

Night, with Ebon Pinion

The time and prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane was sad, but it meant our salvation
Mark 14.27–42

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • August 21, In the year of our Lord, 2022

Scripture Reader and Reading: Billy Henshall – Mark 14.32–36

Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Larry Amberg – Night, with Ebon Pinion; other songs on his suffering

Prelude:

I. Do you remember a time

A. when you were alone and

1. it seemed like the darkest day in your life?
2. Out of pure desperation you prayed to God as you never had before.

B. You were suffering, and

1. there seemed to be no explanation for it.
2. You wept.
 - a) No family or friends were there to comfort you,
 - b) no helping hand was even close.

C. In prayer, you poured yourself out to God,

1. begging for the time of anguish to disappear, but
2. if that was not his will,
 - a) you asked
 - b) that he help you make it through that dark time.

II. That happened to me once when I was 17.

A. In 1975, I had gone elk hunting with my Dad and some of his friends.

B. We rode horseback

1. far into the Rocky Mountains in Colorado to Big Ruby Lake and
2. stayed in some cabins built in the 19th century.
 - a) As you can see on the map,
 - b) it is a long ways from civilization deep in the Rockies.

- C. One day I did not want to go hunting,
1. so I stayed and fished.
 2. My Dad and his friends went hunting and
 - a) were supposed to be back by a certain time and
 - b) we would leave that day.
 3. I really enjoyed being alone in the mountains,
 - a) until the appointed time came and went.
 - b) Eventually, it got too late for us to ride out that night.
 - (1) I started to worry and the night,
 - (a) like a dark bird,
 - (2) started to brood over the lake and the cabin,
 - (a) my worry turned to fear.
 - (b) Finally total darkness fell and
 - i) I did not know what to do,
 - ii) so, perhaps for the first time in my life,
 - (1) I started to pray.
 - (2) During the prayer,
 - (a) they returned
 - (b) hooting and hollering,
 - (c) having a good time,
 - (d) which did not make me happy, but
 - (e) it was to my great relief.

III. If you have had a moment like that,

- A. you have a glimpse of what it was like
- B. in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus was alone
 1. at night,

2. praying to his heavenly Father,
 - a) just before his arrest.

IV. There is a song that captures the gloom of that moment.

- A. Brother Love H. Jameson,
 1. a preacher in the 19th century,
 2. wrote the words to this sad song, and
 3. Joseph P. Powell wrote the haunting melody.
- B. The song is titled “Night, with Ebon Pinion,” and
 1. the tune is appropriately called, “Sorrows.”

V. The reason I decided to preach on this today

- A. was that last week I told you I may not be able to continue in Luke because
- B. of VBS and my duties with it.

Persuasion:

I. The Darkness of the Moment (Verse 1)

- A. It happened at night.

**Night, with ebon pinion,
Brooded o’er the vale;
All around was silent,
Save the night-wind’s wail,**

1. First, notice how the writer inserted a comma after, “Night.”
 - a) Punctuation serves as a pause,
 - b) although we lose that in singing.
 - (1) However, if you read it,
 - (2) pause at that comma,
 - (a) then continue reading, and
 - (b) it serves to emphasize that this happened at night.

2. Night, a time of darkness,
 - a) is intensified with the imagery of ebon pinion.
 - (1) Ebon from ebony, meaning dark or black and
 - (2) pinion, referring to
 - (a) the point at which the bird's wing attaches to the body
 - (b) or a feather or the entire wing.
 - b) The image is that of the night,
 - (1) strengthened with the symbolism
 - (2) of a dark bird brooding over the sight.
 - c) The site is a vale or valley,
 - (1) which is where Gethsemane is
 - (2) between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives.
 - d) Without any of the modern-day noise-makers,
 - (1) the only sound at that time of night,
 - (2) would have been the whisper of the wind blowing.
3. John 13 shows that after Jesus identified
 - a) his betrayer to Peter and John,
 - b) Jesus told the betrayer something and then
 - (1) as he went out to betray Jesus,
 - (2) notice what John points out.

26 Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it." And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. 27 Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly." 28 But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him. 29 For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, "Buy those things we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor. 30 Having received the piece of bread, he then went out imme-

diately. And it was night.

– John 13.26–30

4. Mark 14 continues showing us the horrible darkness,
 - a) brooding over Jesus that night.

27 Then Jesus said to them, “All of you will be made *to stumble because of Me this night*, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered.’ {Zec. 13.7} 28 But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.” 29 Peter said to Him, “Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be.” 30 Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you that today, *even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.*” 31 But he spoke more vehemently, “If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” And they all said likewise. 32 Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” 33 And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be *troubled and deeply distressed.* 34 Then He said to them, “My soul is *exceedingly sorrowful, even to death.* Stay here and watch.” 35 He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. 36 And He said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.” 37 Then He came and *found them sleeping*, and said to Peter, “Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? 38 Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” 39 Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. 40 And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. 41 Then He came the third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, *the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.* 42 Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.”

– Mark 14.27–42

- B. Consider then why it was dark.

**When Christ, the Man of Sorrows,
In tears and sweat and blood,**

**Prostrate in the garden,
Raised his voice to God.**

1. A prophecy in Isaiah 53 shows
 - a) that the song rightly calls him the Man of Sorrows.
 - b) Consider a brief reading that brings understanding to our song.

**3 He is despised and rejected by men,
A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.
And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him;
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.**

– Isaiah 53.3

2. This Man of Sorrows was in “tears and sweat and blood.”
 - a) Hebrews 5 alludes to the world’s
 - (1) strongest and bravest man crying strongly during this time.

**7 who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers
and supplications, with *vehement cries and tears* to Him who was
able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly
fear.**

– Hebrews 5.7

- b) No doubt he shed tears, knowing,
 - (1) number three, of the awful physical pain coming,
 - (2) number two, of the rejection of all humanity, but most of all,
 - (3) number one, that his Father would forsake him.
3. Luke 22 shows that Jesus struggled mightily in prayer in the Garden,
 - a) looking for the removal of the cup of suffering.

**41 And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and He
knelt down and prayed, 42 saying, “Father, if it is Your will, take this
cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.”**

**43 Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him.
44 And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat
became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.**

– Luke 22.41–44

- b) It was a night,
 - (1) with ebon pinion,
 - (2) brooding over the vale.
- 4. Matthew 26 shows that the song is right.
 - a) Jesus was prostrate,
 - b) with his face to the dirt!

**39 He went a little farther and *fell on His face*, and prayed, saying,
“O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless,
not as I will, but as You will.”**

– Matthew 26.39

- 5. Nevertheless, he raise his voice to God.

II. The Loneliness of the Moment (Verse 2)

- A. He suffered for us.

**Smitten for offenses
Which were not his own,
He, for our transgressions
Had to weep alone;**

- 1. Isaiah 53 prophesied that he would be smitten, but
 - a) not for his offenses since he had none.
 - b) He was beaten for ours:

**4 Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,**

**Smitten by God, and afflicted.
But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.**

– Isaiah 53.4–6

2. He was smitten for our offenses,
 3. yet, who was there in the Garden with him?
- B. No one comforted him.

**No friend with words to comfort,
Nor hand to help was there,
When the Meek and Lowly
Humbly bowed in prayer.**

1. His friends were not there to offer words of comfort, because
 - a) they were sleeping!
 - b) His hand helped others, but
 - (1) none of those hands helped him.
 - (2) He was there in their time of need, but
 - (a) they were not there in his time of need.
 - c) Yet, He, *the* Meek and Lowly, humbly bowed in prayer.
2. Think of the irony.
 - a) Matthew 12 contrasts His actions with that of the Pharisees.
 - (1) Watch what they planned to do,
 - (a) yet, knowing their plans,
 - (b) He did not turn the crowds against the Pharisees.

- (2) What you will see is a meek and lowly man.

14 Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him. **15** *But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all.* **16** Yet He warned them not to make Him known, **17** that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:

18 “Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen,
 My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased!
 I will put My Spirit upon Him,
 And He will declare justice to the Gentiles.
19 *He will not quarrel nor cry out,*
 Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.
20 A bruised reed He will not break,
 And smoking flax He will not quench,
 Till He sends forth justice to victory;
21 And in His name Gentiles will trust.” {Isa 42.1–4}

– Matthew 12.14–21

III. The Prayer of the Moment (Verse 3)

- A. He pled for the suffering to pass.

**“Abba, Father, Father,
If indeed it may,
Let this cup of anguish
Pass from me, I pray;**

1. Listen to the first several words of Mark 14.36 again,

36 And He said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. *Take this cup away from Me...*”

– Mark 14.36

2. He spoke tender words of pleading to his Father, saying,
a) Abba, the Hebrew or Aramaic for Father.

- b) Father, the Greek for the same.
 - c) Surely the Father agonized at this moment also!
3. Jesus did not ask
- a) for the world,
 - b) the life of His enemies or
 - c) to return to heaven, but
 - (1) only that the cup of anguish pass from him.
4. He well knew all the anguish headed his way.
- a) Having created the body,
 - (1) he knew how the nervous system
 - (2) felt and dealt with pain.
 - b) Having created the spiritual heart,
 - (1) he knew how his heart would be broken
 - (2) when he was forsaken by all.
 - c) Having created the spirit
 - (1) with its deep need and longing for God,
 - (2) he knew how the anguish of separation from God would feel.
- B. Nevertheless, listen to his acceptance of the suffering.

**“Yet, if it must be suffered,
By me, Thine only Son,
Abba, Father, Father,
Let Thy will be done.”**

1. Brother Jameson brought the song to an unexpected close.
2. The darkness,
 - a) the smiting,
 - b) the loneliness,

- c) the readiness to accept the Father's will
 - (1) all come together
 - (2) at this point in the song.
- 3. Now listen to all the words of Mark 14.36.

36 And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."

– Mark 14.36

- a) In spite of what he was experiencing at the moment and
- b) in spite of what he knew was coming,
 - (1) his greatest concern
 - (2) was not his personal comfort, but
 - (a) only that the Father's will be done, and
 - (b) that we be saved from our sin and hell.

Exhortation:

I. You know what happened.

- A. The *Father's* will was done.
- B. Luke 23 shows
 - 1. that the next day, even at noon,
 - 2. the beginning of the sun's brightest moment in that part of the world,
 - a) ebon pinion still brooded over Jesus.

44 Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. 45 Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two.

– Luke 23.44–45

II. The sun could not bear

A. the evil work of its fellow-creature, man and

1. what he was doing to the Creator.
2. It was a dark moment for Jesus naturally and spiritually.

B. Now, get this part.

1. The song does not even speak of the horrible darkness of the cross!
2. The song only speaks of his time in the Garden!

III. Yet, he had to have this time in the Garden

A. before he went to the cross to die for our sins.

B. He paid the penalty of death.

1. However, that does not benefit us
2. until we do something about it...