



# TWO GARDENS

SERIES: FOUNDATION STONES

Mark 14:32-42

11th Message

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Good Morning! Wow, it's so quiet. There was a time when that would have been perfect but to be honest I'm now kind of used to a certain noise level! So if you want to occasionally chat to your neighbor or get up and move around go right ahead and I'll feel right at home, it'll be just like Middle School group!

Last month Kady, Piper and I travelled to the UK for my brother's wedding. We were both quite nervous to make the 11 hour flight with a 1 year old. I had visions of standing at the back of the plane while Piper screamed and screamed and everyone on the plane hated us!

Well, it went a lot better than that thanks to many people praying for us. The flight out was great and when, on the return flight, Piper went to sleep while I was holding her during takeoff, I'm thinking, "this is gonna be a piece of cake!" Unfortunately, she woke up 45 minutes later and that was the sum total of sleep for that flight! By the time we were landing, Piper was so overtired and done (and so were we), that she just started crying and screaming inconsolably. Frankly, by this point, that seemed like a pretty good option to me as well... Fortunately, before I too resorted to the inconsolable crying, Kady managed to rock Piper to sleep and we tiptoed our way out of the plane, through immigration and baggage claim to Kady's parents' waiting car and collapsed in the back seat.

But that's not the end of the story.

Unfortunately due to a delayed flight and our baggage taking forever to come through, we were now leaving SFO at about 4:20 and so we hit the top of Palo Alto at about 5pm—always a disaster. Kady by this time is feeling just so, so sick (being pregnant, no sleep, long flight, long trip). We've already made one vomit stop and she's like, "Dad can we go home another way?"

To which I, being the compassionate husband that I am, reply, "there is no other way."

About 2 minutes pass and Kady tries again, "Dad can we please go home another way?"

I, in my infinite compassion and care reply, "Kady, look, you remember when you were coaching and we had all those 4pm and 5pm games up in Palo Alto and further north? Back then we tried every option. There is NO. OTHER. WAY. You know this! Why are you even asking?"

At the time I was struck not just by my own compassion and patience, but also by how very human it is to strive and strive to find another way, a way out, even when we know full well that there is no other way! Sound familiar? It did to me: Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, searching for another way, begging his Father that the cup of judgment might pass from him, pleading not to have to drink it.

Jesus isn't stupid—he knows there isn't another way. This plan has been in motion since the beginning of time. But it's one of those

instances where you see Jesus, and you see that he is fully human. There are many things that Jesus did during his time on earth that we have no hope of replicating. But this! This striving to find another way, when you know there isn't one? This is fully human. This we know. This we can relate to.

## Consider for a moment Jesus in Gethsemane:

### 1. Jesus was the most powerful man on the planet.

He's working miracles, raising the dead, teaching with such authority. Huge crowds follow him everywhere; people are drawn to him. He's a charismatic leader.

Since we know the end of the story, we don't often consider this, but is there any doubt in our minds that if Jesus had gone rogue, if Jesus had decided to stage that revolution—is there any doubt in our minds that it would have been successful? Let's not think for one second that Jesus didn't seize power because the Jewish people weren't very numerous and Rome was so powerful. There is no doubt in my mind that if Jesus had gone ahead with that plan, he would have succeeded!

### 2. Jesus submitted to a Higher Authority.

And I want to argue that this is the basis for the call to Servant Leadership—we have a Higher Authority over us. If you think about the ancient civilizations—the Pharaohs of Egypt, or some of the Caesars of the Roman Empire—They considered themselves to be gods. Well at that point, it makes logical sense to give yourself absolute power and authority, because as a god you have divine right. And though they did terrible things, there's really no reason why they shouldn't, because they are god!

It's easy to judge, but our society does the same thing, except that it sets up everyone as gods, with absolute authority over morality—what feels good, what's right for *you!* Or *me!* And sometimes we as Christians are drawn into that kind of thinking and join in, and if we don't believe in God that's fine! If we just believe that everyone has to fend for themselves, find their own meaning and way in life, if there's nothing else—fine!

There's no reason not to take that absolute authority for ourselves if that's what we believe—but we do not! We have a Higher Authority, the One True God, who calls us to be servant leaders.

Today is the last of our Foundation Stones: Servant Leadership. When you think of the topic of Servant Leadership, your first thought is probably Jesus washing the disciples' feet (I know that's where my mind goes). Or maybe if you're a bit more advanced you think of Paul on marriage in Ephesians 5 or the Philippians 2 passage that we read for our scripture reading. But if there's one thing I can't stand, it's predictable sermons!

Now let me reassure you (lest you be concerned!), I didn't just pick something different for the sake of being different. There's

absolutely nothing wrong with those passages; I love them all! But as I pondered this topic (striving for another way—there is no other way, you say!), I was drawn to consider servant leadership in the broader sense of the topic. I think there is a danger sometimes that we fall into considering Servant Leadership as event-specific. When I wash someone's feet, literally or figuratively, I'm a servant leader. But is that really the only time? Or we think of servant-leadership as role specific—in marriage, or at church or at work, if you have a leadership role then you can look to be a servant leader. But what if you're not one of those people?

As I thought more on Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, I was struck by the fact that it is simply the culmination of a LIFE of Servant Leadership. Jesus lived a lifestyle of Servant Leadership. It wasn't a hat that he put on for specific circumstances! So we're going to take a closer look at Mark's account of Gethsemane, but first I want to share with you a revelation I had on the topic of Servant Leadership. You're going to love this; if you don't take anything else away from today, take this:

Servant Leadership is made up of two words!

Brilliant, right?! I mean, it's insights like these that you pay me for! But in all seriousness, these are quite different words. It doesn't take an in-depth word study to figure that out. Servants might not be the absolute lowest of the low, but they're among the lowest. Leaders might not be the absolute top person but they're among the highest.

Servants take commands.

Leaders give commands.

Leaders make decisions.

Servants do what someone else has decided.

How do these two even remotely go together? How can you be of high rank and low rank at the same time, both give the commands and take commands?

Leadership is difficult. It comes with burdens and responsibilities, problems, issues and challenges. But at least you normally get something out of it: fame—becoming well known, kudos, honor, respect; power over people, to call the shots or to make a difference.

I mean no one becomes President for the paycheck! Maybe for Air Force One or the accommodations! Maybe for the chance to become the most powerful man or woman in the world! Maybe for the chance to make a difference (maybe)! I'm not making any political comment or judgment, that's not the point of what I'm saying. But you see that leadership brings with it certain perks.

As a kid, when I first learned how much (or how little!), the British Prime Minister made, I was like "who would ever want to have that job?!" Leadership requires sacrifices but at least it come with perks!

Servanthood is difficult; it too comes with burdens and responsibilities—mostly of the hard work variety. You don't get a say in the big decisions, or maybe any decisions at all, and you have to do what you're told. But at least when your work is done, when you're off the clock, you're done! You don't have to worry about how your decisions are affecting people and whether you made the right choices for the people you lead. Servanthood requires a lot of hard work but at least it comes with certain perks!

Servant Leadership simply requires hard work and sacrifice! The sacrifice of Leadership without the power, and the hard work of Servanthood without the lack of responsibility. I know it's not looking very promising at the moment, but I promise you it's going to get better. This is actually going to be an uplifting sermon!

Let's take a look at our text:

**They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch." Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him. 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 delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"** Mark 14:32-42 (NIV)

Jesus lived a life of Servant Leadership. He models for us how we should live as we read through the gospels, but he was modeling this live and in-person for these disciples, training them how to be Servant Leaders for what would be the church. And here he invites them into one of his moments of greatest challenge as he prepares to go to the cross. From this moment, I believe there are several key things we can pull out regarding servant leadership:

#### 1. The Need for Watchfulness

Jesus, being British, tells his disciples to "keep watch and pray on." Now "keeping watch" is a common theme in the Bible and, generally speaking, a good thing to engage in. But why this insistence? Well this is an important moment for Jesus. You see, there is an evil one who is doing his best to foil God's plans. And while Jesus will bear the brunt of the attack, there will be temptation for those close to him, too.

First Jesus says, "stay here and keep watch." Then once he's found them asleep once, he becomes more insistent, "watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation." And yet, three times they fall asleep!

This is an accurate foreshadowing of how well they're going to do in these upcoming tests/temptations—all of which they categorically fail! I mean not only do they end up doing the wrong thing at the wrong time, but all the while it is quite clear that they don't have a clue what's going on!

Gethsemane was on their way from Jerusalem to Bethany, where they were staying. So maybe the disciples just thought it was one of Jesus' 'take time out to pray moments.' You know, maybe they're just like, "aw Jesus, it's been a long day, a long week. Do you have to have your quiet time now? Couldn't we get home first?" I'm not sure what else explains them falling asleep three times when asked specifically to keep watch. Could they not see Jesus' anguish?

I'm not sure anyone would have been capable of fully comprehending what was about to happen, but how could they miss that this was a big night? This was a life-changing, history-shaping moment!

There are life changing moments and opportunities that come up for us, too, and I don't know anyone who wants to look as foolish as

the disciples looked that night! But how will we be ready for them if we are not watchful?

Is this conversation that I'm having with a friend or work colleague, a 'nothing' conversation? A meaningless, soon-forgotten chat about your fantasy football team, the latest TV show you're into, or (a British favorite) the weather? Or is this the conversation that leads them to Christ? Is this the conversation that speaks life into their hurt? That speaks wisdom into a difficult situation? Is this the conversation that brings healing and begins the path to forgiveness and reconciliation?

There's absolutely nothing wrong with shooting the breeze, but did you just miss a life-changing moment? We must be aware, using discernment and listening for the Spirit's prompting, moment by moment and day by day. Only then can we be Servant Leaders in the lives of those around us!

## 2. The Need for Prayer

The second thing Jesus says is pray: "watch and pray." This pairs with the watchfulness as we obey Paul's instruction to "pray without ceasing" in 1 Thessalonians 5:17. An alertness, a watchfulness is not enough; we must pair it with a continued connectedness to the Father, both speaking to him and also listening to his replies, his whispered promptings. In watchfulness, we bring all of our focus and skills to bear, and in prayer we join that with the Father's divine power. It's a powerful combo!

This is our preparation, our life attitude, how we orient and focus our lives. But preparation means nothing if we will not take action, if we are not prepared to do what our watchfulness and prayer shows what we have to do.

Which brings us to...

## 3. The Need for Sacrifice

Jesus was preparing to do something very unpleasant and the disciples themselves had to do something difficult—keep watch, stay up and pray after an exhausting week!

Servant Leadership requires sacrifice.

See, there was no glory to be gained that night in the garden of Gethsemane, no honor. There was no glory to be gained when they were captured a short time later and hauled before the High Priest, no honor there either.

Oh, but if Jesus had turned around and called down thousands upon thousands of angels, what Power! Leadership would have won Jesus the kingdom of Palestine!

Servanthood would have had Jesus ceding to the Jewish leaders.

Servant Leadership took Jesus on the most painful path imaginable. Yes the Power was there, but he chose not to use it! And neither did he cave to the religious leaders!

There was no glory to be gained through that night and on into the next morning, dragged before Pontius Pilate, no honor when a nation, your nation, cries for your blood. And there was no glory to be gained through that morning and into the afternoon, beaten, flogged, mocked, spat upon, paraded through the streets and finally executed slowly, naked, bleeding, alone, separated from God as he bore the sins of a world who despised him, rejecting the salvation of his outstretched arms!

Yes Servant Leadership requires sacrifice! But you know, there was glory when God reached down, raising his one and only Son

back to life, declaring him innocent of the sins for which he'd paid! Beyond death and out the other side, raised to new, resurrection life and seated at the right hand of God—THERE is glory, THERE is honor!

So I guess there are perks to Servant Leadership, but they're of the eternal, post-death, resurrection type.

I don't know exactly where I got this idea so fixed in my mind—that servant leadership shouldn't involve asking others to do something you're not prepared to do yourself. Well Jesus led the way with servant leadership at the cross. He calls us to take up our own crosses and follow him, but it's not a call to something he wasn't prepared to do himself!

Ultimately, all these aspects of Servant Leadership add up to a huge need for Jesus.

## 4. The Need for Jesus

And you're all like, "of course, Joel. That's obvious. We all know we need Jesus!"

Well yes, but I'm not talking about our need for forgiveness, our need for the salvation that Jesus offers, or our need to be cleansed from all wrongdoing and clothed in the righteousness that only Jesus can provide. We need that. Oh how we need that! But that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about our need for Jesus to live and act through us, each and every day—that's the only way we can do this!

You can't just turn Servant Leadership on for special events; Jesus didn't just suddenly decide to be a Servant Leader that night in the garden. We need a life of Servant Leadership, or we will not be ready!

You see there was another garden, many years before! Two humans given a great responsibility, called to a life of Servant Leadership, called to be watchful and aware, called to rely on God, called to sacrifice and follow God's commands. This man and woman failed miserably! When the showdown with Evil came, they weren't prepared. They were left looking clueless, having forgotten God completely. Instead of 'sacrificing' what seemed appealing to keep God's command, they just went with what looked good to them at the time. An epic failure that sent shockwaves through history!

Fast forward to Gethsemane and the preparation for another showdown with Evil is underway. This time—prepared—humanity aces the test, passing with flying colors, hitting it out of the...oh wait that wasn't what happened!

Called to watch and pray – they fall asleep...

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Until finally Jesus says "Enough! The hour has come!" We're out of time. Preparation is over, now comes the showdown! And their lack of preparation shows! Although maybe we should be glad that Peter's groggy and half asleep so that when he swings his sword he misses the guy's head and only cuts off his ear!

The ONLY reason that this garden is not simply another disaster like the first garden is the presence of Jesus, fully divine yet also fully human, doing for humanity what it could not do for itself—a human passing the test that humanity seemed destined to fail.

We CANNOT do Servant Leadership by ourselves. Our own strength will fail just as spectacularly as Adam & Eve and the disciples, if not MORE so.

This is not a call to greater effort or energy expended. This is not a call to try harder, to be better.

... And yet it is!

Because it is a call to more, a call to something greater! It's a call to a Life of Servant Leadership, lived out as Christ lives through you.

*Serving in Children's Ministry is an excellent example of Servant Leadership.*

*Why do I say that? You mean aside from the fact that Bunnie paid me to?*

*There are many ministries within the church that bring recognition; Children's Ministry is not one of them.*

*If you lead, for example, a bible study or teach a class, people recognize you, they tend to appreciate you, and there's absolutely nothing wrong with that! But Servant Leadership sometimes requires us to forego the recognition and appreciation and simply lead by serving.*

*In Sunday School, you go to a group that isn't in a position to give anything back to you, where it will take years to see if what you've taught them sticks. You go to a group that doesn't understand all the time and effort you put into preparing a lesson. A group that doesn't understand the sacrifice to you personally, on top of your 60 hour work week and busy schedule, to take time to prepare just so you can work some more on Sunday. It's a sacrifice for sure! But it couldn't be more important, watching over and training up the next generation.*

*So if you're looking for a practical way to respond to the call to Servant Leadership, I want to encourage you to sign up at the Children's Ministry table today. And who knows, as you live out Servant Leadership expecting nothing in return, God might just surprise you—from the relationships you build with parents, kids and fellows teachers to the simple joy of serving the Lord, you might find you get far more back than you ever gave in the first place!*

*And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*

*The Love of God*

*And the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit*

*Be with us all as we go out from here to live lives of Servant Leadership*

*Now and forevermore*

*Amen!*

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