

# Sermon Outline

“ABBA! FATHER!”:  
KNOWING GOD AS OUR BELOVED FATHER

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## TOTAL SURRENDER

*Mark 14:32-36*

### I. Introduction

### II. Gethsemane (Mark 14:32)

- A. “And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, ‘Sit here while I pray.’”
  
- B. Prior to this event, the Lord Jesus and his disciples were celebrating the Passover.
  - 1. It was at that Passover meal—the final meal which the Lord would share with his disciples before his death—that he institutes the sacrament of the Lord’s Table.
  - 2. The meal that was used to celebrate Israel’s deliverance from Egypt has now been transformed into a meal to celebrate the Church’s deliverance from sin.
  - 3. Having delivered his final instructions to his disciples (cf. Jn 13-17), Jesus and his disciples go to *Gethsemane*, an olive orchard at the Mount of Olives.
  - 4. From what the Scripture tells us, it seems the Lord’s primary purpose in going there was to pray.
  
- C. Again, we are given a picture of the close fellowship our Lord enjoyed with his heavenly Father.
  - 1. As we consider how *often* our Lord Jesus prayed, we see something of what it means to know God as our heavenly Father.
  - 2. To know God as heavenly Father involves praying often to him.
    - a. Prayer involves drawing near to God with our cares and concerns; the worries of our minds.
    - b. Prayer involves bringing to God the thoughts of our hearts.
  - 3. Just as a child runs to his or her earthly father with all kinds of requests, so also the child of God runs to God with such things.
  - 4. God wants us to relate to him as children.
  - 5. How freely and often we pray is a good indicator of how deeply we believe that God is our Father.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) Where does Jesus bring his disciples after the Passover meal? (2) What does Jesus say to his disciples when they arrive at Gethsemane? (3) “How often we pray is a good indicator of how deeply we believe that God is our Father.” Do you agree? Discuss.

### III. Greatly Distressed, Troubled, and Sorrowful (Mark 14:33, 34)

- A. On this occasion, our Lord is filled with great sorrow as he comes to pray.
- B. Since our Lord Jesus was a human being, he experienced similar fears that a normal flesh-and-blood person would have: “And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be *greatly distressed and troubled*” (v 33).
- C. For those who wonder whether Jesus ever knew what it meant to be stressed out, here is an instance where he clearly is!
- D. When we see our Lord distressed, we can sense that he feared for his life in some way.
- E. “And he said to them, ‘My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch’” (v 34).
  1. These are the words of a man under great mental and emotional duress.
  2. These words teach us that our Lord was capable of being sad, distressed, depressed—even to the point of feeling like he’s dying.
  3. Precisely because Jesus suffered, he is able to be a sympathetic high priest to us:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. (Heb 4:15)
- F. But why does our Lord feel such great distress at this point in time? “Why does Jesus, who has foreseen his death and marched resolutely to Jerusalem to meet it, now quail before it?” (James Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 433)
  1. Jesus is greatly distressed because he dreads facing the full anger of God for the sins of the entire world.
  2. James Edwards explains:

It is one thing, fearful as it will be, to answer for our own sins before a holy and almighty God; who can imagine what it would be like to stand before God to answer for every sin and crime and act of malice and injury and cowardice and evil in the world? In acquiescing to the Father’s will of bearing ‘the sin of many, interceding for transgressors’ (Isa 53:12), Jesus necessarily experiences an abandonment and darkness of cosmic proportions. (*The Gospel According to Mark*, 433)
  3. Edwards adds: “Not his own mortality, but the specter of identifying with sinners so fully as to become the object of God’s wrath against sin—it is this that overwhelms Jesus’ soul “to the point of death” (v 34).” (433)

- G. Do you see what it took for our Lord Jesus to make us sons of God?
1. We become so familiar with the fact that we are children of God that we forget the price that our Lord paid for us to have that privilege.
  2. It was the price of his own life—the one human life that is of eternal worth because it is the life of God’s own sinless Son.
  3. Consider Jesus’ words: “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mk 10:45)
  4. The next time you are tempted to...
    - take your Bible reading for granted
    - take prayer for granted
    - think lightly of coming to church—remember what your Lord did! Your Lord died for you so that you can meet God through all these things.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What was the cause of our Lord’s great distress at this moment in Gethsemane? (2) What did it take for Jesus to make us sons of God and give us the privileges of that position?

#### IV. Jesus Prays for a Way Out (Mark 14:35)

- A. In verse 35, the suffering of our Lord is seen even more intensely.
- B. At this point, Jesus is not praying calmly, with good decorum and formality.
- C. Instead, the Scripture says that “And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed...”
1. People fall to the ground to pray when they feel themselves to be overwhelmed by stress and fear; or else when they are sad and filled with heaviness.
  2. Jesus was really, really pleading with God at this point.
- D. What was our Lord Jesus pleading for? “...that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.”
1. The *hour* here is the great hour for which Jesus had come.
    - a. It is the hour when the Lord hangs on the cross.
    - b. It is the hour when the Lord is lifted up above the ground; and suspended over the creation, he comes face to face with the most terrifying reality in the entire universe—not Rome, not the cross, not even death per se; but the wrath of the holy and righteous God of heaven and earth.
  2. For this reason, Jesus’ prayer is only understandable: *He prayed that he might be able to forego this hour of doom.*

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) How is Jesus praying? What is his emotional state, as far as we can tell from Scripture? (2) What was our Lord praying for? What is so terrifying about where Jesus is headed?

## V. “Abba, Father” (Mark 14:36)

- A. “And he said, ‘Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will’ (v 36).
- B. Later in verse 39, Jesus uses those words again and again in his prayer: “And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words.”
- C. First: Jesus addresses the Lord God as “Abba, Father.”
1. *Abba* is an affectionate yet respectful word for “father.”
  2. *Abba* was the Lord Jesus’ term of endearment for God.
  3. Jesus’ use of the term *abba* implies his closeness with God.
  4. James Edwards says, “Seldom, if ever, did rabbis presume such intimacy with God.” (Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 434)
  5. What is even more striking is the context in which Jesus calls God *Abba*—Jesus calls God *Abba* right in the thick of suffering and great mental stress!
  6. Suddenly, Paul’s words in Galatians 4:6 take on new depth for us.
    - a. Paul says, “And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘*Abba!* Father!’”
    - b. Perhaps we have touched on why Paul chose to use the word “crying”:—It’s because “*Abba!* Father!” were the words Jesus cried out to God when he was suffering.
  7. “Abba! Father!” is not simply a nice, sentimental title that we use to address the Lord when everything in the world is going our way.
  8. Instead, “Abba, Father” is the prayer the Holy Spirit inspires in us precisely when we are suffering.
  9. “*Abba, Father*” is what the child of God prays when darkness falls upon him or her—and he or she feels crushed, desolate, and alone; when the only productive thing that we can do is to fall on the ground and pray.
  10. The fatherhood of God is most experienced in times of suffering!
- D. Next, we hear Jesus saying, “all things are possible for you.”
1. Our Lord is acknowledging the sovereignty of God.
  2. When we are suffering, the sovereignty of God is one of the hardest doctrines to hold on to with joy.
  3. Yet, our Lord Jesus acknowledges this teaching in the midst of suffering.
  4. But if all things are possible for God, it means that God can, if he so wishes, put an end to his suffering immediately.

- E. And so the next thing our Lord prays is, “Remove this cup from me.”
1. In other words, remove this cup of judgment, this experience of doom, from me.
  2. Jesus knows full well what it means to be under the harsh providence of God.
  3. When we are placed in a situation we don’t particularly like; or when we feel that our life goals are being threatened—rest assured that your Savior felt something like what you feel.
  4. Like us, our Lord would prefer not to suffer.
  5. In fact, his suffering is far worse than anything we will ever face in this world—he came face to face with the burning wrath of God.
  6. There is absolutely nothing worse than having the wrath of God descend on you in such fury.
  7. The fact that Jesus prayed to be released from this goes to show that Jesus was not simply resigned to his fate—he wished to be released.
  8. If God could indeed release him from this punishment, why not pray? —Edwards makes the comment: “The plea of Jesus suggests that he is genuinely tempted to forsake the role of the suffering servant” (*The Gospel According to Mark*, 434)
- F. Yet, as much as our Lord recoils from the thought of suffering, this is what sets him apart from us: *Jesus wants God’s will to be done above all else.*
1. Our Lord yielded himself to God’s will: “Yet not what I will, but what you will.”
  2. William Lane states it well: “Jesus’ desire was conditioned upon the will of God, and he resolutely refused to set his will in opposition to the will of the Father” (William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 518).
  3. This is the most well-known part of the prayer at Gethsemane.
  4. It is the prayer of consecration and submission.
  5. Jesus the Son of God who loves life yields himself to death for the sake of something even greater than life—which is the will of the heavenly Father.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) How does Jesus address God? What does this tell us about his relationship to God? (2) What does Jesus ask God to do? (3) What does Jesus ask God to do in the end? (4) How does Jesus teach us to pray?

## VI. The Fruits of Our Lord’s Yielding to God

- A. First: By yielding to Abba’s will, *our Lord accomplished salvation for us.*
1. By saying “Yes” to God in the face of absolute darkness, Jesus overcomes the “No” of the first Adam.
  2. The first Adam was blessed with everything in the Garden of Eden—and still said “No” to God.

3. The second Adam, Jesus, had little in the Garden of Gethsemane—yet still said “Yes” to God with all his heart!
  4. By this act of superior obedience, the human race is made acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
  5. Those who believe in Jesus are saved and are allowed to know God as Father just he knew God as Father.
- B. Second: By yielding to Abba’s will, *our Lord attains glory for himself*.
1. By his obedience, Jesus is given the highest name, LORD.  
<sup>8</sup>And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.<sup>9</sup>Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:8-11)
  2. Behind “Lord” is the divine Name: *YHWH*.
  3. By his obedience, Jesus...
    - a. as God, regains the use of his original Name—the very Name of God.
    - b. as Man, acquires cosmic sovereignty as the supreme Man.
- C. Third: By yielding to Abba’s will, *our Lord stamped obedience into the hearts of all who trust in him*.
1. If the first Adam’s sin implanted the seed of disobedience into the hearts of his children, the implication is that the second Adam’s obedience would also stamp trusting obedience into the hearts of all who belong to him (cf. Rom 5:19).
  2. As a result of this, those who belong to Christ will now begin demonstrating something of the same humble and trusting attitude that was seen in Christ at Gethsemane and all throughout his life.
  3. Of course, our trust and submission to God this side of heaven will always be imperfect.  
 —No Christian is ever as trusting of God as he or she ought to be.
  4. Yet, we mustn’t say that since perfection is far from us, we should therefore expect *nothing* to happen.
    - a. Now that we are in Christ, the Spirit of Christ has been given to us.
    - b. And now that Jesus has given us his Spirit—the same Spirit who was with him at Gethsemane—we can begin to surrender our wills more and more to God.
    - c. Indeed, we *can* and *should* expect to see heart-felt submission to God in our lives today.
    - d. Going further, we *can* and *must* choose heart-felt submission to God today.

- e. If we are not seeing heartfelt trust in God, it could be that we are not yet believers. Or else it could be that we really need more teaching on what has happened to us in Christ.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What are three fruits of Jesus' surrender to God? (2) How does the Lord's yielding to Abba's will accomplish salvation for us? (3) How does the Lord's yielding to Abba's will attain glory for himself? (4) How does the Lord's yielding to Abba's will stamp obedience into our hearts?

## **VII. To Know God As Father Is to Share in the Yielding of Jesus Christ**

**To know God as Father is to share in the Holy Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. By sharing in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, God's perfectly trusting and yielded Son, you and I can now say a greater "Yes" to God and a greater "No" to ourselves, our sins, and the sins of the world. Like Jesus, we can present our requests and cares to God. Yet, like Jesus, we can also say to our Abba God: "Yet not what I will, but what you will." Because the Spirit of Jesus is in our hearts, the very attitude of our hearts can become one of loving trust in our Abba Father, just as it was in our Lord Jesus.**

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) How does yielding to God's will relate to knowing God as Father? (2) What work does the Holy Spirit of Christ Jesus do in our hearts? (3) Where in your life is God leading you toward great trust in and surrender to him?