

Mark 14:32-52

The Cries and the Conviction of Jesus

The young people nowadays use words we older people struggle to understand
Like cap, lowkey, lit, slay, fire, skibidi, glow up, w
If you need those things translated
My daughter can explain them to you.

There is a word that I like

Clutch.

The ability to perform well on a certain activity at a particular moment, despite external pressures, influences or distractions.

“When she kicked that goal with two seconds to go, that was so clutch”
“That fireman was clutch when he rescued those kids from that burning car”
You get it.

By the end of tonight.
What I want you to see in this bible passage
Is that Jesus is so clutch.

And what I’m hoping is that you will see how clutch he is for your life.
In the most difficult and distressing situations in your life
Jesus is clutch.

As we look at this passage we will look at two things.

The Cries of Jesus

The Conviction of Jesus

Let’s look firstly at the cries of Jesus

It’s the night before Jesus is about to be executed
And he and his disciples have just had their last supper together
We pick up the account in verse 32

³²Then they came to a place named Gethsemane, and he told his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” ³³He took Peter, James, and John with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. ³⁴He said to them, “I am deeply grieved to the point of death. Remain here and stay awake.”

We’re not used to seeing Jesus like this
In the gospel so far, we have seen the OP Jesus
Overpowered to the extreme – driving out demons
Calming storms, raising the dead
But now we see the raw emotion of someone not coping
Jesus is deeply distressed
Grieving to the point of death
In another gospel, we’re told that Jesus’ stress was so great
That it was like drops of blood
But notice what Jesus does in his stress?

He prays.

In Mark's gospel

There are three key times when Jesus prays

Once at the start of the gospel when Jesus heals many in a town

Second, after he performs the miracle of feeding 5000

And then our passage in the Garden of Gethsemane

Each of these times, Jesus is facing a threat to fulfilling God's agenda

A temptation to stray from what God wanted

In chapter 1, while Jesus was praying by himself

Peter came and said "Everyone is looking for you"

After Jesus healed many sick people in the town

The disciples and the crowd wanted more of the same

But Jesus had a different agenda

To go to other places to preach

We're told in John's gospel that after feeding the 5000

People realized that there was something powerful about Jesus

And they wanted to make him king of Israel

Jesus again withdraws to pray because he needs to commune with God

There's this real temptation to stray from the path of the cross

That has been set before Him by God

And now finally, the night before he reaches his final destination

Jesus is once again facing temptation

The reality of the cross is now imminent

And the temptation of walking away must have been very real.

And so Jesus realises that he needs to pray.

I reckon about 50% of the time when I'm stressed I turn to God in prayer.

Sometimes I just forget

Sometimes I think that I should have done something earlier about the situation

And I shouldn't turn to God now because I feel a bit embarrassed about it

Sometimes because I don't pray because I can manage it in my own strength

Sometimes it's just because I've given in to temptation and feel guilty so I don't pray

Jesus on the other hand has no hesitation in turning to His Father in prayer when stressed.

What does Jesus pray,

Verse 35

³⁵ He went a little farther, fell to the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ And he said, "Abba, Father!

In this first cry of Jesus we see something of his special relationship to God

"Abba Father"

And this was a term of intimacy in a Jewish household

But considered very disrespectful to address God in this way

But this shows us the wonderful intimacy that Jesus the Son has with God his Father

After all, this is the beloved Son with whom God the Father is well pleased
As we have already seen in Mark's gospel in chapters 1 and 9
And yet this privilege of relating to God as *our Abba Father in heaven*
Is exactly why Jesus is going to the cross
To make a way for enemies of God to become children of God

Romans 8 says that the Holy Spirit testifies to our adoption
And we no longer need to be slaves of sin
But children of freedom who can pray to God as *Abba Father*

I've served in ministry for a long time with Neil
But one of the many things I have learned
Is to address God as "Gracious Father" in prayer.
Early on, I noticed how Neil always addresses God like that
I realised that it is a term grounded in the Bible.
This is the one of the great privileges that Jesus bought for us with his blood
That we can call God "Father" but based entirely on His grace

Let's look at Jesus' second cry in verse 36
All things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, not what I will,
but what you will."
Jesus cries out to God to take away this cup if at all possible
The cup is an Old Testament picture of God's anger towards sin

We learn that from a few Old Testament passages including Jeremiah 25

We now have a window into why Jesus is in such great distress
It is not the physical pain of death he is dreading
It is the judgement of sin that he must drink on behalf of the world
It is a horrendous thought
To face the judgement for all of humanity's sin for all of history
I want you to think about your sin
Every cruel word
Every act of violence
Every selfish thought you've ever committed and are still yet to commit
Now multiply your sin by the 117 billion people
Who have ever lived in history
Now imagine all that sin
Being focussed in on Jesus like a giant moral magnifying glass
And the intensity of the beam of God's judgement bearing down
On one man on one day in history as he hung on a cross
Now if the thought of that wasn't horrific enough
The one who had to judge Jesus for this sin
Was his beloved Father
With whom he shared a perfect relationship
And with whom he would now be alienated as God turned away from Him
As Jesus bore judgement for sin
I believe that this is what troubled Jesus the most

And understandably, Jesus wants another way
It's not that Jesus didn't want to rescue people from sin and death

But this is a gut-wrenchingly honest cry to his Father
You are sovereign, all things are possible for you
Is there another way?

And yet from Jesus lips
we also hear this cry “Not what I will but what you will”
In spite of his immense emotion
Jesus recognises he has a will, that he is not just a bundle of emotions

The Inside Out movies helpfully portray the different emotions
That often pull us in different directions
And that our lives are often a complex mix of these emotions – joy, sadness, anger, ennui,
But if you notice there wasn’t a character called “Will”
You see all of us have a will
A volition to choose a course of action alongside or even in spite of our emotions

I think the Inside Out movies are consistent with how people think of themselves
That who we are and what we do is purely driven by our emotions

But see Jesus praying in the garden
Yes there are raging emotions – grief, distress, sorrow
And he doesn’t suppress these emotions
He tells his disciples he is distressed
Then he cries out to God with a prayer of genuine petition – take this cup
And yet Jesus submits all of these emotions to his will
And then he submits his will to that of His Father’s
“Not what I will but what you will”
It’s not a prayer of resignation
After all, Jesus has just made an honest request to God to take the cup away
But it is Jesus affirming his complete obedience to His Father
“However you answer this prayer, I will obey you”
“It is your will to rescue sinners”
“And that is my will too”

You know whenever I make decisions out of raging emotion
Inevitably I sin against God and others
Someone gets hurt.
And here is Jesus
As vulnerable as you or I to pain and distress and temptation and grief
Instead of hurting others
he uses his will to act for the good of others and the glory of God

Meanwhile the disciples are seemingly unaware of what Jesus is going through

Jesus asks a pointed question to Peter, are you sleeping?
Remember that Jesus has already predicted
That Peter will deny him three times before dawn
The same Peter who swore to Jesus that he would willingly die with Jesus
He’s now struggling to stay awake
And Jesus is not asking the disciples to pray for him.
He is appealing to them to pray for themselves

That they would withstand the temptation that is coming their way
And that temptation is to also to stray from the path of the cross
Judas has already abandoned the path
For selfish gain and self-interest
Willing to sell out his Lord
Will the disciples do the same?

Jesus has withstood his times of testing
Whether that was Satan tempting him with false worship in the wilderness
Or the crowds wanting to crown him king
Or Peter saying that the Christ would never suffer and die
Jesus has held his ground against this temptation
He has stayed awake and kept watch
He's kept to His Father's will
Three times, Jesus keeps watch in prayer
He continues to cry out to God
And each time the disciples fail

These three disciples – Peter, James and John were Jesus' inner circle
The three who saw his transfiguration
Who were brought into the room to seem him raise Jairus' daughter from death
They were privileged to see more of Jesus' power and glory
And yet now they failed to keep watch with their friend and Lord
In his most critical hour

I used to think when I read this passage – how could these guys let Jesus down like that?
And now as I get older
I see my own failure in their failure
I am so prone to the weakness of my flesh
My own laziness and lack of discipline
My own distraction and appetites
My shame to not take a stand for Jesus when opportunities arise
Could I stay awake for 5 minutes and pray, let alone an hour?
Why read God's word today, when you can put it off to tomorrow?
In spite of my best intentions and promises, I fail Jesus all the time
How about you?
When Jesus exposed the disciples' weakness in verse 40
They felt the sting of shame and did not know what to say to him
Have you felt that sting?
Have you been at a loss for words when you know the weight of your failure before Jesus.
I'm not saying this to guilt you.
But to help you to see the enormity of your sin before God

Well three times Jesus prayed "Take this cup from me"
What do you think God's answer was

My Son, this is the only way to save them
That you drink the bitter cup of suffering
For their sinful failure in temptation
For their broken promises
For their lack of loyalty

The cross is the only way
The plan that we agreed upon before the creation of the world
To make them holy and blameless through your death and resurrection
There is no other way

Application

This passage has had a profound impact on my Christian life
Growing up in the church
I always knew that Jesus had to die for our sin
That this was his job after all I thought
I had no idea of the depth of what that meant for him
My version of Jesus was very one dimensional
Very plastic

And then in my first year of uni
In a bible study in the Christian Union that year
we studied the book of Mark in my first semester at uni
I read this passage and it floored me
When I saw what Jesus went through in the Garden of Gethsemane
None of this was easy for Jesus

There he is sweating blood
Wrestling in prayer as he faces the cross
Here is a three dimensional Jesus
Not made of plastic but flesh and blood just like me

The author of Hebrews reflected on this in Hebrews 2
¹⁴ Now since the children have flesh and blood in common, Jesus also shared in these, so that through his death he might destroy the one holding the power of death—that is, the devil— ¹⁵ and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death

Jesus had to be like us
He had to be truly human
Only another human could be a sacrifice for our sin
Only another human could buy our freedom by dying in our place

A couple of verses later in verse 17

¹⁷ Therefore, he had to be like his brothers and sisters in every way, so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in matters pertaining to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For since he himself has suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted

Jesus had to be like us so that he could help us
Jesus our priest, our mediator between us and God
Is thoroughly human
Jesus suffered so he can help those who suffer
Jesus was tempted and he is able to help those who are tempted.

I want you to think about that for a moment.
Have you ever been lonely?

Have you ever felt overwhelmed by grief?
Have you ever felt no one could possibly understand what you're going through?

Now I want you to think about Jesus
The loneliest person in history
Misunderstood, denied, abandoned and betrayed by his closest friends
Mocked and scorned and beaten and executed by his enemies
Judged and forsaken for the sin of the world

Jesus had equality with God
Which he gave up to humble himself to the cross

You don't think Jesus understood grief?
You don't think Jesus understood pain?
You don't think Jesus knows loneliness?
Jesus knows you better than you can imagine.
Jesus understands what you're going through more than you believe.

When I read this passage at 18
I had the hardest couple of years of my life at that stage
My parents had separated and divorced during VCE
And I had a lot of raging emotions within me
Some of which I turned on others
And some on myself as I withdrew
I felt very lonely
That everyone, including God was distant from me
And then I met Jesus here in this Garden

Maybe the loneliest person in history
Could help me in my loneliness?

Can you see Jesus?
Truly human like us
Except in one crucial way.

Again here is Hebrews, chapter 4 this time

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need.

Did you see that crucial difference?
Human like us
Yet without sin
He understands our weakness
He knows the reality of temptation
But he did not give in to sin

When we are under pressure,
It's so easy to sin isn't it?

To numb ourselves with our escapes and addictions
When we feel pain
It's so easy to turn that into anger and blame towards others
When we feel guilt and shame for sin
It's so easy to hide and run from God

We sin, but Jesus didn't.

If I was Jesus, I would have walked away from the cross in a heartbeat
Think of those he had come to rescue
The three friends who could not stay awake and pray with him
Think of his family who thought he was out of his mind
The corrupt officials who were about to falsely accuse him
The crowd of people who were about to cry for his blood the next morning
And Jesus says no, I won't sin.
I won't run from God's will
I will do it. I will face the cross.
And I will rescue them.

And in doing so, he became the only one who could be our priest
The one who mediates between us and God.
Can you see Jesus?

We have seen the cries of Jesus
But now we see the conviction of Jesus

Verse 41

⁴¹Then he came a third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough!
The time has come. See, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴²Get
up; let's go. See, my betrayer is near."

God's answer to Jesus' prayer is clear
There is no other way to save the world
Than for him to drink the cup of wrath
Now notice Jesus does not wait to be arrested
He advances towards Judas.
He has a clear conviction to stride towards the cross
The gut-wrenching emotion is replaced by a calm resolution
The hour of the cross has come
Cometh the hour, cometh the Son of Man
The Son of Man who came not to be served but to give his life as a ransom for many

Back at uni I actually was Jesus
Let me explain
The Melbourne Uni Christian Union decided to put on a musical called
"In the Name of the Lord"
And I was cast as the main character – Jesus
But do you know how hard it is to play Jesus?
And one time I got it completely wrong
It was the arrest and trial of Jesus
And our staff worker Gordon Cheng was playing Caiaphas the High Priest

In his black flowing robe – very Severus Snape like
And in the trial I was glaring at Caiaphas during rehearsals
Because of the false accusations he made of Jesus
But Gordon spoke to me after and said
I don't think Jesus would have done that
Because by this stage, Jesus had already committed himself to the cross
It was more likely that what Jesus displayed was calm conviction
And Gordon was right

Jesus has already wrestled in prayer in the garden
But now he is calm, convicted and in control
While the chaos takes place around him in the side characters

We see the ultimate betrayal from Judas.
Betrayed with a kiss
Here is the friend who stabs you in the back as he hugs you
And yet this is no shock to Jesus
He has already predicted Judas' deceit at the last supper
And yet, how much would it have grieved Jesus to be treated this way
By someone he spent so much time with

There is an armed mob
The temple guard along with the religious leaders
They could have arrested Jesus at any time, as Jesus said
But they come underhandedly in the middle of the night
As they did not want to spark a violent revolution
And this is overkill because Jesus did not come to fight.
He was ready to suffer and Jesus gives in to his arrest with no resistance

But not the disciples
They did not flee when Jesus was arrested
They were ready to fight
In John's gospel we're told that it was Peter who cut off the high priest's servant's ear
The disciples were waiting for this moment for Jesus to show his glory
To make Israel great again by defeating his opponents
They did not believe his three predictions that the Son of Man would suffer and die
And when Jesus didn't fight
That's when they flee, scared for their lives
Including that strange reference to the young man who fled naked
It's believed that this was Mark
The author of the gospel letting his readers know
That he was also present at the time of Jesus' arrest

The disciples flee
Just as Jesus predicted from the quote in Zechariah 13
The sheep are now scattering

But this is all part of God's plan
Verse 49

⁴⁹ Every day I was among you, teaching in the temple, and you didn't arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled."

None of this is outside God's control
And all of this is Jesus' conviction
Judas and the corrupt leaders of Israel think that Jesus is under their control
But how wrong could they be
All of this is God's plan

Isaiah 53

Written more than 700 years before the death of Jesus
Coming true right before our eyes

All the sheep turning their own way
And there is Jesus the Lamb of God
Walking towards his slaughter
Never opening his mouth in protest
Why? Because he's taking our iniquity, bearing our sin
So that God would punish him instead of us
That's the irony
Jesus couldn't save himself
Because he was committed to saving sinners.

The author of Hebrews reflected on what Jesus did
And I believe he was thinking about what happened in these events in the garden
Hebrews 5

⁷ During his earthly life, he offered prayers and appeals with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. ⁸
Although he was the Son, he learned obedience from what he suffered. ⁹ After he was perfected, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him
When it says there that Jesus learned obedience
It's not that Jesus was disobedient
But he learned the full extent of what obedience to His Father meant
It meant suffering and death on the cross
And being perfected means that Jesus completed what God gave him to do
And because of this Jesus is the only one who can be our Saviour.
The conviction of Jesus opens the way to our salvation.

The origin of the word champion has the notion of an advocate
Someone fighting on your behalf in a battle
And your cause is determined by the outcome of that battle
Battles between nations could be decided in this way.
Think about David and Goliath in the bible
Nowadays we use the term champion in sport
That is what happens every time you support your footy team in a match
You want them to champion your cause
And when they win
You share in their victory

The greatest champions are clutch
In the highest pressure situations
They don't run from the ball
They demand the ball and they will put themselves on the line in order to win.

In the 1997 NBA Championship series
The Chicago Bulls and Utah Jazz were tied 2 games each
And Michael Jordan suffering from the flu wanted to play
He staggered around the court during the match, dehydrated and exhausted.
And yet he willed himself to score 38 points in the game
Erasing the lead that the Jazz had in the fourth quarter 77-69.
With 25 second to go,
Scottie Pippin passed the ball to Jordan
Jordan hits a three pointer to win the game
And then he was famously carried off the court
by his teammate Pippin in complete exhaustion
The Bulls went on to win the championship in the next match.
With Jordan being named the Finals MVP
The Greatest champions are clutch
They deliver when everything is on the line.

And there is no greater champion than Jesus
Can you think of a moment in history that is more high pressure
Than the one that Jesus faced as he prayed to God?
Can you think of anyone in history who carried more
responsibility for others than Jesus?
Our fate as sinful people facing an eternity in hell,
Hung on what Jesus would do after he prayed to His Father
And like the great champion that he is
He was clutch.
Everyone else around him was hopelessly self-interested
But not Jesus.
He went into battle for those he loved.
He went to the cross and he became the Saviour of the world.
And he kept every promise that he ever made.
That's clutch.
That's our champion right there.

Can you trust Jesus?
With the burden of your sin?
With the guilt and shame you carry by yourself?

Can you trust Jesus with your fear of death?
With your worries about those you love?

Can you trust Jesus when you fail time and time again?
And when others fail you time and time again.

I hope that you've seen tonight that you can.
That in his cries he's just like you
Human in every way
Except without sin
And in his conviction
I hope you see that he is the champion that you need
And the champion you can trust.