

Sermon: Mark 14:32-42, 43-52. “Gethsemane”

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Sermon text and audio available for download at www.waitara.anglican.asn.au

- **The challenges we face**
- **III** – Derek Redmond Barcelona Olympic games

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0t-NAum8kY8> with Creed – “arms wide open”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFKpZnok10s> with story and interviews

This was an incredible moment at the Barcelona Olympics. Derek Redmond snaps his hamstring in the middle of the 400m semi final and is in so much pain. He is overwhelmed with sorrow. Not just because of the physical injury, but because of his loss. And as he stumbles to the finish line, his Father comes onto the field and walk with him across the finish line.

Have you ever been “overwhelmed with sorrow”? Have you ever been so sad that you feel nearly dead? When it seems that things could not get any worse and you just wish there was someone there to help you cross the finish line?

As we come to chapter 14 of Mark, this is what Jesus is feeling. He’s just eaten his last meal with his disciples, and they arrive together in a place called Gethsemane. And in verse 34, Jesus says to his disciples:

- *“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.”*

Jesus is already feeling the pain. He knows he’s about to be betrayed by one of his disciples, then arrested, then flogged, then crucified. And then he goes off to pray to the Father, verse 36:

- *“Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not my will, but what you will.”*

He prays: “Abba” – a personal (Aramaic) term that means “Dad”. And he says to his Dad, “Dad, this is hard! Is there another way? Can you take this cup from me?”

- “The cup” that he’s talking about is the cup of God’s wrath on humanity. What Jesus means is that he is about to “drink the cup of God’s wrath” – the cup of God’s punishment for the sins of the world. And Jesus says to his Father – “Is there another way?”

And perhaps that’s a prayer you’ve cried out in the past. Perhaps you’ve said to God: “I want to follow your plans, but isn’t there another way? I don’t like **this** plan!” But listen to what Jesus says after that. He adds, verse 36:

- *“Yet not what I will, but what you will.”*

I don’t want to do this. **But** let your will be done. Not my will but your will.

We often pray that prayer, don’t we? In the Lord’s Prayer. We pray it again and again. “Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” But do we **mean it** when it comes to God’s plans, God’s will, for our own life?

Sometimes we don’t like the plans God has for us. It’s easy to follow God’s plans when they’re good plans, or easy plans. But will we follow God’s plans for our life even if it’s going to be difficult?

When I tell my children to clean up their room, they find it soooo difficult! When I tell them to eat their ice cream, they find that pretty easy!

In Gethsemane, Jesus chooses to obey God even when it's an incredibly difficult path.

The question for us is, will we be obedient to God's will for our lives when it's difficult? Or will we only be obedient when it's easy?

Because the truth is, we are not Jesus! You're not Jesus. I'm not Jesus! And while we often have **good intentions** to follow him and obey him, Jesus was the only one, ever, who was perfectly obedient.

- **The intentions we have**
- **III** – Have you ever had good intentions?

Good intentions to join the gym, to go running, to exercise, to diet? What about good intentions to study, to read a book, to learn a musical instrument, to weed the gardens, to read the Bible in a year? We often set goals for ourselves with good intentions. But we often fail! No matter how good our intentions are, sometimes we just can't do what we intend to do.

When Jesus goes to Gethsemane, he takes his disciples with him and tells them to watch and pray while he goes and prays.

- And what do they do? Verse 37: *"Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping"*
- Jesus went back to pray again. Then verse 39: *"When he came back, he again found them sleeping."*
- Jesus went back to pray again. Then verse 41: *"Returning a third time, he said to them, 'Are you still sleeping?'"*

Jesus tells them to watch and pray so they don't fall into temptation. Jesus knows that this is going to be a difficult time ahead for them. He knows they need to be praying. But he also knows this – verse 38:

- *"The spirit is willing but the body is weak."*

And that's the truth, isn't it? Our Spirit is willing, but our body, our flesh, is weak. We might **want** to be obedient. We want to stay awake and pray and avoid temptation. But our flesh is tired, and it's sinful, and it gives in easily to temptation. We can have the **best intentions** as Christians, but still fail because our flesh is weak. Our human desires are sinful. We don't make the time to pray. We forget to read God's Word. We feel too tired to go to church. We give in to sinful behaviour. We gossip, we lie, we don't love others as we should. We speed in our cars, we get angry at other drivers on the road. We WANT to follow God, we DESIRE to follow God. But we're human and weak. We often fail God, even though we have the best intentions.

- **The failures we commit**

Listen to the rest of the story in Gethsemane. Judas, one of Jesus' 12 disciples, betrays Jesus and hands him over to be arrested. A huge crowd with swords and clubs comes to arrest him. One person tries to defend Jesus by attacking them with his sword. But Jesus allows them to arrest him. And then, verse 50:

- *"Then everyone deserted him and fled."*

This verse just sits there on its own. An incredible verse. An incredible statement. Jesus, who has healed and saved so many people through amazing miracles, and even raised people from the dead, is left completely on his own.

Let's go back for a moment to verse 31. Earlier in this chapter, Jesus tells his disciples that they will **all** leave him – that they will **all** fall away. Verse 31:

"But Peter insisted emphatically, 'even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.' And all the others said the same."

Now back to verse 50: *“Then everyone deserted him and fled.”*

They all flee. They all run away. They all desert him. One man, in verse 51, even leaves his clothes behind because he’s in such a rush to get out of there. Jesus is left completely alone. Yet he still follows God’s plans for him. The disciples fail. But Jesus keeps going. Imagine feeling the way he did, like Derek Redmond on that Olympic track, completely broken. But no-one cheer you on. No-one runs onto the field to walk beside you. Instead, everyone, including all of your closest friends, **run** away.

The plans we make

III – A couple of years ago, our family went to Canberra for a few days. And one morning I made plans to go for a run early in the morning to Parliament House. It was about a 12 kilometre run. I got up early in the morning, put on my running gear and off I went. And it was a great run. I made it there and back. 12 kilometres. And I felt great! But what I noticed about Canberra while I was running was that it was very flat. There were no hills to go up or down, which made it really easy. One reason I’ll probably never run the City to Surf is because of the hills!

When we plan to follow God’s plans, sometimes it’s easy because the road is flat and straight. It can be pretty easy when there are no hills, when we suffer no injuries, when there are no hurdles and no obstacles. But Gethsemane reminds us that the road to following God’s plans is not always easy. In Gethsemane, we get two pictures:

- 1. First – a picture of Jesus.

Jesus is Completely dependent on God. Completely focussed on God’s plans. Completely obedient to God’s will. Completely alone, completely overwhelmed with sorrow. But he’s committed to God, he obeys God, he follows God. And he’s arrested, flogged, and crucified. A horrible and difficult road.

- 2. Second – a picture of the disciples

They completely love God. They are completely focussed on Jesus and his teaching. They are completely committed to him and obedient to him. But, when they see the road ahead, when they see how difficult it is, they can’t do it. They have good intentions, but at that point, they run the other way and desert Jesus.

We are like the disciples, aren’t we? Sometimes we find the road too hard and we fail God. We desert him. We disobey and run the other way. We’re not perfect. Our Spirit is willing but our body is weak.

We will ALL make mistakes. We will ALL, at different times in our life, fail God. And when we do, we need to recognise those failures and confess them to God, then ask for forgiveness and then get on with following and obeying him again. We really need to do that whenever it happens, again and again:

- Confession.
- Forgiveness.
- Obedience.

But as we look at Gethsemane, we also need to understand that where **we** have failed,

- **Jesus has succeeded.**

Jesus has obeyed God perfectly. And he did it for us. He did what we couldn’t do. At the cross, Jesus took the punishment for all our failures. So while we always TRY to follow, and TRY to be obedient, and TRY to love him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, we will still fail. But when we do, remember, you going to heaven doesn’t depend on your failures. It depends on Jesus’ success.

Let’s pray.