



Christ Reformed Community Church

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“High Treason” Mark 14:43–52

This morning, I want you to take your copy of God’s Word and be turning with me again to the Gospel of Mark, Mark chapter 14 if you haven’t already. We’ve been in the Gospel of Mark for some time now, and we come to—I guess the easiest way to put it—perhaps the heaviest portion of Mark’s Gospel. In some sense, it’s even heavier on our hearts as we read it and study it than the crucifixion itself because it’s the anxiety of Jesus awaiting the crucifixion in the garden of Gethsemane. This morning, we look at Mark 14:43–52. I want to ask you to stand in honor of the reading of God’s Word. This is Jesus’ experience in the garden of Gethsemane as we continue our thoughts. The title of the message: “High Treason.” Picking up in verse 43:

And immediately, while he [that is, Jesus] was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard.” And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, “Rabbi!” And he kissed him. And they laid hands on him and seized him. But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. And Jesus said to them, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But let the Scriptures be fulfilled.” And they all left him and fled.

And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked.

Thus ends the reading of God’s Word. Please be seated, and let’s ask the Lord’s blessing as we study His Word together.

Father, as we come now to study Thy Word, we pray, O God, that You would close down our minds from thinking about the petty cares of this world, and at the same time, we pray that You would open our ears to receive the truth of Your word. Simultaneously, Lord, we pray that You would soften our hearts, making them fertile soil for Thy Spirit to cause spiritual growth even as we deal with a very heavy passage of Scripture. We ask Your blessing and Your presence as we study it. We ask these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

The account, as I read it to you from Mark chapter 14, occurs early Friday morning of the last week of our Lord’s life. It was Sunday of this week that Jesus rode resolutely into Jerusalem with the cries of “Hosanna!” to the Son of David from the crowds, but it’s late Thursday evening that

Jesus has the last Passover/first Lord’s Supper with the disciples where He drinks the cup that He says symbolizes His poured-out blood. But here in the garden on early Friday morning, He doesn’t so much walk resolutely into the garden; He sort of stumbles into the garden, as He feels and senses the grief and the agony that He’s going to experience. And in that garden, He begins to just get a taste of another cup, the cup that He would drink down. As He gazes into that reality of suffering for sinners, He’s understanding the fact that He’s going to drink man’s sin down to the last dregs, and in so doing, drink God’s wrath that such sins deserve. In the garden of Gethsemane, a place in which an oil press was located that crushed olives, Jesus Himself felt the crushing weight, the soul-wrenching prospect of His Father unleashing His wrath upon His only begotten Son. And Jesus, in a sense, was all alone. Oh, the disciples were there physically but not mentally. They were asleep while Jesus prayed, and even as He urged them to “*watch and pray*” lest they “*enter into temptation*,” they were out of it. And then suddenly, Jesus awakens them from their slumber, and He announces, “It is enough. My prayers are over.” Jesus had accepted and embraced the Father’s plan from before the foundation of the world. He would walk to the cross and suffer for God’s people. It’s there that He says, if you skip back to verse 42, “*Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.*” He’s accepted and embraced what He came to do, and that is atone for sin.

One of the most powerful tools placed by the Holy Spirit in the writers of Scripture is the use of irony. Irony is used throughout the Bible. We can go all the way back to the Old Testament, like Joseph’s brothers who sell him to slave traders, telling their father, Jacob, that he had died while the irony being that later, those same brothers had to buy grain from Joseph lest they themselves die. Or the irony of evil Haman, building gallows for Mordecai, and then Haman himself hanging by the own rope that he prepared for Mordecai, dying by the own gallows that he built. Or we go to the New Testament, and we consider Caiaphas, the high priest, accusing Jesus of blaspheming the God of heaven. While making that accusation, he himself was blaspheming the Son of God on earth right in front of His face. Or maybe the ironies related to the gospel. For example, the soldiers placing a crown of thorns upon Jesus’ head as an act of mockery, the irony being that He actually is the only King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Or the Bible telling us that in the final analysis, the rich are poor, and the poor are rich. You have to become poor to enter the kingdom of God to become spiritually wealthy. Or Jesus’ statement: “*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*” In other words, you have to mourn in order to experience joy. What an irony that is. We read in the book of Acts that the church grows—it produces converts—when the church is persecuted. What an amazing irony. Jesus said if you want to be first you have to what? Be last. That’s ironic. If we want to live, Jesus says, we must die. What an irony.

Well, Mark is especially good at spiritual irony. For example, in chapter 3, He gives to us that scene where Jesus heals on the Sabbath. The religious leaders accuse Jesus of violating the Sabbath for a healing, and yet that same day, that same day, they plot to kill Jesus. What an irony. They accuse Him that He commits a sin of healing a man when they are plotting to kill Jesus! Or repeatedly throughout Mark’s Gospel, Herod is referred to as the king of the Jews, when the reality is he was hardly a shepherd that led them properly. Jesus said that Israel was like a sheep without a shepherd, Mark 6:34. Jesus was the true Shepherd. Or later in Mark chapter 14, the soldiers mock Jesus for being a false prophet, asking Him to prophesy, and the reality was just as they’re making that statement, a few moments later, Jesus’ prophesy that Peter would deny Him three times takes place. The Bible is full of irony, but I submit to you this morning that the sadness of all ironies is before us in this text, that the murder of Christ was instigated and executed smoothly and

successfully because of Judas, one of the Twelve. This was not an outside job; it was an inside job. Without the hands and the plotting of Judas, the religious leaders simply could not have arrested Jesus as quickly and smoothly as they did. They had to do it under the cover of darkness, and the only way they could do it when they did it was because Judas came to them to tell them where Jesus was. And here we see Judas committing the highest act of treason in the history of the world, and he does it—here’s the irony—with a kiss, an ironic way to turn in one you say you love, one you say is your master, into the authorities. Well, Jesus is the master, but Judas was a slave to his own sinful and damning ways. The high treason that takes place takes place in a calm and quiet garden; but as we’re going to see, the scene of the garden becomes a violent place of sinful irony and agony for our Lord. The scene of the garden is one that opens up to us in four ironic parts.

I want you to notice with me, first of all, from verse 43, what I want to call the temple’s detachment to the scene, the temple’s detachment to the scene, verse 43: “*And immediately, while he,*” that is Jesus, “*was still speaking.*” That goes back to verse 42 when he told the disciples to “*Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.*” Verse 43 says, “*Judas came.*” Now, Luke 22:47 says that Judas was leading the way, probably leading the way with Malchus, the servant of the high priest close by, and notice how Mark identifies Judas. He identifies him as one of the Twelve, not because you don’t know that. He’s not insulting your intelligence, but he’s pointing that out because it’s unthinkable that the one who would betray Him would be one of the Twelve, that the highest treason to ever occur in the history of the world would come from one intimately associated with Jesus, one who had that privileged position. That is Judas. He would sell the spotless Son of God, the one he called Master, he would sell for the price of a slave, all of course, to fulfill prophesy. Jesus “*came not to be served but to serve,*” to be a slave, “*and to give his life as a ransom for many.*” And we’re going to talk more about the traitor, Judas, in the verses that follow, but for now notice who came with Judas.

Verse 43 says, “*And with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.*” This is a detachment from the temple. It’s a crowd with swords and clubs. Those “*with swords*” denotes Roman soldiers who, no doubt, were detached from Port Antonia located on the northwest corner of the temple, a Roman cohort, some six hundred to one thousand soldiers. That was part of the crowd. The other part of the crowd were those who came with clubs. That would be wooden clubs, and that would be those who composed the temple police. John tells us in his gospel an interesting thing. He says in John 18:3: “*Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees,*” that is, soldiers and temple police, “*went there with lanterns and torches and weapons.*” The NIV calls this a detachment of soldiers, but what you need to see is that this posse of well-trained men left Jerusalem under the instructions of Judas, of all people. They would have went down the temple mount. They would have probably rendezvoused in that valley, the valley of the Kidron Valley there, a little stream. They would have headed up the western slope of the Mount of Olives to the garden of Gethsemane with flickering torches of light and weapons to arrest—get this, here’s the irony—the Light of the World.

The Passover moon was full, and so Judas would have met with them there, probably outside of the city in the valley, but he wasn’t operating alone. He had the backing of the Sanhedrin. In fact, the soldiers, the temple police, and Judas were working at the behest of the Sanhedrin. That was the Supreme Court of Israel, the seventy-one-member board that essentially governed Israel. And as the end of verse 43 makes plain, this detachment of men came from the Sanhedrin. Notice your

Bibles, Mark says they came *“from the chief priests.”* They were sent *“from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.”* So, under the cover of outside darkness and the inside light of conspiracy, these two dark forces, Pharisees and Sadducees which composed the Sanhedrin, coalesced together to use their power and their authority to arrest, try, condemn, and crucify Jesus; an irony of sorts because this supposedly was the religious elite, and they’re out to kill the Savior of sin to save Israel.

The Sanhedrin was made up of those three parties, verse 43: chief priests, scribes, and elders. The chief priests, of course, being composed of former high priests and then the current high priests, in this case really two, Annas and Caiaphas. The elders were from the influential families due to their wealth. They owned a lot of land, and so the elders worked closely with the chief priests. Most of these first two groups were of the Sadducean philosophy, and they were influential due to their wealth. They held sort of a balance of power in the Sanhedrin over the most influential group over the average Jew, and that was the scribes. These were the conservative Pharisees. They were more middle class. They were the theological expert lawyers. They held a revered place among the average Jew. They conspired together, this Sanhedrin made up of the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. These are the ones who sent the detachment to arrest Jesus, but the conspiracy had not begun this night. It had begun months earlier. They operated out of a societal fear. They feared that the popularity of Jesus might cause a revolution, creating some sort of societal upheaval or political upheaval, sparking a sort of revolution that would then result in the Roman government persecuting the Jews because Jesus was a Jew. So, they operated out of societal fear.

They also wanted to arrest Jesus because they operated out of financial fear. Jesus’ actions in the temple interrupted their temple commerce; and since the Sanhedrin was hungry for money, they feared a decline in temple revenue. So, they operated out of societal fear, a revolution; financial fear, losing their money; and also, a personal fear. They were fearful they would lose their power because personally they resented Jesus and His public denunciation of their blatant hypocrisy, His mocking of their rabbinic traditions that were extrabiblical. And they were personally offended because Jesus was beginning to have a greater influence upon the people than they themselves. These were the reasons that the Pharisees and Sadducees became strange bedfellows, as it were, to arrest Jesus and join together. But the practical outworking of this planned conspiracy really lay in the hands of Judas. This was an inside job. John tells us in his gospel that after receiving the morsel of bread, Judas immediately left the upper room. Presumably, he made his way to his point of contact with the Sanhedrin to tell them where Jesus was located. Now, Judas had not known earlier where the Passover was going to take place because Jesus kept that a secret from Judas, but obviously once Judas got to the upper room and then he slipped out, he knew where Jesus and the disciples would be located, and it’s very likely that during that time in the upper room, he learned where Jesus was going to spend the night.

Jesus always spent the night outside of Jerusalem, and He didn’t go to Bethany every evening, and so Judas found out He would be in the garden of Gethsemane. So, the plot was to wait until they were asleep in the middle of the night, Jesus and the disciples, and to take armed men to this private location under the cover of darkness outside of Jerusalem on the rural slopes of the Mount of Olives where only the distant lights of the city could be seen across the valley. This would be a sneak attack, a sinister slime maneuver, but Judas was very competent. He acted very quickly. Consider this. He had to go to his point of contact with the Sanhedrin. They then had to agree upon

a rendezvous of the detachment of police and detachment of soldiers. They had to obtain permission by Pilate to recruit and dispatch these soldiers that were guards at the Fort of Antonia. All the members of the Sanhedrin, all seventy-one members, had to be placed on full alert. Annas had to be notified. Caiaphas had to be notified. Weapons, lanterns, torches had to be gathered. The manner in which Jesus’ trial was expediated, as we will see in Mark chapter 15, reveals the fact that they all had previous knowledge of exactly what was going to happen on this night.

But here’s the irony of it all; a detachment from the temple to take down the true Temple of Jesus, a detachment of dark forces in the darkness in the night to extinguish the Light of the World, a supernatural demonic force made up of religious leaders in the greatest religious institution of the known world to take out the Cornerstone of the church—the new religious institution, evil orders from the headquarters of the religion? Yes, that’s the irony of Judas betraying Jesus. Listen, it’s a warning to the church today. Not everything that bears the name of Christian is worthy of that label. Not every book, not every Christian, not every pastor, not every parachurch organization honors Christ. And, in fact, many seek to destroy Christ, sometimes unknowingly, but mark my words, they are fueled by the same powers that merged in the Kidron Valley, the powers of darkness, the powers of Satan to silence Jesus. Those same powers are around in the West today to silence and destroy the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The church has a responsibility this day to stand up and to speak up and to fight all rouge forces that even name the name of Christ sometimes because—here’s the reality—one named and called by Christ, one who followed Christ, Judas, led the posse to arrest and silence our Lord Jesus Christ. And so, this detachment comes from the religious authorities, as unthinkable as that is. That’s the first irony, but we proceed a little bit further in the text.

We move from, number one, the temple’s detachment to the scene, to the second irony, and that is the traitor’s deportment on the scene. The temple’s detachment to the scene is ironic, but the traitor’s deportment on the scene in verses 44 and 45 is ironic as well. The deportment, the manner in which Judas presents himself to Jesus this night is both striking and demonic. It is the epitome of hypocrisy and duplicitous behavior. Notice verse 44: “*Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, ‘The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard.’*” It is ironic that Judas would choose the sign to betray our Lord, that sacred of all human symbols, a kiss, to identify Him in the dimly lit garden, torch lit by the torches and lanterns carried by the soldiers. Judas would use a kiss, a sign of respect, honor, a sign of affection to betray Jesus. This reveals the depth of his treachery on the one hand, and the height of his depravity, the disgusting, despicable, deceptive way to betray our Lord, and Luke gives us some insight. It says before Judas kissed Him, Jesus asked Him, “*Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?*” Jesus knew exactly what Judas was going to do. Imagine that moment, by the way. Capture it in your mind’s eye. Jesus steps in front of the disciples, who were just awakened from their sleep. Judas leads this posse into the garden, and as the betrayer approaches Jesus, they gaze into each other’s eyes, the piercing, all-searching look of disappointment on our Lord’s face. And just as Judas goes to kiss Jesus, Jesus straightens up, looks at him, and says, “*Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?*” By this point, it wouldn’t have mattered what tender appeals Jesus would have made. This son of perdition was on a power trip. Luke 22 says he led the soldiers and police into the garden, as if he’s some commander of forces. And in fact, verse 44—notice the end of it—he says that “I’m going to kiss this man, and after I do so,” the end of verse 44, “*Seize him and lead him away*

under guard.” This was Judas’ moment of great power—hungry for power, hungry for money, hungry for others to submit to him.

It should also be pointed out, by the way, that for all the angelic composure of our Lord, which we’ll see more of in the verses that follow, Judas held a sort of composure himself, howbeit a demonic one. Unmoved by Jesus’ appeal to his conscious, Judas kept in character, or we could say lack thereof. The text says he began to kiss Jesus. I put it that way because of verse 45: “*And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, ‘Rabbi!’*” and the text says: “*And he kissed him.*” Really, it’s the idea that he began to kiss Him because this is a sickening display of dramatic outward love when in actual fact, it was seething with devilish hatred. The word *kissed* there in verse 45 is *kataphileō*. The prefix, *kata*, is part of the *kataphileō* and intensifies the *phileō* part. *Phileō* is normally how we translate the word *love*, but it can also be translated as *kiss*. *Kataphileō*, an intensified version of that word, is defined in a Greek lexicon as this, and I quote: “to kiss fervently, to kiss affectionately.” This is no mere peck on the cheek. As one commentator says, “Judas’ kiss drips with horror, for it is a calloused prostitution of one of humanity’s most sacred symbols.” He was making a show of it. Mark my words, this was not tenderness; this was treason. This was not affection toward Christ; this was defection from Christ. This was not a kiss of devotion; this was the kiss of death. And one other thing mentioned in verse 45. It highlights—notice your Bibles—the traitor’s duplicitous deportment because not only does he kiss Jesus lavishly, but notice, it says in verse 45, that he referred to Jesus as “*Rabbi.*” *Rabbi*—that could also be translated as *master*.

If you are using a King James Bible, that will be translated “*Master, master,*” the repetition. The New King James translates it “*Rabi, Rabi.*” I wish the modern translations would have kept the double wording because I think it reveals the Jewish custom of someone repeating a name as a means of personal affection. It’s found throughout the Bible. It’s even customary of God himself to speak to man this way. You remember when Jacob feared to take his family to Goshen. God came to him and comforted him in Genesis 46, and God addressed him this way: “*Jacob, Jacob.*” “Do not fear to go down to Egypt. I will go down with you.” Or in the wilderness when God called forth from the burning bush to Moses to lead His people out of Egypt, Obviously, Moses was afraid, but God addressed Moses as: “*Moses, Moses.*” And then there’s the custom use, not just by God to man, but by man to man, like when Elijah was taken up by chariot into heaven and Elisha stood watching it go, and he cried out in 2 Kings, “*My father, my father!*” a phrase of personal affection. Then there was that tragic event of the death of Absalom, and you remember when David found out about that death in 2 Samuel 19, although David was grieved in his heart, David said, “*O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!*” terminology of affection. Jesus even responded this way, the Son of Man lovingly to Martha when she complained about her sister, Mary, and Jesus looked at her and said, “*Martha, Martha.*” Jesus also spoke that way to Simon, Simon Peter, when Peter declared he would never betray the Lord, he’d never deny Him. Jesus said, “*Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.*” Jesus even lovingly lamented over Jerusalem because of their lack of repentance: “*O Jerusalem, O Jerusalem...How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!*” And even on the cross, the Son of God spoke to God the Father: “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” All of these are expressions of communicating personal affection, and that’s the way Judas approached Jesus: “*Rabbi, Rabbi,*” “*Master, Master.*” A stunning and ironic way for Jesus to be betrayed—by a kiss.

There are illustrations throughout the Scriptures, striking illustrations in the Old Testament in particular, a feigned appreciation and honor. There's an incident in 2 Samuel 20 where a fake honor, fake respect, fake affection is shown in a kiss, seen in Joab's kiss to Amasa. It has a chilling backstory to it, one that bears repeating. You're familiar with Joab. He was commander and chief of David's army. He was also David's nephew. And unlike David's son, Absalom, who was at war with his father, Joab, David's nephew, was intensely loyal to David even to a fault. By the way, he participated in the plot of putting Uriah on the frontlines leading to Uriah's death. That's how loyal to David Joab was, but although he indirectly murdered Uriah, Joab directly murdered Absalom. Absalom appointed a man, Amasa, as captain of his army, crossed the Jordan to fight David and his father's men in the woods of Ephraim. We read about this in 2 Samuel. That was a pivotal battle in the Old Testament because Absalom was defeated. He lost some twenty thousand men. And not only that, even Absalom himself fled from those woods, and as he did so, he caught his head in the branches of an oak and was suspended in midair, yet still alive. And when the incident was reported to Joab, the commander of David's army against Absalom, when it was reported to him that Absalom was hanging there, he was fuming mad that the man who reported it hadn't killed him. *“Why then did you not strike him there to the ground?”* says Joab, but the man's reason was a good one. David had told all the commanders and all the soldiers, *“Kill anyone you want, but don't touch my son, Absalom.”* Joab answered this man who reported it, *“I will not waste time like this with you.”* And 2 Samuel 18 says, *“And he took three javelins”* and he stabbed Absalom *“into the heart...while he was still alive,”* looking him in the face. And of course, David got word of this, and soon after when the kingdom was restored because Absalom had lost the battle and Absalom had died, in an ironic turn of events, David took away Joab from command of the army and he put Amasa, commander of Absalom's army, in his place. And overcome by jealousy, it was Joab who killed Amasa in a strikingly similar way that Judas betrayed Jesus. We read in 2 Samuel 20, *“And Joab said to Amasa, ‘Is it well with you, my brother?’ And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. But Amasa did not observe the sword that was in Joab's hand. So Joab struck him with it in the stomach and spilled his entrails to the ground without striking a second blow, and he died.”* Looking him in the face just as he did Absalom, saying he was his brother, kissing him, betraying him.

What Judas did, obviously, was far worse. Joab, Judas, betrayal by a kiss, feigned respect, honor, and love. As Judas kissed Jesus, it was like a metaphorical dagger that he thrust in Jesus' side. *“O Rabbi, Rabbi,” “Master, Master,”* double title, a double word to address Jesus. You know, Jesus speaks in a similar way. He says this:

Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?” And then will I declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.”

In other words, on the final day, all hypocrites will be exposed like Judas, who in feigned love cry out, *“Lord, Lord.”* Jesus will say *“I never knew you,”* which means they never really knew Him. Jesus will not reciprocate feigned love to those sort of hypocrites who address Him as: *“Lord, Lord.”* And here we see in Mark 14, Judas' deceptive deportment serving as a stark warning to us.

Loyalty to Christ involves more than just loyalty to the person of Christ. It involves loyalty to the kingdom of Christ and loyalty to the people of Christ. Judas was only loyal to himself. He wasn't thinking about the other disciples who had been tasked with the Great Commission, and they went on without him, by the way. He was useless and later dead anyway. They didn't need someone who was disloyal. It's unlikely, before of course he began pilfering from the pot the money that was used for ministry, that Judas actually believed he would follow through with his lust for money and power. It's also likely that none of the other disciples suspected treachery from him because they had entrusted him with being the treasurer of the band of the apostles. But the more he stole, the easier it became, the harder his conscience got until he reached the point of no return, and the lesson for us today is that by the end of one's hardened conscience, it becomes easier to betray others, easier to murder others inwardly or outwardly than it does to humbly repent. The issue with Judas was one of pride and disloyalty. And how often has Judas' high treason been repeated in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ?

I was told before I accepted my first pastorate at the young age of twenty-four, “Be careful, son,” this pastor said. “The person in the congregation who is the nicest to you will be the one who betrays you.” That prophecy came true at the first church I pastored, and that always seems to be the case in the church. The people that have an agenda, people that are hungry for power, hungry for money, prestige, they end up being the ones who are disloyal. And it saddens me and even scares me to even admit this morning that even in a congregation this size, the chances are virtually zilch that from five to ten years from now everyone in this worship service this morning will still be walking with the Lord. It's virtually zilch. It's virtually zilch that you will live to the end of your life seeing everyone in this room loyal to Christ until the end. That is the reality of the visible church. Judas stands as a warning to us to repent, to come clean with the darkness in our hearts today before we are overwhelmed with the darkness that overwhelmed him, reaching the point of no return, darkness overshadowing us. Even as Judas entered eternal darkness prepared before him, that reality is a reality for everyone in a confessional covenant community. Hebrews 10:29 warns the confessional covenantal community, the community baptized, the community that professes Christ, the community that worships the Lord on the Lord's Day, do not “*trample underfoot the Son of God.*” Do not trample underfoot the blood of the covenant, as it were. Judas is a stark warning for us to guard our hearts from disloyalty.

But the highest act of treason the world has ever seen is not only marked, number one, by the temple's detachment to the scene, verse 43; number two, the traitor's deportment on the scene, verses 44 and 45; but number three, the target's detainment at the scene, verses 46 through 50. Several ironies here. The temple's detachment to the scene—the religious establishment sent the detachment of soldiers and police. The traitor's deportment on the scene—he betrays Jesus with a kiss, a fake show of love. Now, number three, the target's detainment at the scene. Jesus, of course, was the target they were aiming at. Through the sly plan of Judas, they successfully detained or arrested Jesus, and it's amazing because His detainment bears several noteworthy features. First of all, His detainment was one of violence. We see this in verses 46 and 47. Verse 46 says, “*And they laid hands on him and seized him,*” so now things are becoming physical. But it gets more physical, verse 47: “*But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.*” After Judas kissed Jesus, things got really physical, but Matthew tells us that after the kiss, before the arrest, Jesus told Judas, “*Friend, do what you came to do,*” and that's when Judas came up. “*They laid hands on [Jesus] and seized hm.*”

David poetically and prophetically gives expression to this, speaking from his own experience, in Psalm 55. He was betrayed by his own familiar friend, by his own companion. Mark just briefly says in verse 46, “*And they laid hands on him and seized him,*” and though Jesus didn’t resist the arrest, I have no doubt they were rough with Him, as is the nature of the policework when they think they have captured a criminal. Certainly, they were rough with Jesus. They had been after Him for a while. But we need to back up a little bit. After the kiss and the statement by Jesus to Judas to do what he came to do, there’s something else that happened, and John helps us with this. I want you to turn to John chapter 18 just for a moment because we have some insight into this. In verse 12, John tells that “*The band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him.*” So, they would have tied Him up in some manner, but before all of that happened, after the kiss and the statement by Jesus to Judas, “Do what you have come to do,” something else happened. Verse 4 of John 18:

Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, “Whom do you seek?” They answered him, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus said to them, “I am he.” Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground.

This is amazing. Apparently, that identification of the divine predicate, “*I am he,*” “*I am,*” a divine predicate, made even these pagan Roman soldiers violently fall to the ground, no doubt a preview of “*every knee will bow,*” but on that day, as on this day, this wasn’t willful worship. This was—I guess the best way to describe it—it was a violent wave of Christ’s holiness as the Son of God overpowering them just at His words identifying who He was: “*I am,*” the divine predicate. What’s the point? Well, Jesus is making a point, and that is simply this; they may have come to arrest Him, but they weren’t sovereignly in charge of the arrest. They came to arrest Him, but before they could, He arrests them. They are bowing in submission to His holiness, admittedly, more of a reaction than reverence, a physical prostration—not a heartfelt spiritual prostration. They probably didn’t even have a chance to catch themselves before they hit the deck, but Jesus was making the point. What was the point? Well, in illustration form, He made it here in the garden by the fact they violently fell to the ground, but in verbal form, He made it earlier. He said this: “*I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.*” He was sovereign over the whole thing. They would have stayed on the ground if Jesus wanted them to.

Well, it was this violent wave of holiness that led to Peter’s, perhaps noble but misguided, violent swing of rashness. Notice verse 47: “*But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear,*” back in Mark 14:47. You’ve got to love Peter. Jesus certainly did, but he was a better preacher than he was a swordsman. He missed, likely going, I think, for this poor fellow’s head. He missed it and severed his ear, but I can assure you, Peter was not trying to render this man deaf, but dead. He was attempting to kill him. John tells us that the one who stood by, as Mark calls him in verse 47 without identifying him, was Peter, John 18:10. And John also tells us that the servant of the high priest whose ear was cut off was a man by the name of Malchus. That’s important because supplemental gospel material supplied by both John and Luke indicates the sequence of events as follows. So, if you are somewhat confused, here’s

the summary: Judas walks up; he kisses Jesus. Jesus makes the statement to Judas, “Do what you have come to do.” Jesus then questions them, “*Whom do you seek?*” They say, “*Jesus of Nazareth.*” Jesus says, “*I am he.*” Boom! Soldiers fall to the ground. This is where Peter saw his chance while the soldiers are on the ground. The disciples, Luke says in Luke 22, were saying, “*Lord, shall we strike with the sword?*” They’re asking Jesus; Peter acts. And I think Malchus is right in front of him on the ground with his face to the ground, and Peter goes with his sword to take off his head, and the man rolls, and he takes his ear off. He acted violently and wrongly because Jesus reasoned with him. Luke tells us in Luke 22: “*Jesus said, ‘No more of this!’ And he touched his ear,*” that is, Malchus’ ear, “*and healed him.*” An amazing miracle we don’t have the time to go into this morning, but just to point out this fact: Jesus showed kindness to His enemies and love to His enemy. He later told Pilate, by the way, “*My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.*”

I could give a long exposition just on this verse alone, but I’ll just make this statement: Jesus, what did He mean? “*My kingdom is not of this world.*” Well, Jesus didn’t mean you never fight or use weapons militarily as a nation. There are times for that. Nor is Jesus arguing against self-defense—sorry John Piper, you’re wrong. Nor was Jesus saying it was wrong to carry a sidearm. Peter was carrying a sidearm, a sword, but Jesus was rebuking him for the use of it because Jesus would later say, “*My kingdom is not of this world.*” What does that mean? The kingdom grows most naturally and in a gradual way, not with physical swords but with the sword of the gospel. The declaration of the gospel produces changed hearts; changed hearts produce changed lives; changed lives result in changed societies; and changed societies result in reformations and revivals. I sometimes think the American revolution—we are required by God to fight for the liberty so that the gospel can be heard, the liberty to proclaim the gospel, for example. But in the garden was not the time for a revolution. That was the point. It wasn’t time for a revolution. Matthew helps us out to point out the fact that Jesus could have started a revolution: “*Then Jesus said to him, ‘Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?’*” A Roman legion equaled six thousand soldiers, so six thousand soldiers for each of the Eleven plus six thousand for Jesus himself would have totaled seventy-two thousand angels to cause this revolution. Jesus didn’t do that because Jesus doesn’t need our bullets to kill; He needs our boldness to preach the gospel of life so that sinners are raised from the dead. But there’s more.

There’s also a lesson Jesus is teaching Peter about day-to-day faith in God. We are to love the unlovable. We are to love our enemies. We’re to bear with them; and if we love our enemies, we’re to bear with those in the church. We’re to bear with their sin. We’re not to seek to lop off their heads with our words and our ways, writing them off by cutting them out of our lives completely such as violent inward murder. This isn’t the hard work of building the kingdom; this is tearing down the kingdom of God. The greatest advice I can give any Christian is to find the most biblical church in your area and to go to it; and not just go to it, but if you determine it’s the most biblical church, commit to it for the next fifty years. Don’t commit treachery, thinking the grass is greener on the other side, causing division in the body of Christ, leaving, coming, going. Find a church, do the hard work of building, bear with those that are there, forgive those that are there. Don’t seek to lop off heads in a destructive way.

But it is ironic that Jesus’ detainment was one of violence. It was also one of innocence. Notice back in Mark 14:48: “*And Jesus said to them,*” Mark says, “*‘Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me?’*” He says, “*Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me.*” We will go over this quickly because we’re running out of time, but this is an appeal to His innocence. In other words, Jesus is saying, “I was in the temple during the day, the most public of all places. I was in the temple. Why didn’t you arrest Me there? You’ve had every chance to seize Me,” as verse 49 says. Well, Jesus is revealing His innocence, and at the same time, He’s exposing their guilt. He wants them to know that He knows what they know but are afraid to admit, and that if they would have arrested Jesus in broad daylight, at best, they would have looked foolish and at worst, it would have led to some sort of revolution behind Jesus. The religious leaders didn’t want that because they liked their power. The darkness in which they came to Jesus this night revealed their own evil dark hearts. That is Jesus’ point: “You came to extinguish the Light of the World, and I’m exposing your darkness. You had every chance to seize me in the day, and you didn’t do it, so you come to me,” as Jesus says, “as if I’m a robber.” That’s an interesting word. It’s the Greek word *lēstēs*. It could actually be translated “revolutionary.” Interestingly, Barabbas, the one who was released is referred to as a *lēstēs*, a “revolutionary” for committing murder in an insurrection.

Why would Jesus say, “Do you think that I’m a revolutionary?” Well, it’s clear, isn’t it? Jesus taught the establishment of the kingdom of God, and what kingdom on earth has ever been established apart from that kingdom conquering and robbing others? Jesus was a threat. By the way, you’re a threat too. You’re a threat to the culture in the West. It shouldn’t surprise you that the cancel culture targets Christians. We essentially are political insurrectionists. We go against the grain. The government says shut down the church. We say, “No, we submit to the Lord.” The government encourages bars and strip clubs to be open instead of the church during covid. The government promotes CRT, Critical Race Theory, and even some Christians criticize other Christians for speaking out against this atheistic and Marxist ideology, accusing us of dividing the West, dividing the church. Transgenderism—even in Canada, pastors being persecuted and the government seeking to silence ministers for speaking against transgenderism. What do people say? They say, “The church should remain silent on these issues. These are political issues. Stay out of politics,” and they’re not political issues. They’re spiritual issues. They’re ethical issues. In some cases, they are a matter of protecting physical life, like abortion, but in other cases, it’s a matter of promoting spiritual life. It’s a matter of upholding the law of God, but the church will be accused of being revolutionary insurrectionists.

By the way, the social justice movement in particular and secularism in general have a mantra and the mantra is “freedom, freedom.” The reality is that hellish ideology leads to statism, which doesn’t lead to freedom. It leads to the restriction of our freedom. Many ironies within all the biblical ironies that we are discussing this morning. We are to trust the one who said, ironically enough, that He was going to die for the church, and by dying for the church, He was going to build the church. We must believe that when persecution comes, the church grows. When Jesus dies, the church lives. When the church is persecuted, it grows. Jesus said He would build the church. How do we survive? Well, we’ve noted the fact that Jesus’ detainment, His arrest, which might come to us some day, was one of violence. It was one of innocence, but it was also one of deference. Notice verse 49, the end of it, Jesus says, “*But let the Scriptures be fulfilled.*” In the midst of such hatred and hostility, Jesus trusted the Father, the sovereign will of God, decreed

before the foundation of the world. I mean, you can quote Genesis 50: “*You meant evil...God meant it for good,*” but I don’t think that’s the verse Jesus has on His mind. I think He has Isaiah 53:12 on His mind: “*He poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors.*” “*But let the Scriptures be fulfilled.*” “I’m innocent, but I’m going to be numbered among the transgressors to fulfill the Word of God.

We must always defer to the Scriptures in troubling times. We must always submit to the head, Jesus Christ. We don’t try to take matters into our own hands like Peter. Thank God that God, through Christ, stopped Peter because Peter would have led a revolution. He stopped Peter. He willingly went to the cross. He submitted to the sovereign decree of God. He submitted to the Scriptures. What does the church do today in midst of being falsely accused? Very simple. Very simple formula: you preach the Word, you live the Word, and you call others to come underneath the Word—the law of God. Promote the law of God. That really simplifies the issue because the law of God tells us there’s only one race of people; not black versus white. It’s one race of depraved people who need to find their identity in Christ. The Bible, the law of God, tells us there’s a difference between men and women. The Bible tells us that only men should marry women and women should marry men. Homosexuality is a sin. Transgenderism is a sin. All forms of androgyny is sin. So, what does the church do? Well, they can accuse us of involving ourselves in political issues. That’s not what we’re doing. We’re simply preaching the law of God. We are letting the scriptures be fulfilled. We are submitting to the Scriptures and letting them have its work in our hearts and in our lives to have some sort of influence of salt and preservation upon society. It doesn’t come by some revolution with physical weapons. It comes with the preaching of the gospel, changed lives, changed hearts, your relationship with unbelievers, and your boldness to declare the Word of God and tell people and confront people they must come under the authority of the Word of God. That’s essentially what Jesus is doing here. He’s deferring to the Father.

He’s deferring to the Scriptures with all of the consequences that will flow from that, which takes us to the last noteworthy feature of His detainment. It was one of violence, one of innocence, one of deference—and you knew we were coming to it—verse 51, of absence. Jesus was all alone. Verse 50: “*And they all left him and fled,*” just as He predicted, right? Back in chapter 14, verse 27, Jesus said as the Scriptures say it will be fulfilled. “*I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.*” Exactly where Jesus needs to be, though—all alone. He had to face His enemies alone. He had to suffer alone. He had to atone for sins alone so that we wouldn’t be left alone. He said He would never leave us nor forsake us when we believe in Christ. We won’t experience the loneliness that Jesus felt in our place. They all fled. They all scattered. They all left, all the disciples, and I should hasten to say that later on, Peter and John came to their senses and kind of followed Jesus close behind. All the disciples other than Judas eventually came around to Jesus, right? They were restored, a reminder to us that it’s never too late to come back to Jesus as long as we have breath in our lungs and repent, no matter how high-handed our treason may be. I hope you hear that message this morning. No matter what sort of secret hidden sins you may have, you can be forgiven if you repent, if you repent.

But Mark ends this section on an interesting note, and I hope you bear with me for the next few moments. Several ironies in this passage. Number one, this high treason reveals the irony of the temple’s attachment to the scene, verse 43. Secondly, the traitor’s deportment on the scene, verses 44 and 45. Third, the target’s detainment at the scene, verses 46 through 50. That leads us, number

four, to the teenager’s disbursement from the scene, verses 51 and 52. Mark says, “*And a young man followed him,*” that is, Jesus, “*with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked.*” It would be easy for me this morning to close in prayer, say the benediction, and leave. I’m not going to do that because I want to make a point. Some interpreters, even conservative ones, write off these verses saying they’re insignificant; they’re unimportant. Is that really the right way to approach any of the verses of sacred Scripture? Wouldn’t it be more wrong to not study their meaning? When you study their meaning, you find John is telling us something critically important. Note there with me in verse 51. It says, “*And a young man followed him.*” The word *young man* translates essentially to “teenager.” That’s common vernacular, but that’s essentially what it refers to—someone in their teens. Who was this? Well, tradition has speculated about many people. It couldn’t have been one of the apostles, or Mark would have probably named him.

So, tradition tells us that it was John Mark, the author of this gospel. That would make sense. Mark was from Jerusalem, and this individual, this young teenager had to be someone close by who got word that something was happening in the garden. Mark’s family home, by the way, was where the Passover, it is believed, took place. Mark’s father, it is believed, was a follower of Jesus, and he owned the upper room that was lent to Jesus and the disciples. Later on, Mark’s father passed away. His mother was in charge, and she used that home for Jesus and His followers to meet. Acts 12:12 refers to it as “*the house of Mary, the mother of John,*” also called Mark, John Mark, the writer of this gospel. It wouldn’t be unusual for a gospel writer to anonymously speak about himself only by description and not by name. The apostle John does that repeatedly in his gospel. But some say this event is insignificant. It wasn’t insignificant to the teenager who escaped the posse naked to save his life; and furthermore, if it wasn’t Mark, how did Mark know about it? And if it wasn’t Mark, what is the significance of Mark including it? Well, I think it was the author, Mark, perhaps awakened or not sleeping due to his curiosity, or perhaps even his affinity to Jesus. Mark sneaked out in the middle of the night to see where Jesus and the eleven went. The fact that he did it in haste is indicated by verse 51, and the observation that—it’s almost embarrassing to say—he had nothing on but a linen cloth about his body, no undergarment, probably a bedsheet of some sort. What exactly happened? Well, no one would have worn linen like that unless they were wealthy. Clearly this someone who came from a wealthy family, someone who would open their home later to Jesus’ followers, someone who would open their home to convene in an upper room. Or maybe Judas didn’t know the destination of the garden, so the soldiers first came to John Mark’s house looking for Jesus, and he in haste wrapped a sheet around him and followed them to the garden. Or maybe after Jesus was arrested, Peter of course fled, and the first place he went was to John Mark’s home to say what had happened, and young Mark hurried out in a rash adventure.

It’s hard to know for sure, but what is inescapable is the shame of it all. This youth was scared for his life, and verse 51 says they “*seized him,*” but when they did that with an amazing athleticism, he spun away, leaving the linen cloth, as verse 52 says, in the soldiers’ hands, and he “*ran away naked.*” Reminiscent of Joseph, leaving his garment in Potiphar’s wife’s hands, except that Joseph acted bravely. The point here is that Mark acted shamefully. What was he afraid of? He was afraid in sharing in the same judgment Jesus was going to before the Romans, the Roman tribunal, the religious leaders, and I think that’s exactly Mark’s point in including this shameful episode of his nakedness. Revelation 3 says that apart from Christ we are “*wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.*” That’s the reality this morning. Apart from Christ, we are all naked and shameful before

God, and His Word tells us in Hebrews 4:13 we are “*all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*”

You remember all the way back in the garden before sin entered into the equation, Adam and Eve were naked, the Bible says, and they were without shame. But as soon as they sinned, the manifestation of that guilt was seen in the fact that they were uncomfortable at being naked, particularly naked before God. And so, they sewed fig leaves together no doubt in an attempt at works righteousness so they could stand in God’s sight without shame. Well, the point is not merely to build in shame of physical nakedness, although I’m sure young Mark running home that night naked had to do some explaining to his parents, but it really has more to do with the shame of spiritual nakedness and the reality that we need to be clothed with Christ’s righteousness. That’s the point. In the garden, God had an animal whose blood was shed. I believe personally Adam slew that animal as a reminder there is no forgiveness apart from killing, apart from death, and then He clothed Adam and Eve with those skins, He clothed their nakedness—all a picture of the gospel, a covering of shame not just of naked bodies, but of Adam and Eve’s eternal souls, to cover their guilt of sin. And of course, Isaiah tells us that all our righteousness is what? It’s as “*filthy rags*” or like a filthy garment, and all of us “*like sheep have gone astray.*” We have scattered in the darkness of the night in shameful nakedness from God.

What is the remedy? Well, the remedy is the gospel. That is Mark’s point. Why does he include verses 51 and 52? Because he understands that, spiritually speaking, greater than his physical nakedness that night was a spiritual nakedness. He needed Christ to be judged in his place so he wouldn’t be judged. He needed Christ’s righteousness to cover his nakedness. He realized what we all must realize, and that is this; that if we stand on our own without Christ, without His righteousness, we are condemned. Here is another irony of the gospel. Christ was obedient and then condemned, standing alone so that we who are disobedient could be justified and wouldn’t have to stand alone but would stand with Christ before the Father and be accepted. Here’s another irony. Jesus shed His blood, hanging essentially naked on the cross in shame so that we could be clothed with His righteousness and no longer be ashamed before Him. That’s why Mark gives his account this way. Oh, you can criticize Peter all you want, the other apostles. You can criticize Judas like an armchair quarterback on Monday morning after the game, but here’s the reality. We are not really the giants of the faith like the apostles, who by the way did deny the Lord and did flee. We’re more like Mark. We’re an average teenager, naked and scared to death. Curious, curious, wanting to follow Christ, and that’s how Mark wants us to see ourselves. We fit into this story. We were there in the garden in nakedness and shame, just as Adam and Eve were clothed in the garden of Eden. Mark was clothed in the garden of Gethsemane with the righteousness of Christ in his nakedness. He wants us to see ourselves in this story. He wants you to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ so that you won’t be shamed on the final day of judgment. That’s why he ended the account this way. These aren’t meaningless verses. They’re inspired by the Holy Spirit for us to see we fit into this story. We need Christ.

I’ll end on this note. As Jesus was led away to His last judgment before He was crucified, here’s another irony. It was really the last judgment of the religious leaders. Jesus would stand before them as they judged Him, but He would judge them in this sense. When He died upon the cross, what happened in the temple? The veil was torn in two. Access was made ready, full and free to enter through the blood of Christ—not through some religious leader, not through works

righteousness. And then what happened in AD 70 with the destruction of the temple? God’s final word of judgment on the religious leaders and the religious establishment to make this point; Jesus is the true temple, and He has opened the doors of Himself to sinners. How do you get in? You become naked like Mark in all of your shame and humility. The door into the temple is low and you must go low. You must understand the shame of your nakedness. You must recognize your shame of sin, and you must embrace the shame of the cross to enter the temple of God and the kingdom. Irony. If Judas had not betrayed Christ, you wouldn’t get into the kingdom. The irony of all ironies is that God in His sovereignty predetermined before the foundation of the world that all of His true sheep would come to Him. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was a preacher during the rise of the Nazis in Germany, spoke to a church that didn’t have a voice. They were afraid of tyranny. They were afraid of speaking out, and they essentially didn’t have as much fear as they should have had at what statism could do. Bonhoeffer said this: “Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless [but guilty]. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.”

It can be applied in a couple of different ways. Number one, the church must unashamedly present the gospel just as it was presented this morning, that we are sinners, damned to hell apart from the regenerative work of the Spirit of God clothing us in His righteousness. We cannot be fearful to speak that. We must speak that. “Not to speak is to speak.” And “not to act is to act.” For you to know that, and then not turn to Christ in faith and repentance is to commit blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, and that is a sin that’s unforgivable. You must come to Christ if you haven’t, and if you have, embrace His shame so that you don’t have shame before the Father. Embrace the shame of the gospel, declare it from the mountaintop. Don’t be silent because that is the message of salvation. Jesus was shamed for us. He drank the cup of wrath so that we could be clothed and not be ashamed, and we could drink the cup of the Lord’s supper as a celebration in what He did for us.

Father, we thank You for, Lord, the gospel of Mark. What a heavy portion of Scripture it is because we see ourselves in this story, even as it builds to its climax of Jesus’ arrest. We see ourselves there. We see ourselves in the soldiers. We see ourselves in Judas. We see ourselves in the apostles. We see ourselves in John Mark. Lord, we recognize that if it weren’t for Your grace, if it weren’t for Your sovereignty in choosing us, Lord, we would not only be sheep that scatter and have gone astray, but we’d never come back. We thank You that through faith and repentance, we can know You as our Savior. Through faith and repentance, we can know You as Lord. Father, You have promised us because Your Son was left all alone in our place, You have promised us that You will never leave us nor forsake us. You have come to die for us and give us eternal life. Remove all of the anxieties of our lives. Remove from us the fear of man and place within our hearts the boldness of Christ to trust in the power of the gospel, to trust in the power of Jesus to build His church in spite of a hostile society that falsely accuses Christians of meddling in politics. Just by virtue that we’re preaching the gospel, we’re declaring the law of God.

Give us strength at this hour. In a sense, and we say this with a little bit of fear and hesitation, we feel like Jesus, the one that we are in union with. We feel surrounded by enemies. We feel the hostility. Lord, help us to love Him and be committed to Him through it all, resting in His grace, resting in His sovereignty, deferring to Him, deferring to the Scriptures. Because He died and was resurrected, we too have been resurrected spiritually and some day physically. This is what our great hope is as we look to the consummation of Your eternal kingdom. Until that day comes, help

us to build Your kingdom with boldness and to build it in the power of Jesus. We pray, for your glory and our good. We ask these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.