

Betraying the Savior

Luke 22:47-53

47 And while He was still speaking, behold, a multitude; and he who was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them and drew near to Jesus to kiss Him.

48 But Jesus said to him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"

49 When those around Him saw what was going to happen, they said to Him, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?"

50 And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear.

51 But Jesus answered and said, "Permit even this." And He touched his ear and healed him.

52 Then Jesus said to the chief priests, captains of the temple, and the elders who had come to Him, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs?"

53 "When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

Evil Deeds are generally done under cover of darkness. There are many reasons for that. When people are up to no good, they obviously want to be concealed from others, and certainly the large group coming to arrest Jesus did not want the people of Jerusalem who believed that Jesus was a prophet sent from God to know what they were up to lest there be a riot. That was why they sought to seize him in the dead of night.

But men often do evil deeds in the dead of the night in order to be concealed from themselves. There are many deeds that conscience might not allow us to perform in broad daylight, that we can allow ourselves the liberty of doing under cover of darkness. Now of all the evil deeds that men can get up to, perhaps the most detestable is betrayal. To sell out those who love and trust you to their enemies is something particularly horrid, something you want to do in secret. I often wonder if Judas would have been able to commit his act in the light of day instead of in the dead of night.

But come he did, leading a band to the very spot where he and the rest of the Apostles had been encamped with Christ. With him is a large band of armed men and authorities, we don't know exactly how large the group was, but we do know from this gospel account and the others that it contained Temple Police (those were the armed guards of the Temple and its environs who kept order and answered to the chief priest), as well as a detachment of Roman troops from the Garrison (so we know the chief priests had probably asked Pilate to help them to capture a man they claimed was stirring up the people to rebellion), the group also contained high ranking priests from the temple, and even representatives from the governing body, the Sanhedrin. All in all, it was a group designed to act with authority, and they really expected this group to accomplish its mission.

Now apparently the Chief Priests had dispatched the temple police to capture Jesus before, we read the following in John 7:43-47

43 So there was a division among the people because of Him.

44 Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

45 Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why have you not brought Him?"

46 The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!"

47 Then the Pharisees answered them, "Are you also deceived?"

So this time the chief priests stooped to sending along Romans whom they were confident would not be impressed by Jewish Rabbi.

Judas had arranged to give a signal that would indicate in the dark, whom the officers should arrest. The signal of course, adds to the enormity of the crime, that he would kiss Jesus. This wasn't unprecedented in biblical history. Many of you will recall that Joab betrayed Amasa the same way in 2 Samuel: ***Then Joab said to Amasa, "Are you in health, my brother?" And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him.*** In his other hand of course, Joab was concealing a knife with which he stabbed Amasa in the stomach. A horrible scene and an act for which Joab was rightly cursed by God.

Jesus permits Judas to do what he has come for, Jesus of course knew in advance what Judas was planning, he alone knew that the well-trusted Judas was a thief and a traitor who would sell his Master for the sum of 30 silver pieces. But when he has been kissed, he points out to Judas exactly what he has done, hoping even then to convict him of his sin. *He calls him by name, and asks him are you betraying the SON OF MAN – that title taken from Daniel 7:13* ***And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.*** – *He asks are you betraying the Messiah the Savior like this? You come with the sign of sure trust and love, only to plunge in the dagger like Joab.*

The other Apostles had been sleeping, so they are slow to react, but immediately even though they are massively outnumbered and there are only two swords amongst all of them they ask if they might strike with the sword. Impetuous Peter doesn't even wait for the answer, he tries to split the hated chief priest servant in two, and probably because he is a fisherman, not a soldier he only succeeds in striking a glancing blow against the side of his head, taking off an ear.

Jesus immediately puts an end to that, commanding them to allow Him to be arrested. And then he does this last of his healing miracles during his earthly ministry, he heals that severed ear. Now why does Jesus do those things? Well he must be taken that the scriptures might be fulfilled, particularly Isaiah 53 which has the image of the suffering servant allowing himself to be led meekly to the slaughter. ***Is. 53:7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.***

He even tells his disciples we are told in Matthew that he doesn't need a few poorly armed apostles to defend him, when he could call on an invincible army of 12 Legions of Angels. In fact, Jesus doesn't even need the Angels, were it not his wish, no man could take him.

But there is also the issue that he must remain innocent of all the charges brought against him. One of the lies that will be brought to the Romans as an excuse to kill him is that he intended to lead a violent insurrection against the Romans. So Peter's violent act could be construed as justification for that charge. In fact, Calvin views this as another attempt by the Devil who would have liked nothing better than a pitched battle in the garden, to bring disgrace on the gospel making it seem ***“as if Christ had***

kept company with assassins and seditious persons for revolutionary purposes.” So Jesus entirely cancels out Peter’s violent act, the band that returns to the chief priests will be just as the set out. And Jesus will be able to say truthfully to Pilate:

John 18:36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."

In fact Jesus points out, convicting them of sin, how sinful and sordid all this prowling about in the dark was, if their cause was righteous they could have taken Him in the temple. Robbers and rebels and criminals hide out and operate by night, innocent men openly walk about in public. Jesus had been walking and teaching amongst them, but they were afraid of him and his power so they came armed and at night.

But it must be so, Jesus has submitted to the will of the Father. He will die in the place of all his wandering sheep, now is the fullness of time. The great act of sacrifice for which Jesus was born, and to which all of his life has been leading is at hand. This is no mistake, but even this hour of darkness is part of God’s divine plan. Sometimes I’m amazed that men can read about the garden and the crucifixion and not see the fulfillment and of what Isaiah wrote long before.

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.

I want to close by setting before you three applications, the first is an observation, the second is a warning, and the third is an exhortation.

1) ***Here I particularly want to speak, to the men of the congregation.*** It has been my great privilege to get to know many of you well. You are men of courage, conviction, sacrifice and zeal. And partially because of that, I have no doubt that many of you would find it difficult not to react exactly the same way that Peter did when you see Jesus and his gospel threatened. But I implore you never to do that. Be bold for the gospel in your speaking and writing and living, but never think for a moment that you can defend Christ or advance the gospel by striking with the sword. The sword is given to the magistrate and it is intended to be used in punishing the evil-doer and defending the citizens.

In many ways this will make it easier to advance the gospel. We worship freely because the sword arm of the magistrate suppresses those who would love to close our church, kill our officers, and scatter the sheep and we can see that in the fact that that is exactly what happens in places like Iran and Indonesia. But don’t cross the line into thinking you can strike a blow with the sword for Jesus.

Also, as a number of men have pointed out, it is much easier to be a crusader than a martyr. Much easier to fight for Christ, than to suffer for him. And in some cases men who would gladly storm the gates of hell will not take up the cross and follow Christ. And that tendency can become very sour. For instance, I know of men who are always fighting tooth and nail in the public arena for Christ, and yet whose own practice of piety, of self-denial, of Sabbath keeping, of turning the other cheek, of esteeming others more highly, of all the personal disciplines of grace, are a shambles. I know of one

young man who confronted his own father, after his dad had once again carried on a personal crusade, who said essentially “Dad, I’ve seen you attacking the men you think are the enemies of Christ again and again, but as we were growing up, you know I can’t recall ever seeing you just sit down to read the word of God by yourself.”

2) ***Beware of those who would betray the Son of Man with a Kiss.*** Our culture loves to say pretty things about Jesus, perhaps at no time more so than during the Christmas season, while at the same time, heaping scorn on His gospel message. “Shame on some that are called Christian ministers! They believe in Christ, but it is a Christ without his crown, his atonement, his judgment-seat, or even his Godhead. They mock us with orthodox phrases, from which the essential truth is gone. They pretend that they believe in the atonement, and when we listen to their atonement we find that it does not effectually atone for any one. It is a mere fiction, and not a fact. It saves nobody, but is a mere sham. They have eviscerated the gospel, and then they hold up the empty carcass, and claim that they are Christians still. Christians who have murdered Christianity! Believers who doubt whether there is anything to be believed! Yet we are entreated in our charity to hug such traitors to our bosom. We shall do nothing of the kind. We would sooner believe in infidels outright than in those who pretend to be Christians and are infidels at heart. “Modern thought” is a more evil thing than downright atheism; even as a wolf in a sheep’s skin is worse than a wolf in his natural form.

“There are pretty things said of our Lord Jesus by those who deny the faith which are sickening to me. I loathe to hear our true Lord praised by false lips. They deny the doctrines which he taught, and yet prate about believing him. It is a shallow trick, but yet it deceives shallow souls. Poor, weak minds say, “The man speaks so beautifully of Jesus, surely he cannot be in error.” I tell you it is the old Judas trick — the Son of man is betrayed with a kiss. How nauseating their praises must be to him whom they are betraying. Think not that they are honest; their designs are far other than appear upon the surface. They laud him as man that they may dishonor him as God: they cry up his life, and his example, that they may cast his atoning sacrifice into the ditch. They lift up one part of the divine revelation with no other intention than that they may dash down the other: they crouch at his feet that they may stab at his heart.” – SPURGEON

Do not yourself, become like Judas in any respect, brothers and sisters it is better to go to him with tears, with anger, with confessions but being sincere than to wear a mask, and play the part of a Christian.

3) ***Remember, please remember that moment of darkness is only for a moment.***

Realizing that will make taking up the cross and forsaking the sword far less burdensome. Judas came to Christ thinking he had hit the jackpot in the midst of a failing ministry. 'Fool! This night **your soul** will be **required** of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' Often we buy into the counterfeit or adopt the idols of the world because we think they will go on for ever.

Some of you have been or are going through hard times... Darkness is fleeting, and even it serves the Lord’s purposes!

Even the worst of things, and the work of the Devil happens to fulfill God’s purposes.

Our times of trial are but for an hour

Eph. 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.