

# True Safety vs Delusions of Safety

Mark 14:43-52

6 December 2020, 10:30 AM

## Introduction:

Today we are continuing our sermon series in the gospel of Mark.

- Last time, we saw the temptation of Jesus reach its highest pitch in Mark 14:32-42 when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane.
  - One thing that we often don't think about with Jesus is that as one who never gave in to temptation, His temptations did not get easier, but harder.
  - Satan was bent on getting Him to sin, and when Jesus stood against one temptation, he sent another.
  - And of course all the while the Father was also testing and proving Him (as He tested Adam and Eve and Job—and as He tests everyone) through the temptations of Satan.
    - The difference is that, in the same temptation, our heavenly Father counsels us not to sin and Satan counsels us to sin.
    - Though Hebrew and Greek both use the same word for testing as for tempting, in English we use testing to refer to what God does in our temptation and tempting to refer to what Satan does in the very same temptation.
    - God calls us to continue in obedience and grace; Satan lures us to reject God and His way.
- We saw that at Gethsemane, Jesus had to wrestle to relinquish His good and righteous desire to remain in the favour of His Father.
  - The Father called Him to go to the cross to bear the sin of all of His people—to be punished for His sinful bride, all of the people that were appointed to salvation.
  - If He had been asked to refuse something sinful, that would have been easy for Him, but He had to relinquish something good and right—His Father's approval—to bear our shame—to become sin for us.
  - It was through three sessions of prayer that Jesus rightly made certain that there was no other way possible for Him to fulfill His mission as the Messiah.
    - Settling that there was not, He resigned Himself fully through many tears and much anguish to go forward with bearing the pains of hell on the cross for all of us.
    - His disciples did not prepare themselves for the coming ordeal. They did not accept the cross. They slept while our Saviour wrestled, even though He warned them multiple times to pray lest they enter into temptation.
- We ended with Jesus arousing them from their sleep because the time had come for Him to be taken to the cross.
  - In 14:42, **He said: "Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand."**
  - He is ready to do the Father's will

His betrayal and arrest immediately follow.

- We have the record of these in the passage we are looking at today—Mark 14:43-52.

- One of the things that stands out in this passage is the delusion men have that safety can be found outside the will of God and apart from Christ who does the will of God.

It is a grand delusion that affects us all in various ways whether we are hostile to Jesus or followers of Jesus.

- It is a delusion that causes individuals, churches, and nations to go astray.
- It affects the people as well as their leaders in the church as well as the state.

Please give careful attention as I read this passage to you now.

**Mark 14:43-52:** And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. <sup>44</sup> Now His betrayer had given them a signal, saying, “Whom-ever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him and lead *Him* away safely.” <sup>45</sup> As soon as He had come, immediately he went up to Him and said to Him, “Rabbi, Rabbi!” and kissed Him. <sup>46</sup> Then they laid their hands on Him and took Him. <sup>47</sup> And one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. <sup>48</sup> Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? <sup>49</sup> I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.” <sup>50</sup> Then they all forsook Him and fled. <sup>51</sup> Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around *his* naked *body*. And the young men laid hold of him, <sup>52</sup> and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.

May the Lord add His blessing to His holy Word.

What a contrast there is here between Jesus and everyone else.

- Jesus was convinced that doing the will of God, no matter how dangerous or difficult it might be now, was the only pathway of shalom—ultimate wholeness and blessing.
  - It is remarkable that He was the only one ever who truly believed this throughout His whole life.
  - There are those that come to believe this by His grace—more or less—but Jesus alone believed that His Father was wise, powerful, and gracious even when it was His Father’s will for Him to go to the cross.
- As fallen sinners, all the rest of us turn to find safety apart from the way that God has called us to go.
  - Some of us do this ultimately so that we never come to Christ for salvation and some of us who are true believers do this, like Jesus’ disciples did, when God’s calling is especially difficult and dangerous.
  - We are deluded about safety.

Let’s look at three delusions about safety that are revealed in our text.

### **I. Delusion 1: That safety is found in the crowd.**

- A. In our text, you can how the Sanhedrin looked for safety in the great multitude they sent to arrest Jesus with their officers, clubs, and spears.

- **Mark 14:43 “And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.”**
  - Calvin calls it “astonishing madness.”
    - Clearly so.
1. Here they come to arrest Jesus in the middle of the night with this great multitude.
    - From the four gospel accounts, we gather that this was a mixture of Jewish temple police, Roman soldiers, and even a few of the Sanhedrin.
    - a. They come with a great show of force (as Jesus points out in verses 48 & 49) as if they are coming to arrest a dangerous bandit who rides into town with his armed robbers to raid and destroy.
      - When in fact, He was a rabbi who had been teaching in the temple, never rioting or using violence to achieve His ends.
    - b. This great show of force is ridiculous until you realise that the truth is, they had a bad conscience about arresting Him and they were terrified.
      - They knew of His miracles and it unnerved them.
      - He had raised the dead and given sight to the blind.
      - They did not know what to expect with Him. He had astonished them repeatedly.
    - c. But this makes their action even more ridiculous—
      - Whatever were they thinking? That a multitude with swords and clubs and trained forces would be able to take Him if He did not want to go?
      - That is more ridiculous than I was as a seven-year-old aiming my toy bazooka at the sky to blast the rain clouds away because I wanted to play baseball.
      - No matter how many people they might employ and no matter what weapons they might carry, how did they expect to take the Son of God unless He was willing to go with them?
        - And if He was willing, what need did they have of so much force?
  2. And perhaps the most ridiculous one of them all was Judas.
    - a. He had seen his master calm the wind and the sea with a mere word.
      - He had been with Him all along.
      - He knew His authority and power.
    - b. And here he is, advising them to seize Him as soon as he kisses Him (14:44).
      - The word translated *seize* is used four times in the narrative, and means to take Him by force.
        - As if they could surprise Him in the dark.
        - As if they could grab Him so that He could not get away from them.
      - Verse 46 shows that they followed his advice—when it says that they **laid their hands on Him**, it suggests that they clapped their hands upon Him—

and then they took Him—that is the same word translated **seize** in verse 44.

- c. Judas completed his advice by telling them to take Him away safely upon seizing Him—with carefulness so that He will not escape.

TRANS> How could Judas and the others think that this show of force could aid them against Him? This is lunacy.

- But perhaps this madness is not so far from us as we might think.

B. The crowd and the officials often give us a false sense about our safety.

1. God created us to go along with the crowd and with the officials.
  - a. It is a good thing in itself.
    - We are relational beings who are designed to work together in beautiful harmony under those who have authority over us.
  - b. We should make the most of this in godly families and churches and in godly communities...
    - Yes, and even in ungodly societies, we should pursue harmony on our part as much as we can in good conscience before the Lord.
2. The problem is, we are drawn to go along with the crowd even when they oppose God.
  - a. We are inclined to go along without fear of God.
    - The crowd makes us feel secure when we ought to be terrified of God.
    - The false security can blind us and intoxicate us and inoculate us against the conviction of sin that we ought to have.
    - This is one of the reasons that after the flood, God divided languages—so that we would not all drift into evil together.
  - b. And related to this, if we are serving God when the crowd is not serving Him, we can have a false sense of insecurity.
    - We live in fear of the crowd as if they can ultimately harm us and as if God cannot protect us.
  - c. There is in all this a complete miscalculation of things.
    - We reckon without the power of God.
      - It is true that those with superior numbers and forces often win the battles—but it is also true that God will judge them in the end.
      - This deceives us.
    - We forget that God can do whatever He pleases in heaven and earth.
      - We fail to recognise that God is the ultimate judge of all and that He can crush the greatest armies with His breath if He so pleases.
    - We forget that He is the One who raises up one kingdom and puts down another.
      - He revealed this to the world again and again by His prophets in the Old Testament who told which nations would rise and which would fall.

- No one was ever able to reverse what He pronounced by might or by power... The only way to reverse it was by humbling themselves and pleading for mercy.

C. There are many examples we could point to.

1. A leading example is found with Israel refusing to go into the promised land when God told them to go and take the land of Canaan that He was giving to them.
  - On the one hand, they were afraid of the numbers and the strength of the Canaanites even though God had promised to give them victory.
    - They saw the fortified cities, the trained armies, and the giants.
  - On the other hand, they found strength to stand up against God and His prophet from another crowd.
    - The majority report of those who went to spy out the land was that Israel could not pull this off, and soon that was the majority opinion of the multitude.
  - They did not realise that if God was with them, none of this mattered.
2. One of the most striking counterexamples is Jonathan, Saul's son, who found security with God apart from the crowd.
  - We read about this in 1 Sam 14.
    - We saw how Israel was cowering away in fear before the Philistines.
    - Even though Jonathan was alone with his armourbearer, he boldly went to fight against a camp of the Philistines.
      - In 1 Sam 14:6, his words to his armour bearer were: **“Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the LORD will work for us. For nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few.”** <sup>7</sup>So his armorbearer said to him, **“Do all that is in your heart. Go then; here I am with you, according to your heart.”**
3. In our day, we see how easily people are swayed by the crowd.
  - People are super confident about something as far fetched as evolution. Essentially, evolution is natural selection turned into an amazing designer and creator... when all that can be seen of natural selection is that it enables creatures to adapt out of the variations that God endowed them with when He made them.
  - The whole theory is built on the notion that organisms created new traits trillions and trillions of times even though that has never been observed or rationally explained.
    - To rearrange traits that are already in the gene pool that God created is one thing, but to create new traits even once, let alone trillions of times, is quite another.
    - Yet, because the officials and the multitude declare that this is surely what happened, most people swallow it without stopping to consider whether or not it makes sense.
      - They go along like this multitude with Judas to overpower the Son of God who commands the wind and waves, supposing they are safe because they are many and they have officials with them.

- My dear friends, don't just go along with the crowd.
  - Certainly, we should all want to be united—God made us to be united.
  - But when the crowd is going against God, we need to go with Him.
    - There is no safety with the masses. When they go against God, they all perish together.
    - The only ones who are safe are those who do the will of God.
      - We must get comfortable with being in the minority because Jesus told us that if they opposed Him, they will oppose us.

TRANS> But there are two other delusions that we must watch out for.

## **II. Delusion 2: There is safety in my own wisdom and strength when these are deployed for God.**

- This is a very subtle deception because it is religious.
  - It is driven by a defective faith.
  - I am using my gifts, my resources, and my courage for God, so surely he will be with me.
- A. In our text, Mark 14:47, Mark tells of “one who stood by” who draws his sword and cuts off the ear of the servant of the high priest.
  1. We know this to be Peter from John's gospel, but for some reason Mark leaves him unnamed—
    - perhaps because it is an action that the Romans (to whom Mark writes) would have been inclined to wrongly admire...
      - it would almost be like boasting about something that ought to make a person ashamed.
    - And indeed, it was a very bold thing to do—that this one with his sword was prepared to stand up to this great multitude.
      - This noble soul was prepared to die for his master.
      - He was bold, but rash. Confident, but wrong.
  2. In fact, he plays right into the hand of Satan.
    - This disciple, if the Lord had not stopped him, would have brought the master he was supposed to be defending into disgrace.
      - He would have caused his Lord to appear to have a kingdom from this world instead of from above—as Jesus told Pilate later, “If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight.”
    - Not only that, but his efforts were actually diabolical.
      - It was not God, but Satan that was trying to dissuade Jesus from going to the cross.
      - This is the very thing that Jesus had worked through at Gethsemane when He said to His heavenly Father, not my will, but yours be done.
      - It was the very thing that Jesus had rebuked Peter for in the past.
    - This disciple meant to be on the Lord's side.
      - He fully thought that he was on the Lord's side.
      - But in this he was not.

- In worldly terms, his action was rash and insane because he did not stand a chance against such a multitude...
    - But in spiritual terms, his action was diabolical.
- B. How easy it is for those who are gifted, bold, and highly devoted to fall into this error.
1. It arises from the right principle that we are to use our gifts and strength for the Lord and that we are to be zealous for Him—to pour out our all for Him.
    - That is all right and true.
    - Most of us fail because our devotion is not at all that it should be.
    - We can sneer and be critical of this disciple because he puts us to shame in this regard.
  2. There are many that use their gifts and devotion in the wrong way.
    - Perhaps they are gifted with creativity, talent, popularity, superior intellect, charisma, charm, elocution, energy.
    - And perhaps they can use these gifts to great effect—to draw a crowd together and captivate them.
      - They know how to use psychology to get people to respond to a message.
      - They know how to bring a crowd to tears, to stir them to protest in the public square, or to rally them to take up arms and go and fight against Christ’s enemies.
      - Or maybe as a parent, they have learned how to manipulate their children—to control them by making them feel guilty.
      - Maybe they use sensationalism.
      - Maybe they can touch people’s felt needs and send them to Jesus with those needs.
      - Or motivate them by getting them to envy other disciples, showing them that they are falling behind... “Did you see what so-and-so did for the Lord?”
      - Maybe they even start a political movement for Christ.
    - a. The problem is, you might be able to get a lot of people together in this way, but this is not how God’s kingdom is built.
      - It is not by human might or power, but by God’s Spirit.
      - The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for the pulling down of strongholds (2 Cor 10:4).
        - Ironically, some of the strongholds that must be pulled down are the very ones that these disciples are using to try to build the kingdom.
    - b. Jacob is a prime example of a man that did this for many years.
      - He was crafty and clever. He also loved God’s promises and wanted all that God had promised to him.
      - The problem was that sought to obtain God’s promises by his clever scheming and ended up making his own life miserable.
        - Instead of trusting the Lord fully, he trusting in his own ability to secure what God had promised to him...

- But over the years, the Lord broke him so that at Penuel, he realised that his blessing was from God—he refused to let the Lord go unless he blessed him.

TRANS> But what is to be done instead? It is really quite simple.

C. We must simply do what God says.

1. The disciple who drew his sword did not wait to hear the Lord wanted him to do.
  - That was his problem.
    - He took matters into his own hands.
    - He thought he knew best so he launched out in the flesh and not in the Spirit.
  - What was needed was not his sword, but the cross.
    - He erred because he did not listen to Jesus.
    - The kingdom would not come by Peter’s sword but by Jesus’ cross.
2. And what are the weapons that God has given us to use today to build His kingdom?
  - The grace of God goes into the world by the means of grace—the word, sacraments, and prayer.
    - a. The word of God is to be read and preached with simplicity, preaching the cross.
      - It is to be explained and application is to be made to the hearers.
      - No emotional appeals, no working up with music designed to manipulate, no testimonies from celebrities who show everyone how cool it is to follow Jesus.
      - No images and icons and priestly robes that God has not appointed.
      - No bands and comedy, fleshly stories, light shows, marketing, appeals to pride.
        - But the simple preaching of Christ crucified as Lord and Saviour.
    - b. The sacraments are to be administered with simplicity, setting forth Christ crucified as our sufficiency.
      - So that Christ is set forth at the door to His kingdom as the only one who is able to wash away our sins—so that all who come in must come trusting in His cleansing by the shedding of His blood and by the renewing of the Holy Spirit.
      - And then we are taught at the Lord’s table to feed upon Him who was crucified that we might grow in our devotion and obedience to him—that our faith might be strengthened and encouraged by trusting Him to feed us.
    - c. And prayer is to be made in Jesus’ name, by which we call upon Him to establish His kingdom and to bless us.
      - We learn that instead of scheming like Jacob did, we must call upon Him like Jacob learned to do.

TRANS> Safety is not found in relying upon our own wisdom, gifts, or devotion.



- It is found in relying upon Christ and the means He has given to attach us to Him.

### III. Delusion 3: That distancing ourselves from Christ will sometimes make us safer.

#### A. Jesus' disciples all fled, forsaking Him to find safety.

1. Once they saw that Jesus was not going fight but was going off willingly with those who came to arrest Him, it was too much for them.
  - Verse 50 says: **Then they all forsook Him and fled.**
  - It is much easier to fight than to bear the cross.
2. Mark gives us the bonus story about the young man who was seized by some of the young men in the crowd.
  - **Mark 14:51-52: Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around *his* naked *body*. And the young men laid hold of him, <sup>52</sup> and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.**
  - No one is sure about why Mark, by the Holy Spirit, included this detail.
    - It is a good theory that this young man was Mark himself, for he was quite young and this refers to a teenager, and he was rich, here he is wrapped in a linen sheet—something most people could not afford.
    - Tradition has it that Jesus ate the Passover at Mark's parents' house, a place in Jerusalem where the church often gathered, as we see in Acts.
    - It appears that this was his night wrap that he grabbed to go out into the night and see what this crowd was about.
  - The one thing that this story does is highlight the roughness of the crowd that came to arrest Jesus so that it was not safe to remain with Him.
    - This young man chose to flee in this embarrassing way than to remain in their clutches.
3. And that is the issue that is depicted here—that staying near Jesus was not safe—or at least did not seem safe.
  - That is the delusion.
  - It was not safe in the sense that staying near Him might bring on suffering.
  - But it was safe in that He was, by suffering, bringing eternal life to all of His people. It is in fact the only safe place in the all the world.

#### B. Think how silly it is for us to suppose that safety is found in forsaking the only one who can save us!

1. That is the devil's message.
  - "Follow Jesus," he says, "and you will be destroyed."
    - He focuses on the fact that we must be crucified with Him—that we will die—that we will lose all for His sake.
    - Our honour, our reputation—we may be laughed at, mocked, snickered at, called evil.
      - Satan tells us to flee from Him at once lest we be ruined!

- Christ also tells us that we must forsake all and follow Him—that we must die with Him, die to ourselves and our own way, be crucified with Him.
  - But He tells us that in doing so we will find our life.
  - We die only in order that we may live as a new creation in Jesus, filled with eternal life that He gives to all who come to Him.
    - He assures us that we will perish under God’s wrath forever if we do not come to Him.
- I very much hope that all of you have come to Christ to die with Him that you might live with Him.
  - That by God’s grace you have seen your sin and that you need to turn from it and come to Christ that you might die and be given eternal life by Him.
  - And that you might be forgiven through the blood that He shed to atone for your sins.
- 2. But if you have, you still need to beware of fleeing from Jesus for safety in times when the danger increases.
  - Far too often, we distance ourselves from Him to protect ourselves from the world’s malice and contempt.
    - Or even an erring church’s malice or contempt.
    - Remember when Peter refused to eat with the Gentiles because he did not want to displease his Jewish friends?
      - Paul called him out on that and Peter repented.
      - But what was Peter doing when he did that?
        - He was distancing himself from Christ his only saviour in an effort to be safe.
        - This distancing is not only what unbelievers do—it is something that believers do too.
  - Often, if we will but soften on one or two points that are especially offensive, we feel that we have made a great compromise.
    - We will still be his disciples and identify ourselves with Him—but we will modify our views about hell because people think hell is unjust... just distance ourselves a little from that...
      - And we will at least keep quiet about the order that God has established in marriage when wives are supposed to submit to their husbands...
      - And we won’t try to expose the folly of evolution or the wickedness of homosexuality.
        - It is not safe to talk about such things and might even keep people from coming Christ.
          - What? Keep them from coming to Him when this is what His word teaches? How could that be?
          - We won’t instruct the rich man who gives more than anyone else in actual dollars that he is supposed to tithe—because he

might be offended. And we won't discipline him because then how could we support our mission?

3. Let me tell you something brothers and sisters.
  - Instead of distancing from Jesus when it gets dangerous to follow Him, you should instead strengthen your association with Him all the more.
  - Growth does not come by dodging the cross—it comes by bearing the cross that He gives you.
    - Yes, in one way, it is not safe at all—but in reality it is the only place of safety.

**Conclusion:** All the trouble comes because we lose sight of our heavenly Father as the wise and gracious and almighty Father that He is.

- We will not be harmed in any way for following Him... the harm comes from forsaking Him.
  - It is truly a great insult to Him for us to act as though bearing the cross will harm us when His gracious purpose is to save us.
- How glad we must be that our dear Lord Jesus Christ is not like us.
  - He alone was able to bear the cross so as to secure the safety of fickle disciples like us. We have blown it so many times, but not Him.
  - See that you cast yourself on Him. He is the place of true safety.