



"Will You?"
Sermon Series: "The Way of Jesus"
Mark 14:32-52
By: Peter Haas
July 11, 2010

The end of this sermon includes the transcription of Louise Redding introducing the new iCare Net Ministry

Mark 14:32-52 Gethsemane

(New International Version)

³²They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." ³³He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. ³⁴"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."

³⁵Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. ³⁶"Abba, ^[a] Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

³⁷Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? ³⁸Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

³⁹Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. ⁴⁰When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

⁴¹Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴²Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

Jesus Arrested

⁴³Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.

⁴⁴Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." ⁴⁵Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. ⁴⁶The men seized Jesus and arrested him. ⁴⁷Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

⁴⁸"Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? ⁴⁹Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled."

⁵⁰Then everyone deserted him and fled.

⁵¹A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, ⁵²he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

Footnotes:

- a. [Mark 14:36](#) Aramaic for Father

We are continuing in our sermon series on the Gospel of Mark and if you remember last Sunday we left off with Jesus and the disciples in the upper room having their final meal, what we call the Passover Supper. **Jesus is gathering his disciples and in the story that we are about to read they are walking downhill into the Kidron Valley, up the Mount of Olives overlooking the City of Jerusalem.** Before Jesus is arrest, He goes to prayer. He prays in the Garden of Gethsemane and from Gethsemane to Golgotha and we see Jesus experiencing His agony and desertion of His disciples and the people He loved the most and trusted the most, only to be left to his mother and the women who could only stand as bystanders weeping and wondering.

So friends, this is holy ground that we are about to read – this story is holy ground where we consider the agony of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ – deserted and failed by his disciples. In addition to **the agony of Jesus Christ,**



it is also the failure of His disciples. It is a story that shows how weak and vulnerable they were, even at their friend and master's most difficult moment. In fact, if you think about, this was Jesus last night alive in this state. Of course, he died and was resurrected and came back. It is a little difficult for us to understand this, but this was His last night with them and what we are going to see as we read the story is that they could not even stay awake with Him on His last night and in His moment of need. This is indeed a difficult story, because it is a story about the disciples failure. This is holy ground. As I read this text, I invite you to take each word into your heart and ponder it's meaning for you, not only in this hour but through the hours of the week to come.

Reads Mark 14:32-42. The Word of the Lord, thanks be to God. Open the heart of your fountain of grace Lord Jesus Christ and give to each one of us the strength and the courage to stay awake and to care for one another. Amen.

"Will you visit me again before I die?" She said these last words to me as I was quickly leaving her house. Earlier that day I was sitting in my office at the First Presbyterian Church of Flint, Michigan, when a women called who sounded like she had been smoking and singing the blues for forty years. She said that she was a church member and that she was dying and she wanted to speak with a minister and confess her sins before she died and that she wanted communion. I said, "Sure, be happy to. Are you a church member?" And she said, "Yes." I looked her up on the database and I said, "Well, I don't see you here [on the membership rolls]." But she was certain that this was her church. I got her address and I realized that she lived up on the north end of Flint, which is the ghetto where there are more burned out drug houses than there are homes that people live in. Frankly, I was always told as a white man that I shouldn't go up there. However, I went under the power and the authority of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now, I had just leased a new black 93 Saab. As a single man, I had to comfort myself somehow and so at least I could go fast. As I entered this ghetto area, I began to see that I was getting into a very rough neighborhood and I started to get a little apprehensive and fearful. I pulled up to her house and the house was tilted a bit, supported by some bricks. I knocked on the door and she said, "Come in, it's open." So I walked in and immediately I was greeted by a scene that you just can't imagine and there she was sitting in her rocking chair with her nightgown on, hiked up to her knees, sitting back, smoking a cigarette with oxygen tube hooked to the oxygen tank. She said, "Hello pastor." (in a raspy voice) I sat down and we began to talk and asked her how I could help her and what is going on for her. As I looked around, I saw the velvet Elvis prints hanging on the wall, smelled the scent of cat urine and looked out at my nice new Saab in the driveway wondering if it was safe.

I sat there and listened to her. She said, "Pastor, I liked to confess my sins." I said, "Sure, I'd be happy to listen. What would you like to talk about." She began to unload on me her story. She said, "Pastor, I've done cheatin. Pastor, I've done adultery. Pastor, I've done lying. Pastor, I've done murder." Just at that moment I started to sit up and think that I'm really in over my head. They did not teach me at seminary how to deal with this. She went on. She began to tell me how she never felt welcomed at the church – she didn't look right, she didn't have the clothes and she felt like she had been a sinner. The church was the last place she felt she was welcomed. I listened to her. Read a scripture and we offered communion and she was very grateful. She wasn't a church member. But somewhere along the way she had gone to a church service at First Presbyterian and someone had treated her well. That became her church. Now, my visit with her was on a Friday.

A couple of weeks later I got a phone call and it was my day off. I was snuggled up on a cold winter night in my reclining chair and I had cup of tea and cookies, more creature of comforts of being a single man. Enjoying my quiet evening, finally to read the book I've wanted to be reading. Then the phone rings. "Reverend Haas this is McLaren Hospital calling, so, and so is here and she is dying and she has requested a visit and she says you are her pastor," a voice said. I asked, "Well, is she going to die imminently?" The caller said, "Yes." I hung up the phone, sat there, looked outside – kind of a cold, wintery night. She is not a church member. It is late – just go in the



morning I said to myself. Had I had a wife, maybe she could have brought me to my senses, like my good wife Christiana [married in 2008]. But I went to sleep. I was tired.

I went there in the morning to McLaren Hospital. Checked with the desk and I was advised that she had died over the night. I'll never forget that. I had told her I would be there. But you know what, my word was like so many other times when we say, "I'm doing fine." But are you? "I'll be there." But will you? I didn't really mean it. The text that we have today friends is the same deal. Jesus disciples the people that were with Him, knew Him, listened to Him, studied Him, followed Him and in His hour of greatest need they failed Him. If they couldn't get, can we? So, we can go easy on ourselves here. Because even the ones who were with him the most, failed. Now they had just had a beautiful dinner. You know the Jewish Passover, they are not light meals. Nice heavy lamb, several courses of Jerusalem red wine. You know I get very sleepy after just two glasses. So, it is no wonder, it is late, they are scared, they are wondering what He is up, He is talking kind of funny, talking about giving up His life. They fall asleep.

There are many insights I'd love to share with you about this story, but two or three will suffice. Notice that He singles out Peter, right. Now Peter was the hotshot leader who thought he could be Jesus' right hand man. **Well, before Peter denies Jesus three times, he takes three naps.** This guy had a lot to learn about being a follower of Jesus. **You ever wonder the parallel here – Jesus' three temptations in the wilderness and He has the three temptations of agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.** By the way if you go to Jerusalem to this day you can see the general area where this occurred. This is an area along the Mount of Olives that overlooks Jerusalem looking westward and there is now an ancient olive growth there. The earlier olive trees were cut down by the Roman army. So, the ones that are there today were not the ones that were there when Jesus was, but it would have looked very similar. There is a little cave, a little grotto where the name Gethsemane (Hebrew word meaning olive press) comes from. In this little cave there was an olive press and you can imagine Jesus going to this little cave to pray. I suspect that He prayer there a lot. Because when you are in trouble, don't you go to the same place to pray? At least I do. I think He was familiar with it.

When He was there, He cried out to God, "Abba, Father." When He cried out that cry of dereliction, please if there is any other way, I'd love to do it another different way, calls God, Abba, Daddy. **Well notice that on the cross Abba is missing.** He doesn't cry out to Abba, Father on the cross, **He says, "My God, why have you forsaken me."** **You know what I take from that, that becoming sin for the world, meant losing his intimacy with His Father, the thing He loved the most, He had to give up.** That is what sin is – the unreality of the intimacy with God and he had to become that for us. Can you imagine, living your whole life with Abba and then having to give it and all of sudden Abba is gone and all there is vague, "God where are you?" So this is Holy ground friends.

His disciples fell asleep in His hour of need and this happens to all of us. There is one word of comfort and I think this gives some insight to the text and comfort to us, because this is about failure and I suspect all of us have stories of failure in our own lives. The world does not seem set up to support our success. It seems setup to take from us and you have to fight for what you've got. Well this is a crummy system. How is it going? If we are hoarding and keeping from ourselves to protect ourselves, well how do we care for each other then? Jesus is seeking to bring to a different model. It was for the disciples falling asleep. So, it goes for myself. I fall asleep so often. Tired, fatigued, run down, distracted. Unable to care the way I wish to.

It happens to churches as well. I have some friends who are going to share with you a new vision for how this church can care for one another. You know recently the Session of this church, the leaders, the elders of this church, discerned that the neighborhood care groups, while they have served our congregation very well over the years, have in recent years kind of fallen asleep in terms of providing care. Not every neighborhood care group, but the majority of the groups have not functioned as we would wish them do. In this time of transition of seeking discernment for how to improve how we deliver care to one another, a vision was given that I hope you



see the value of today, as you listen to what is being birthed among us. It is called the **iCare Net Ministry**. We wish to care for one another. We must wake up. We must be roused.

But the comfort is this friends, **the disciples didn't have the Holy Spirit yet**. They hadn't been give the gift of the Holy Spirit from Jesus Christ at Pentecost. **But when they had been given the gift of the Holy Spirit which is now available to the whole church and each one of us, then they became apostles**. No longer were they nappers, they were apostles, they were sent ones – out into the world with love. Not their own love, they had ultimately very little love to give, but when they had been touched by the love of God, they had an infinite amount of love to give, it was unending. They drove them and propelled them into the farthest reaches of this globe and it is still going to this day. It is here at this moment.

You asked **what is the Holy Spirit?** I can't tell you. It is only something you can feel. It is knowing beyond knowing and it is the greatest thing in the world. **The personally touch of God's love, filling you when you are empty and strengthening when you are weak**. Supporting you when you have nothing to stand on and declaring things that you never in a million years thought you could declare.

Where was the Holy Spirit for me that night long ago in Flint, Michigan. Well there is a resistance to the Spirit of God in each one of us, that is called the power of the flesh and by the words flesh I don't mean our physical body. I mean a dynamic that is grounded in self-centeredness that keeps us taking care of ourself versus caring for others.



Friends let us wake up, let us be roused by a new vision by the gift of the Holy Spirit that is called the **iCare Net Ministry that we can learn how to care for one another better**. That we can improve our delivery of care. I'm so grateful for this team of volunteers who have given of themselves in the last week. Why don't you stand up.

Peter calls forward Louise Redding to share the vision, I give thanks for you and your efforts and your time.

Louise Redding speaking:

I am very excited this morning to have the opportunity to introduce to you our new caring program here at WHPC called *iCare Net*. It is important that everyone knows how it works for several reasons. The first is that we want to know if you or a member of your family has a care or concern. So, whether you have had an accident or are going to have surgery or have an ongoing medical issue, we has your faith family want to walk beside you and be there for you.

The other reason why it is important for you to know about iCare Net is so that you can volunteer to help frequent visitors and fellow members who are going through tough times. When we help others we allow God to work through us to be a blessing to someone with the gifts that he has blessed us with.

The vision for this ministry comes from 2Corinthians 1:3-4 and I'd like to share them with you now. Louise read from The Message Bible:

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 The Rescue

All praise to the God and Father of our Master, Jesus the Messiah! Father of all mercy! God of all healing counsel! He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us.



And that is what we intend iCare to be about. So you may be asking yourselves how does it work? Well the first thing that has to happen is that **we need to be made aware of your situation**. We cannot help unless we know there is a need. So **call the church and ask for the Care Office or Margaret Moser** who is in charge of gathering this information and sharing it with the proper people. **She is going to tell Peter Haas** who is our pastor for all things community related and **he or one of the other pastors will contact you and along with one of the deacons assess whether or not your situation would best be handled by the iCare Net Ministry**. If it is you will be assigned an **iCare coordinator**.

Now an iCare coordinator is a special volunteer who makes a one year commitment to handle care situations one at a time from beginning to end. There are going to be twelve coordinators and they are going to be willing to be trained on the ins and outs of email and other various tools that will be an integral part of iCare.

In addition, the iCare coordinators will possess strong administrative skills. They will be the ones responsible for executing, following up and following through with each care situation that they are assigned until it has been resolved. But by far the most important characteristic an iCare coordinator will possess is a strong calling from God to care for others. We anticipate that these coordinators will each handle one to two situations a year; however, it is our hope that as this ministry becomes more visible and valuable within our church community we will begin to serve the unserved – those who currently aren't aware that we have a care system in place or who would feel uncomfortable asking for help. We want to provide care for everyone who is going through a difficult time and the beauty of iCare is that we can add more coordinators if we need to.

So let's imagine you are in need of care. The iCare coordinator is going to contact you or a close family member to assess your specific needs and determine how these needs can best be met. Whether that means you and your family need a few meals brought to your home a couple of times a week for the next few weeks or you need some rides back and forth to your doctor's office or you need someone to run errands for you – those are all things that can be taken care of through the iCare Net Ministry.

Once the iCare coordinator has all that information, he or she is then going to share it with the iCare volunteers. The iCare volunteers are men, women and youth of our congregation who will respond to God's call to care for those in need of help. They are truly the foundation of this ministry and really where more of you can get involved. It is our hope that there will be a very large pool of volunteers who are called to show compassion by turning their empathy into action.

It is one thing to feel bad about someone's situation and it is another to actually do something about it and that is what compassion is. iCare volunteers will attend a one hour training session. The length of a Sunday School class where they will be taught about the tools of iCare; there will be information shared on how to practice good listening skills; we will learn how to pray with someone in a delicate care situation; and there will be tips on how best to serve a person in need.

The most important aspects of being an iCare volunteer are that you are willing to respond to a request for help and follow through with the requested action and that you are willing to be missional in your response. In other words, this is not just about serving people that you already know, because frankly we assume that you are going to do that anyway. This is about stepping out and serving someone that you may not know, that may not live in your neighborhood. But if you've ever had an experience where you've been cared for or served by someone that you didn't know, you know what an incredible blessing that is and that is what we are trying to accomplish here. We're asking you to open yourselves up to God so that He can use you to be a blessing for someone else.

The iCare Net Ministry is an invitation for all of us to live into our church value of courageously caring for one another. Spreading the needs of our congregation over a large number of volunteers in an organized way allows us to provide extraordinary care to those experiencing difficult times and be the true hands and feet of our Lord, Jesus Christ – and really that is what we are all called to do. AMEN.

