

Jesus Agony

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[0 : 00] I'm going to pray and ask for God's help as we sort of think about his word. Almighty God, we come to you this morning expect and wanting to hear you speak to us.

And we thank you that you do speak to us through the Bible. And so as we think about this difficult time in your life, the night before you died, we pray that we would learn more about you.

We pray that we'd learn more about ourselves. And we pray that you'd build us up and encourage us in what it means to live for you day by day. We ask for this in the name of Christ. Amen.

Now I don't know when your era of music is. Mine, I was born in the, I'll say mid-80s.

So the late 90s, early 2000s is kind of, some of the music from that is kind of what I still listen to. That's kind of the peak of like, that's where I go.

[1 : 04] There's a band in the late 90s, early 2000s called, some of you might know this, maybe most of you won't. They're called Star Sailor. And they've got a chorus to a song. It's called Some of Us.

And it goes like this, the chorus says this, it says, Some of us laugh, some of us cry, some of us smoke, some of us lie, but it's all just the way that we cope with our lives.

Now, when I first heard that, I wasn't a Christian, but those words have always stuck with me.

I think it's just what the song is getting at, is that everyone at some point or another goes through difficulty. It happens, every single one of us, without exception. But there's an awareness in there, in the songwriter James Walsh, if you want to know.

There is the awareness that everyone develops a coping strategy to get them through. When life is too much to handle, when there's too much to cope with, everyone turns to something and you can fill in the blank.

[2 : 15] We just have four here, but there's things that are, everyone turns to something. Some things are more destructive than others, but everyone turns to something. You could turn to, I'm struggling to cope, I'm going to go on a shopping spree.

That's going to make me feel better. I'm struggling to cope, I'm going to have an extra few drinks tonight. That's going to help me cope with life. I'm struggling to cope, I just want to veg out, and just want to block everything out by binge watching something on Netflix.

That's how I'm going to cope with life. Some of us laugh, some of us cry, some of us smoke, some of us lie, some of us drink. Some of us binge out and stuff, some of us go on shopping sprees. But it's all just the way that we cope with our lives.

In our Bible reading this morning, what we see is a man who is struggling to cope with what life is throwing at him. What is surprising is that the man who is struggling to cope is Jesus of Nazareth.

You don't expect this. You don't expect him to struggle. You don't expect him to appear like he's not coping. You expect him to cope. This is the God man.

[3 : 24] This is Jesus Christ. But that is what we see in this moment. We see Jesus Christ in all his human frailty come to the fore.

We see a man who's not coping. That's what we're going to look at this moment. We're going to think about Jesus' agony, Jesus' suffering, and then Jesus' praying. And my hope and prayer, actually, as we think about this through, as we see Jesus in agony, suffering, and praying, is that actually when life is too much for us and we want to turn to something that actually doesn't, only is a temporary fix, that actually there is a place that we can go to help us cope, and it is Jesus himself.

It is Jesus himself. First thing we're going to think through is Jesus' agony. Jesus' agony. He is in total agony, and like I said, it appears like he's not coping.

We see that. He doesn't want to be alone is the first thing. He doesn't want to be alone. He takes his three closest friends with him to pray. Now, he's going to leave them and pray in solitude.

He doesn't want to pray, like, in a group, but it's the awareness of their physical presence, just that he knows they're there, is a comfort to him. He just wants to know.

[4 : 41] He wants to be able to, like, hear that they're breathing, that they're there. He wants that comfort. He wants people around him. It's just like when, it's very similar, isn't it? Just when we're not feeling great, and we might not want anybody to say anything to us, but we want the support of a family member or somebody that knows as well, just to be there as a support when we're going through rough stuff.

That's what Jesus is doing. Verse 32, we read, we get an insight into what he's feeling. Verse 34, he says, yeah, verse 34, he began to be deeply, deeply distressed and troubled.

Deeply distressed, it's not just kind of a fleeting, passing, momentary concern. It is deep agony. He says to his disciples, my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.

That sounds pretty intense emotion. That sounds pretty intense. I was going to tell a story. About 10 years ago, me and Annabelle, we were on a holiday in Fuerteventura.

It's one of the Canary Islands. If you get to go, it's a beautiful island. It's just south of Lanzarote. Right in the south, there is this beautiful isolated beach. It takes ages to get to you.

[5 : 59] You have to take the most horrible road to get to it. It's called Cafete. And I know now that Cafete is notorious for being in danger of sea to swim in. I didn't know that at the time.

There's lots of waves. When I get there, it's isolated. There's nothing, just this beautiful beach. There's lots of waves, but there's people jumping in and out of the waves. It seems like fun. So Annabelle stays on the beach. I go into the waves, just joining everybody, jumping over them.

And there's a moment when, jumping around in a wave, it knocked me down totally. And I went under. And the power of the wave and the riptide kind of rolled me on the bottom of the ocean bed.

And I can still remember. And maybe you've had this before when that feeling, if you've ever been pushed under the water, that feeling of distress, like you need to take a breath right now.

There's panic. There's terror. There's terror because you're not in control of your own body. Being under the water, thinking, I need to get out of here. I can't be under here for any longer. Eventually the sea kicked me out.

[7 : 00] I'm still here. But Annabelle said as I walked back, she could tell something was wrong. I'd drip white. Been under too long. You know that emotion. When you hear me say that, you know instantly the kind of distress that it would feel to be drowning.

The reason I tell you that is to get an idea and a picture of what Jesus is experiencing emotionally. It's so overwhelming, the sorrow that he's going through, the intense anxiety, that it feels like he's drowning under the weight of it.

It's so bad, so intense, so engulfing. It actually feels like he's dying now already. The sorrow itself, the sorrow itself, the pain, the anticipation of what, even just the thought of it is going to kill him.

I mean, it's so bad, you read, he can't stand up. His legs buckle like jelly. Verse 35, going a little farther, he fell to the ground. We can only imagine his mindset.

No one in the history of the earth, apart from Jesus, has ever had to deal with what he experienced on this night. What was ahead of him? Let's not forget, there's what lay ahead of him, but there's also the emotion of the betrayal, the abandonment, the way that his friends had treated him.

[8 : 24] In the whole of Jesus' life, this is Jesus, weak and feeble. Weak, feeble and distress. He's not, it reminds us that Jesus is fully human, but he's not superhuman.

Human flesh, human blood and bones, human intelligence, human emotions and needs. And at this moment when we read that, it appears like he's not coping. You see, we have a saviour, Jesus of Nazareth, who has experienced every human feeling, every human emotion from top to bottom.

And as we read and experience and see and come to terms with what he's going through, there's this almost strange encouragement from knowing that our saviour has experienced that kind of difficulty more than we ever will.

Because what it means is this, this is what it means. It means that when you're overwhelmed with life, when you feel like you can't cope, and perhaps that no one really, truly feels or understands you and that you're suffering alone, the truth is when it is that bad, I'm going to lay it out for you, when it's really that bad, you might be right.

Your friends, even your church family, as much as they listen and are there for you and are sat with you and providing support as much as they can, they may not fully understand what you're going through.

[9 : 58] But what Gethsemane teaches us is that Jesus does. He always understands. If you've ever felt or if you do feel like you're drowning in life, Jesus felt this emotion.

He felt like the emotion on this night was going to kill him before the cross did. That's how he felt. To the point of death, he felt like he was going to die before the cross took him.

It's intense. We have a saviour who is able in every way to empathise, to sympathise, to understand, truly know our weaknesses.

He's been tempted in every way just as we are, yet he didn't sin. He knows what you're going through and he understands you perfectly. You're never alone in your struggle.

You're never alone in your struggle. Jesus is with you and you can bank on it, truly bank on it, that he has experienced what you're going through and worse. So that's the first point, Jesus' agony.

[11 : 09] Jesus' agony. The second thing I want to come to is Jesus' suffering. You might think they sound the same thing. The question is, maybe you've experienced this.

When someone is agony, when somebody is struggling, natural response, most of us, we want to help, right? We want to help. It's normal. We want to know what's going on. I mean, what's going on in your life?

How can I do something? Can I provide a solution to you? What's on your mind? How can I help you seem so distressed? I want to get you out of this. What's the reason for the torment?

The answer to the torment we see, Jesus tells, we see it in Jesus' prayer, the source of it. The two things we see, verse 35, he prayed that it was possible that the hour might pass from him.

First thing. Verse 36, he says, take this cup from me. So, Jesus' distress, we've got two ideas. They actually mean the same thing. The hour and the cup come together.

[12 : 14] The things that's distressing him is the hour when he will drink the cup. That's the source of his agony and distress. I wonder, I really wonder, what would, if he was going through that now and we were there with him, what would our counsel have been to Jesus?

What would your counsel be to Jesus? Because naturally, when we see someone struggling, when suffering with agony, we want to do what we can to stop it. We want to provide a solution to ease the torment.

The big question that we, therefore, must explore is, like, what is in this cup? What on earth is in this cup? We have to ask that. My counsel to Jesus probably would have been, like, are you really sure you need to drink it?

Like, are you sure? Like, it seems pretty bad. It seems like it's really cutting you up, the fact that you've got to do this. It's causing you so much, why not just push it to one side? That's, that'd be my, that'd be my counsel.

What on earth is in this cup? Here's what the cup is. I'm going to tell you what the cup is. Now, to understand what the cup is, we have to do a little bit of digging.

[13 : 19] We have to go back, because actually the picture, the cup is picture language of what is coming for Jesus. In fact, it's come all the way through the Old Testament. There's this picture language of the cup.

It keeps coming up. In Jeremiah 25, God, in the Old Testament, God says about what this cup is. I'll just read it for you.

The Lord, the God of Israel, said to Jeremiah, he says, Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it.

The cup that Jesus is to drink is a cup filled with the wine of God's anger. The wine of God's anger. What we have is a picture of suffering.

Jesus, when he drinks, the picture is that as Jesus drinks the cup, he's going to drink God's anger at sin on himself. That is what's going to happen.

[14 : 22] Now, I've just thrown a huge amount of ideas out to you. We just need to pause for a minute, because there's a lot of things floating around that you're probably thinking, heck, there's a lot of things to take on board.

The idea of God being angry at sin and punishing sin can seem quite jarring with the world that we live in, right? It can seem quite jarring. I want to suggest why it's good.

It's good. We can see the effects of our world, the sin, the way things have messed up everywhere. You only have to read a newspaper. There's wars, the loss of innocent life, abuse, misuse of power.

You can see the effects in every subsection of society that we live in. Now, I don't know about you, but there's things that we see and that we read in the news that makes me angry.

I don't know if it does you. That we think, I wish there was a way that this could be dealt with. It seems right that this should be punished.

[15 : 23] However, closer to home, we have to go. Deep down, I mean deep down, we know the effect that our mistakes have on other people too.

You know that when you judge someone or you look down on them, when we say unkind things to those that we love, when we get road rage perhaps or feel jealousy and act selfishly, we deep down know we're not squeaky clean.

And we might even find it hard to admit, but we do know that about ourselves. It all hints, it all points to big things, but things in here as well, that our world is not, it's not the way that God created it to be.

It was perfect, but we are as responsible as the next man. And so it is right and a good thing that God is angry at things that is the reason the world's broken.

That is right and it's a good thing. Jesus is the one man, the only man to ever walk the face of this earth without sin. He's the only man who should be exempt from drinking this cup and suffering, the only one.

[16 : 41] And yet, if Jesus drinks the cup, if he goes ahead with it, he knows what's in store. He knows what's going to come. That's why even the thought of it, he feels like he's going to die.

Of course there's the physical side of suffering, there's the violence, the barbaric torture, the excruciating pain of the crucifixion, of the cross, the beatings, the hands of angry men filled with hate about what Jesus was about.

So there's that side of the suffering that is, I mean that sounds enough to me, but alongside there is something that pains him more. There's something that pains him more than that.

It is coming under, how do I say this? It's coming under the displeasure of his own father. Divine displeasure. He knows if he drinks his father's anger, that none of it at him, none of it of anything that he has done, but because of everything that's going on in our world and goes on in our hearts, he knows that if he drinks it, he'll drink it to the last drop.

He'll drink it dry. And what that means for him is that he'll be cut off, separated, isolated, rejected and forsaken by his own heavenly dad. That's crushing.

[18 : 08] Rejected by the heavenly family. That's what it is. I mean, that does something to someone. Rejected by his heavenly, the one who he's been in perfect relationship with from the beginning of time, that's the rejection that he feels that way.

He's going to be condemned. You know, before I did this, I worked in a hospital. And when a piece of equipment was broken, like a bed or a blood pressure machine or something, one of my jobs was to get an A4 piece of paper and stick it and just wheel it out to the hospital corridors.

Maybe you've walked in a hospital and you've just seen, like, broken stuff as you walk past it. And my job was to write on it, condemned. And the reason I left it there was because this is no good.

This is no good. It needs to be pushed out of the hospital and it's no good anymore. It either has to be destroyed or something needs to be done to it.

Condemned, no good. If Jesus drinks the cup, his father will condemn him. He'll be punished for sins he did not commit, bearing their guilt. When Jesus started his ministry, the Holy Spirit came down like a dove.

[19 : 35] And God the Father encouraged him, said, this is my son with him, I'm well pleased. There's none of that here. He's alone. He's isolated. He'll not be a martyr going down in a blaze of glory, but a humiliated, forsaken man bearing our guilt.

Separated from his father so that we never will be. The cross, it truly is the lonely road. And no one has ever shared that experience with him.

And he drinks that cup to save you. He drinks that cup to be guilty for you.

He takes God's anger so that you won't. And it's the anticipation of that that causes him to feel like he does. He's not coping because the thought of that is too much to bear.

Being separated from his father. The question is, will he do it? As we reach this point in the story of Jesus, you come with it, will he do it?

[20 : 38] How is he? He's caught in this place, isn't he? He knows what's before him. He knows how he's going to feel. If he's in this state, how is he going to get there?

How is he going to get there? Well, the answer comes in what he does. We're going to move to the final point. Jesus praying. Jesus knows. The only way, the only way he can begin to face what lies ahead of him is if he turns to God in prayer.

It's the only way. He doesn't, you know, he can't even pray. I mean, he's so weak and feeble. He can't even pray on his own. He needs to know that his friends are right there. He actually wants some sort of, like, prayer meeting with four of them, but with them just behind him.

He doesn't want to pray on his own. He needs support of his friends. He wants them to pray with him or at least that they can hear him and he can hear them. And as we look, what we see in this moment, as we look at Jesus praying, we see the difference between Jesus and the difference between his disciples.

The contrast between Jesus and his friends. We see Jesus goes to pray three to four times. Verse 32. He says, sit here while I pray. Verse 35. He says he fell to the ground and prayed.

[21 : 48] Verse 39. He went and prayed the same thing. And yet, three times Jesus is praying. Three times, what do we see the disciples do in sleeping? Jesus prays, prays, prays. They sleep, sleep, sleep.

He found them sleeping. He found them again sleeping. He returned the third time and said, are you sleeping? He prays, prays, prays, but they sleep, sleep, sleep. The prayer meeting of four becomes a prayer meeting of one.

And it's for several hours. You know, he comes after an hour and he says to them. What we have in this few words, I think it's perhaps a summary of what Jesus prayed.

If he was praying for like three or four hours, he didn't just say the same prayer over and over again. We have a summary of his desperation. He prayed more than these, just a few lines. What we see here is Jesus' response to temptation.

I mean, there was a definite temptation. That's clearly obvious to abandon the whole plan, right? He says, what does he want? If it's possible, he wanted the hour of the cross to be passed from him.

[22 : 54] He said, is there another way? I don't know if I'm sure if I want to drink this cup anymore. Abba Father, verse 36. That's the Abba Father, a deep, personal, intimate way to address God.

He says, everything's possible for you. Take this cup from me. Is there another way, Father, to do what we plan to do? Is there another way without me going through all this? If it's possible, could we, whatever the other way is, can we just do that instead?

He's tempted. Part of him wants to do a runner. Yeah. The disciples, we have dual temptations going on.

Jesus is tempted to do a runner. The disciples fall to temptation. Their flesh, their body is weak, and they can't stay awake. Jesus is weak. But he prays when they can't.

He prays when they can't. He resists and submits to the plan. He chooses to drink the cup because he prays. You know, that is still the case. When we fall and we can't pray, when we can't cope and we're struggling to even get a few words out, Jesus is still praying for you.

[24 : 09] Jesus is still praying for you now. He intercedes at the Father's right hand for you and for me today. But what does he say here?

He says, yet not what I will, what I want, what, not the temptation. He resists and says, but what you will.

The plan, what we plan, what Jesus and the Father plan together with the Holy Spirit before the creation of the world. The plan of the whole of creation. That is what you want. I know that's what you want and that's what I'm going to do.

I'm submitting. It is, what we read here is, I think, honestly, this is one of the most beautiful things that comes out of Jesus' mouth. It's the most beautiful thing that comes out of his mouth.

Yet not what I will, not what I want. Forget what I want. Put it to one side. Don't put the cup to one side. Put me and this temptation to one side. But what you want, he submits to the Father's will.

[25 : 13] Puts himself, everything to one side. He puts himself to one side because he puts you to the fore. You're in the eyes.

You're in his mind. For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross. He looked and he thought of each one of us. The Father and the Son planned this moment.

Now Jesus has to make it happen. He's struggling to cope with his emotional state and the prospect of what is coming, but he chooses to do it anyway for you. It is beautiful.

The yielding, the humility, the obedience. The moment is, it is something else to hear those words from Jesus, yet not what I will, but what you will.

You just consider the fact that he says that with everything that we started with. The mental torture, the fact that he feels like he's drowning under the weight of this burden that is coming.

[26 : 16] And yet in that mental place where he's not coming, he still says, not what I will, but what you will. It is mind-blowing.

Jesus isn't coping, but he will go to the cross. Some of us laugh.

Some of us cry. Some of us cry. Some of us cry. Some of us cry.

Some of us cry. Some of us cry. But it's all just the way that we cope with our lives. Jesus is the model of how we cope.

He turns to God and he drinks the cup. When we can't cope. You know, the normal crutches of life are poor substitutes for the living God.

[27 : 21] His plan didn't change. And when we turn to him, whatever's going on in your life right now, and if you're struggling, Jesus will provide the strength and the humility and the servant heart.

He might not change what's going on. Jesus still had to go to the cross. He didn't take the cross away just because it was hard. It still might be hard, but he'll give you what you need to get through.

What must we do? We must do this. We must go to Gethsemane with Jesus. We must bring our stress and anxiety and struggle to him.

We must place our hands in his, in Gethsemane. Praying to Jesus and praying with him. Pouring out our hearts to him. Expecting him to act and submitting to his will for our lives.

If Jesus needed to get on his hands and needs to cope, then how much more do we? The humanity of Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, human emotion, human suffering, and human dependence on prayer.

[28 : 37] But do you know what it reminds us? It reminds us that the one sat right now on the throne of heaven is flesh and blood like us. Jesus went through all this.

The one who sits on the throne of, the one who sits on the throne of heaven is one who understands you. Jesus of Nazareth began his earthly life the same way we did. He grew from an embryo inside his mother's womb for nine months.

He's one of us. And that is actually the reason that he can save you. Because he himself is a man. He's fully God too. But because he took, because he took on a human nature and became one of us.

Because he lived a human earthly life that yet was without sin. Was without mistake or mess, but completely perfect. That is the reason he can represent you before God the Father.

Because the one that stands in front of the Father is one of us. It's one of us who drank the cup. It's one of us that died. A human, a man, died for you.

[29 : 43] It's because he's one of us that our God became a man and that he gets us. You know, it says, and you might have heard this at funerals and things, it said, our bodies that return to dust when we die.

Yet it is dust that is on the throne. It is a man made from the materials of the earth that sits in heaven.

We started by considering how we cope. Some things more destructive than others, but they're all a poor substitute. Like sticking a plaster on.

Jesus struggled more than any of us. He was alone. He awaited rejection. In your struggles, can I encourage you again, when you're overwhelmed with nothing left, when you're tempted to find solace and comfort somewhere else, then consider going to Gethsemane with Jesus and placing your hands in his.

Jesus, the reservoir, the reservoir of his sustaining grace never dries up. He'll draw near to you and be there where no one else is. He's lived it and he knows what you need.

[30 : 59] He knows what you need and he'll give you what you need for the rest of your life all the way to the day that you go to be with him. If you turn to him, he'll never forsake you or leave you.

Let me pray. Almighty God, I just thank you so much for your son.

I thank you so much for sending your son coming down to earth and living life as the perfect man and we see so much in who he is and what he's done for us and we just, we can't fathom how, how you did this Lord.

We just can't fathom how you found it in the fragile place that you were to be separated from the Father and to die such a painful death and that you did it for us in our place.

And so I just praise you. I come to you just in complete utter thanks and praise that you've done this for me, that you've done this for us, that every single person on this earth who turns to Jesus, this is for them.

[32 : 09] And so I thank you so much. And I pray that we would know this deeply in the circumstances of our life. I pray that you'd touch us and help us and bless us in what lies ahead.

And so we praise you and we ask for your blessing upon us now. In Christ's name. Amen.