

Swords, Clubs and a Kiss
(Good Friday, April 19, 2019)
Matthew 26:47-56 MtJL079

In our Sunday morning worship

at Bread of Life, we have been going through
the Gospel of Matthew.

In the last month or so, we have been examining
the Passion of Christ –

that is, His suffering leading up to the day
that we observe this evening, Good Friday.

Tonight, I will continue the exposition
where I left off on Sunday morning –

so turn in your Bibles to Matthew 26.

In the final three chapters of Matthew's Gospel,
the events surrounding

the Passion of Jesus Christ are
intensely dramatic, only occasionally
relieved by pleasant interludes.

The chapter opens with the intense drama of
the priests' plot to have Jesus arrested
and killed by stealth.

This is followed by the HIGH point
of the woman of Bethany's great expression
of worship in anointing the body
of Jesus Christ

And in the third scene we sank to discover
Judas's treacherous betrayal plot –
to hand Jesus over for 30 pcs of silver.

From there we examined

the disciples obedience to prepare
the Upper Room for the Passover,
followed by,

the betrayer at the table, and

Then the ultimate HIGH point
of the Lord's Passion week

the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Now, most of those HIGH moments of relief
in the Passion events give way to a series of

LOW points of great suffering
in Jesus's final day on earth,

as we go through the events resulting in
His arrest, trial, and execution on a
cruel Roman cross.

No sooner have the disciples celebrated
the Lord's Supper and finished singing
the triumphant Hymn,
than Jesus predicts their utter collapse
in verse 31 saying:

*You will all fall away because of me
this night*

He identified Himself as the shepherd of
Zechariah 13:7, saying,

*"I will strike the shepherd and
the sheep of the flock will be scattered."*

And indeed, it would not be very long before
the unity and joy of the Last Supper would
give way to a dark night of disloyalty,
doubt and fear among
Jesus's disciples.

On Sunday we contrasted the
weakness of humanity as illustrated in the
prideful boasting of the Apostle Peter,

with the suffering and ultimate resolve
and poise of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at verse 33,

³³ Peter answered him,

*“Though they all fall away because of you,
I will never fall away.”*

And in verse 35, he swears:

*“Even if I must die with you,
I will not deny you!”*

Ironically, not 4 hours will pass from this boasting,

and this same Peter would deny Jesus
three times,

even swearing again,

“I do not know the man!”

We witnessed the human weakness not only
of Peter,

but of James and John, as well,

as they are invited to join Jesus to pray in
the Garden of Gethsemane,

but they did not find prayer so important,
choosing rather to sleep than to
stay up with Jesus and
watch and pray for one hour.

Eventually ALL of the disciples will forsake Jesus
this night, illustrating in living color,
the weakness,
faithlessness and depravity
of humanity.

Meanwhile, it was in the Garden of Gethsemane,
that Jesus learned obedience –
the obedience of the Son of God was
not automatic, it was learned through
the suffering in Gethsemane.

It was a struggled-for, learned obedience.

Jesus was not Superman

Superman is not human –

Jesus was truly man

And nowhere is that clearer than in
Gethsemane which shows us that
we do not need a Superman –
we need a True Man –

Not a machine who's obedience
is programmed in.

Contrasted to fickle humanity

Jesus Christ in Gethsemane

faithfully prayed in utter anguish –

He contended with His Father, even
asking Him to take away the cup
of judgment that he was to bear,

but in the end, He consented to
do the Father's will.

And the Father's will it was, to fulfill justice
that day by crushing of His Son.

It WAS the Father's will that His
cup of judgment go away –

but not magically.

As much as He may have wanted to,
the Father would not send a
legion of angels to defend Jesus and

deliver Him from
what was to come.

No,

Jesus had to drink the cup
to set the world free.

Because He is a thrice holy God,
He must judge sin.

But because He is also a supremely loving God,
He gave His Son to be the final sacrifice
whose bloody death would deliver
billions of people.

It has been said,

the battle for the cross was won
in Gethsemane.

The end of the sorrows and Spiritual warfare
that Jesus endured in the
Garden of Gethsemane prepared Him
for another phase of suffering
and physical warfare,
where Jesus,
is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Because Jesus prayed, he could face these horrible events that were to take place the remainder of that Good Friday.

the first of which is our text for this evening, the treasonous betrayal by Judas and arrest of Christ in verses 47-56.

Matthew 26:47-56

⁴⁷ While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

⁴⁸ Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; seize him."

⁴⁹ And he came up to Jesus at once and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" And he kissed him.

⁵⁰ Jesus said to him,

"Friend, do what you came to do."

Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him.

⁵¹ And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.

⁵² Then Jesus said to him,

“Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword.

⁵³ Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴ But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?”

⁵⁵ At that hour Jesus said to the crowds,

“Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me.

⁵⁶ But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.”

Then all the disciples left him and fled.

PRAY.

I hope that you can see why this is
an appropriate text for us to consider
for Good Friday.

All that will take place leading up to Christ's
crucifixion begins at this moment of arrest.

The hour of betrayal initiates
the hour of atonement!

Beginning in verse 47, the Gospel-writer,

Matthew reminds us, as he has done before, that

Judas is "*one of the twelve.*"

Oh how this hurts – the betrayal was an
inside job,

one the perfect number of 12 disciples
was lost.

The treachery of this, is incomprehensible!

Perhaps you have some idea of what it is like to
be betrayed –

whether by a co-worker, a friend,
a family member –

you know that the closer the person,
the harder it is to take.

Judas was “*one of the twelve*” –

one of 12 men with whom Jesus ate,
fellowshipped, taught – every day for
a span of 3 years.

This was his
close friend in whom he trusted,
who ate his bread,
who has now
lifted his heel against Jesus.

Who would have thought that with
all of the enemies that Jesus accrued
in the religious world,
that it would be
“*one of the twelve,*” who would betray him.

What a blow!

The shame of it!

How could a friend betray a friend?

The Roman Soldiers with their swords, yes!

The temple guard with their clubs, yes!

All expected!

But “One of the twelve???”

It’s hard for us to fully understand
this kind of betrayal.

Even any feeling that you may have been
betrayed – cannot approach this.

This was not merely a friend betraying a friend

It was more than a student betraying a teacher

This was the Son of God being betrayed!

The magnitude of His person,
magnifies the offense and shame!

The BETRAYAL is at the center of this text.

(the word is mentioned 10x in our text)

We can make much of the make-up of the
crowd that came to arrest Jesus.

We often think of a few men,

but it was many soldiers that came
to arrest One Man!

The Gospel of John identifies the multitude
as a Roman “cohort.”

A “cohort” consisted over 400 soldiers!

So it was literally hundreds of men
who charge in

with the lights of lanterns and torches
and weapons – swords and clubs.

Among them are:

Roman soldiers

Temple police

... BUT leading the pack and most emphasized
in the text is the betrayer.

Judas steps up first –

ahead of the crowd and in tragic mockery,
he says: “Greetings Rabbi”

Judas was a liar right to the end.

Greetings Rabbi, ... right!

Judas led this crowd to the location
where they could arrest Jesus by stealth,
as they wished –

it was very late – after midnight –
it was dark.

They needed a sign to identify the
right person.

The man ... a friend ... “one of the twelve”

The sign ... a kiss!

He chose a token of affection as his
sign of betrayal

Can anything be more offensive?

Judas profanes the Son of Man!

What a horrible shame!

We see the depths to which
human beings can sink when they rebel.

And brethren, this is ANY of us here!

We're not to look for Judases in OUR lives ...
we are NOT Jesus.

Christ is the one who was betrayed
for me,
even while I was betraying Him.

When you see Judas, in this story,
your response is:

let ME not betray Christ!

We are all “one of the twelve”

So any of us may betray Him.

Let it not be I.

*

Back in the text,

Christ, knows exactly what is going on,

though I am sure that He is pained by losing
“one of the twelve”

Jesus submits to the indignity,

offering the words:

“Friend, do what you came to do;”

and then,

as Luke reports:

“Judas, with a kiss you deliver up
the Son of Man?” (Luke 22:48)

Oh yes, this is MORE than the sinister act of
treachery of one friend against another.

With a kiss, Judas has upset the harmony of
Christ’s mission.

One of twelve was lost!

But this kiss was not just Satan’s move on the
chessboard of history ...

Jesus truly IS the Son of God

And He endures Judas’s betrayal and
overcomes the shame of it.

As we seek to harmonize the description of events
from the other Gospels,

it seems at this point that

Jesus leaves Judas ignoring the signal
and asks His opponents

“Whom do you seek?”

“Jesus the Nazarene” (they respond)

To which Christ replies with
infinite calmness and majesty,
the Divine Words,

“I am”

John reports that the power of these words,

“I AM”

causes them to fall backward!

Brethren, I believe that John’s contribution
to the story reveals that

The events surrounding the arrest of Jesus
are more than a

series of unfortunate events.

His arrest was not meaningless or
some unanticipated tragedy
which overtook Jesus by surprise
bringing to a close an otherwise
promising ministry.

No!

Every moment, every action is under the
sovereign control of Almighty God.

Throughout the moments of this day from
the arrest, to the mock trials,
to the scourging and crucifixion –
though Jesus is

“In the hands of sinful men,”

the power in those hands is
strictly limited.

Even Judas is only doing that which
He was ordained by God to do.

In John 17, Jesus’s high-priestly prayer –
(which many believe was prayed
in the Garden of Gethsemane)

He thanked his Father that the disciples
were kept safe – saying ...

None has been lost except
the one doomed to destruction

so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

Even the very man who

hands Jesus over into the
hands of sinful men

Fulfills the Scripture and

unwittingly offers a people their Savior,
who will “kiss the Son” not as Judas,
but in obedience and faith!

Christ was not kissed by Judas in vain!

*

Which is what makes the human action of
one of the apostles so unnecessary and
even foolish.

Look at verse 51:

⁵¹ And behold, one of those who were
with Jesus stretched out his hand and
drew his sword and struck the servant
of the high priest and cut off his ear.

Although Mark and Matthew withhold his name,
we learn from John that this disciple is Peter,
and the target is Malchus –
a servant of Caiaphas, the high priest.

What a strange night it will be for Malchus

Perhaps this is Peter’s carnal attempt
to show that he is, after all, loyal!

I believe that Peter's nap in the Garden
may be linked to his

carnally, taking up arms to defend Jesus.

Had he made spiritual war in prayer,
perhaps he would not have been so quick to
make physical war with the sword.

Thankfully, and providentially, Peter was a
poor swordsman ...

I can tell you that he was not
aiming for Malchus's ear,

but whatever he was aiming for, he missed,
and cut off his ear.

Whatever we think of Peter's act of loyalty,
Jesus rebukes Peter.

Look at verse 52:

⁵² Then Jesus said to him,

*"Put your sword back into its place.
For all who take the sword will perish
by the sword.*

*⁵³ Do you think that I cannot appeal to
my Father, and he will at once send me*

more than twelve legions of angels?

Jesus is not interested in any kind of
carnal defense.

He says, “put your sword away.”

He doesn't need a human sword –

at any time, He could call down
more than 7200 angels to wipe out his
army of adversaries ...

and they won't just cut off ears!

Jesus doubly rebukes this act,

by healing Malchus's ear – which is
Jesus's LAST miracle performed
before His death!

(This is reported in Luke's account)

How though do we apply Jesus's rather
proverbial saying:

all who take the sword
will perish by the sword.

I do not believe that this text can be used to
try to defend anti-gun laws
in the 21st Century, United States.

This has become to go-to verse of Christians
seeking to defend their anti-gun position

...

But, in fact, this has NOTHING to say
to 21st Century America about
guns or the second amendment.

But I do believe an appropriate application
of this text is that violence in defense
of Christ or the kingdom of God
is always unjustified.

Christians are not to seek to advance
the kingdom of Christ by violence –
and when we do, we cut off proverbial ears ...
one need only look at the Crusades and
Inquisition, over a millennia ago,
where over a million Jews and Muslims were
tortured and slaughtered as heretics,
in the name of Christ ...

I think it's right to ask ...

Have those who have taken up the sword
in the name of Christ,

cut off the ears of Jews and Muslims
so they could not hear the Gospel
for generations to follow?

Brethren, we are not called to bear the sword
either to advance or resist when

being persecuted for our faith.

Retribution is NEVER God's way!

Ever since the first murder of Abel by
his brother Cain, God was the One
who oversees justice.

Later He puts justice into the hands of
governing authorities ...

but it is NOT right for one to allow
arbitrary impulse in a moment of chaos
to execute vengeance.

Christ shows that HE alone is the bearer of justice,
Not with a sword, but

by healing the ear of the one who has
come to arrest Him.

Love your enemy
do good to those who hate you ...

never avenge yourselves, but leave it to
the wrath of God, for it is written,

“Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

Rather “if your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink;

... Do not be overcome by evil,
but overcome evil with good.

This is exactly what Jesus did for Malchus.

The day of judgment for Malchus will come –

the Perfect Judge and King who
judges rightly will

reveal the intentions of the heart

*

I believe that the mob that was coming
to arrest Jesus, affected the disciples.

In particular the chaos and violence of
the crowd infected the disciples.

I find an application here for disciples today,
that WE need to BEWARE –
we live in a violent world –
the world's ways are that of violence –
not only physical violence,
but violence in words ...
our words can be weapons –
sharper than any dagger.

Sadly I find far too often,
as disciples stew in the proverbial boiling pot
of violence and cruelty in the world,
we fail to realize how the heat has turned up –
and end up falling for the same violent
methods as our enemies.

Instead of overcoming evil with good,
we submit and become OF the world

I see this on social media, for example –
there are people who I follow and agree with ...

and there are people who I follow and
don't agree with.

And it really doesn't matter which side starts
a Twitter-war – with their words,
the other side ends up adopting the same kind
of “swords” that the world use.

Brethren, have no doubt ...

We are affected by our milieu –

and the environment of our political and
social arena is one of cruelty and violence,
especially in our use of words

But brethren, the Scripture says,

We are “more than conquerors,”

but that does not entail using physical weapons,
or anything of flesh and blood.

We are more than conquerors ...
through Him who loved us!

Jesus was “more than a conqueror” –

he **WON** every battle that mattered!

Yes, he was taken away bound,
but that was not the end of the story –
(Sunday is coming!)

Jesus bore a different kind of arms –
spiritual weapons that are actually
effective!
Not human swords that cut off ears.

Jesus is not a martyr –

He laid down his life willingly.

He said it:

“If I want to, I can call 7200 angels”

And in verse 55 He said:

*“Have you come out as against a robber,
with swords and clubs to capture me?
Day after day I sat in the temple teaching,
and you did not seize me.*

But why did he allow his arrest?

Why did He not take up arms, or

call down 12 legions of angels?

Why did they not arrest him earlier,
when they had ample opportunity?

He says it in verse 54

*how then should the Scriptures
be fulfilled, that it must be so?"*

And again in verse 56:

*⁵⁶ But all this has taken place that the Scriptures
of the prophets might be fulfilled."*

God had arranged all of the preceding Centuries
of time from the beginning of creation to

converge in such a way as to bring about
this hour of darkness

that was foretold in the Scriptures!

The Scriptures reveal that

Jesus's mission was not to save us
from clubs and swords,

but from sin

And for that to happen, Jesus could not
break these bonds,

but had to submit to them.

He was bound, so that we might be set free!

And He accomplished just that,
by submitting Himself to arrest
by a crowd with clubs and swords,
led by the kiss of a betrayer ...
all the way to road to Calvary
on this very first Good Friday.

*

Our text ends, perhaps fittingly so,
on a day like Good Friday ...
with Jesus bound and left alone –
all of his devoted followers have deserted him.

Verse 57

Then all the disciples left him and fled.

There was one betrayer,
but really, all betrayed him.

All the disciples left him.

When their carnal attempt fails,
they run.

Ultimately these are the human options:

- 1) Try to help Jesus win,
and when that doesn't work,
- 2) Abandon Him

They didn't get it.

The call of the disciple is NEVER to
help Jesus win –

He doesn't need our help to win!

All of your carnal efforts will only serve to
cut off your enemies ear.

But the call of the disciple is to DIE!

To come after Jesus is not political

To come after Jesus is not a call to
defend rights

It is to trust Jesus and DIE with Him,
so that you might also live with Him!

Our calling is to be

*crucified with Christ; and it is no longer
I who live, but Christ lives in me;*

*and the life which I now live in the flesh
I live by faith in the Son of God, who
loved me and gave Himself up for me.*

This is the call that I call you to today.

Come and die with Christ,

that you may live with Him also.

Amen.