

The Runaway of Gethsemane / The Gospel of Mark 11-16: #10 / Mark 14:51-52 (cf. 14:31-52)

For if by the disobedience of one man the many were made sinners, how much more through the obedience of one man the many shall be made righteous. Thanks be to God for our Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, Genesis Church of Vero Beach, the first little pig built a house made of straw. He thatched and he thatched till he couldn't thatch any more. He worked every day till his trotters were sore, then early one evening came a knock on the door. "Little pig, little pig, won't you let me come in?" "No, no, no, by the hair on my chinny, chin, chin." "Then I'll huff, and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house in." Whether you hail from California, or the New York Islands, or the Red Wood Forrest, or the Gulf Stream waters, you have heard that story – The Three Little Pigs and the Big Bad Wolf – a thousand times. But probably not in South Kackalack Southern Accent.

There are many stories you've heard a thousand times from the Gospel of Mark long before I started preaching through it two years ago. (1) "Come follow me," Jesus said to Simon and Andrew, "and I will make you fishers of men. (2) "The people ate and were satisfied," Mark told us, "and the disciples picked up seven baskets of broken pieces that were left over." And my favorite: (3) "go to the village ahead of you, there you will find a foal which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here because the Lord has need of it." Well, the Passion Week story you are going to hear today is a very familiar story as well. It's the story of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. But here's the kicker: I will guarantee you have not heard it the way you are going to hear it presented today. Here's why: three of the four gospels recount Jesus' anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane. And all four of them recount his arrest. But only Mark saw the need to mention the story of a young man wearing nothing but a linen garment following behind Jesus who fled the scene naked because guards grabbed ahold of him but couldn't get a firm grip on him. There's a reason for this: the young man Mark describes is no less than Mark himself. That's why I call Mark the Runaway of Gethsemane and the writer of the part of the Gethsemane story that you've never heard.

Friends, I give you permission today to call him whatever you like. But I don't give you permission to gloss over him. Because he's important to the story of Jesus and the Garden of Gethsemane. And he's important for you and me. Today we find out why. So, I invite you to see the story of Gethsemane through the eyes of the Runaway of Gethsemane who witnessed all of it. The final point will tell you why this Runaway is so important why he wanted to be included in this story. We will use Mark 14:51-52 as our main text this morning and work backwards through his account of Gethsemane in Mark 14:32-50 as we go along.

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

The Runway of Gethsemane:

1. Saw the Anguish of Anticipation (14:32-37)

- **A Child Going to the Doctors Office:** (1) If you are a parent, you remember these days: (a) "Dad, where are we going? "To the Doctor's office." "What's the doctor going to do? "Give you a check-up?" "How's he going to give me a check-up?" (2) That last question from your child was disguised as a general question. It wasn't general though. It was specific. Your child wanted you to rule out any possibility there might be a finger-prick. (3) And the anticipation was the hardest part.
- **Main Idea of the Point** - The anticipation of something difficult and painful on the horizon is often much worse than the experience. But for Jesus it was the exact opposite. He came to the Garden in anguish because He knew exactly what he was going to face.
- **We See the Anguish In 14:32-37** - ³² *They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray."*³³ *He 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."*³⁵ *Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that, if possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ "Abba,^[1] Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."*³⁷ *Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping.*
- **What the Anguish Was from a Medical Perspective** – (1) In Luke's account, the physician tells us that Jesus "being in anguish, prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground." (2) Medical doctors would describe this as hematomidrosis. (2) It happens when the tiny blood vessels that surround the sweat glands begin to constrict and then dilate to the point of rupture. (3) This causes blood to effuse into the sweat glands. (4) And the cause of hematomidrosis is extreme anguish; the anguish of the anticipation of the betrayal; of the scourging; of the cross; and, most of all, the anguish of the anticipation of being forsaken on the cross by the Heavenly Father.
- **That Begg a Very Important Question?** (1) Who in the could have witnessed Jesus say this? Jesus sure didn't tell the disciples. They all fled. (2) Maybe it was James, Peter, and John? Nope, they were all asleep. The fact that John was asleep is evident by only a brief mention of Jesus praying in a Garden in John 18:1. He doesn't even mention it by name. (3) Maybe it was Matthew then? Nope. Even though Matthew is first in your New Testament, Mark wrote his gospel first. Luke also uses Mark as a source. (4) That only leaves one possibility: the one who witnessed this anguish of anticipation, this hematomidrosis, was Mark, the Runaway of Gethsemane.
- **App:** "I come to the Garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses." You are never alone. That why the song says, "he walks with you and talks with you." But Jesus was, so we wouldn't be.

2. Saw the Weakness of the Flesh (14:37-41)

- **The Three Strike Rule:** Baseball has a three-strike rule. Three strikes and you are out. We sometimes have the three-strike rule. Jesus had a three-strike rule too. But thankfully, he doesn't call us out for being asleep in the light.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** The disciples sleeping at Jesus point of need tells us something about why we needed the cross and resurrection.
- **The Series of Three Sleeps in 14:37-41** - ³⁷ Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour?"³⁸ Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."³⁹ Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. ⁴⁰ When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him. ⁴¹ Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting?"
- **It Has a Dual Meaning:** Three disciples, Peter, James, John, the leaders of the group were found sleeping three different times in spite of the fact that Jesus told them to "keep watch and pray" twice. This series of three is going to come into play again later in the night with Peter, with the same results.
- **It Has a Central Purpose:** What we want to do. We often don't do. That's why we needed the cross. That's why we needed the resurrection.
- **App:** Because of the cross and the resurrection, now we can, through the Spirit's power, do what we can't do in our flesh. That's how Peter passed the test the next time a series of three occurred after the resurrection: (1) Feed my sheep; (2) Feed my sheep; (3) Feed my sheep.

3. Saw the Kiss of Death (14:44-55)

- **The Kiss of Death:** (1) Is a phrase we use occasionally that I'm convinced has real meaning behind it. (2) It means if you say that a particular event is the kiss of death for something, it is certain to make it fail or be a disaster. (3) That's why no Atlanta Braves fan will ever say "the Atlanta Braves" will win the World Series. It's the kiss of death.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** The greatest sting of Gethsemane came not from the outside. It came from the inside in the form of betrayal, the kiss of death.
- **The Kiss of Death in Mark 14:44-45:** ⁴⁴ Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard."⁴⁵ Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him.
- **How Judas Is Identified Tells Us Much:** (1) Mark calls him the "betrayer." Why? (2) Betrayal is something only a friend or a loved one can do. To betray someone, you must first secure the loyalty and trust of another. (3) Rejection may cause a wound, but betrayal pours salt to make it sting. (4) Failure may knock you down, but betrayal kicks you while you are down. (4) Insult may hurt your pride, but betrayal breaks your heart. (5) That's why Judas was called the "betrayer."
- **What Judas Means Tells Us Much:** He's a real-life illustration of the danger of being religious but being lost. He's the primary example that it is possible to know about Jesus but never know Jesus as one of His sheep who heard His voice.
- **App:** So, what's the difference between Judas, Peter and the rest of the disciples who fled, including Mark? They knew they had sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, repented, and walked in the right direction. Judas, however, shook his fist, gnashed his teeth, felt sorry for himself, and perished by his own hands (a symbol of what sin without repentance does in our lives).

4. Left Behind a Garment (14:51-52)

- **The Sam's Wardrobe:** (1) There's a running joke I have with a couple of people in our church about their wardrobes because their wardrobe looks a lot like mine. When I see them wearing a shirt that looks exactly like one, I have, I say to them "you bought at Sam's didn't." And their response is usually: "you know it." (2). Yes, I do know it. Because if Sam's doesn't have it, I don't wear it. And thank the Lord they don't have what the ancient Israelites knew as a shroud.
- **Main Idea:** In Mark's Gospel there are only two shrouds mentioned. One covered the Naked Runaway. The other covered the Body of the Lord Jesus. And, oh, what a difference between the two.
- **Mark Tells Us This in 14:51:** ⁵¹ A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, ⁵² he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.
- **This Shroud:** (1) Served one type of use in ancient Israel: a bodily covering on men that functioned much like shorts. (2) The NIV translates it as "linen garment." The NASB translates it as "linen sheet." The King's English calls it a "linen cloth." They are all slightly different translations of the Greek word "sindon" that denotes a shroud. (3) But this shroud symbolizes something important: This shroud was left behind as Mark fled with everyone else because he could take the pressure, just like everyone else. (4) This shroud represents what all of us would have done had we been in their spot: fled.
- **But Then Mark Tells Us This in 15:46:** ⁴⁶ So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.
- **This Shroud:** (1) Served another type of purpose in ancient Israel: burial. (2) But the same Greek word is used by Mark to describe both: "sindon." (2) The first time he used it, he fled and left it behind. (3) This time he uses it because Jesus didn't flee. He was faithful. Faithful to the point of death.
- **App:** "Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me." Because He was faithful, now we can be, just like the disciples were and Mark was after the resurrection. Praise the Lord.