

Eavesdropping on God:
The Road to Easter
Mark 14:32-42

Introduction:

I am not sure how wise it was to agree to follow Pastor Bob's *Good Sex* series. My name is Patrick Gibbs and I am one of the pastors here at Moon Valley. If you are visiting this morning, you are our guest and I hope you feel like you belong here.

Easter is just 2 weeks from today. And so this week and next, I'd like to eavesdrop on Jesus and the things he said to God leading up to Easter. In essence, you could say we have some wiretap transcripts of Jesus' conversations with God. This week, we're going to listen in on a prayer Jesus prayed the night he was arrested. And when we listen to Jesus pray, we learn some things about prayer. These things we can use all the time, and specifically right now as we head down the road to Easter.

We use prayer for lots of things. To heal us- to get us out of trouble- the get things we want or need- to deal with a crisis- the get a parking place closer to the front of the store- to help us fall asleep faster. Lots of things. But I must admit though, these 2 weeks won't tell us everything there is to know about prayer. And I must confess, I don't really understand that much about how prayer works. Even this morning, as we listen in on Jesus, I can see the principles in the Bible, but I still can't answer some questions. If God already has a plan that can't be changed, then does it really matter if I pray? I don't know. Can I really get God to do something by praying? I don't know. Does God change his mind because I pray? I don't know. And frankly, I am personally leery of anyone who tells me they know the answers to these questions. Because the Bible does teach that God has a plan that cannot be ruined. And the Bible also teaches that we should ask God for what we want. In fact, the Bible says,



^{NLT} **James 4:2** Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it.

So, somehow in God's design of us and this world, our choices, our prayers, the things we pray for or don't pray for work within God's plan. I don't understand exactly how this works. But I know the Bible teaches both, and my part is to pray. If you have a Bible, you can turn to Mark, chapter 14.

The day is Thursday; Thursday night to be more specific. And Jesus and his disciples are celebrating the Jewish holiday of Passover. It is also the night that marks the beginning of the end for Jesus. In a few short hours, he will be betrayed by his friend Judas. He will be arrested by the Jewish leaders. He will be abandoned by his followers. He will be tried and convicted for claiming to be God. He will be beaten and executed for his crime. And he will die alone because God turns his back on Him. All of this will occur within the next 18 hours. And here might be the worst part of all; Jesus knew all of this.

After celebrating Passover, Jesus and his disciples started walking and somewhere around midnight, they find themselves in what is called the Garden of Gethsemane. It is a private garden of olive trees on the outskirts of Jerusalem. Jesus and his disciples came here often. It is here we find Jesus in Mark 14, beginning with verse 32. Let's eavesdrop. ►

^{NLT} **Mark 14:32** They went to the olive grove called Gethsemane, and Jesus said, "Sit here while I go and pray." ³³ He took Peter, James, and John with him, and he became deeply troubled and distressed. ³⁴ He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." ³⁵ He went on a little farther and fell to the ground. He prayed that, if it were possible, the awful hour awaiting him might pass him by.

This interaction demonstrates a very real and human side of Jesus. He isn't healing people or walking on water or turning water into wine. He isn't wooing crowds with his great teaching. Instead, he is contemplating "the awful hour awaiting him." And it seems more than he can bear. For the next few minutes, I'd like to consider 5 things we see about prayer as Jesus prays to God. Here's what he prays: ►

^{NLT} **Mark 14:36** "Abba, Father," he cried out, "everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine."

1. The first thing I notice about Jesus' prayer is that it's ► **PERSONAL**.
 - a. He addresses God as "Abba Father."
 - b. "Abba" is an Aramaic word that means "papa" or "daddy."
 - c. The Jews would never dream of using such a familiar everyday family word for God. It was too informal and disrespectful. It was using everyday language to talk to God. But that's exactly what Jesus did. He used everyday language that made his conversation with God personal. He could call God *Abba* because that was the kind of relationship they had. It was close and personal.
 - d. And this isn't just because Jesus was God's Son. God wants that kind of relationship with us. ►

^{NLT} **Galatians 4:6** And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father."

- e. Jesus' prayer and our prayers can and should be personal, like we're talking to a close friend or a family member. It doesn't need to be some formal thing full of "thees" and "thous." It doesn't need to be rehearsed. In fact, it shouldn't be rehearsed. How many of you regularly practice a conversation with a friend or spouse? Frankly, if we have to practice, we're probably in trouble for something. But we don't do that.
 - f. In almost every small group I've been in, I have someone tell me not to call on them to pray. And I don't. But where did we get PPAD? You know- prayer performance anxiety disorder? Praying to God is no more a performance than talking to a friend should be. Jesus' prayer was personal and ours can be too.
2. Secondly, we see that prayer is ► **POWERFUL**.
 - a. Jesus continues his personal prayer by saying, "everything is possible for you." Jesus believed that anything and everything was possible for God.
 - b. God can do the miraculous; God can do the impossible. And the strange thing is, he invites us to ask for it.
3. Which leads us to the third thing we see about prayer. Prayer is ► **PLEADING**.
 - a. Jesus pleads with God for something different. He pleads with God for what he wants.

- b. By pleading, I mean “to appeal earnestly or beg.” This is more than just asking for something.
 - c. Jesus begs God to take this suffering away. He recognized that God could do the impossible and so he *begged* God for another way.
 - d. We read this so fast and cold sometimes it sounds like, “Hey God, it would be cool if there was another way. But whatever you want.” Jesus is deeply distressed when he prays this prayer and he is crying out to God.
 - e. I think we have this idea that prayer is simply asking God for something and it becomes impersonal and routine. But Jesus is pleading with God. Almost begging God to find another way.
 - f. And he can plead this way because he knows nothing is impossible with God. He knows that praying matters. Somehow, in God’s design, our prayers matter. And just because we can’t understand it doesn’t mean it isn’t possible.
 - g. I’ve told this story before, but it rests so vivid in my mind in regards to pleading with God. It’s October 1 of my freshman year in college. I’m 17 and 2000 miles from home. My grandfather passed away after several years of battling cancer. It didn’t really come as a shock and I had said my goodbyes before I left for college. So I got the call and then I called Jeni to tell her. After I hung up with Jen, I was overwhelmed with a sense of sadness and loneliness and emotion like I have never felt. I remember lying on my bed, my feet pushed up against the bottom the bunk above me crying and pleading with God to go home. Begging in fact. About 10 minutes of that and I get a phone call from Jeni, who has no idea I am an emotional wreck. She tells me that her mom and aunt want to buy me a plane ticket home.
 - h. God invites us to plead to him for what might seem impossible to us because prayer is pleading and powerful.
4. There is a fourth aspect I see in prayer. It’s ►**PERSPECTIVE**.
- a. Jesus concludes his prayer with this statement: “Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.”
 - b. Why would Jesus add that? Have you ever prayed that and felt like it was a disclaimer you have to include because you don’t really believe a miracle is possible?
 - c. Jesus prayed for what he wanted and he believed God could do it. But, he also acknowledged that his human perspective may not see what God sees. God’s plans and our plans might not always be on the same page.
 - d. God sees a bigger picture than we do and Jesus recognized that truth when he prayed. Why does God seem to answer some pleading prayers and not others? Why does God do the impossible sometimes, but not other times? I don’t know. But I think part of the answer rests in God’s perspective.
 - e. We have a street view of life. We can only see what’s right around us and so far in front of us. We are limited. But God has Google earth. He sees everything all at once, including the past and the future. And his answers to our prayers, whether the answer is yes, no or maybe, reveal a little more of what God sees and desires for us. Even though we may not understand it.
 - f. I remember a time when Courtney was about 3 years old. She got her hand slammed in a door at a family gathering. Her pinky nail and the tip of her pinky finger was barely hanging by a tiny piece of skin. So we took her to ER. She had broken the tip of her finger and she needed some stitches. So, they have her on the table and they are going to sew her up. So, her arm is out like this, a doctor is holding her head still. I am holding her other arm. And Jen is holding her feet. And Court is screaming. And even though they numbed her up, she seems to know every time

they touch her finger even though they had her head so she couldn't look. About 4 times between the crying, Courtney gets completely calm as she looks up at the doctor with her crystal, tear-filled blue eyes and says, "Please doctor don't touch it anymore. I'll be good." UGH! DO you know how heart wrenching that was to watch and hear? At the foot of the bed, tears are streaming down Jen's face. But let me ask you? Should we have made the doctor stop? No. As painful as it was, it was necessary to fix her finger. We had perspective that Courtney did not have. And I think that's a picture of God with us.

- g. And I think there are plenty of times when we are crying out to God in pain- like Jesus is doing here- and He is standing by our side with tears streaming down his face, because he shares in our pain but sees the bigger picture. And that's what we acknowledge when we say, "But God we want your will."
5. There is a final aspect of prayer we can learn from Jesus here. It's that prayer can be ► **PERSISTENT**.
- a. Jesus asked more than once. In verses 39-41, we, in fact, see that Jesus prayed this same prayer until God made the answer clear.
 - b. And that answer came for Jesus in verse 42. ►

^{NLT} **Mark 14:42** Up, let's be going. Look, my betrayer is here!"

- c. His persistent prayer wasn't answered the way he prayed, but his persistent desire for God's plan to be done seemed to quench his overwhelming desire for a different plan. And when the answer came, the time Jesus had spent with his dad seemed to fill him with the courage he needed to accomplish what God had for Him.
- d. Don't give up praying for something or someone because God hasn't answered yet. Sometimes he wants us to pray for something more than once. And when he answers like we pray, what an amazing experience it is. And when he doesn't, the time spent talking to him about it gives us courage and energy and power to do His will.

So, ► eavesdropping on Jesus has taught us that prayer is personal, powerful, includes pleading, provides perspective, and can be persistent. And I think these principles apply whenever we pray and whatever we pray for. And I hope this helps you pray like Jesus.

But I'd like to close this morning by considering how these principles might play out as we head into Easter. The road to Easter for Jesus was paved with prayer. And more than 2000 years later, I'd like **us** to consider paving our road to Easter with prayer. You can pray for our service. You can pray for the 400 visitors we are praying for. You can pray for the weather and logistics of an outdoor service. But I'd like to challenge all of us to make our prayer more personal and specific. On your chair this morning, was a card that looks like this. Grab one and hold onto it. Using the principles we've learned today, I'd like us to consider how we might pray like Jesus prayed leading up to Easter.

1. How can our prayer this Easter be more PERSONAL? Well, I think instead of praying for 400 visitors, you might pray for your visitors. Around MV, we call them our 7. Who do you know and who are you willing to pray for and invite- by name- to come to Easter this year. Can your prayer to God be so personal that you would utter their name as you pray? This card is a tool to help you do that. Take one and use it to write the names of people you will pray for a chance to invite. Put it in a place you will remember to

pray- your pocket, your mirror, taped to the back of your cell phone, your nightstand, a book marker in the book you are currently reading. But make your prayer more personal by naming the people you want God to bring.

2. And what if we prayed for the impossible? What if we prayed- by name- for the person we don't think would ever say yes to God? Who is that impossible person in your life? A colleague, neighbor, spouse, child? Maybe we add their name to the card. Maybe we pray for the impossible. Because with God, all things are possible. And somehow and for some reason, our willingness to pray for them has power to do the impossible.
3. And what if we actually pleaded with God for the names on our cards? Not a prayer like, "Lord, help George." But something more emotionally involved that sounded like we were begging God to move in George's life. What if we begged God for an opportunity to invite George or courage to invite him. Or whatever. When was the last time we actually pleaded with God for someone else?
4. And what if we trusted God and His perspective with the results. We want our friends to come find Jesus. But God brings them. God draws people to himself. We can plead with God for what we want, but His perspective is far greater than ours. And I think it's good to acknowledge that. Failure for us isn't that people don't come when we invite them. That's God's part. Failure for us is neglecting to pray for and invite them. That's the part God involves us in.
5. And what if we prayed more than once? This card isn't so we can pray today for Easter and be done. What if we committed to pray everyday between now and Easter for the names we will write on our cards. Seeing God answer by this Easter would be amazing. But what if he doesn't? Maybe God wants us to pray longer. Maybe we keep this card and pray persistently until Jesus answers.

Oftentimes prayer seems to be one of those things that falls into the important, but not urgent categories. And because it isn't urgent, it get's rushed and crowded out by the urgent things in our life. Easter is just 2 weeks away. It is urgent and important.

It's urgent because people will come to church on Easter when they might not come on other days. So wasting this opportunity seems foolish. And it's important because hell is a real place and real people go there. This isn't about some big service or achieving some goal. It's about real people hearing the Easter story and believing in Jesus. And God invites us to participate by praying.

Will you pray with me?

Personal

Powerful

Pleading

Perspective

Persistent