

Echoes in Gethsemane

Sun. 4/10/11

Intro

As we approach the celebration of Easter this year we have been looking at the Gospel of Mark's account of the final journey of Jesus to Jerusalem. What we have found is that He made a deliberate and intentional journey to the cross.

This morning I want to talk to you about an incident that happened late in that journey—just before the arrest, trial and crucifixion of Jesus there was Gethsemane.

It was in Gethsemane that Jesus showed His resolution to do all that the Father called Him to do one last time before the actual events began to unfold!

The events in Gethsemane happened on Thursday night, after the Last Supper and after Peter is told that before the rooster crows he will deny Jesus three times.

Mark 14:32-42

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, 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. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?" ³⁸ Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body 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? Enough!

The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

This morning I want to talk to you about “**Echoes in Gethsemane**” because as I read this story I am struck by the fact that it is full of echoes or images of larger stories. I want to talk to you about three echoes that I hear in the story of Gethsemane: the echoes of two other gardens, the echoes of two other cups and the echoes of other sleepy watchmen.

The Echoes of Two Other Gardens!

Both Mark and Matthew tell us nothing more than: “They went to a place called Gethsemane”. We are given no other details about this place.

Scholars tell us that Gethsemane comes from the Hebrew or Aramaic word for Oil Press.

Luke tells us that “Jesus went out *as usual* to the Mount of Olives”.

So we know that it was a place that Jesus and His disciples frequented on the Mount of Olives that was connected to the pressing of oil.

It is John’s Gospel that connects all the dots for us and tells us that Jesus and His disciples withdrew to a garden or olive grove on the Mount of Olives outside of Jerusalem after their meal that night.

So we call this place The *Garden of Gethsemane*...I cannot escape the fact that this story happens in a garden.

Any reference to a garden in the Bible makes me think of the Garden of Eden, and the more I listen in Gethsemane, the more I hear the Echoes of Eden!

According to the Bible, the story of human history has a garden on each end of it.

At the beginning there is the Garden of Eden, the perfect place that God Himself built to house the pinnacle of His creation, Adam and

Eve! It is a place of perfect harmony between God and His children. There is no sin or suffering or loss or death. The Garden of Eden is in every way Paradise.

And a close examination of Revelation chapters 21 and 22 will show us that God's description of the New Jerusalem is a perfect joining of garden and city. That the City of God descends from Heaven with a river issuing forth from beneath God's throne, much as river flowed through Eden. And on each side of that Heavenly river stand the trees of Life, the same trees that mankind lost access to so long ago in Eden. We begin to see the Heaven is in many ways a recapturing of Eden, another Garden for us to be with God in.

And right in between these two gardens that flank the story of human history is the Garden of Gethsemane.

If the story of history could be charted on one end there would be a perfect garden where God's children had perfect relationships with Him and with each other and on the other end would be another perfect garden where God's children had perfect relationships with Him and with each other, and in between there would be a deep valley—that valley would be called "Sin".

But near the very bottom of that valley, just before the lowest point in human history—the place where God Himself died in our place—you would find another garden.

This garden is far from perfect.

Unlike Eden and New Jerusalem, in this garden there is anguish, betrayal and violence. In fact, Gethsemane is anti-garden, a surrealistic inversion of the qualities of the other gardens! But it is Gethsemane that links the other two gardens together!

In fact, I think that in many ways Gethsemane is a retelling of the story of Eden.

It was in Eden that a sinless man and a sinless woman first encountered a desire to do something outside of the will of God. In Eden Adam and Eve saw that the forbidden fruit was “good for food, pleasing to the eye and desirable for gaining wisdom” but they knew that God wanted them to not eat it. They choose to eat it anyway and in doing so they exposed the whole world to the curse of sin!

It is in Gethsemane that another sinless man—Jesus—knows that God has called Him to walk a path that He does not want to walk, but Jesus chooses to honor God and yield to His divine will. In doing so He brings the whole world a cure for the curse of sin!

In Gethsemane we hear the echoes of Eden retold and the echoes of Heaven calling us home.

It is in Gethsemane that we see the turn in human history start, from the downward spiral of sin and death to the upward climb of forgiveness and righteousness.

Gethsemane is where we first have the opportunity to identify with Jesus’ triumphant “Thy will be done” instead of Adam’s tragic “My will be done”!

It is in Gethsemane that we learn that the broken and sinful path that we have inherited from Adam is not the only way!

The apostle Paul said that Jesus was a second Adam—The Last Adam because there will never be a need for another new start after

Jesus.

Rom. 5:18-19 (NLT)¹⁸ Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone.¹⁹ Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.

Because Jesus retold the story of Eden He can retell the whole story of human life, and He can retell the story of your life if you will let Him.

So if you find yourself in a Gethsemane type place this morning—a place of anguish or betrayal or uncertainty, I pray that God will help you listen for echoes. I pray that as you hear the echoes of Eden retold you will find that Jesus is already at work retelling your story and turning your life back towards right relationship with Him and right relationship with each other!

Then there are **The Echoes of Two Other Cups.**

Jesus asked The Father to “Take this cup from me” and in that I hear the echo of two other cups.

The first is the cup that Jesus just talked about with His disciples at the Last Supper. He told them that the cup He shared with them that night was the cup of a new covenant between God and man.

This cup represents new way for us to be in relationship with God! This is the new covenant of participating in the retold story of Eden; of identifying with Jesus.

Our part of the covenant is faith in Jesus and surrendering our lives to Him; it is in Jesus' part of the covenant that we must confront the other cup.

Like everything in Gethsemane that night, this other cup is far more sinister! There is a cup of God's wrath that cannot be ignored by a holy and righteous God! It is this cup that had to be dealt with before the cup

of the new covenant was made available to us. It is for this cup that Jesus has set His face towards Jerusalem and towards the cross!

There is a cup of wrath with my name on it and there is a cup of wrath with your name on it. It contained the natural consequences of all of our sins and it held the bitter retribution of God for our transgressions.

God could not and would not ignore or dismiss our sins! Our willful transgressions against God and His laws created an eternal separation between us and God.

The pain and loss caused by our words and actions could not simply be dismissed.

And everyday our own sinfulness added more and more wrath to the cup. To borrow a phrase from Pastor Phil; all of our lies, our lusts, our hatred, our pride, our selfishness, and our thirst for power added to the contents of that deadly cup.

It was God's justice that demanded payment for our sins and satisfaction for His wrath. And the only acceptable payment for sin and rebellion against God is death.

But the cup of God's wrath is empty. There was one who drank it for me, every drop. All of the just and righteous punishment that was measured out for me was taken by another.

Adam sinned in ignorance; Jesus took on sin with full knowledge?????

It is in Gethsemane that we hear the echoes of the two cups. It is here that we see Jesus choose to drink the deadly cup of God's wrath so that He could freely offer us the life giving cup of His new Covenant with God.

I pray that this morning you will start to hear the echoes of those other cups; the hollow echo of that empty cup of God’s wrath and the deep hearty ring of the overflowing cup of God’s New Covenant with man.

Finally there are **The Echoes of Other Sleepy Watchmen.**

Jesus uses an interesting phrase with His disciples in the Garden. While He goes to pray, He asks His disciples “to keep watch”. What exactly does He want them to watch for?

It is possible that He wanted to have a little warning before Judas came to betray Him. Maybe He just didn’t want to be caught off guard.

It is clear that Jesus has in mind that their watchfulness will have an element of prayerfulness in it too. But there is an echo here too.

This image of sleeping watchmen is one that Mark has used before, just in the previous chapter as a matter of fact. It is part of the final teaching section that Jesus has with His disciples.

Mark 13:33-37: ³³ Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. ³⁴ It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

³⁵ “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. ³⁶ If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. ³⁷ What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”

“Keep Watch”, “Rooster crowing”, “Sleepy watchmen”...Sound familiar? Mark’s account of Gethsemane and the events immediately following it ring with echoes from this teaching!

Jesus teaches His disciples that the day and hour of His return are unknown. That as His disciples they—and all of us as well—need to be alert in the way that we live our lives, so that we will not be caught sleeping and miss out on what God wants to do in our lives.

I am captured by Jesus' statement that His soul was overwhelmed with sorrow... And I wonder, what is Jesus soul sorrowful about today? What are the things that break the heart of Jesus today? What would He ask you and me to keep watch over with Him?

I wonder if there are things going around me that break the heart of Jesus. I wonder what He has called me to keep watch over and I wonder if I like Peter, James and John have found a comfortable place in the corner to take a nap.

What in the world could they have possibly been thinking to drift off to sleep three times?! Maybe they were thinking the same kinds of things that I think:

Jesus is always going off to pray for hours and hours. It's a busy weekend, there's a lot to do, maybe we'll buckle down after the holiday, but we need our rest tonight! There's always next week.

But for the disciples there was no tomorrow with Jesus. That night He was taken, that night they all ran, the next day He died!

What breaks the heart of Jesus in your world? For what has He asked you to watch and pray over. Are there places in your family, at your school or work that Jesus is anguishing over while you sit a stone's throw away sound asleep?

The master has gone away and He entrusted His Kingdom into your hands. He is coming back, I don't know when but I think the time is short. Watch and pray! Stir your soul and look at your world with the eyes of Jesus! Listen for the echoes of Gethsemane. Listen for the prayers of a God who loves the hurting and the lost and whose heart is broken for

them! Keep watch and listen for the echoes.

Conclusion

In my mind Gethsemane is a dark and somber place; a place full of sorrow and anguish. I can picture Jesus kneeling in prayer, the disciples shifting about nearby in a restless sleep. I can feel a cool chill in the air and smell the smoke of dying fires throughout the city. I hear the wind rustle through the olive trees and I begin to hear the echoes...

The echoes of two other gardens: Eden retold and The New Jerusalem. Echoes of distant times and places where all that is broken will be made right; echoes of the way it was always suppose to be! I hear the echoes of Jesus retelling the story of men and women who trust their lives into His hands. And if you find yourself in a dark and somber place today, will you listen for the echo?

I hear the echoes of two other cups: the cup of wrath and the cup of the new covenant. I can hear hollow ring of an empty cup, a cup that has been completely drained of its dark and deadly poison by the only man who could bear to drink it. And I can barely make out the sound of a richer, fuller, heartier cup. Its sound is difficult to hear, not because it is quieter or softer—quite the opposite—it rings out loud and true, but it is almost drowned out by the sound of singing. By the sound of thousands and ten thousands gathered around the great throne of God and singing to the lamb who blood has sealed the everlasting covenant between God and man. Can you hear the echo?

I hear the echo of a warning to sleepy watchmen. A warning that the master is coming home; and coming home soon! I hear the voice of Jesus crack with sorrow as He asks me to keep watch; to not sleep in the distance but to listen closely to His prayer and allow my heart to be shaped by His. I hear the echo of Jesus calling us to stir our hearts and look at the world through His eyes. Is it echoing in your heart too?

Listen for the echoes! Listen for the echoes of the greater stories in Gethsemane and listen for the echoes of the greater stories in your life too!

Pray