

In the Garden

SCOTT HOEZEE

When you are between the devil and the deep blue sea, where do you turn? How do you pray? How do you behave when life's walls seem to be closing in on you? Well, Jesus knows how this feels because that is the same situation our Lord Jesus Christ experienced on the night before his crucifixion, as he endured dark hours in the Garden of Gethsemane. Today on *Groundwork*, let's see what Jesus' example as we read it in Mark's Gospel from the 14th chapter has to teach us and what it says about not only Jesus' work of salvation, but our lives as we now follow him as disciples today.

From Words of Hope and ReFrame Media, this is *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast. So Scott, we are tracing in this series of programs the last day of Jesus' life – the last twenty-four hours, essentially, from late Thursday afternoon and evening when he went to the upper room and had the last supper with his disciples with the foot washing, and then on through the crucifixion on Good Friday.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; so they leave the upper room, which we looked at in the last program, and then they go into this in-between place – in between the upper room and the washing of the feet and the establishment of the Lord's Supper, and the arrest, trial and crucifixion – and that in-between place is a garden called Gethsemane; and in Mark's Gospel we read about it – in Mark 14 – which I think, Dave, probably counts as one of... in all of the Gospels that recount Gethsemane, but in Mark 14 as well, probably counts as one of the darkest, heaviest, gloomiest scenes in the whole Bible.

DAVE BAST

Yes, literally in one sense because it is the middle of the night now. They must have spent a long time in the upper room, especially given what John tells us about Jesus' farewell discourse; a lot of teaching with the disciples there; and then we read in the Gospels that they sang a hymn, which was probably one of the psalms prescribed for the end of the Passover; and then they went out, and they would have gone out of the city, one of the eastern gates of Jerusalem, down across the Brook Kidron in the valley that ran along the east side of Jerusalem; and then beginning up the slope of the Mount of Olives, partway up here is this olive orchard, or garden it is called, known as Gethsemane.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and no sooner do they get there and Jesus changes. The disciples seem kind of droopy and sleepy here, but boy, if they were looking at Jesus they must have seen him turn pale; they must have seen his eyes start to dart around – maybe he started to sweat – because listen to some of the descriptions Mark gives us here in the 14th chapter. Mark writes:

^{33b}Jesus began to be deeply distressed and troubled. ³⁴“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” he tells them. And just a few verses later, Jesus fell to the ground and prayed: ³⁶Abba, Father, take this cup from me,” and then a little later we are told the disciples, their eyes were heavy; the whole atmosphere is gloomy and kind of depressing and oppressive in a way.

DAVE BAST

I know that you know this reference, too. There was a great New Testament scholar named Oscar Cullmann who wrote a quite significant work about the death of Jesus...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, yes.

DAVE BAST

And he points out the contrast between Jesus here approaching his death and the great philosopher, Socrates, who was executed, and Plato, his pupil, tells the story of Socrates, and Socrates is all calm and confident and he is full of faith and comforting all of the sorrowing disciples that he has, and he sort of takes death in stride; and what a contrast with Jesus.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; because to the Greeks, and to Socrates, death was a good thing. It got you out of this messy creation.

DAVE BAST

Exactly. You are just flying away – you are escaping your body – and your soul will soar to heaven, you know, if you were a good person; which is the default belief of most Americans...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, right; but Jesus, we know, is the word of God who spoke creation into being in the beginning. Jesus knows how good creation is and that death is an enemy; and so Jesus is not going to welcome death or march calmly into it. He hates death, and here in the Garden of Gethsemane, he is going to face his last temptation to go another way and to avoid death. We feel temptation sometimes, too, but we have no idea what Jesus felt as the full force of the devil was targeted – there is a bullseye on Jesus' back – and the full force of the devil went after him, and that is what made Jesus say: I can hardly breathe. I think my heart is going to stop. I am sad to the point of death.

DAVE BAST

Well, Luke says kind of a telling detail that his sweat was like great drops of blood, and perhaps even literally blood oozed out of his pores. It is difficult to say there exactly, but probably metaphorically; he is dripping with sweat, he is trembling with fear, he is crying out in agony; what kind of a scene is this? What does this do to your picture of Jesus, the calm and serene Son of God who commands the winds and the waves and they obey him; and he walks on the sea...

SCOTT HOEZEE

But he is a real human being, right? That is part of our theology, that he is the Son of God, but he is also a real human being, tempted in every way as we are, the New Testament tells us. You know, sometimes we think that right after his baptism, you know, by John the Baptist, Jesus goes into the wilderness, is tempted three times, passes with flying colors, resists the devil – and sometimes we think: Well, that was it; but I think it is Luke who says that after Jesus resisted those three the devil left him until a more opportune time; in other words, this ain't over yet. The devil is coming back at Jesus, and here is...

DAVE BAST

And here is the time, exactly, in the Garden. I think that is an absolutely crucial insight. In fact, one of the things I liked about Mel Gibson's film, *The Passion of the Christ*, and maybe we will talk about this a little bit more in the next program – something I didn't like so much – but it was a powerful, powerful movie portraying Jesus' suffering in his last day; and this Gethsemane scene is well done there; it is eerie, and Satan appears in it, and that is exactly what is happening.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, and that is actually the only scene in that movie I liked, but it was well done because it did show that... You know, I sometimes think that the disciples... why do they keep falling asleep? Well, they had had a big meal, they had had some wine – you know how that goes...

DAVE BAST

It is late, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But I think there is more; I think the presence of the evil one was so heavy and oppressive there that mere mortals could barely take it. I think they just fell dead away in sleep because that was how bad the atmosphere really, really was. Here is the devil coming at Jesus, and as we will see, this garden – we sometimes forget this, but this garden is a parallel to another garden – a garden called Eden; and we will look at that when we come back.

Segment 2

DAVE BAST

Hello; this is *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Dave Bast.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee.

DAVE BAST

Scott, I am intrigued by the idea that you suggested just before the break. I am not sure if I have thought through this really carefully before, but the parallel between what happens in the Garden of Gethsemane and what happened at the beginning of the Bible in the Garden of Eden.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right. So, we begin in a garden, where God placed his image bearers, and it is a paradise in that case, very different in atmosphere initially from the Garden of Gethsemane...

DAVE BAST

Everything is bright; there is daylight and...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Opposite; but there is one thing in common between the two gardens: Somehow, the devil is there, in the Garden of Eden, and as Genesis tells us, it comes in the form of a serpent. We are not aware of any actual serpent in the Garden of Gethsemane with Jesus, but the serpent, of course, was the devil in disguise, and that same devil shows up again in Gethsemane. So that is a parallel.

DAVE BAST

Yes, clearly, Jesus is facing and struggling with the temptation to avoid the cross. He prays repeatedly – three times, actually. “If it is possible, Father, let this cup pass from me.” Now, he is speaking to his Father – his heavenly Father – but the cup has to be a symbol of the cross, of the suffering, of the satisfaction for sin that he needs to make.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And not just... You know, Jesus is aware of something we sometimes forget. Sure, the cross was physically terrible and painful and spikes through your wrists and all the terrible physical things; and of course, he will die. Everybody dies. But Jesus also knows that inside that cup – that metaphorical cup that he does not want to drink – is the abandonment by his Father and the Holy Spirit; for the first time in all eternity, there is going to be a temporary breach in fellowship among the three persons in God and he is going to be left alone. That

is what he wants to avoid.

DAVE BAST

Yes; sure, the cup is a symbol in the Old Testament for the wrath of God; it is brimming over, which again links us back to the Garden of Eden, because God said: In the day that you eat this fruit – that you disobey me – you will surely die; and Adam and Eve did die in a sense that way. They were separated spiritually from God...

SCOTT HOEZEE

They spiritually died, yes.

DAVE BAST

Right; and so, there is this thing hanging over the human race ever since; the justice of God – the holy wrath of God against the heinousness of sin – and who is going to pay that? Who is going to satisfy that?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Who is going to snap that...

DAVE BAST

That is the cup.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is interesting; so, we have these parallel gardens... So, what did the devil say to Eve and ultimately to Adam? The devil said: Hey, be smarter than God. Don't do it God's way; do it your way. Look out for good old number one. Feather your own nest. Take care of yourself. Put yourself first. That is what the devil said to Eve, and that is what...

DAVE BAST

You shall be as God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; don't do it God's way. And of course, I am pretty sure I speak for just about everybody to say I have never seen a talking snake in my life, but you know what? I have heard those same words: Do it your way, Scott. Put yourself forward. Step on other people if that is what it takes to feather your own nest. Don't do it God's way. Just about every bad crime in history, every bad event can be traced back to somebody somewhere saying: I am going to look out for good old number one; and that is what the devil is saying to Jesus now in Gethsemane. The devil knows God's plan for Jesus going to the cross as well as Jesus does, and he is saying to him: Don't do it. Take care of yourself. What good are you going to be to anybody, Jesus, when you are dead? Run away.

DAVE BAST

Now, what makes you say that? I am just curious – what makes you think that the devil knew God's plan as well as Jesus did?

SCOTT HOEZEE

I mean, Jesus is in Jerusalem. The devil is aware that he has already put it into Judas to betray him; so, I mean, maybe the devil is playing both ends off against the middle, but I think it is pretty clear to him that if he cannot derail Jesus now, then it is going to be all over, and something is going to happen that is going to bring him down.

DAVE BAST

Well, you know, now that I come to think of it, there is that earlier incident when Jesus first announces that he is going to have to be crucified – he is going to be betrayed. Peter tries to remonstrate with him and says:

No, Lord. That is not what the Messiah does. And Jesus says: Get behind me, Satan. So he clearly perceives the suggestion of swerving away from the cross as coming from the tempter.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And even if you go back to the temptations in the wilderness, one of them was the devil showing him all the kingdoms of the earth and saying: Look, I have a way for you to become Lord of lords and King of kings the easy way...

DAVE BAST

Yes, the easy way...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Just worship me and I will give it to you. So, he has been trying to keep Jesus from the cross. He keeps trying to trip him to keep him from getting to a place where I do think the devil knows if he gets there and if he goes through with it, oh, oh. The cycle of evil that was started in the Garden of Eden is finally going to be snapped; and that is exactly what happens in Gethsemane, finally; evil has been ricocheting down the corridors of history like a bad bullet – it just keeps ricocheting and hitting everybody. The bullet is going to stop at a place called Calvary, and that is going to change everything – that is going to turn the cosmos from darkness into light; and so the devil has got to stop him, and that is what is going on in Gethsemane.

DAVE BAST

And then you think, too, of God's plan, which is the plan of the Trinity – the Father, the Son, and the Spirit – so here is more mystery: As a human, Jesus struggles with accepting this plan – with draining the cup of pain and wrath – enduring separation from God; but as the Son of God, he fully embraces and endorses that plan. It is his plan, too. It is not just the Father saying: Oh, here; do this even though you don't want to. And that plan leads through the cross to the resurrection and the triumph of the book of Revelation, where the redeemed host says: The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. So yes, Jesus will ultimately receive every kingdom and the whole creation, but only by way of the cross.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Only that way. If death – spiritual death, physical death, separation from God, which Jesus will face on the cross, as we will see in a future program – if that is the essence of hell – if that is the essence of sin and evil, Jesus knows it has got to be stopped; but it is a huge struggle, and again, when we look at this scene, and as you said, Dave, earlier, three times Jesus screams to God: Isn't there another way? He is hearing the tempter's voice to say: Go another way; and Jesus even says to his Father: Is there another way? Three times. Don't let anybody ever tell you that sin and evil are not serious, serious matters. It is so serious, even to the incarnate Son of God, that it makes him sorrowful to the point where he can hardly breathe in this dark, dark scene.

DAVE BAST

Well, I think often of people who sort of assume: Well, God can just forgive sin. Easy to say because they do not have to pay for it. He has to pay for it, and that is a different matter.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, my teacher, Neal Plantinga, a former president of Calvin Seminary as well, noted in class one time: Isn't it interesting that in scripture the act of creation was a whole lot easier for God than the act of salvation. In creation, he spoke and it was, but salvation took a lot longer, and it ended up with the Son of God not just speaking but screaming from the cross: My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Somehow, rooting out evil was a major, major work of God.

DAVE BAST

It sure was. I want to look a little bit more at Mark 14 because that is the chapter that we started with, and there are a couple of very curious things that happen as well in the Garden after Jesus' prayer. So let's do that after we take a brief break.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome back to *Groundwork*. I am Scott Hoezee.

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast; and Scott, we wanted to look at the end of Mark 14, the incident in Gethsemane; what happened after Jesus prayed three times for the cup to pass. We pick it up at verse 43:

Just as Jesus was speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priest, the teachers of the Law, and the elders. ⁴⁴Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them, "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard," ⁴⁵and going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi," and kissed him.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Then we read further that: ⁴⁶The men seized Jesus and arrested him. ⁴⁷And one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. ⁴⁸"Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "That you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? ⁴⁹Every day I was teaching you in the Temple courts and you did not arrest me. But the scriptures must be fulfilled." ⁵⁰Then everyone deserted him and fled.

And then there are these last two verses that we will get to in a moment; only Mark records this starting at verse 51:

A young man wearing nothing but a linen garment was following Jesus. When they seized him, ⁵²he fled naked, leaving his garment behind. And that is how Mark wraps up this Gethsemane story.

DAVE BAST

Which is filled with drama and tension, and here is this scene of a brief scuffle, which is triggered by Judas, the betrayer, the traitor, coming in, leading a mob from the Temple guard, and betraying Jesus with a kiss, ironically.

Scott Hoezee:

And you know, we have been saying that this Garden of Gethsemane is, in so many ways, parallel to the Garden of Eden we talked about in the previous segment; and we are going to see that these two incidents – what Judas does and then that strange incident of the mystery man in the last two verses has a lot of parallels to the Garden of Eden, too; because what happened in the Garden of Eden? What was Eve tempted by? Was Eve tempted by something bad? No, she was tempted by something good. God made that fruit. He just said: Don't eat it; so Eve was tempted by the good, and it became bad, and now here, Judas takes something good – a kiss – and makes it something bad. It is exactly what evil is: A nice little example here of how evil takes what is good, twists it, and makes it something bad: A kiss, which should show love and respect and joy and...

DAVE BAST

Friendship, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Life-giving becomes...

DAVE BAST

The relationship between a master and his disciple – a beloved master; and it is the sign of death. It is like a mobster, you know; some kind of Mafia hit.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, there is this thing in the Mafia called the kiss of death; in fact, you can see it in one of the Godfather movies, where the lead mobster finds out his brother tried to kill him; and so he comes up to him at a party one time, grabs his face, gives him a kiss on the lips, and that is the kiss of death. That tells the brother: I am going to be killed. And again, it is a perversion of a kiss, but that is what evil does; it takes what is good, flips it on its head, and makes it something bad.

DAVE BAST

Sure; and just on a practical level, this would have been necessary because of the dynamics of Passover week. Jerusalem would have been thronged with pilgrims; people camped out all over the place. There may have been groups out on the slopes of the Mount of Olives sleeping; so, in order to grab Jesus without causing a great scene or a riot, they would have needed to be able to find him in the midst of all that and identify him in the darkness; and so Judas' kiss, both symbolically portrays evil, but it also very practically enables the authorities to arrest Jesus.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And so they grab him. One of the disciples tries to take matters into his own hands, does a violent act with a sword, and Jesus says: No, no. It is interesting because, of course, Jesus did have followers – not just the disciples, but others as well; and if he had marched them over to Pontius Pilate's house or King Herod's palace and pointed and said: Let's take 'em, boys. They had weapons. They would have followed him, and that is kind of what some of them were still hoping would happen: That he would restore politically – by force – the kingdom of Israel; get rid of the Romans; but here Jesus says: No, scripture must be fulfilled; and no sooner did they hear that and they are gone. All the disciples are gone into the night.

DAVE BAST

But it was Peter, you know, who we learn elsewhere...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right, in another Gospel.

DAVE BAST

It was Peter who drew the sword; and I have this sense that Peter thought he passed the test there. You know, he had said: I will die with you. Even if all the others betray you, I will never do that; and he thought it was – boom – see, I proved myself. But he had not even begun to be tested yet. That would happen later and it would be embarrassment that would trip him up.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; but once they see that, and once they see Jesus does not approve that act – and in another Gospel we are told Jesus even heals the ear of the servant – they are gone; all of them; and then, this last little thing...

DAVE BAST

Yes; this weird thing. I want you to talk about that a little bit.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, there is this mystery...

DAVE BAST

This young man who flees away naked.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, he is out there wearing just a towel around his waist apparently...

DAVE BAST

Or a bed sheet, maybe, that he snatched up.

SCOTT HOEZEE

They grab him and he leaves the cloth – you know, the garment – in their hand, and he runs away naked. Nobody knows who the young man is; and needless to say, theories and probably PhD dissertations have abounded as to who this is. Some think it might have been the gardener who heard some commotion and got up out of bed in the middle of the night. Some think the young man here might even be the young man who is the angel at the tomb later – that seems a little far-fetched...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Some think this might be Mark, who wrote the Gospel; maybe Mark was there and this is his signature.

DAVE BAST

Well, yes; I have always thought that was the likeliest... If you just think of this scenario – let's just say Mark was living in the house where the upper room was...

SCOTT HOEZEE

It could be.

DAVE BAST

He was part of the larger group, and he follows them out hurriedly, and witnesses the scene. I mean, how else would Mark have known that this happened?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, it could be; but I think who he is is less important than what it symbolized because it goes back to Eden, where we had naked and ashamed and fleeing from God: Adam and Eve naked, ashamed, and fleeing from God; so this is another reminder that what is happening here is a reversal of the Garden of Eden because Jesus now will soon be stripped. He was crucified naked. We don't like to think about that. We usually cover him up in art; but Jesus was stripped naked, but he did not flee from God – he did not hide from God – and the reason is so that he could die and save us and we would never have to be naked and ashamed again because now we will be clothed with righteousness – we will be clothed with Jesus Christ himself. Paul will later say that we put on Christ as though Christ is a garment, and we are clothed in his righteousness; and it all happened because in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Garden of Eden was reversed.

DAVE BAST

Well, and that is a great segue into our next program, because we are going to look at the cross and consider what it cost the Lord Jesus Christ to cover us with his righteousness; so, tune in for that next week; and thanks for joining us today on *Groundwork*. Don't forget, it is listeners like you asking questions that will keep our topics relevant. So tell us what you think about what you are hearing and suggest passages you might like us to talk about on future *Groundwork* programs. Visit us at groundworkonline.com and join the conversation.

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