

Lake Cities Community Church
Series: On Your Mark
October 11, 2009
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A Certain Kind of Death
Mark 14:12-31

On September 25, 2006, 25-year old Navy Seal Michael Monsoor was on duty in Ramadi, Iraq when a grenade hit his chest and bounced to the ground. With only a moment to act, Monsoor threw himself onto the grenade, shielding six other soldiers from the blast. *He died 30 minutes later from his injuries.* One of the Seals said, "He never took his eye off the grenade – his only movement was down toward it. He undoubtedly saved mine and the others' lives."

Monsoor was posthumously awarded the US Medal of Honor – the highest military honor awarded by our country. His name is forever etched into the Medal of Honor Memorial in Indianapolis Indiana and listed in the Hall of Heroes at the Pentagon. At his funeral – according to Navy Seal tradition - he was placed in a simple wooden coffin – and his fellow Seals lined up on both sides of the pallbearers route. As the coffin passed each seal – they removed a gold trident from their own uniforms and with a slap – embedded it deep into the wood of the coffin. There were so many there to honor him that day this went on for 30 minutes. Slap, Slap, Slap. Former President George W. Bush who was deeply moved said in a speech, "The simple wooden coffin had become a gold-plated memorial to a hero who will never be forgotten."

I have to believe that Michael's parents George and Sally though deeply grieved by the loss of their son, must have at the same time been so proud of the way he died. Their son died with glory and honor and the respect of presidents. He was a hero.

Which is... just exactly, completely, 100%, 180 degrees opposite of the death of another man who gave his life for others. Though Jesus fell on the deadly grenade of sin to save our lives - he did not die a hero. He did not die with awards and honors. The religious people rejected him. The government *condemned* him. The military *tortured* him. There was no one there to slap gold crosses on his coffin – he had to be buried in a borrowed tomb.

We are going to see this morning that Jesus had to die a certain type of death – not one of honor, but one of humiliation. Turn with me to Mark 14:12-31 Last week Mark began moving us toward Jesus' death. The woman with the alabaster jar anointed Jesus for his burial, and Judas ran off to conspire and to coordinate Jesus' arrest. We are not to his death yet, but our toes are on the edge of the event. Mark 14:21-31 has three movements, it takes place on Thursday, just before his arrest - and on Friday Jesus will be killed. I have two points this morning. First, we will see how Jesus was to die – the type of death he had to face, and second we will discuss what difference that makes in our lives.

1) HOW Jesus was to Die...

Preparation for Passover (14:12-16) – A Sacrificial Death

In terms of the type of death Jesus was to die, we take from the first movement of the story, in verses 12-16, that Jesus was to die *a sacrificial death*. **Mark 14:12 On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was being sacrificed, His disciples said to Him, "Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?"** Our context

is that Jerusalem is celebrating the feast of the Unleavened Bread or Passover, which is the great feast remembering God's deliverance of His people out of Egypt. You may recall that in their escape from Egypt, each family had to kill a lamb and put its blood on the doorposts so that the angel of death would spare them – pass over them. In remembrance of that event – during the Passover celebration this would be acted out. The Passover lamb would be killed and the father would tell the story using food and drink symbolically. Jesus wants to celebrate Passover with his disciples – but the preparation is a bit unusual.

Mark 14:13 And He sent two of His disciples and said to them, “Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him; Mark 14:14 and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, “The Teacher says, “Where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?”” Mark 14:15 “And he himself will show you a large upper room furnished *and* ready; prepare for us there.” This reminds me of two things. First, of a spy movie – “Look for the man with the glass eye and give him the secret code.” Second, it reminds me of how Jesus prepared for the triumphal entry in chapter 11, with the man and the colt. Jesus does this to show his sovereign control over the events. Mark 14:16 The disciples went out and came to the city, and found *it* just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover. I like the way James Edwards put it in his commentary: “Jesus is not a tragic hero caught in events beyond his control...Jesus does not cower or retreat as plots are hatched against Him. He displays a sovereign freedom and authority...” (219 – Edwards).

But in the Passover story – who does Jesus identify with? The rescued people? The Angel of Death? The Egyptians army? No – the sacrificial Lamb. Mark subtly moves our thinking toward that in verse 12: Mark 14:12 On the first day...when the Passover *lamb*

was being sacrificed. Jesus is going to die a sacrificial death. A Navy Seal may die with honor – but a sacrificial lamb does not. The sacrificial Lamb is a humble, dumb animal. Josephus estimates at one point over 200,000 lambs were killed during Passover. There are no tears, awards or funeral services for these creatures – they are a means to an end. Jesus' death had to be a sacrificial death. Isaiah wrote: [Is. 53:7](#) He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter.

The Lord's Table (14:17-25) – A Shameful Death

Jesus' death was sacrificial, and it was also shameful verse 17. [When it was evening He came with the twelve. Mark 14:18](#) As they were reclining *at the table* and eating, Jesus said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me—one who is eating with Me." [Mark 14:19](#) They began to be grieved and to say to Him one by one, "Surely not I?" [Mark 14:20](#) And He said to them, "*It is one of the twelve, one who dips with Me in the bowl.* [Mark 14:21](#) "For the Son of Man *is to go just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.*"

In the Jewish culture of honor and shame, you can only imagine how devastating it would be, to be betrayed by one of your closest followers. David Garland writes, "Eating together was evidence of peace...to betray the one who had given you bread was a horrendous act" (526). That evening would not be known as the night in which Jesus was arrested – but the night that he was betrayed. The element of betrayal adds to the story: failure, scandal and shame. To be killed by an enemy is one thing, to be betrayed by a friend is something else. The result of his betrayal would be his death:

Mark 14:22 While they were eating, He took *some* bread, and after a blessing He broke *it*, and gave *it* to them, and said, “Take *it*; this is My body.” Jesus would die – His body – the bread of life would not stay intact – it would be violently broken. Mark 14:23 And when He had taken a cup *and* given thanks, He gave *it* to them, and they all drank from it. Mark 14:24 And He said to them, “This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for *many*. His blood would be spilled like wine from a crushed grape so that God might make a new covenant with His people. Mark 14:25 “Truly I say to you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” Jesus’ prediction of death ends with hope - Jesus will rise again to share a meal again in the coming Kingdom.

Jesus had to die a shameful death. Isaiah wrote: Is. 53:3 He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

The Disciples are Scattered (14:26-31) – a Solitary Death

Jesus death would be a sacrificial death, and it would be a shameful death, and finally it would be a solitary death. Jesus would in the end, die very much alone. Look at verses 26-31: Mark 14:26 After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Mark 14:27 And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away, because it is written, ‘I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP SHALL BE SCATTERED.’ Mark 14:28 “But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.” Mark 14:29 But Peter said to Him, “*Even though all may fall away, yet I will not.*” Mark 14:30 And Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me

three times." [Mark 14:31](#) But Peter kept saying insistently, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And they all were saying the same thing also.

You may be aware that Whitney Houston is in the midst of a major comeback. And a song on her new album is called: "I didn't know my own strength" which is a biographical song – it is her story and it goes: I didn't know my own strength. And I crashed down, and I tumbled. But I did not crumble - I got through all the pain - I didn't know my own strength. I'm glad for Whitney, but the Disciples song is called, "I didn't know my own weakness." They insist, especially Peter, that they would be strong for Christ and would not fall away – but they did all abandon Him. It had to be that way. The prophet Zechariah wrote: [Zech. 13:7](#) "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, And against the man, My Associate," Declares the LORD of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered; And I will turn My hand against the little ones." Jesus died a sacrificial death, a shameful death and a solitary death. It was not a death of honor like Michael Monsoor, but a death of humiliation.

2) What Difference Should His Death Make in Our lives?

Now we need to ask the question: "What difference should all this make in our lives?" His death would be sacrificial, shameful and solitary. That is good information – but what possible difference should it make for you and I?

To answer that question, it is important to understand how Mark tells the story of Jesus' death. Mark's goal is to present Jesus as an example for us to follow. Peter, whose theology informs Mark said, [1Pet. 2:21](#) For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps. Our application is to follow Jesus' example in suffering.

So... if you have no difficulty – no suffering or trials in your life then the sermon is over for you - come back next week. But I suspect you are in the minority. Like Woody Allen said, “To live is to suffer.” Like Westley said to Buttercup, “Life is pain, and anyone who tells you different is trying to sell you something.” As Ringo Star said, “It Don’t come easy.” As Rodney Dangerfield said, “Life is fear and tension and worry and disappointment.” As Peter said, “Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you.” (1 Peter 4:12). As Jesus himself said, “Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

If you have come to understand that the world is a broken place – “Follow Jesus as an example in suffering.” One reason Jesus died the way he did was so that he could provide an example to you and I as we face betrayal, injustice, rejection and difficulty. “Well what does it look like to suffer like Jesus did?”

First it means we endure through suffering – we don’t give up. We don’t run at the first sign of trouble, like the disciples. We don’t deny Christ, like Peter. We cry to God for the strength to endure one more day. **1Pet. 2:25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.** The time for scattered sheep is over. As a baby clings to her mother’s legs so we are to cling to Christ. Hold on until the danger is past. If you are considering giving up on the Christian faith, because of some hypocrisy or trouble you are facing – I would point you to Jesus who endured through suffering *as our example.*

Second, we follow Jesus’ example by obeying God. Often when we suffer it become an excuse for sin. I’m suffering – therefore I will lust. I’m suffering – therefore I will become a glutton. I’m suffering – therefore I will gossip about my problems. It was a hard time for Jesus’ disciples – and Judas, rather than trusting in God, gave in to sin. The writer to the

Hebrews said, “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are, yet without sin*. Jesus went through suffering – without sin – continuing to trust God. If you, out of your frustration, are heading down the path of sin – I would point you to Jesus suffered, without sin, as an example to us. Follow Jesus’ example through endurance and through obedience.

Closing Story

Presbyterian Pastor Clarence McCartney early in his ministry had the opportunity to talk with a soldier of the Army of the Potomac who took part in the battle of Gettysburg during the Civil War. He belonged to the 6th Corps - the soldiers who made the famous march from on July 1st from Manchester to Gettysburg. They marched 42 miles in 19 hours with minimal rest and then went straight into battle.

The soldier said of that march, “With the clouds of dust, the perspiration, the blood of chafed limbs tricking down into our shoes, it was the hardest experience of my whole long war service.” Pastor McCartney said, “Sometimes it is harder to march than to fight. The test of endurance is the long march. You have set out on a long march. You will meet many who have gone part of the way and turned back. You will have at your side those who are ready to quit. But always there are some going steadily forward – enduring to the end.”

You may not be called to win the medal of honor, or to fall on a grenade. But we are all called to walk faithfully with Christ day after day. The march is not an easy one, but we know Christ has gone down it before us, and with his help we will endure to the end.