

## Sacrifice and Self-Confidence -- Mark 14:22-31

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January 11, 2014

Please bow your heads with me for prayer.

*Lord, we need You just now. I need Your Spirit to be able to take Your message and deliver it effectively to Your people. And every one of us needs Your Spirit to not only be hearers of Your word, but doers. We pray for this in Jesus' name, amen.*

I brought some money with me today. I got it out of one of our children's games. Let's say I want to save some money for an emergency fund. Every month I deposit \$500 into the bank. When an emergency comes, I would be able to withdraw that money and pay the bill. But if I had not been making those deposits, and I went to the bank in my state of emergency, would I be able to make a withdrawal? No. The emergency could turn into a crisis, right?

For many months Jesus had been depositing not money, but love, in the bank of His disciples' hearts. As we move through this story in the book of Mark, you will see Jesus make a withdrawal. If He had not made those deposits of love in their hearts, His words could have easily ended their relationship.

Here's a summary of our story:

*During the Passover meal Jesus took the bread and wine, transforming them into symbols of His own body and blood. After singing together, Jesus and His disciples left the guestroom and headed out to the Mount of Olives. On the way, Jesus told them that they all would forsake Him that very night. Peter, however, insisted that he would remain faithful even to death. All of the disciples made similar promises.*

Let's now consider what Jesus experienced in this story. First of all, He experienced instituting symbols of His death. Mark 14:22 pictures Jesus and His disciples eating the Passover meal together. During the meal Jesus "took bread, blessed and broke it". This act had become one of His trademarks. When Jesus fed the 5,000 men plus women and children in Mark 6, He is described as following the same progression. When Jesus fed the 4,000 in Mark 8:6, a very similar description appears once again. In Luke 24 when Jesus appeared to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, it is in repeating this sequence that they suddenly realize that this stranger is Jesus. (Luke 24:30)

In Mark 14:22 Jesus says of the bread, "This is My body." Bread was a word synonymous with food in that culture. It was common and simple. Often it consisted of only flour and oil. And yet Jesus took this very ordinary food and transformed it into something full of significance. He used it to represent something very sacred and holy – His own body.

Mark 14:23 says that Jesus also took "the cup". Verse 25 makes it clear that this cup contained "the fruit of the vine". It was what we would call grape juice today. Mark says Jesus gave thanks for the juice. The word translated, "given thanks", is the word, "eucharisto", from which comes the word, Eucharist. It is significant that Mark says, "They all drank from it." (Mark 14:23) Comparing the four gospel accounts of the Passover meal, it becomes evident that Judas was most likely included. In Mark 14:24 Jesus says of the juice, "This is My blood." It is clear from Scripture that life is in the blood (Lev. 17:11). Jesus' blood is the source of eternal life.

Jesus continued saying that His blood was to ratify the covenant. This is one of only two times that the word, "covenant" is used in the Gospels. (The other time is in Luke 1 in Zacharias' prophecy at the birth of his son, John the Baptist.) The word, "covenant", is used hundreds of times, though, in the Old Testament. God came to Abraham and made a covenant with him in the book of Genesis. One of my favorite occurrences is in Genesis 22:16-18. I invite you to turn there with me. (Read) Abraham has obeyed God to the point of offering his only son, Isaac as a sacrifice. God has intervened. Isaac's life has been preserved. At that moment God repeated His covenant with Abraham, promising him that all the nations of the earth would be blessed in his

seed. According to Galatians 3:15-18, that seed was not ultimately Isaac, but Christ. And so Christ had come to give His own life to ratify the covenant made in the Old Testament. It is through Christ that the human race has been blessed.

Jesus continues in Mark 14:24, stating that His blood would be “shed”, or “poured out”. Just as the juice poured out of the cup, so His life would be poured out on the cross. It is His death that brings us life.

Jesus says in Mark 14:25 that He would not drink the juice from the vine again “until that day” when He would drink it in God’s kingdom. Matthew 26:29 adds the words, “with you”, revealing that the next time Jesus would drink this juice would once again be together with His disciples. He is still waiting for that opportunity.

Second of all, Jesus experienced singing. Mark 14:26 says that before they left the guestroom that night, they sang a hymn. Every Passover it was the Jewish custom to sing the Hallel, which consisted of Psalms 113-118. Taking a quick look at these Psalms, you will notice that they are filled with words of praise. Psalm 113 begins with the words,

*"Praise the Lord!"*

Psalm 118 ends by saying,

*"Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever."*

I would have loved to have heard Jesus sing, wouldn't you? One day in heaven we will, amen? But can you imagine that on the night of His betrayal and arrest, Jesus lifted up His voice in praise?! What an example for us!

Third, Jesus experienced predicting abandonment. Mark 14:26 says that after singing, Jesus and His disciples went out to the “Mount of Olives”, which was just east of Jerusalem, where they had celebrated the Passover meal. As they were walking out of the city, Jesus stunned His disciples with these words in Mark 14:27, “All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night.” Earlier that night in the upper room Jesus had alarmed them by saying that one of them would betray Him. Now His words included all of them.

The words, “will be made to stumble”, are found in other places previously in Mark. In chapter 4 verses 16 and 17 Jesus used these words to describe those represented by the stony ground in His parable of the sower. In Mark 6:3 these words are used to describe those who rejected Jesus in Nazareth. But now these words are used to describe His closest followers! How offensive these words must have seemed to them! It would be like turning to your spouse and saying, “You’re going to cheat on me.” That could permanently end the relationship! Jesus even backed up His statement with Scripture. He quoted from Zechariah 13:7.

In Mark 14:29 Peter was quick to respond: “Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be.” Peter was clearly offended. He can't believe that Jesus would doubt his devotion. But his words are filled with self-confidence. He might have even pointed to the other disciples and said, “They might, but not me.” The grammar in the Greek manuscripts reveals just how strongly Peter made his point. The word translated, “yet”, is the strongest possible word to use when contrasting two statements. “They might, BUT not me.” Peter’s words are also written in the Greek using two different negatives. In essence, “not” is repeated twice, which in the Greek delivers twice the punch.

Notice how Jesus responded in Mark 14:30: “Assuredly I say to you, that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” Jesus did not back down from His prediction. He only intensifies it, beginning His response with the words, “Assuredly I say to you”. Jesus then visualizes Peter not just being offended and leaving Jesus alone, but denying Him. The word in the Greek here is quite strong, meaning to “utterly disown”. As if that was not bad enough, Jesus said that Peter would do this not once, but three times!

Peter was quick to retaliate. Except in Mark 14:31 his words are even more forceful and his tone even more passionate. His feelings have been hurt and his anger flares. But Peter was not the only one upset. Verse 31 says “they all” were. The other disciples were just as sure of themselves as Peter was. They followed his flurry of words with similar promises

Last of all, Jesus experienced promising faithfulness and forgiveness. After Jesus made His awful prediction of their abandoning Him, He made the disciples a promise. It began with the same word that Peter used to contrast himself with the other disciples. In contrast to their fall, He would remain faithful to them. In Mark 14:28 He tells them, "But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." The resurrection would still occur for their salvation. God and Jesus would remain faithful and fulfill the covenant given 42 generations ago to Abraham.

Not only did Jesus promise to be faithful to them, but He assured them of a reunion. The Greek word translated, "go before you" means "lead the way". It was as if Jesus was promising to remain a faithful Shepherd to them. Before they abandon Him, Jesus gave them the assurance of being reconciled to Him.

Now that we have considered what Jesus experienced in this story, let's consider our experience. Jesus sets an example for us in this story. He shows us how we should live as healthy Christians. We will look at two ways in which Jesus is revealed as our example in this story. First of all, He is revealed as our example in that He provided a tangible reminder of His death. When Jesus chose a means by which we not always remember Him and His death for us, He utilized all five senses. The disciples saw Him take the bread. They heard Him break it. They touched it. They could probably smell it. And they certainly tasted it. Jesus similarly chose wine as something very tangible. These two symbols serve as enduring reminders until that day when we will eat and drink with Jesus in His kingdom.

I remember when I was a pastor/chaplain at La Vida Mission. It was an elementary boarding school for Navajo children in northwestern New Mexico. I gave Bible studies and conducted worships for the children as well as for the community. I preached sermons geared especially for the children. And yet after two years, my ministry had had limited success. Then we hired a Bible worker who used a more tangible approach. He became known for his fresh loaves of bread which he delivered as gifts to the staff, community, and Bible study interests. He offered his time and labor, helping the Navajo cut firewood, and providing transportation into town. His tangible acts of kindness made an impression on me and I know they did on everyone else, too. Twelve years later he remains one of my best friends.

And so, instead of just giving your neighbor a witnessing tract, how about attaching it to a loaf of bread? Often what we say has a minimal long-lasting impact. But what we give people or do for them will often reach their hearts. It's what Jesus did when He wanted to be remembered. He gave us something tangible so that He might always be with us in our hearts.

Jesus is also revealed as our example in that He promised forgiveness in the face of rejection. Jesus was well aware of His disciples' self-centeredness, weakness and fear. His love and devotion to them was not dependent on their behavior or merit. Why did Jesus speak those hard words the night of His betrayal? Why did He tell them in advance that they would all leave Him when He needed them the most? It was because He wanted them to know that His sacrifice for them was in full view of their faults and failures. His desire to have a relationship with them had not been earned. He loved them while they were still sinners (Romans 5:8).

And so Jesus reveals that a healthy Christian is someone who is more concerned about a relationship with me than my faults. There's a time to confront, rebuke, and chasten. But before you make that withdrawal, make sure you have made some deposits. Follow Jesus' example in depositing tangible acts of love in your brother's heart before you make that confrontation. Some of us are not well-learned in making those deposits or in investing in relationships. Here are five suggestions that may help you: (1) If appropriate, spend one-on-one time together doing something you both enjoy; (2) Do something you know they don't like doing; (3) Write a note containing a genuine compliment; (4) If you're of the same gender or are family, a well-timed hug goes a long way; (5) Surprise them with a gift.

Maybe you know someone who is struggling and you need to invest in them. Maybe there's a strained relationship that you need to reconcile. These five suggestions could be a good place to start. If you're needing more ideas, there's a book entitled, 5 Love Languages, by Gary Chapman that may be helpful. Maybe

there's a person that God has brought to mind whom you need to invest in. If so, I would like to have a prayer for you as we close.