

WHEN YOUR PLANS ARE INTERRUPTED BY PAIN + + +

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Good morning, King of Kings! Oh, man, what a beautiful day for a run for all those who are out there, blessing the Lord with the bodies they've been given. I was a big runner back in Wisconsin, and I've started taking up running again here in Omaha. Man, y'all have some hilly hills. It's ridiculous. I thought I'd be PRing it because I've heard Nebraska was flat. False! Here in Nebraska, in Omaha at least, it's not.

All right, well, that's, you know, what I was thinking about running, but I am from the Milwaukee area of Wisconsin, so I thought maybe I would begin with a story from the Milwaukee area, and it's actually going to involve one of my favorite presidents of all time. Now, I'm not going to tell you who this president is. I'm going to tell the story, and I'm going to see if you can figure it out based off of the clues in the story, but it is about pain, so you have to be ready for that part because today's sermon is about what do we do in the middle of pain when our lives are interrupted by that? So here's how the story goes.

It is October 14th, 1912. That's your first clue. It'll give you a little bit of a heads up as to what we're talking about in time here. This man was kind of on the stomping grounds for his third presidential term. That's another clue for you. And as he got out of his car and started walking his way to the stage, this man named John Schrank stands up, points a revolver at him, and shoots this presidential candidate in the chest.

Now, it actually hits. It actually goes in. He stumbles backward a little bit and then goes up on the stage, gets behind the lectern and says, ladies and gentlemen, I've just been shot, but don't worry, I will finish my speech. It takes more than that to kill a bull moose. All right, there's another clue for you.

Raise your hand if you think you know who it is. You can't just yell it out. Yes, it's Teddy Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt, of course. And he goes on to speak for 84 minutes. So today I'm going for 85. All right, Fremont, buckle in, Northwestern, buckle in, let's go. No, I might get fired if I try to do that.

All right. But in any event, today's message is going to be like that. That there are going to be circumstances that every one of us are going to be called into. And we know that it's going to have some pain in that moment, or you are in pain right now, and the Lord is calling you to go through that pain and still continue to be obedient in your life.

And so I have a little bit of a sticky statement that I want you to repeat after me, because we're going to repeat this several times throughout our message today. And it's this, sometimes you just got to play hurt. All right, I'm going to start it, I'll let you guys finish it. Sometimes you just got to play hurt. Exactly.

Because interruptions will happen in your life. This is a broken, fallen world. So interruptions happen all over the place. We've been studying interruptions these past three weeks. Let's do a little quick recap

of all of the interruptions that we've seen Jesus doing ministry through. So you'll see why it's kind of an end cap to have him interrupted by pain.

So the first week, we heard Jesus's family and the religious leaders of the day wanted to take him out of ministry. And we learned, what do you do when your integrity is interrupted?

Second week in the sermon series, we followed Jairus as his daughter was dying. And all of a sudden it's interrupted by this other woman who reaches her hand out to touch his hem. She's healed of her illness, but while she's doing so, Jairus's daughter dies. And we address the question, what do you do when your miracle is interrupted by other people's miracles?

Last week, did you leave your big old bag of fear behind last week? You should have, because we learned from Jesus, what do you do when fear interrupts your obedience?

And this week, we're going to deal with the text itself that's going to equip us to answer the question, what do you do when your plans are interrupted by fear?

Because you see, all too often the relationship that we have with pain is that we avoid it. So if we know it's going to be in front of us, we step to the side. If we think we might encounter it in the future, like just the possibility of it, we'll step away from that and we won't move forward because there might be pain on the other side.

But I believe that in many of those circumstances, the pain is not an excuse for a detour. It is actually the highway through which you're called to travel to bring the beauty of the gospel. Because sometimes you just got to play.

And so let's see what happens when we are called to embrace pain. In Mark chapter 14, verses 1 and 2, this is our outer story for today.

So Jesus has just been going around doing the most Jesus-y things. He's kind of transitioned in the gospel of Mark from doing a lot more of the miraculous to now doing more teaching focus.

And ironically enough, do you want to know what he just got done teaching? He just got done right before this saying, hey, just so you know, nobody knows the day nor the hour when I'm going to return, which I think is appropriate because what was supposed to happen this last Tuesday? Yeah, we are all terrible Christians if that's the case, because we're still here on a Sunday. And apparently the rapture happened last Tuesday.

Well, just so you know, it's been recalculated according to the Gregorian calendar rather than Julian calendar. The real rapture apparently is coming in October.

Do I believe that? No. Why? Because I do not take my theology from TikTok, Instagram, or Facebook. I take my theology from Jesus who says that nobody knows the day or the hour. Amen, church? Amen.

All right. So now we got that out of the way. What else is Jesus doing here in our media context?

Jesus has flipped some tables. He's cleansed the temple. He's corrected the inaccurate teachings of the teachers of the day. Does that sound familiar? He's still doing that. And I want to hear their reaction.

And so as we read into the outer story, you get a chance to interrupt. So it was two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were seeking to arrest him by stealth and kill him. For they said, not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people.

So here we have a little bit of actually like this cool full circle moment. Do you remember the word that was used in the very first sermon, the very first interruption for what his family wanted to do to stop him in ministry?

Remember that word? It was seize. It was more violent than that. It was like yeeting him out of ministry, just pulling him right out of there. It's the same verb that's used here.

So the religious teachers who had just been convicted of teaching false doctrine want to arrest him, violently grab him, pull him away. But now it's not just to pull him away from ministry, it's to pull him away from ministry and do what? Kill him.

That is what they're planning on doing.

Now, do you want to know the timing of all this? Like Jesus knew that this pain was coming, this arrest and this murdering, and he knew it was happening soon.

And does he like step away, sidestep away from it like he has done earlier in time? So you remember like the crowds didn't like his teaching about Isaiah when he was in the synagogue and they crowded around him and they moved him towards the edge of a cliff.

But rather than like them being able to complete that plan, he just kind of like moved out of the way. Not today. He didn't move away from the pain.

Instead, he knows it's forthcoming. And he knows this because these religious leaders and scribes, they're smart. They know that in just a few short days, hundreds of thousands of Jewish pilgrims are going to come to Jerusalem.

And if Jesus incites some kind of rebellion, because that's what the religious leaders think that he's going to do, they'll have hundreds of thousands of rebels going against them as leaders.

And even if they're able to put them down, that is the pilgrims, the Romans who are over the chief priests and scribes are going to get them out of the way too.

So Jesus knows that this is probably Wednesday of Holy Week and that this pain is coming shortly. He knew that it would come fast. He knew it was brutal. But did he stop? No. Because sometimes you just gotta play hurt.

And that's where we transition into like the cut into the inner story. So outer story, scribes want to arrest him. Brutality is coming.

Inner story. Now we move to Mark chapter 14, verses three through nine, and it's a pretty significant gear shift, but we need to pay attention to it.

You might say, why do we need to pay attention to it? Because the gospel of Mark is very specific that the woman in this story needs you to pay attention to her.

And Jesus himself is going to draw everyone listening here today to what this woman is doing in the inner story that interrupts the outer story, because it's a great example of playing hurt.

So let's read this text together. It's a little bit longer, but you guys get the opportunity to interrupt twice.

So while Jesus was at Bethany and the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard. It was very costly.

She broke the flask, poured it over his head.

Now there were some who said to themselves indignantly, why was the ointment wasted like that? This ointment could have been sold for more than 300 denarii. It could have been given to the poor.

They scolded her.

Jesus said, leave her alone. Why do you do this? But she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you're always going to have the poor with you and whenever you want, you can do good for them, but you'll not always have me.

She's done what she could. She's anointed my body beforehand for burial and truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed, this is why you need to pay attention, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.

Look, you and I know what hurt and pain feel like. We know our usual reaction is to shy away or maybe use our pain as an excuse not to lean in to other people and minister Christ's words of hope in the middle of their brokenness.

But this is why we need to pay attention to this picture. This is why Jesus says what she's done is going to be told in memory wherever the gospel is proclaimed and at this church, at King of Kings, we proclaim the gospel every single time you come here.

You can go to the bank and get information about money. You can go to a counselor and hear all about marriage, but here at church, you get to hear about the gospel. You get to receive in your heart the forgiveness that Jesus brings.

And so if this is important to Jesus, that wherever the gospel is proclaimed, this woman's story is going to be told, then here in Fremont, in Bennington, we will tell the story of this woman because she gives us a wonderful example of real life following of Jesus, real life discipleship, because she knows what it's like to play hurt.

So I want to give you a picture here to look at.

It's a picture of an alabaster jar.

And this alabaster jar is going to represent many things. You're going to take a look at it. We're going to learn a lot because of this specific thing that this woman is using to anoint Jesus.

She knows he's going to die.

And yet we're going to learn several different lessons about what it's like to play hurt.

The first one is when we're playing hurt in our security.

You see, the scripture said that this is worth about 300 denarii.

If you were to work a regular job in this first century Judea, you'd make about a denarii a day.

So if you take 365 days in the year, you subtract the 52 Sabbaths where you couldn't work, subtract some of the remaining festivals where you couldn't work at this time, and you come up with about 300 denarii.

So this is a year's worth of wages.

Most people, when they're called to follow Jesus, they wait until they're strong enough, secure enough, and then they'll follow him.

And is that how you do it sometimes? Like somebody else will take care of proclaiming Jesus's name because maybe I just got a little pain right here.

But what do we learn from this woman?

She doesn't wait until she's strong enough.

She gives in the moment when it's needed, and she gives everything.

She knew Jesus was going to die.

Now here's the other thing.

Sometimes we want to like worship and serve out of our overflow.

But faith worships and serves most of the time out of emptiness.

Here's another thing that I want to show you from this woman and the what she's doing in worship for Jesus and ministering through pain.

Take a look at this jar.

Let's take a look at that.

Where is the cork so that you could take some of the perfume out, use it, sprinkle it a little bit, and then put the cork back in?

Where's the little flip top lid?

Where's that thing?

You can't.

So this is actually an amphora from around the same time from Judea.

So same area where Jesus is doing ministry.

You don't notice that there's a way to reseal that flask because there isn't.

When Mark writes this gospel, he talks about not just her opening it.

The gospel says that she broke it.

There is no going back.

This is a word for shattering.

Like she didn't stop to say, oh, gee, maybe I'll just use a little bit here and then I'll save a little bit back because I might need a little bit more later.

Who knows?

Maybe I could sell this on what, like the black market of perfume?

I don't know.

None of that.

She went all in while her heart was breaking that her friend was going to die.

And so I want you to think about this the next time that you feel like you have unbreakable plans in front of you.

That you know and you feel that Jesus is calling you this way, but that's different than the plans that have you going this way.

Think of this act of this woman playing while hurt, giving everything to Jesus, shattering her own plans, her own future, her own pride, and moving towards Jesus.

That's what it looks like to play with full surrender.

Now also, we're going to learn that this is like teaching us to play hurt even when the timing feels wrong.

When were you supposed to anoint a body for burial, church?

After death.

Right.

And when is she doing this?

Yeah, Jesus is still alive.

It doesn't look like the timing makes sense in any of this.

A lot of your life doesn't make any sense when it's filled with Jesus.

Oftentimes we wait for the perfect season to actually talk about the Lord.

I will be talking about the Lord a lot later in my life when I feel more mature.

When I'm able to do X, Y, Z, line everything up, then I'll go do it.

Sometimes you honor more when you're working in imperfect seasons because you're not going to ever encounter on this earth a perfect season to follow Jesus.

And sometimes you honor a lot more in the valley than you do in the mountaintop.

Well, how about another lesson of how she's playing hurt?

She plays hurt against the crowd.

The very people who follow Jesus so closely that have heard him teach and preach are the very ones, the disciples, who critique what this woman is doing in her pain and in her service.

She was misunderstood, she was criticized, and she was ashamed.

But just like when you follow Jesus into these various same moments, you knew that he was calling you there.

You knew the Spirit was guiding you in that moment.

You knew it was right, despite what everybody else around you was saying.

This is the example that she's given to every single one of us, that sometimes you play hurt despite the crowd's approval or lack thereof.

Because sometimes you just gotta play hurt.

And what does Jesus say about this?

In verse 8, in the middle of her pain, in the middle of her struggle, it doesn't make sense to anybody else.

He says, she has done a beautiful thing for me.

She's anointed my body beforehand for burial.

Well, I pray that this is where your life is interrupted by Christ's gospel.

Because in pain, it is so easy to not be like this woman.

In our pain, it's so easy to just kind of step to the side and wait, or step over here and wait.

And other people are pursuing Jesus, and that looks like beauty to me, but I can't do it because I'm over here in my own pain trying to solve my own problems.

He's calling me there, but I'm over here.

And I tell you what, my life when I do this does not look anything near beautiful.

It's ugly and it stinks.

But isn't that what sin is?

Isn't that why every single one of us knows what it's like to stand in this place and see life and adventure and ministry passing us by?

Because we've been crippled with our own pain and we're easier called to be obedient to that than we are to Jesus himself.

And that stinks.

Here's the great news of the gospel of Jesus.

This is how Paul talks about Jesus's life.

The one who is anointed with this aromatic perfume.

He says, Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God.

Just think about that.

Every single one of us are in pain, but Jesus was willing to step into that pain, go through it and do something absolutely beautiful, despite it looking quite torturous.

And why is one more reason why we should tell this woman's story, this interruption of pain next to the cross.

Here's why.

When Jesus went up to the cross, did he have clothes on?

He had been stripped of all of his clothes.

Did he have any pride with him that Jesus would take that with him?

No.

He was humiliated, stripped of his dignity, stripped of his clothing, stripped because of the flagels against his back, stripped of his skin.

But what was it that he carried with him?

Most likely, what was it that he wore in the middle of that pain?

He still wore the perfume.

He still wore the anointing, the reminder that he is the Messiah, the one that would come to take away the sins of the world, and that there was beauty in the midst of that ugly pain.

And what a wonderful example of Jesus do we have, that sometimes you got to play hurt.

I would love for there to be some other kind of celebratory, joyous resolution to this interruption, but it's not going to come, not in this text.

The resolution comes in Mark 14, verses 10 through 11, and you get a chance to interrupt into this text.

You get a chance to see how all of this unfolded still in the eyes of one of Jesus' closest followers and in the eyes of the religious teachers of the day.

Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them.

And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money, and he sought an opportunity to betray him.

Look, the reason why there's no happy celebratory resolution to this is because the scriptures record reality.

And that as long as there is sin in this world, guess what?

There's going to be pain, and you're going to hurt.

And oftentimes, it's going to come from the ones who are the closest to you.

Judas followed closely with Jesus for three years.

And he didn't even have to be, like, cajoled into doing this thing.

He did it willingly.

And yet, Jesus was still called to love Judas.

And we are still called to the people that have even caused us our pain.

Because what we're going to learn in application to this last sermon in this sermon series is that we're called to play hurt for the sake of the kingdom.

Paul's a great example of this, right?

So Paul had this thorn in the flesh.

We don't know what it is.

He went to the Lord.

He asked for it to be taken away.

The Lord did not take it away during Paul's life.

And yet, how does Paul interpret this?

Does he step to the side and say, no, pain is going to have its way with me.

I'm no longer going to talk about Jesus.

No, instead, Paul steps up to the plate.

He comes up to the stage.

And despite floggings and shipwrecks and beatings, he gets up and says, the Lord Jesus loves you.

All of you sinners, all who have hurt, Jesus cares about you, loves you.

He died for you.

Paul knew what it was like to play hurt.

But I think you've seen an example just this past week of the impact of a believer in Jesus playing hurt.

Erica Kurtz's husband had just died.

And last Sunday, they were having a memorial for his life.

She could have sat down and no one would have held it against her.

She could have not said a word and no one would have thought the wiser.

But instead, what did she do?

She steps up in the middle of her pain.

And she says, that man, that man who killed my husband, I forgive him.

She knew what it was like to play while she was hurt.

She knew the effect that it would have for the kingdom of God.

And did you hear some of the stories that came as a result of that?

My feed was blowing up with stories of people saying, if she can do that after such struggle and trauma, I can forgive my dad's killer.

Tim Allen from Home Improvement.

Did you see that?

His dad was killed by a drunk driver 60 years ago, and he's not been able to forgive the man who killed his dad.

And yet after that stage moment of Erica on the stage and speaking through pain, he said, I think I can forgive that man now.

And over and over, I started to see more and more stories of the gospel taking root in life of people speaking through their own pain, that there was forgiveness and there was beauty in Jesus there.

I could forgive my mother's killer, my brother's killer, my sister's killer, all of it.

Because Jesus's people decided they weren't going to shy away from pain, but they were called to it.

And this is what our interruptions do.

They make us stop, ask really good questions, and listen to Jesus for his answer.

So as we recap the sermon series, let's go through it in a way that you interrupt me.

We've asked questions like, what happens when your integrity is interrupted by your family?

Interrupt, sometimes you need a timeout to regroup.

Well, what happens when your faith story is interrupted by somebody else's miracle?

Sometimes you need an injury timeout.

But what happens when your obedience is interrupted by fear?

Sometimes you need an encouraging halftime speech, and that's what the gospel is, brothers and sisters.

And so what happens when your plans are interrupted by pain?

Sometimes you just got to play her.

I want to go back to that original story about Teddy Roosevelt getting shot.

When the doctors did have a chance to look after him after the speech was over and he went to the hospital, they credited basically one thing with saving his life.

That 84-minute speech was a 50-page written speech that was folded up several times.

And even though the bullet still went in and he felt pain, do you want to know what saved he still went in and he felt pain, do you want to know what saved his life?

A collection of words right around his heart.

I pray that as you and I learn more and more about all of these interruptions in life, that you see you got a collection of words right here too.

That yes, you're going to encounter pain, but you have a collection of God's word from this gospel of Mark and the rest of the scriptures.

That doesn't necessarily shield you from the pain, but keeps you alive and stepping up to the stage for the name of Jesus.

Let's pray.

Jesus, thank you so, so much that you're not a savior who's going to step away from pain and yet you as God, as man step into pain.

And despite your pain, you did something absolutely beautiful in giving us hope and grace in life.

So now Jesus, with this example, we would just ask that we could do the same, that you would strengthen each and every one of our faith.

That when we're encountering pain, we don't use it as an excuse not to speak of your promises, but a platform through which your kingdom is proclaimed.

We ask this by your blood and we ask this through the power of your spirit and all God's people said, amen.