



Live to Fight Another Day

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Mark 14:26-31

Clint Pressley

²⁶ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. ²⁷ And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' ²⁸ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." ²⁹ Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not." ³⁰ And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." ³¹ But he said emphatically, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you." And they all said the same.

(Pastor Prays)

Any way you cut it, the Battle of Dunkirk in World War Two was an abject failure for the Brits. 330,000 British soldiers, that's the whole of their army, that's all they had, were pressed against the English Channel over on the continent. They're surrounded on all sides by an overwhelming Blitzkrieg Army of Nazis. Germany is in command. France has already fallen. France is not going to be any help. And it looked as if the English would be next. They are fully surrounded. There is no way out, but something called the miracle at Dunkirk, look it up, the miracle of Dunkirk unfolded. It is where hundreds of civilian boats, yachts, fishing boats, pleasure craft, and hundreds of civilian boats crossed the English Channel and they rescued the entire English army and the whole British expeditionary force. They did so so that the Brits. might live to fight another day. Dunkirk was a disaster, no doubt about it. But because of that disaster, they lived to fight another day.

In Christ, You Can Live to Fight Another Day

In the same way, the passage in front of you describes an unfolding disaster for the disciples. But out of that disaster, they will live to fight another day. Just like some of you have made a hash of it or life has made a hash of you, this passage right here has been given to us to put the wind back into your souls. So, let's get the context here. We are on a Thursday. It's in the last week of the earthly life of Jesus. This passage is a bridge between the Last Supper, which we dealt with last week, and the Garden of Gethsemane, which we'll deal with next week. In Gethsemane, everything that we find in this passage that Jesus predicts that will happen, happens. It's Thursday night. The disciples and Jesus have left Jerusalem. They are walking down from the city of Jerusalem. They will walk over across the Kidron brook and go up the Mount of Olives. As they are climbing up the Mount of Olives, they are talking and walking. What Jesus told them was not good. There's nothing good about this passage.

But embedded in that bad news was a promise that you need to hear. That promise is:

In Christ, You Can Live to Fight Another Day

The story is not over. If you are in Christ, you can live to fight another day. Let's do what we've been doing. Let's go back to the passage. I'll walk through it fairly quickly. We do this for a reason. I want you to know the story, and the important thing is not that you remember an illustration. It's not that you remember whether I was actually any good at preaching. I want you to have a grasp of the story. So join me in verse 26. Let's just walk through it, and I'll point out a couple of things. Then we'll come back and make some applications. Join me there in verse 26. ²⁶ *And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.* So after every Passover, at the end of it, it's a formalized thing; at the end of the service, they were singing a hymn. That hymn is made up of three or four songs. You can find them in Psalms 15-18. That is the song they sang after the Passover. After singing, they came out of Jerusalem and the text says they go over to Mount of Olives. It's not very far, maybe 3/4 of a mile. You go down the hill into the valley. At the bottom is a little creek called the Kidron Brook. And as they walked over that, the water would be stained by the blood flowing out of the sacrifices of so many animals. There would be so much blood. That would be a little bit of a foreshadowing. They would have to step over the brook to get to the Mount of Olives.

While they are walking, verse 27 says, ²⁷ *And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, The word for "fall away" means scandal or scandalous. You will all stumble. This means that these disciples will lose their nerves at some point. Jesus tells them, everyone, not just Peter. All of you are going to fall away. And then Jesus said. *for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'* He reaches over to Zachariah 13:7 which is a little bit of an obscure prophet. He reaches over to an obscure prophet and pulls out one verse. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; So Jesus says, what's gonna happen to you is something that has been prophesied about.*

We know it's going to happen, so after giving that to them, in verse 28, Jesus says, ²⁸ *But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee."* So, this is the only verse with any hope in it. Jesus says after I am raised up. Well, if someone is raised up it means you were first put down. There's an assumption there was a death. So, they don't know what he's saying exactly yet, except that there's something good that's going to happen in Galilee.

Now in verse 29, Peter's not having it. We know Peter. Verses 29-31 are all about Peter and Jesus. I'm going to make that my last point. All three verses are about Peter. ²⁹ *Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not."* That is a statement that is saying, I am stronger than them. Peter is named Rock. He is saying they don't call me Rock for nothing. I'm stronger than every one of those guys. In fact, I'm going to say that I don't care if I have to die. Then Jesus said to him, truly. Do you see that truly? That's Amen. When Jesus says that, that is him saying what I'm getting ready to say is going to happen. ³⁰ *And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times."* Truly. Amen. Look at the specificity that Jesus uses. This very night, before the Rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times. Peter, again, is not having that. In verse 31, Peter said emphatically, there's a sense of anger. ³¹ *But he said emphatically, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you."* And they all said the same.

Okay. How do we take that little story and apply it to living to fight another day? Every one of the disciples denied Jesus and abandoned him. Every one of the disciples was used by God for the gospel. Let's walk through and make some points. I'm surprised at this point. I didn't expect to get this one, but here it is, number one.

Singing is more important than you think

Singing. Don't think singing is just what we do before we get to the preaching. I don't think if you just get here in time for the sermon, you've made it. I get that from verse 26 that says in Jerusalem, after the Passover meal, they sang a hymn. That hymn is not like the hymns we have in a hymnal. That hymn is from the songs in Psalm 115 to 118. They are called the Halal Psalms. They're pretty short. I went back and looked at them. They are songs of praise, songs of thanksgiving, and songs of trust. And at first, I didn't know what to do with verse 26. A lot of commentators don't even bring it as a part of this passage. They usually start in verse 27. But God's word is there for us, and it's there for a reason. What are we learning from this? And the more I thought about it, the more I realized that they are singing this song at the end of the service, and it wasn't just a conclusion to the Passover meal. What they were singing, they didn't know it, but it was preparation for the ordeal they were getting ready to go through.

I went back and read one part of Psalm 115, and it goes like this. *Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.* Look, there's some truth that they were going to need. When we sing songs here, we sing truths that we need. Sometimes, when you're singing it, you don't know it until you're standing in something terrible. Do you need to hear it? Singing is a gift, and it's not just for Christians. There are some things that God has given to all humans, and singing is one of those things. I didn't say he gave you a singing voice. I'm just saying that singing is a gift. I stood in that gift line, but they shut it down before I got there. I didn't get that one.

Singing has been used throughout the centuries. Men go off to war, and they sing. Do you know the genre of music called sea shanties? You should look it up. I love sea shanties. Sea shanties came out of men working on ships in the 16th - 18th century in England. It's men singing as they work. Or, think of the negro spirituals that were sung during slavery to endure the pain.

Singing to the Lord is used by God in people's hearts. What does it do for Christians? We gather together on a Sunday. If you miss the singing, you miss a whole lot of what it means to worship. What does singing do? Singing develops a unified body. We have one voice singing unto the Lord. Singing prepares my heart to be able to preach, and it prepares your heart to hear the message. Singing strengthens our souls. Singing the truths of God, when we were singing those

songs today, you were reminded of the joy that comes from being Christian. Singing comforts our minds.

Why do we sing when things are bad? Why do we sing at funerals? It reminds us of the beauty of God's grace. Singing develops our resolve. It makes us strong. We sing songs like Onward Christian Soldier, marching as to war, with the Cross of Jesus going on before. We get a sense of God going with us. Singing inspires confidence. Singing reminds us that we are not alone. You are reminded that you are not standing here by yourself. You have brothers and sisters with you, singing. Singing puts truth deep in us. And sometimes you'll be singing a song from church, and you're singing lyrics that you're not even sure what they are, but God has brought them back out for you to sing.

I didn't mean to give this point, but it's there in verse 26. Singing is more important than you think. Use it to keep growing as a Christian. Let me give you a second thing, #2.

You are worse than you think

This is the worst self-help message there ever was. If you're a visitor with us, welcome to Hickory Grove. You are terrible. Your bad self-image is not bad enough. I'm sure you are thinking, Preacher, what's the matter with him? But let me show it to you in verse 27. What did Jesus say? Look what he tells every one of them. *27 And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away."* So, let's take the word fall. What it means is depravity. We can put it in two categories. Let's put it in universal depravity and then in total depravity. So, when I say universal depravity, you will all fall; that means that every one of us is a sinner. There's not anyone walking into this building that's better than anyone else walking into this building. We are all equally bad. That is a reminder for us. It's good for us to hear that and to be reminded that the gospel gets really good when you understand how really bad you are. So universal depravity says that we are all sinners and fall short of the glory of God.

So, what is total depravity? Total depravity is that every part of us has been affected by sin. Total depravity is not that you are as bad as you could possibly be. You are obviously not as bad as you possibly could be. Total depravity is that every part of you, even your good intentions, is affected in some way by sin. So Jesus says every one of you, universally, will fall away; that's total depravity. Now, here, when Jesus gives us this, it doesn't mean that the disciples are

gonna lose their salvation. It doesn't mean that. What it means is that every single disciple who's hearing this, every one of us here, will be disloyal in some capacity. That when given a chance to stand for Jesus, we will not. We all stumble. That's the word, scandal. You all will fall away.

So what does this mean then for us? There are a couple of things. The first one is if you are in Christ, your identity is not the sinner you used to be. If you are in Christ, you don't identify yourself as a certain kind of Christian. I'll just pick a headline. The Bible teaches that homosexuality is a sin. If you were involved in a homosexual relationship, and then you got saved, that sin came out of you. You are not a gay Christian. That is not your identity. It is what you used to be but not who you are now in the righteousness of Christ. If you used to steal, you don't say, I'm a thieving Christian, or I'm a bad mouthed Christian. No, you're a Christian. So your identity is found in Christ.

Let me give you something else. The second thing is that you all, we all, need the gospel. Every one of us needs the gospel. If you're a guest, when I say the gospel, this is what I mean. God is the holy Creator who created us in his image. But the image of God in you has been so disfigured by sin that it doesn't even seem like it anymore. We know it's there. But that sin is a crime against God and it has separated you from God. You're not far away from God, you are separated. And the only way to be close to God is through the gospel. The gospel is that Jesus Christ, living perfectly as a human, goes to the cross and he takes the judgment that God puts on sin for all sinners that are going to be saved. God kills him and then raises him from the dead. And the Gospel says if you trust that Jesus did that in your place, you trust that Jesus did that for you, you will be saved. This calls for humility. That God saved you as a sinner.

So we have two things so far that we need to get. Singing it's more important than you think. Sing the truth of God. The second thing is that you are worse than you think. Let me give you another one, #3.

The Bible is better than you think

I'll show you where I get that in verse 27. It's when Jesus quotes the Bible. ²⁷*And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'* So here's what Jesus does. He reaches back into an obscure prophet, Zachariah 13:9,

and he grabs one sentence, one sentence that was written several 100 years ago. It's just been sitting there all these years. Jesus says that sentence predicted what's going to happen in the garden tonight. *'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'* Now that right there, just the fact that he would pull the Bible out reminds us how powerful the Bible is. It's better than we think. This is why we call ourselves Protestant. This is part of the Protestant Reformation because we put so much emphasis on what the Bible says. This is why we have the form of worship we have because it's guided by the Bible. Our worship starts with scripture. That lets us know that the Bible is going to be preached by the Preacher in this service. What he does is expository. We're exposing the Bible. We read the Bible, go back over the Bible, then talk about the Bible. So we have all these Bible studies. Why do we do Awana? It's nothing more than getting the Bible in our children. The women's intensive that we do, those are because the Bible is food for your soul. The Bible is water for your parched soul. The Bible is light to get you out of the darkness. Your life has been sinking and here at the bottom is a foundation. It's called the Bible. The Bible takes us to Jesus. So what do you do with it? You ought to be reading it. You ought to be singing it. You should be meditating on it and mastering the Bible. If you don't where to start, here's what I would recommend. Start tomorrow morning, and get up about 30 minutes earlier. Open up the Bible to the book of John. It's the easiest gospel to read in the New Testament. Read one or two chapters, and ask God to speak to you. He will from his word. If you'd like to go a little further, maybe go over to Psalms and read two or three Psalms to start the day. Let that guide your prayer and begin going through the Bible. Why? Because the Bible is better than you think it is. Okay, let me see if I can make this point, #4

God is smarter than you think

That's in verse 27. Let me show you what I mean. ²⁷ *And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'* This is from the Bible. I won't spend much time here except to say that I find it incredible. This was written in Zachariah several 100 years before, this was predicted beforehand. If it is predicted by God, it is going to happen. God strikes the shepherd. That striking is his cross. It is in accordance with his will. And it happens through the sinful actions of people's free choice. And it's all according to his Providence. So I've been wrestling with those thoughts. What are the applications for me, for you? There are a couple of things. When you're asking things like why did God let this

happen to me? I want to be as pastoral as I can because I know some of you have been through some bad things. But to be angry with God is short-sighted. He's not done with you. He's using all of this to form you. What does Paul in Romans 9:20? ²⁰ *But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?"* Well, John Piper used to say that God is doing 10,000 things every second that you are not aware of. So what do you do then? You pray for trust, and then you live your life. We get past bitterness. Bitterness is a mountain and we have to get over it. Ask God to help you. Ask God to help you work through hatred or anger. Look, the gospel is good. We believe that there is healing in Jesus and there is strength in Jesus. He is making you into a vessel for his own glory. And when you fail, in Christ, you can live to fight another day. So, what have we learned so far? The first one is, singing is more important than you think. The second is, you are worse than you think. The third is that the Bible is better than you think. And the fourth is that God is smarter than you think. Let's look at another one, #5.

Life is more hopeful than you think

Where I get that is that there's hope in verse 28. ²⁸ *But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.* Do you see the contrast? So there's a terrible prediction in verse 27. But after the terrible prediction, hear the hope in verse 28. They are stumbling, they're all going to fall away. Jesus says after I have been raised. What does that mean? Well, it assumes that if he's raised, it means he was laid down. So it assumes he was killed. So we assume that, at the cross, where Jesus is our substitute, our sins are taken away. When you think about verse 28, it assumes victory. It promises that our sins have been washed away. After their betrayal, forgiveness is secured and promised. Jesus says I will go ahead of you. I will be the pathfinder. Look what Paul says in Colossians 1:18. ¹⁸ *And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.*

Jesus says I will go before you to Galilee. He is the man from Galilee. I'll meet you back home. Everything you're going through that is so terrible, it's not the end. On the other side of this, I'll meet you. I'll be with you. On the other side of the death, burial, and resurrection, when I get there, I'll have the keys to the Kingdom. What I'm trying to tell you, brothers and sisters, in Christ, you can live to fight another day. I'll give you a last point, #6.

You are not as strong as you think

We are going to see what Peter says in verses 29-31. ²⁹ *Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not."* ³⁰ *And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times."* ³¹ *But he said emphatically, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you."* And they all said the same. What you have right there is Peter speaking from betterment. He sees himself as better than those other guys. It's a statement of betterment. It's a statement of confidence. It is pride and self-assurance. And every bit of that in Peter is crushed at the Cross of Christ. Let me tell you how I know that. Mark wrote this little book with 16 chapters, and every bit of the information that Mark wrote down, he got all of it from Peter, including this story right here. And Mark is the only one who tells us about the rooster crowing twice. He got that little tidbit of information from Peter. This is an embarrassing story about Peter but Peter told him anyway. Why? Because he's a different man than he was before the cross. Jesus Christ saved him and because of Jesus, he could live to fight another day - and so can you. Find your hope and your strength and your rest in Jesus.

(Pastor prays)