

Unfolding the Word

Prayer of St. Fursey

The arms of God be around my shoulders,
The touch of the Holy Spirit upon my head,
The sign of Christ's cross upon my forehead,
The sound of the Holy Spirit in my ears,
The fragrance of the Holy Spirit in my nostrils,
The vision of heaven's company on my lips,
The work of God's Church in my hands,
The service of God and neighbour in my feet,
A home for God in my heart,
And to God, the Father of all, my entire being.

Amen



Mark 14: 26-42 Jesus in Gethsamene

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The Gospel of Mark has the most human portrayal of Jesus in all four Gospels. For example, it shows Jesus suffering in a more real and concrete way than the other Gospels.

Like any human being, Jesus feels a wide range of human emotions, including pity (1:41), anger (3:5) and wonder (6:6), compassion (6:34), indignation (10:14), and love (10:21). He becomes tired (6:31) and hungry (11:12). More significantly, perhaps, Jesus does not know everything (13:32), and his power is sometimes limited (6:5).

There is no reason to doubt the historicity of the Agony in the Garden. It is referenced in all four Gospels (Mt 26:36-46; Mk 14:32-52; Lk 22:39-46; Jn 12:27; 14:31; 18:11) and in the Letter to the Hebrews 5:7.

In this text, the humanity of Jesus can be seen in Mark's description of Jesus' sufferings in Gethsemane. The adjectives used to describe Jesus' agony and pain, are very powerful. Mark describes Jesus as "distressed and agitated" (Mk 14:33). Furthermore, Jesus describes himself as "deeply grieved, even to death" (Mk 14:34). This is a reflection of Psalm 42, a psalm of lament.

Morna Hooker says that "Mark's picture of Jesus in Gethsemane rings true, for it shows us the struggle of someone who faces up to the likelihood of imminent

suffering, not knowing what the outcome of events will be. Jesus grapples with the horror of violent death, recognising it, as did every Jew, as an outrage" (M. Hooker, *The Gospel according to St. Mark*, p. 347).

This is the only gospel where Jesus, in his upset, throws himself on the ground and in his prayer he asks God to "remove this cup from me" (Mk 14:36) and seems afraid to face what is ahead of him. In his upset he turns especially to Peter, James and John for support.

They've been his closest companions, have seen him raise the dead (Mk 5:37f.) witnessed his Transfiguration on the Mount (Mk 9:2f.), have heard him speak of suffering before the final vindication/victory and have protested their loyalty to him on numerous occasions (Mk 10:35-40; 14:29f.): but even they fail to "watch and pray" with him (Mk 14:32, 34, 38).

The 'hour' of Jesus' Passion is at hand (Mk 14:41-42) and he is finally able to accept his fate, he is ready to face the suffering he fears awaits him. So, he urges the disciples to "Get up! Let us go. Look, my betrayer is here" (Mk 14:42). Then, Judas enters to betray him.

Mark has written his gospel for people who are being persecuted and suffering. The human picture of Jesus which Mark portrays is meant to bring home to this community that like them Jesus also felt abandoned by God and his family and friends. However, like Jesus, this is not the end and they will come through suffering and abandonment to the resurrection.