

It was two years and two weeks ago when I started on staff here at the church as the worship director. One of the first things I did was to take some time each month to evaluate our songbook. If you want to know a Church's theology, read the lyrics of her songs.

After a few months I had this collection of songs marked "for further review" These were great songs, solid and biblical. But we had been doing them the exact same way for a while, and I thought maybe it was time to take a fresh look at some old truths.

And so I would look around online and see what other churches were doing, to see how they were arranging these particular songs. I started with the "A's" and worked my way down until I had to stop at the "I's" where I found something unexpected and shocking, and a bit confusing.

For the song "In Christ Alone" I found several arraignments and versions that were all 25% shorter than the version we do here. They were missing an entire section. And They were all missing the *same* section. One quarter of the song was removed as if it never existed. The following is the missing section:

Verse 2:

*In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,  
Fullness of God in helpless babe.  
This gift of love and righteousness,  
Scorned by the ones He came to save  
Till on that cross as Jesus died,  
The wrath of God was satisfied  
For every sin on Him was laid  
Here in the death of Christ I live.*

Very confused, I asked Rich, “why would people just throw away an entire verse of a song like that. I’ve never heard of anything like this. Seems like a pretty solid verse to me What am I missing?”

And he said, “People are uncomfortable with the idea of the wrath of God.”

One prominent denomination here in the states went so far as to petition the writers of this song to allow them to sing it without verse 2. When the song writers responded, “No you may not.” That denomination promptly removed the song entirely from their songbooks and none of their churches sing it today. All because of the one line that references the wrath of God.

This morning I want to encourage you that we cannot understand the Gospel, we cannot understand the cross, we cannot fully understand Jesus Christ himself and his work, if we remove the topic of God's wrath. It's not a pleasant topic. It's not an easy topic to stomach. It is however, a necessary topic for the believer in Christ to consider. It is necessary for everyone who is "saved" to be biblically informed on how to answer the question, "Saved from what?"

And, in some respects, I understand people being uncomfortable with the wrath of God. I get it. But this morning I'd like to submit to you that **We really aren't uncomfortable *enough* with the idea of the wrath of God.**

If you are one for taking notes, you could title today's message, "The Cup and the Church"

Please open your copy of God's word to the gospel according to Mark, chapter 14. Mark chapter 14 and our focus will be on verses 32-42, as I have the privilege of bringing God's word to us this morning.

And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray."

And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch."

And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour?"

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words.

And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him.

And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

42 Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand." - Mark 14:32-42

Would you pray with me?

Heavenly Father,  
I feel very aware of my need this morning. God would you send your Spirit to highlight your word in our hearts and minds today? We don't want to encounter your word and leave here unchanged. Help us God, soften our hearts to hear what you have for us this morning.  
In Jesus name, Amen.

Point number one, The Cup.

Spend any length of time Here at Center Church, and you will hear about the cross of Jesus often. You'll hear it in our songs, it's in our sermons, you can even see a cross in our logo. We've adopted the concept of "the cross" in our everyday conversations.

But when we stop and truly contemplate an actual death by crucifixion, the nailing of a human body to a cross of wood, it becomes difficult to imagine anything else but the physical pain. The bodily damage that would occur as metal nails are forcibly driven through skin and muscle and bone would be *extreme*. To be crucified would be to have the long remaining final hours of your life focused entirely around the excruciating pain.

And yet, in Mark's account of the crucifixion of Christ in Chapter 15 the beginning of verse 24, it simply reads,

*"And they crucified him."*

Four very direct and practical words to describe the saviors death.

Four words. Thats all we get from Mark. We can be tempted to ask, "Really Mark? That seems a bit light on the details. Couldn't you spare a few more words to describe this scene to us? I was under the impression that this was the biggest moment in all of history. And you wrote down four words. What's going on?"

I believe that Mark wisely choose to focus the bulk of his words for the context surrounding the crucifixion. See, when we read the gospel accounts of how Jesus responded to being accused, when he was whipped and beaten, and had a crown of sharp thorns forced onto his head, while he was being crucified, when the soldier pierced his side with a spear, throughout all of these horrific things: he never gave a word of protest. Not once do we read of Jesus crying out to his father to allow the hour of

whipping to pass. When he was unjustly accused, he was silent.

*Mark 15:4-5*

*And Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you."*

*But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.*

This just made no sense to Pilate. With all that Jesus had gone through, surely he would have something to say. "Jesus your own people have so many charges against you, do you have any thing to say in your defense?"

But there were no objections, no words of protest, nothing.

In the face of such pain and injustice and horror, he is quiet.

But in our text, Jesus encounters something in the garden, and he has a strong reaction to it that is very different than what we've seen elsewhere and he is anything but quiet.

In Mark 14:33 we see Jesus

“began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.”

And then in verse 35

“And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

As Jesus is hours away from his coming crucifixion, the thing that troubles him, the thing that makes his soul so sorrowful even to the point of death, the thing that causes him to physically stagger as his legs give way, the *thing* that causes him to cry out to his Father, “**is there any other way?**” Is the mere thought of the cup.

The book of Isaiah gives us some context to explain what this cup is. And why Jesus reacts so strongly to it. Isaiah chapter 51 verse 17

*“Wake yourself, wake yourself, stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the LORD **the cup of his wrath**, who have*



*drunk to the dregs the bowl, the cup of staggering.*

The cup represents God's wrath. Now a cup doesn't exactly strike fear in your heart. But, a cup is meant to be filled with something for the purpose of drinking it. You only fill a cup when there's an expectation that someone is going to drink from it. God chose to take his wrath and pour it into a cup and at some point someone will have to drink it.

I don't know what you imagine God's wrath to be like. I don't know if you are picturing an irritable God who's just waiting for something to make him mad so he can toss a lightning bolt or two. But that's not what we're talking about.

The Bible describes the wrath of God as His just response to, and His intense hatred of, *sin*.

**Psalm 5:4-5**

*For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;*

*evil may not dwell with you.*

*The boastful shall not stand before your eyes;*

*you **hate** all evildoers.*

Psalm 11:5

*The Lord tests the righteous, but his soul **hates** the wicked and the one who loves violence.*

Proverbs 15:9

*The way of the wicked is an **abomination** to the Lord,*

God is explosively furious at Sin. God doesn't just consider Sin a minor annoyance, it doesn't just rub him the wrong way. God isn't mildly irritated at sin. Sin, enrages God. It is so *offensive* to Him He can't even stand to look at it. It is the worst sight, worst smell, worst sound and worst taste all put together. It's repulsive to God. So much so, sin cannot exist in his presence. It's impossible for evil to dwell with him. My sin, your sin, the familiar sin that we get so comfortable and friendly with, God *hates* with such a fury that it's hard for us to even imagine. And he takes that wrath and places it inside a cup.

In the garden, Jesus contemplates this cup, full of stored up, red hot, brutal, furious, righteous and

concentrated wrath of God and the mere thought of drinking it, absorbing it into his perfect body, it causes him to physically stagger and fall to his knees. God's wrath is not some metaphor, or simply a concept in Jesus' mind. It is the actual, physical, tangible rage of God against sin that can be tasted, and seen, and felt most deeply. The realization of the full weight of God's anger against sin pushes Jesus down to the dirt in the garden.

Just To anticipate this is a thought so awful and terrifying, Three times he pleads with his father to remove this cup from him. The full cup of the wrath of God is too terrible.

Jesus who up to this point had given no words of protest, now protests.

The second person of the trinity, God the son, who up to this point had enjoyed perfect union with God the Father from eternity past, perfect and complete communication for all of time, now cries out, **“Father. Is there another way? Take the cup away from me.”**

And there is silence.

For the first time, God the Father does not answer his son. There is no other way.

Jesus comes back two more times, saying the same words, "Father, All things are possible with you. Remove this cup from me."

And each time... Silence.

There are no analogies, no word pictures, there exists no collection of words in any language that can convey the abject terror of coming face to face with God's wrath. It's not uncomfortable, it is deeply horrifying to your core. Jesus does so in the garden and the experience causes him to sweat great drops of blood as he pleads with his Father to get that cup as far away from him as possible. But there is no answer. No alternative. He can't even find any comfort in his friends, they've all fallen asleep. He is alone.

And what does he say? "Yet not what I will, but what you will."

And so, Jesus, hearing no reply from His Father is led to the cross and he begins to drink the cup of God's wrath until it is dry. And the roar of God's intense hatred for sin swells and crashes violently

onto Christ. God the Father, unleashes the torrent of His stored up wrath *on his own beloved son.*

Because now he *can't stand the sight of him.*

Because now, It was as if Jesus was the one who was a liar, a cheat, and a thief. It was as if Jesus had committed adultery, looked at porn, and slept around. God's intense hatred of sin *burned* against Christ as if he were the one who abused children and raped women, and committed war crimes. Jesus never did any of these things, he was perfect in every way and yet here God **crushes** him as if he did all of them.

2nd Corinthians 5:21 "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew *no sin.*"

And then, after Jesus finished drinking the cup of God's wrath, he cried out... it is finished. The wrath of God is now satisfied. There is now not a single drop of wrath left in that cup. And then he dies.

*Can you see the display of God's peculiar love in this moment?*

Because that cup, was my cup. It was your cup. In it was the particular and unique stored up wrath of

God for all of my sin. It was the cup with my name on it, filled with the consequences of *my* sinful actions and thoughts. There is only one person who should have to drink the contents of that cup. There is only one name on the side of that cup. There's only one person who rightly deserved to die for my sins and experience the wrath of God in full.

Me. And me alone.

That would have been justice. That would have been fair and right. I should've gotten what I deserve. And I deserved every single drop of wrath in that cup.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—**by grace you have been saved**

The savior called out my name and said “follow me.... not only will I put *my* name on your cup, I'll put your name on my perfect life. Let's trade.”

Why? Why would Jesus make such an offer? Because of his steadfast love for his bride....

[Hosea 2:19-20](#)

And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy.

I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.

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## Point number 2. The Church.

Jesus left the glory of heaven and perfect union with God the father to put on flesh. He suffers the indignity of being accused and beaten and whipped by the very men he crafted and made in his image. The people who relied on Him every second of every day to keep their hearts beating -drove nails into his body with the intent of stopping his. He experienced the *most horrific* thing anyone could go through, the full wrath of God crushing him when he didn't deserve it.

Jesus, why did you choose this?

*“And I will betroth you to me forever.”*

Jesus, I find myself easily turning to so many different things. I wander away from you, I try to find satisfaction in money, and relationships and a whole host of other things. Why would you stand in my place and drink the cup of wrath that I deserved?

*“I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy.”*

Jesus, I'm not faithful. On my own, I can't love you back in the same way that you love me.

*“I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.”*

Can you see how much Jesus loves his church? To Christ the church is his bride waiting for her wedding day. And despite all of the flaws and problems that can be easy to spot when you look at the Church.... Jesus looks and sees his intended and He loves her with a kind of steadfast forever love. The kind of love that promises to pursue us even when we go after other gods, other things to satisfy us. The kind of steadfast love that can even overcome spiritual adultery, and that's what we've seen in our series in Hosea. When we wander from God to other things, God describes it in the same way as you cheating on your husband or wife. This is why it's critical we don't shy away from talking about the wrath of God. God promised that he betrothed us to himself. And it's through seeing the incredible cost of keeping that promise that we could ever understand just how much God loves his church. God the father gave up



his only son, and crushed him under his righteous wrath... this is how we know love.

What else is there? All of the sudden, in this context, the god of an extra \$10,000, or losing 20 lbs, or gaining more respect... seems pretty pathetic when stacked against the incredible steadfast love we've received from God in Jesus.

There's no greater gift in heaven or on earth to give you. God gave himself! There's nothing more valuable!

There's no stronger piece of evidence to be found that somehow proves his love more. This was it! God loves his church, his people, so much that he gave *himself* for it.

When we were so unbelievably lost, it was through the love of God on full display at Calvary as He crushed his son with his wrath, that whoever puts their trust in Christ - they shall be saved from it. We're Saved *by* God, we're saved *from* God. And we're saved *for* God.

Center Church, and all the believers who are listening, you are intended for God. I need to hear this directed to myself- Zach, you are betrothed to Christ. *Start acting like it.* Live as if this is true. See what it cost Jesus to rescue you and know his great love for you.

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus, I confess I don't always live my life as if I was betrothed to you. I *am* prone to wander, I'm inclined to go after so many other things. Jesus your steadfast love is like nothing we've ever encountered. Your relentless pursuit of us when we stray and go after other gods is sobering and sometimes embarrassing... how could we seek after other gods in light of what you endured at Calvary on our behalf? We thank you Lord, for taking our place, for drinking the Cup in our place so that we would never know of Gods wrath.

Lord we are weak, but in our weakness you are strong. Help us Jesus to remember your steadfast love and promises this week, we've encountered your word this morning, and may we leave this place changed because of it..

it's in your name, we give thanks and pray,

Amen