Intro…

What an amazing series Brave in the New world has been. It was good for us to look at some topics that our culture views quite differently than we do. And to examine our own hearts to see if we are being influenced by our culture more than we are God’s word. We’ll get that full series uploaded to the Vault on the website this week if you happened to miss one or want to refer a friend to a particular message, you’ll be able to do that. Man, I feel like I’m getting into announcements mode here. But it has been good, and I know I’ve had some up front and honest conversations with people because of it. Sometimes breaking that barrier of “safe” is needed for growth and maturity. I think at times we are prone to misidentify God as safe. I love the quote from the Chronicles of Narnia in which Aslan, the Christ figure, is asked about if he is safe. And the answer: "Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good.” Today we are looking at a passage from Mark chapter 14:32-42 where Jesus is praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. I had a professor tell me a while back that Jesus battle for obedience was not at the cross, but at the Garden. I think that is true. I hope today’s look at Jesus in the Garden stretches your perception of him and know it has mine. This is definitely not a safe passage.

Set up…

As I said we are looking in Mark today at a very meaningful and impactful moment in the life of Jesus and his disciples. They just spent time together celebrating their traditional Passover meal together. This one proved to be different than many of the others they had experienced. One of those profound differences was in Jesus telling them that one of them would betray him. The very one who dipped his bread in dish with him. Distraught at this statement they all began asking emphatically “Not I?”. Also, during this Passover meal Jesus shared an experience that we continue to share today. They broke bread as Jesus spoke of it as if it were his body broken for them and they shared a glass of wine as Jesus spoke of it as if it were his blood poured out for many.

They sang a song and headed out to the Mount of Olives. On the way Jesus spoke to them again of how they would all desert him. Peter, who it is believed is Marks source for content, probably aggravated at this point that Jesus keeps speaking of how they are going to disappoint him. Jesus told them that the shepherded will be struck, and the sheep will scatter, but when he is raised up, he will go before them. He’s telling them about the path they are soon to be on, I am sure to give them hope and strength. But Peter doesn’t hear when I rise, I will go before you. He says even if all fall away I will not. I know Jesus you can point at a fig tree and it withers, but you don’t get to put this on me. You don’t get to say that I will betray you. Never will I fall away. Jesus looks him square in the eye and says to Peter 3 times tonight you will deny me.

And then they arrived at their destination and we have arrived at our text for this morning, so if you would look to your Bibles now as I read Mark 14:32-42.

**32**And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” **33**And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. **34**And he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.” **35**And going a little farther, he 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. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.” **37**And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? **38**Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” **39**And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. **40**And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. **41**And he came the third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. **42**Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”

After all the years of ministry together and this final night of instruction, warnings, fellowship, and singing which Jesus has said and done to prepare them for what is about to happen, he too needs to be prepared. He does this through prayer. “sit here while I pray” | As with narratives there are several things we can gleam from this text, but we are looking for an overarching plot and what it communicates. Even with this brief instance in Jesus life, we see a setting, a general plot, the rise of tension, the climax, and the resolved state. So, our general plot is Jesus needing to pray, **because he was every bit as human as we are**. This really isn’t anything new to us as we read through the Gospels occasionally in in our daily time in the Word or to his disciples who walked with him years. Jesus often went off to pray. It’s not surprising then that Jesus told his disciples to sit while he goes and prays. Let’s veer off the path here for just a second. The setting is late maybe 10 or 11. They didn’t have any smart phones to check Facebook, play games on or take selfies of them at the Olive Garden. Right, but let me test your judgement. A disciple is one who follows their teacher, their master. They subject themselves to live as he lives to do as he does. So, Jesus tells them to sit so he can go pray, what should they be doing? Praying. As you might have guessed by the title of the message this isn’t going to be about how to pray effectively or a theological apologetic of prayer. Rather it is about timing. And not really answering the question of when the right time to pray is, but timing in the sense of what we do while we wait. What we do while we live in a world that is in opposition to God. Well Jesus’ actions here are speaking louder than his words.

I said Jesus was every bit of human as we are, and maybe some of you are stuck on that statement, reeling a little bit, then again maybe some of you readily identify with Jesus’ humanity, but struggle with his deity. We’ll get to that too. But let's first look at these verses here in Mark in light of what we know about Jesus from the author of **Hebrews 4:14-16**.

**14**Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. **15**For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. **16**Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Look back to verse 33, “And he took with him Peter and James and John and began to be greatly distressed and troubled.” As soon as he started to separate from the others and was with his small group he quickly moved to transparency and vulnerability. These three guys have seen some amazing things. A young girl had died, and Jesus only let these three follow him into the home. He then kicked out everyone but the parents and Peter, James, and John. He then brought that girl back to life from the dead. These three men were also with him when his physical appearance was altered during an encounter with people who should have died hundreds of years ago. But this time, the amazingly perplexing circumstance was Jesus’ descent into a depressive state. He said my soul is very sorrowful, even to death. He expressed to them how he was **hopeless in anguish**. Reading to the end of Mark we know he is sorrowful over the cross he is about to endure, but how can he be sorrowful unto death about dying? It’s because it is going to be the one point in all his eternal existence as being one with the Father, the Father in him and he in the Father; his divine place in the Trinity that is forever experienced as his reality, except at this one point in time he experiences a chasm, a break, a separation because he is taking on our curse for our rebellious hearts. He who is without sin was becoming sin for us. And it was crushing him. | If you’ve ever gone through something traumatic, you always feel it and remember it, but when there is healing and grace on the other side of it, we remember it in contrast to our present peace. Maybe Jesus in his eternal state before the foundations of the world is able to remember the cross, but in contrast to his ever-present reality of peace is able to view it knowing the healing and grace and the redemption for all of us. But here in Mark, he is drawing toward that moment where the memories will be transverse. The darkness and separation will overshadow the memory of peace, culminating at that moment on the cross where Jesus cries out “My God, my God why have you forsaken me?”. Jesus was hopeless in anguish. He is headed to a point in his entire existence where he would be truly alone and there is nothing he can do about it. And so “He went a little further and fell to the ground” As if his legs had lost the will to support his own weight. I know the feeling of falling to the ground in an open field crying out to God, I don’t want to do this anymore. At this point Jesus was tempted to give up. His humanity could not bear this.

My Lord was tempted as I was, but as always, he had his mind on those he loves. His concern for his disciples, and for us was still present in this dark time. He led those sitting outside the garden by example, now he is a little more specific with these band of brothers. Instead of just saying sit here while I pray, he is seeking to convince them, Just as Mark is seeking to convince us that **we are called to be the watch in the night.** Even in his sorrow, he said to his small group to **remain here and watch**. There is a sense of being on guard in watchfulness. Jesus posted his disciples as sentries by an entrance and is now instructing those close to him to be on watch, to be on guard. It’s not surprising then we read in Mark 14 of an armed group moving in on his position. In one sense Jesus is telling them to be on guard, for an enemy is approaching. That is true for us today as well is it not? Although our enemy is not a crowd with swords and clubs. Our enemy is apathy. It convinces us that contentment is to not care, to not be concerned. To tell us the lie, that I’m ok with how things are. Rather contentment is an exercise in trust. We can learn to be content in plenty and in want because we can face any of those situations since we have the resolve of Christ imparted to us through God’s Spirit. But we are not to be content with the spread of the Gospel. We are not to be content with our devotion towards Christ. We are not to be content in our adoration and praise of God. We are not to be content loving and showing honor to one another. Paul wrote to the Philippians to push toward the goal to win the prize. There’s no apathy in prize winning. We do not rest from our call to follow Christ. We must be watchful, for apathy creeps in through many subtle ways. The stress of life pushing our mind towards a time of relaxation. Dreaming about not having to do so much. Look I get it, I’m prone to want to relax. Since I manage shifts that span 5:00 am to 12:00 am, there are only 5 hours out of a day where I’m not on call, and then I am required to actually show up at my job as well. When I get home, things really get busy. Here is our weekly Schedule. Daily homeschooling, or as close to daily as we can get. LaRae works 2 part time jobs right now. I work from in block either on the front end or back end of 7:00 am to 5:00 pm depending on the day. **Monday** nights are typically Elder Meetings so I get dropped off there and then LaRae takes Maya to her pointe class which both end at about 9:00 pm. On **Tuesday** nights we do a once over on the house our small group meets that night, take Mason to robotics and Maya to RCC to help student teach and everything wraps up close to 9:00 pm. **Wednesday** nights we take our oldest to Harvest Kids and Jasperlyn to pointe class at 7:30 pm, which we all get back home around 9:00 pm. **Thursday** nights, Mason is taken to robotics right after I get off work at 4:30, Elise is taken to a Tap class at 6:15, then Mason is picked back up from robotics at 6:30, and Maya has ballet from 7:00-8:30 pm were we all get home around 9:00. **Friday** is an amazing day, because we only have two dance classes and were home by 7:00. In all this we have to fit in cleaning laundry and dishes and other daily chores. Now that I am in school, I am needing to 100-200 pages a week, maintain an active presence in the online discussion boards and complete 2-3 assignments weekly. These either put me late into the night on the weekdays or consume most my time on the weekend. Like I said I get wanting to relax. I even try to justify it by calling it rest and how taking rest is biblical. However, my “rest” typically doesn’t include praying or studying God’s word. It usually has to do with avoiding any type of responsibility. I want to relax, and not have to care about anything. But this is dangerous, because there is an apathetic mob looking for me to join their ranks. We must be the watch in the night. Not only for the forces that would press upon us but the forces within that wage war against our intimacy with God.

Jesus calls us to vigilance, but he displays this vigilance by **showing intimacy with God is not just knowing God’s possibilities but being aligned with his will**.

Look back to Mark at verse 36 with Jesus’ payer. “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.” This is such a great display of being watchful. **He prayed not my will**. Remember Jesus just said he is sorrowful, even to death. But where does he turn? He goes to God in prayer. Crying out Father Father. He knew this “cup” was coming. There was a conversation that took place while Jesus and his disciples were walking when Jesus was drawing out the heart of James and John who asked to sit at his right and left in his kingdom. He responded to them will you drink the cup of suffering that I drink and go through the baptism I go through? Knowing this cup of suffering and judgment is coming he looks to his father, his dad and prays. But what exactly is he praying for? Mark gives us commentary in verse 35 that he prayed if it were possible, this cup might pass from him. But this “if” is not questioning God’s capabilities, for we see he said all things are possible for you. Jesus in anguish is crying out, I know you can do anything. I was there and experienced firsthand how you made something from nothing, how you spoke into existence things that were not. I have seen you give order to chaos and orient the universe. You took the dust of the earth and created for yourself image bearers. Father, my Father, there is nothing beyond your capability to make happen. What Jesus prays next absolutely amazing me. He didn’t ask. He told God to remove the cup. Father, you are infinitely creative and make possibilities out of that which is impossible, make a way…I know I am the way, Not my will, but your will. Jesus vigilance brings about his resolve towards obedience. He prayed in earnest bearing it all, and through it was given the strength to continue. But I want you to notice something, this prayer was not a one and done kind of thing. In verse 39, we see he went further into the garden and prayed the same prayer and in verse 41 we read he came a third time. Jesus over and over prayed telling God to remove the cup and each time being strengthened in his resolve to be obedient to the Father’s will. That is being watchful.

Sadly, his disciples disappointed him in this moment, but I believe Mark includes this so that we will do differently. This all through a narrative that shows **God uses testing to refine us, the enemy tests us to break us**.

Look at verse 37, “then he came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, ‘Simon, are you sleeping? Couldn’t you stay awake for one hour?’” **He found them sleeping**. You know what though, I recall reading in Mark a few pages back where the disciples were distressed and afraid and Jesus was sleeping. I cannot help but think Mark is using some irony here to point out something quite astonishing. In the midst of a storm that threatened to capsize their boat and drown all those on board, Jesus was sleeping. The disciples woke him and pleaded for their lives to be spared. At their behest Jesus spoke peace. The waves subsided, the wind died down, the clouds parted to reveal a clear sky. The entire time, Jesus was never bothered; he wasn’t anxious or worried. In fact, he questioned where their faith was in that moment. The question we need to ask, the question the disciples should have been asking is: if Jesus could be calm in a moment of clear and present danger, what in the world has him so bothered that he is visibly shaken to his core? And yet, his small group here doesn’t take notice. He asked them to be the watch in the night and they were found sleeping on the job. They didn’t pray for him even though he was vulnerable to share his fearful soul. But even more disappointing they were not praying for themselves to be submissive to God’s will. Jesus now urging them to take this moment seriously says to them “the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” This very hour Jesus was experiencing the willing spirit and weak flesh. And he was praying because of it. He knew they needed to as well for what they were about to face. | Being watchful can also have the sense of being active and awake. Luke wrote, blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. So, Jesus now specifically calls them to prayer, because being watchful is not simply observing. It is to actively participate in waiting through prayer. In other words, being a guard, being the lookout means nothing if you’re not prepared to fight. The battle here, that we need to be in vigilant prayer about, is not one that we fight with weapons made of this world’s material, but weapons made of another. Weapons forged of will and obedience, dependence and trust, faith and love. With these we will find ourselves strengthened in the time of need. Without them, we will be broken into pieces. This isn’t something we muster up ourselves. It isn’t that fact that we pray therefore we receive strength. It is that when our prayers are like the ones Jesus prayers here, open and honest, direct with God, and ultimately submissive to his will, in these we find resolve.

I recently got sucked down a YouTube blackhole. I noticed a video for Cornerstone music festival in the 1970’s or something and I was intrigued. I attended the festival on and off from 1997 to 2007. As I watched video after video until I saw a thumbnail for a different video serious off to the side that was for the band Jars of Clay in 1997 at Cornerstone Music Festival. Of course, I played it, I’m in the youtube blackhole, its what happens. I was amazed with how vivid my memory was. I recognized the shirt the lead singer was wearing. I recognized the beachball bouncing along the crowd. The lights on the stage were exactly how I recalled them, red and blue and white lights shining all over. I remember this because it was at that concert that I experienced one of the true defining moments in my life. I submitted to God fully entrusting my entire life to his direction. It is in the submission that we find ourselves strengthened to carry on. We go to him in prayer Not a prayer of, God I’ll do anything you want, if you… Rather it is God heal my body, yet whatever comes about I trust in you. God restore my marriage, yet whatever comes about I trust in you. God change our finances, yet whatever comes about we trust in you. God, please save our child, yet whatever comes about we trust in you.

And still, he found them sleeping, 3 times, he found them sleeping. Here we are getting to the climax of this mini narrative and can really grasp what Mark is looking to convey. Namely, that **now is not the time to rest, but to stay awake and pray**.

Reading from verse 40, “And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. And he came the third time and said to them, ‘Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.’” When he found them still sleeping, he **said enough and rise**. After coming back from praying the same words, it appears Jesus woke them again and inquired of them taking this time to sleep instead of praying, and they had no excuses. They were without words. It is interesting that Mark used that phrase before and with these three people. When Jesus’ appearance changed, and Moses and Elijah appeared before them. Peter said let’s build three tents and you can all stay up here on this mountain. Mark tells us that Peter said this, because Peter didn’t know what to say. He didn’t have categories to understand what he was experiencing. So, he said something. Here in the garden Peter is again without words to categorize his lack of commitment in this moment. When Jesus comes back the third time his questioning does not even pull them out of their slumber. As if he exhausted from prayer and concern for his followers quietly approaches and softly asks, you asleep? With no response I imagine Jesus setting quietly praying over his beloved disciples. I do wonder how mark knows. He wrote down Peter’s stories for this Gospel, and Peter was asleep. So maybe when Jesus and Peter where setting by the fire eating fish after Jesus rose from the grave. If Peter remembering how Jesus said he would deny him 3 times and how he disappointed him in the garden and how he lashed out in an effort to make up for his failure and prove himself, and how he denied even knowing him. That he then asked what happened when you came back the last time? You were just there when we awoke. And maybe Jesus told him, I asked if you were awake and then I let you sleep, till it was time. When it was time Jesus said enough, be done with that. The time to pray had passed and the moment of dread was upon them. Jesus had fought his battle and is ready to face what lies ahead. Yet the disciples have been sleeping and are ill prepared for what is to come. And just as Jesus said the sheep will scatter, they did. In absolute panic and confusion. Mark tells us that even a young man who was following Jesus was seized but wiggling out of his garment he was able to run away naked. They all ran. As Jesus feared he was getting more alone by the minute. And yet his resolve to obey the Father is increasing moment to moment.

I’m reading a book for one of my classes called the Principle of the Path. The premise of the book is how direction not intention determines our destinations. We can see this principle in this passage with Jesus praying and urging his disciples to pray. A life a watchful prayer is a direction that sets a course for trust and reliance upon God. A life of sleeping is a direction that leads to confusion and chaos, being blown and tossed by the wind. In chapter 10 of this book the author describes King David’s lack of response to his son’s behavior and how that leads to more trouble. Then he relates the point where David is on the Mount of Olives shoeless and full of sorrow to Jesus at the same location but years apart and he too is sorrowful. The difference is between David and Jesus, and between Jesus and his disciples is that his prayer while waiting is a prayer waiting on God. Trusting in God for whatever and whenever. We are called to follow Jesus and to be watchful. But we also must not forget the lesson we see with the disciples who were not and ran out of time to be watchful.

Prayer prepares us for what lies ahead. Prayer protects us from the enemy’s schemes. Prayer positions us to be in proper alignment with God. Prayer in the waiting space is to be watchful. In a world that continually seeks to absorb us into the temporary, we must remain watchful in prayer with our eye on the eternal. Always trusting. The time to be watchful is now.

1. We follow Jesus who was every bit of human as we are. (32-35)  
   He was hopeless in anguish
2. He calls us to be the watch in the night. (34)  
   He said remain here and watch
3. Intimacy with God is not just knowing God’s possibilities, but being aligned with his will (36, 39)  
   He prayed not my will
4. God uses testing to refine us, the enemy tests to breaks us (37-38)  
   He found them sleeping
5. Now is not the time to rest, but to stay awake and pray  
   Jesus said enough and rise

GO DEEPER

1. Gethsemane means olive press or oil press. Do you think that is significant to this passage?
2. Read Matthew 26:36-46; Luke 22:39-46. Do these gospel accounts speak differently to Jesus humanity and divinity?
3. Do you think Jesus might have meant or felt for the cup to pass on from him would then go to someone else?

GET PERSONAL

1. Do find it difficult to pray during times of waiting?
2. What are some distractions that lull you into a false sense of security?
3. Do you feel is if you are pouring into others without reciprocal affections? How does comfort or challenge you in that?

GO LIVE

1. How might you develop better prayer habits?
2. Who in your life could use encouragement in a time of waiting?
3. What in your spiritual growth to you keep putting off?