

The Arrest

The Cross (Part 8)

Mark 14:41-52 (Mt.26:45-56; Lk.22:46-53; Jn.18:2-12) 8/13/2022

Hook: What's with the strange story about the young man fleeing naked at Jesus' arrest? Mark leaves out so many big aspects of that event, but he includes this. Is it a meaningless, throwaway story? Or is it Mark at his best, crafting a profound message in a vivid picture?

Summary: Jesus leads the 12 into battle even though he knows they will fail. When the hour comes, you'll have to face the battle, ready or not. Jesus fights this battle on four fronts. Front #1: Judas (Jesus fights discouragement by calling out to Abba, Father). Front #2: the rogue disciple who jeopardizes the whole gospel. Jesus fights that front by reminding him of the mission (the gospel), which can't be achieved by the sword. Front #3: He exposes their sinfulness and points them to prophecy about him. Front #4: Jesus takes upon himself the garments of our shame and clothes us in his righteousness.

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Mark 14:41 Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. **42** Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

43 Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. **44** Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." **45** Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. **46** The men seized Jesus and arrested him.

47 Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

48 "Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? **49** Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled."

50 Then everyone deserted him and fled. **51** A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, **52** he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

Introduction

Imagine yourself waking up from a deep sleep. It takes you a minute to even realize where you are. You feel the hard ground, you shiver. *Man, it's freezing out here. O, right, we're up here at Gethsemane ... uh oh.* You see the look on Jesus' face. This is the third time he's come back and had to wake you up and he's not happy.

Mark 14:41 Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. **42** Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

I mentioned last time that's military language—like saying, "Forward, march!" Jesus is letting them know they are headed into battle. And he's letting us know as well. We're going to learn a lot from Jesus here about spiritual warfare.

From this point on, the mood totally changes. In Gethsemane we see *pathos*—extreme emotion, tears, desperation, weakness. Mark shows us the passions roiling inside Jesus' heart. After v.43 there's no sign of that. Jesus stands with calm, strong, unruffled, poise.¹

In the Garden, Jesus was worked up and the disciples were asleep. Now he's calm while they panic. Why? Because Jesus understands what's happening. There are a lot of characters in this drama, and Jesus is the only human in the scene who has any idea what's actually going on. Jesus had prayed, "Your will be done, Father." And he understands what he's doing is watching the answer to that prayer. The rest of the book is nothing but God's will unfolding and coming to fruition. And Jesus has spent the whole night in prayer coming to grips with that.

Or to put it another way, look at verse 49 where Jesus explains why everything was happening the way it was happening.

Mark 14:49 ... the Scriptures must be fulfilled.

God had a plan for how this was going to go, it was set in stone, sealed in the pages of prophecy, and we're about to see it unfold.²

¹ Even the style of Mark's writing changes. He drops all the emotive language, nothing about how anyone feels. The arrest scene is outlined in concise, matter-of-fact objectivity. The focus is now on what happens (the unfolding of God's will) rather than on emotion.

² When Jesus says, "Here comes my betrayer," literally, it's, "Here comes the one handing me over." That word "to hand over" has been used all through the gospel to describe both the human side and the divine side of the cross. The term "hand over" reminds the reader that what Judas is there to do falls right in line with God's perfect plan.

Ready or Not, You Must Face the Battle

So back to our scene. You wake up, Jesus is back again, and he says this:

41 ... "Are you still³ sleeping and resting?⁴ Enough!⁵ The hour has come."

A more natural way to translate this would be, "Do you plan on sleeping indefinitely? Do you think it's far off? No. The hour has already come." Then he points down the hill.

41 ... Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Rise! Let us go! Here comes the one handing me over!"

The disciples are supposed to be the ones keeping watch while Jesus prayed, and he ends up having to tell them to wake up because Judas is coming. That's like if you had to wake up your guard dog and drag him on a leash to go confront intruders.

Advance

41 ... Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Rise! Let us go!

The mob doesn't have to run to catch Jesus. He advances on them. He's showing us that it's not enough to *pray* for God's will; we must also *walk* in it. We say, "Your will be done," but that prayer doesn't mean anything unless you're ready to embrace God's will once he reveals it.

So Jesus advances, and he brings the disciples with him.

Why? Why not just tell them to run? He knows they're not going to do anything good in this encounter. Why not say, "Look guys, the mob is coming to arrest me. This is my battle, it's my cup to drink. You guys clearly aren't prepared. There's nothing you can do here. Run and live to fight another day." Instead, Jesus leads them straight into the fire.

That's sobering because it reminds us that when the hour comes, ready or not, you're going into that battle. God doesn't say, "You're not prepared—I'm going to bench you for now and put someone else in the game." It's not a game; it's a war—no bench, no time outs, you're going into battle whatever your condition, whatever your state of readiness.

Okay, so now let's watch how Jesus fights this spiritual battle. Mark is going to show Jesus fight this battle on four fronts simultaneously. The first one is Judas.

Front #1: Judas

42 Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!" 43 Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared.⁶

³ The word translated "still" (λοιπὸν, *loipon*) normally means, "from now on."

⁴ This can be a statement or a question. If it's a statement, Jesus is saying, "The battle's over now. You have permission to continue sleeping." That seems unlikely because the next words out of Jesus' mouth are, "Rise, let us go."

The other possibility is that Jesus is being sarcastic ("Go ahead—sleep forever) or asking a rhetorical question (Are you planning on sleeping indefinitely?). I believe Jesus most likely meant a question.

⁵ The word translated "enough" is difficult to translate. One common meaning for the word is "to receive payment," but that doesn't seem to fit here. Some have tried to tie it to Judas receiving his payment, but that would hardly make sense to the disciples at this point.

Some have suggested the translation "It's settled," referring to Jesus' prayer. "I asked the Father if there is another way. Clearly the answer is no. The matter is settled."

All the major translations translate it, "Enough" because the normal uses of this word don't seem to fit. But I think the "far off" meaning does fit, so there is no need to press the word into a meaning outside of its semantic range.

So I think it's best to take it as another question, answered in the next line. "Is it far off? No. The hour has come."

⁶ Jesus announced that Judas was about to arrive even before the others realized what was happening. Evidently, Jesus knew they were about to arrive even before they came into view. Jesus' words here comes my betrayer are followed by the words just as. The description of things happening immediately after Jesus speaks has been a sign of his authority since the earliest parts of this Gospel.

Betrayal

What kind of spiritual warfare is going on here? It has to do with the fact that Judas was a friend. If we go back to verse 20 where Jesus first announced that one of the 12 would betray him.

Mark 14:20 "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me.

This is an intimate friend. And look what he does.

43 ... With him was a crowd⁷ armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. 44 Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard."

Judas gives the order to the arresting party to lead Jesus away under guard. Judas doesn't want Jesus to escape, he doesn't want the disciples to bust him loose, he doesn't want a crowd to come save Jesus—he says, "Make sure you guard him well." He's not just reluctantly doing what he has to do to get some money. Judas wants Jesus dead.

45 Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him.

Evidently, Judas still thought he could do this without anyone knowing he was the betrayer. Otherwise he would have just walked up to Jesus and said, "I'm turning you in." Judas thinks he's there under cover, and he doesn't want to blow his cover during the arrest.

It's bad enough Judas betrays Jesus, but the way he does it is so grotesque. A kiss. And the word for "kiss" here is an intensified form, referring to either an especially long embrace or an especially warm greeting. Judas is really making a show of this.

Jesus knows exactly what Judas is doing, he knows what's in his heart, he knows Satan is inside Judas—can you imagine what it was like for Jesus to endure this sickening kiss? I suppose it's a little like that when people go to church and they're all expressive about worship, waving their arms, shouting amens and all the rest, and then on Monday they betray Jesus in the way they live. What must it be like for Jesus to endure that kind of "worship"?

Discouragement

So what kind of warfare is this? Have you ever wondered why Satan moved Judas to betray Jesus? It seems a little out of character because one thing we know for sure about Satan is the last thing he wants is for Jesus to die on the cross. In his temptations, he tried to convince Jesus to bypass the cross. When Peter suggested Jesus not go to the cross, Jesus called Peter Satan, because that was Satan's whole agenda—keep Jesus from dying on the cross. So why prompt Judas to betray him to the authorities?

If you look at what happened in Gethsemane, you get an idea what Satan was up to. He was trying to weaken Jesus. He wanted to break Jesus down, discourage him, bring him to a point where he wouldn't be strong enough to go through with drinking the cup. And what's more discouraging and disheartening than being betrayed by a close friend?

I think that's the point of Jesus emphasizing, "One of the 12—one who breaks bread with me." I don't think Satan moved Judas to hand Jesus over because he wanted Jesus to be crucified. I think he

When Jesus said "Here comes my betrayer" in v.42, he used the same term he used back in ch.1 when he preached about the kingdom of God being near, or at hand. He uses that same word here, and no sooner does he say "My betrayer is at hand" than Judas shows up. It might be a subtle way of reminding us, when Jesus says something's coming, it's coming.

⁷ It's interesting that Jesus uses the word, "crowd." It was probably the temple police with the clubs and Roman soldiers with the swords. But Mark uses the word "crowd." That's interesting because that word has been a big theme all through the book. And in these closing chapters, the crowd has always been on Jesus' side. More than once it was the crowds that kept Jesus from being arrested because the chief priests were afraid of them. Now the crowd comes to arrest Jesus. I'm not suggesting it's the same crowd—the same people, but by using the same word, Mark is making a literary point. In one chapter the crowd saves Jesus from being arrested and in the next the crowd is making the arrest. Jesus didn't luck out when he was saved by the crowd. But this is a turning point. Prior to this, the crowd was never hostile to Jesus. From here on, the crowd was always hostile to Jesus. The crowd can go either way, and they'll go whichever way ends up serving God's sovereign plan.

wanted Jesus so demoralized in the garden that it would just be too much and Jesus would recoil from drinking that cup.

That's the spiritual battle here, and this is where spiritual alertness comes in. You look at this from a natural point of view and think, "Oh, the battle here is someone's trying to hurt me and I need to protect myself." But that wasn't the battle. The battle was what Satan was trying to do to Jesus' heart. And Jesus won that battle by crying out to God and calling him Abba, Father.

A big part of spiritual alertness is understanding what the enemy is going after. You naturally think the problem is that big financial loss you suffered. But the real issue is what Satan's trying to do to your heart through that loss. You think the issue is that spiteful thing someone said to you, or your health problem, or the crisis at work. But those are all ancillary. The real issue is what those things are trying to do to your heart and whether you're going to let it happen or fight it.

Front #2&3: The Crowd/Disciple

So that's one front of the battle Jesus has to fight. The next two fronts surround Jesus—one in front of him and one at his flank.

The Crowd

46 They seized Jesus and arrested him.

So the first front of this battle is Judas, the second is this crowd arresting him, and no sooner does that one arise than a third front pops up—this one from behind. When I say, "behind," I mean this is someone that's supposed to be on Jesus' side. This one is a case of friendly fire. Someone trying to defend Jesus threatens to derail the whole plan.

The Disciple

46 The men seized Jesus and arrested him. 47 Then one of those standing near⁸ drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.⁹

This disciple was packing, and he attacks the whole mob by himself. Lest you think the disciples were all complete cowards, this would take some guts. Don't think of a big, long broadsword. This is the word for a dagger. This disciple gets real close, right up into the guy's grill, takes a cut at him, and delivers a damaging blow to the side of his head. I don't know if he was trying to slice his throat and the guy ducked, or just went for the head in general.

But he does some damage, and now we've got a huge problem. In order for God's whole plan to work, Jesus has to die innocent—the spotless lamb. It's essential that Pilate asks, "What crime has he committed?" and they have no answer (Mark 15:14).

If Jesus' followers attack the authorities, now they have some legitimate charges against Jesus as an insurrectionist. This action looks heroic on its face, but it actually threatens to derail the entire plan of redemption and destroy the gospel.

⁸ We know from Luke 22:38 that the disciples had two swords, and this one was Peter (John 18:10).

⁹ The word could mean ear or earlobe. The normal word for "ear is *οὐς*. This word is *ὠτίριον*. That word is found in the papyri in reference to the handle of a vessel, so it may mean earlobe—the handle of the ear. This would explain why Luke 22:51 says Jesus "healed" his ear, rather than putting it back on.

Two Victories with One Word

So Jesus has two problems here. The crowd in front of him arresting him and the disciple behind him trying to fight them off. But that isn't a problem for Jesus. He handles both of them with one comment.

Let's look at the disciple first. This is a very scary moment. All these temple police and soldiers against the disciples? This could have turned very quickly into a bloodbath. So what does Jesus do?

Am I Leading a Rebellion?

Mark doesn't record Jesus' words to the disciple.

He does straight to Jesus' words to the crowd, but those words serve double duty.

48 "Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me?"

He's talking to the crowd, but what does that question imply for the disciples? "Am I leading a rebellion?" No. So put the sword away.¹⁰

Left Hand Right Hand

And that has implications for the church in every age. Jesus wasn't leading a rebellion then and he's not leading one now. The work of the Church is never accomplished through violence, and so God didn't give us the sword as a tool for our task. Who *did* God give the sword to?

Romans 13:4 [the government authority] is God's servant ... does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

Governments bear the sword (the right of lethal force) as God's servants to keep law and order. God gave it to them; he did not give it to us.

In Luther's words, God uses the sword with his left hand, not his right hand. With his left hand, God carries out his work of justice through human government. But God does his mightiest work with his right hand, through the Church. And the sword plays no part in that.

Governments can accomplish their work by the threat of brute force because their task is a simple, natural task. The sword works great for that sort of thing. But the task of the Church is far greater. Our job is not to get people to comply with rules. Our job is to transform their depraved hearts. That's a task that requires supernatural firepower. The sword is useless for that task. So God has given us a much, much more powerful weapon—the Gospel.

The police can't transform hearts because they don't have the weaponry we have. The sword is all they've got to work with. The reason the Church doesn't use violence is it's too weak. You don't use a revolver when you have tactical nukes.

Preachers Don't Cut off Ears

In fact, not only is the sword not powerful enough to accomplish the church's task, but it does the exact opposite. It will make people less likely, rather than more likely, to give a receptive hearing to the gospel.

When you see the reference to this guy's ear, given all that's been said about ears and hearing in this gospel, you can't help but draw the symbolic connection to spiritual hearing. If we use violence, we

¹⁰ Even if violence were the answer, we wouldn't be the right ones to bring it. In Matthew's account, Jesus points out that he had 12 legions of angels standing ready (Mt.26:53). He didn't really need a fisherman with his little knife. When the time comes when violence (and it will) it will be the angels, not us, who carry it out. One day all the weeds will be pulled up, separated from the wheat, and burned. But it will be angels, not the Church, who do that work (Matthew 13:40-42).

cut off the ears of the people we're trying to preach the gospel to—we make it impossible for them to listen. No one is going to give us an open-hearted hearing if we're using violence against them.

So how does Jesus fight the battle on the front of dealing with his rogue disciple? By reminding him of the mission. “What did I come here to do? Lead a rebellion? No—I’ve told you a hundred times, I came to preach the gospel.” Silencing Jesus So that’s how Jesus deals with his rogue disciple—by reminding him of the mission. What about the crowd? How does he fight the battle on that front? First he exposes them.

Exposing Sin

This word translated “leading a rebellion” can mean that, but it can also just mean “robber” or “criminal.” It’s the same word Jesus used when he said they turned the temple into a den of robbers. So when Jesus says this, it wouldn’t be lost on them that after calling them a den of robbers, he says, “What’s with all the SWAT gear? Am I robber?” What Jesus is saying is, “This show of force is unnecessary because I’m not a criminal like you people.”¹¹

Sinners

He does something similar when they first approach.

Mark 14:41 ... Look, the Son of Man¹² is betrayed into the hands of sinners.¹³

He calls them sinners. That’s their word. Back in chapter 2 they asked the disciples, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?” They knew all people sin, what they meant by “sinners” is the worst of the worst. Now Jesus sees them coming and says, “Oh look. Sinners.” He’s making a statement about who the worst of the worst really are.¹⁴

The beginning point of preaching the gospel is showing people that they are in need of the gospel. And when you’re dealing with self-righteous people, that requires some pointed rebuke.

Prophecy

Then Jesus explains to them why they are doing what they’re doing.

49 Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me.

If he’s not an insurrectionist, then what is he? A preacher. Criminals sneak around at night to do their work so people don’t see it (like this mob is doing). Jesus didn’t do that. He did what he did in broad daylight, right in the middle of the Temple courts—the most public, visible place there was.

It’s the place where they came up to him and said, “Teacher, we know you’re a man of integrity. You teach the way of God in accordance with the truth.”¹⁵ Jesus, who bounced children on his knee and

¹¹ Adding to the irony, this is the same word used of the two criminals crucified with Jesus (Mark 15:27). He was not a criminal, but he died as if he were. “He was assigned a grave with the wicked ... in his death, though he had done no violence” (Isaiah 53:9).

¹² Jesus had explained this before. Remember when they asked him about Elisha?

Mark 9:12 Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected?"

They knew Daniel wrote of a glorious, divine figure called the son of man who would rule forever. And they knew Isaiah spoke of a humble servant of the Lord who would come and suffer and die for the sins of his people. But nowhere in the OT is there any verse that speaks of the son of man figure suffering. When Jesus said the son of man must suffer much and be rejected, he was revealing that the glorious son of man and the lowly suffering servant are the same person.

¹³ Those are the last words Jesus will speak to his disciples in the book of Mark.

¹⁴ Another occasion when Jesus turned their own words on them like this was in chapter 7. They accused his disciples of breaking the law when they didn’t do the handwashing ritual and Jesus showed that they were the ones breaking God’s law (7:1–13).

¹⁵ See Mk.12:35.

was so tender with the outcast woman , and who healed the sick and who taught his followers to obey the government and love their enemies. They knew he wasn't going to fight.

Scriptures Must Be Fulfilled

So Jesus says, “Why are you out here with those ridiculous weapons?” And they look at their swords and their clubs and think, “Good question. What are we doing out here with these things in the middle of the night?” Jesus says, “I’ll tell you. It’s because the plan of God is taking shape.”

49 Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.

This arrest has to happen because Isaiah 53:9 says he will die as a criminal and be buried with the wicked.

Isaiah 53:8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away. ... He was assigned a grave with the wicked ... 12 he was numbered with the transgressors.

Zechariah 13:7 still has to be fulfilled—“I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.” The Passover itself had to be fulfilled. Jesus has to die as the Passover lamb, which means it had to happen this night.

So how does Jesus fight the battle on this front. He saw past the arrest and all the violence and understood the real issue. The real issue was they wanted to silence Jesus. And he fights that battle by preaching the same thing he’s been preaching. He exposes their sin and points them to prophecies about him.

Front #4: The Disloyal Disciples

So Jesus fought on the first front (against discouragement) by seeking hard after God all night and calling him Abba, Father. He fought the second front, with the rogue disciple, by reminding him of the mission. He fought the third front by exposing their sin and pointing to prophecy. Now one more spiritual battle front—the disloyal disciples.

True Courage: Die Like Jesus

At least one of the disciples was ready to fight to the death for Jesus, but then Jesus said something that made even that disciple desert Jesus and run away.

49 Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." 50 Then everyone deserted him and fled.

As soon as Jesus made it clear that this was the plan—for him to be arrested and put to death, they all run. They were prepared to go down fighting, but they weren't about to go down not fighting. Courage is not the willingness to die for Jesus; it's the willingness to die *like* Jesus, and they weren't ready for that.

They run in every direction except the one Jesus is leading in. Jesus told them this is what they were headed for, but they didn't get it because no one discovers their faults by being told. You have to be shown.

When Jesus refuses to let them fight and he offers no resistance—puts out his hands and says, “Go ahead. Cuff me. The Scriptures must be fulfilled”—the disciples say, “Oh, it’s going to be like that?” and they all panic and take off.¹⁶

¹⁶ This is the problem with basing ministry on meeting people’s felt needs. You can gather a big crowd doing that, but the problem is, most people are like the disciples—they don’t feel the need for a Savior who will die for them. And they really don’t feel the need for a Savior who calls them to take up their cross and follow him to that death.

Jesus had been as clear as crystal what he expected of them in the Olivet Discourse. You'll be arrested, you'll stand before the authorities, and your job is to preach the gospel to them.¹⁷ But they weren't ready for that.

And the way Mark writes this, the emphasis is on the word, "all." Literally, "And they left him and fled, all. If you trace the "all's" in this chapter, they all drank from the cup, they all said they would never deny him, and they all deserted him.

And this is ominous given what Jesus said back in ch.8.

34 ... If anyone would follow me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it ... 38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

These are the leaders of the Church, and on the very last day of their training before Jesus leaves them, they're all deserting Jesus and trying to save their lives. That's not looking good for the Church.¹⁸ This is a problem, isn't it? This is how the story ends? Jesus spends years training 12 men to be the foundation of his Church, and the story ends with all of them collapsing in failure?

The Clothes Exchange

And if you want to know how bad this desertion was, Mark gives us an example.

51 A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, 52 he fled naked,¹⁹ leaving his garment behind.

What is the point of that? Most of the commentaries and preachers I checked say this story has no apparent purpose or meaning. Mark just randomly included it, but it makes no real contribution to the story. Does that sound like Mark to you? Or do you suppose it's just a deliberate and important and well-crafted as everything else in this masterful book?

I think it has multiple purposes. For one thing, it shows us that the arrest of Jesus was a violent ordeal. Mark always likes to show more than tell. Instead of just telling us they tried to capture the disciples, he shows us in dramatic fashion. This was a scary situation where an armed mob with swords, clubs, and torches came in the middle of the night and they didn't just want Jesus. They tried to arrest the disciples too, and escaping wasn't easy. They almost got this guy.

A lot of people obsess over who this unnamed young man was. Some postulate that the fact that he's unnamed means it must be Mark himself. But by that logic we'd have to say Mark was also the one who struck with his sword and the guy who got struck with the sword and lost his ear. Not naming people is Mark's style. Mark wants our attention on Jesus, and so he doesn't bother with names when they aren't necessary. This arrest scene has a lot of characters, but the only ones Mark names are Jesus and Judas. Chances are, it wasn't Mark because the information we have from history is that Mark wasn't a follower of Jesus before the resurrection.²⁰

Instead of speculating about who the man was, how about if we assume the things Mark doesn't say aren't important, and the things he does say are important? Let's look at it through that lens.

¹⁷ Mark 13:9-11.

¹⁸ Very often people accuse the New Testament writers (especially John) of being anti-Jewish because of how much they criticize the Jews. But by that logic, you would also have to say they are anti-Christian and anti-themselves, because all the disciples come off looking terrible in the gospel accounts.

¹⁹ Some have pointed to Amos 2:16 which warns of a judgment so severe that even the mighty will flee naked. But it's hard to see how that reference would fit here. I don't think Mark is presenting the arrest of Jesus in terms of the judgment on the Day of the Lord.

²⁰ Papias, the early second-century bishop of Hierapolis, said "Mark neither heard the Lord nor followed him" (Eusebius, Hist. Eccl. 3.39.15) during Jesus's lifetime.

What *does* Mark tell us? Four things: he's a follower of Jesus, he's a young man, his garment was made of linen, and he ended up naked. The word naked is actually mentioned twice in the Greek, so that's emphasized.²¹

In our hyper-sexualized, pornographic culture, nakedness is often associated with sex and sensuality. But in the Bible, it's always associated with shame. Just look up all the times that word appears and you'll see it. It's always connected to shame, and so when Mark uses that word twice in two verses, he's emphasizing how shameful this was. Now he has run into the night naked, make his down through the Kidron Valley and up the road to Jerusalem, through the city gates, and down the streets of the city to his house or wherever—completely naked. That would be humiliating in any culture, but in ancient Jewish culture it would be absolutely mortifying.

And the shame of the nakedness illustrates the shamefulness of the act of abandoning Jesus. Think about it. What is discipleship in Mark? It's leaving everything to follow Jesus. Peter said it in ch.10—“We have left everything to follow you.” But what is this young man doing? He's leaving everything to flee from Jesus. Even if it literally costs him the shirt off his back, that's a price he was willing to pay to escape association with Jesus. Linen garments were expensive, and this was a very cold night. Later we'll see Peter, fully clothed and with his jacket and everything, still needing to warm himself at a fire. It's a freezing cold night, and this young man is willing to leave every thread of his clothes behind. He'll give up absolutely everything to get away from Jesus. The exact opposite of discipleship. That's shameful, and that shame is illustrated by his nakedness.

So what is Mark telling us? He's making a big point about shame and failure, and it's connected to this garment, and he wants us to understand it was a linen garment. Why is that significant, Mark? You don't waste words, you don't throw in extraneous, meaningless details, so what's with the linen?

Let's hunt around in Mark and see if there's any other place where a linen garment shows up. It's an easy search because there's only one. One other place, and it's not far—just turn the page. After that whole setup of showing us this horrible shame and failure of his disciples in connection with a linen garment, the only other time linen is mentioned in the Gospel of Mark is in 15:46, where the word is used twice in one verse. And guess whose body ends up covered with linen?

Mark 15:46 So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down [Jesus'] body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb.

Jesus was buried in linen. Do you suppose that was an accident—Mark makes a point of connecting the shame and failure of the disciples to a linen garment and on the very next page he has Jesus buried in linen, and those are the only two places linen is mentioned in the book?

This is a method Mark has used before, where he puts some details in a story that don't seem to have significance, and then when you read on, you see the significance.²²

Now let's look a little closer. What about the young man—is the word for young man ever used anywhere else in the book? Yes—just one other place. Where is that? Turn one more page. The women come to the tomb on the third day looking for Jesus' body.

Mark 16:5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man.

Interesting—the only other place in the book the word “young man” appears. Any word on what he's wearing by chance? As a matter of fact ...

Mark 16:5 ... they saw a young man dressed in a white robe.

A white robe. Any significance to that? Is there any other place in Mark where someone has white clothing? Yes—one. It's at the transfiguration when Jesus is showing his glory.

Mark 9:3 His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.

²¹ Where the NIV says, “wearing nothing but a linen garment,” the Greek says, “naked under a linen garment.”

²² For example when Jesus asks James and John if they can drink his cup in ch.10, and only in ch.14 do we learn what that cup is referring to.

That's the only other place in the book of Mark where the word "white" appears (and it appears twice in that verse).

Now, I'm not suggesting that Jesus was buried in the same linen that was pulled off the young man. And I'm not saying the young man in the tomb was the same guy as in the garden. It wasn't. The man in the tomb was an angel and the guy at the arrest was a disciple. The point isn't that it was the same garment and same person; the point is the literary connection. Mark is using words to connect ideas.

The linen garment is associated with failure and shame, and on the next page Jesus is buried in linen. And a *young man* is stripped naked in humiliation. After the resurrection a *young man* appears in the glorious white robes of the righteousness of Christ.

Could it be that instead of this being a goofy, meaningless story that serves no purpose, it's actually a vivid portrait of the whole message of the book of Mark? What is Mark about? The opening words of the book—"The gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God." It's the gospel message, and here in this story we see the whole gospel played out in literary word pictures. A clothing exchange—that is the gospel. Our rags of shame put on Christ in his death; his glorious righteousness placed on us in his resurrection. Just like Joshua in Zechariah 3.

Zechariah 3:4 The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes." Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you."

That's the gospel.

And it answers the problem of the terrible ending of the story with all 12 Apostles abandoning Christ. This is the solution to their failure.

And it explains why the young man is unnamed. If Mark gave his name, we would focus on that individual. By leaving him faceless and nameless, he can stand as a model for all followers of Christ who have horrible failures.

Conclusion: Mercy

Let me close by reminding you of v.28.

Mark 14:27 "You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written: " 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' 28 But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

I just want you to see the mercy implied in v.28.

Imagine you're walking with a friend in a rough part of town, and you're confronted by a mugger. He looks pretty tough, and you're not sure if the two of you can handle him. He takes hold of your friend, and in that split second, you know what you should do. But you're so scared, you just turn and run. You run as fast as you can and get out of there, even as you hear the smack of the mugger's fists on your friend's face.

The next day, you're walking down the street and around the corner walks your friend. His eye is swollen closed, he's limping, his front teeth are gone, and his whole face is black and blue. You're so ashamed for just leaving him like that, your stomach turns to a knot. But when he sees you, he smiles, runs up and gives you a tight hug and says, "I'm so glad you're okay."

Does that story sound a little farfetched? Who's that forgiving? But that's exactly the story of v.28.

In his moment of greatest need, the disciples would all abandon Jesus. And the next words out of Jesus' mouth are not, "How could you? After all I've done for you ...". His next words are not, "You will all abandon me and never see me again. Have a nice life." His next words are, "You will be scattered like scared sheep, and I will gather you and lead you once again."

He took upon himself our shame and now dresses us in his righteousness.

Revelation 7:9 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation

belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." ... 14 "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple ... 16 Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. 17 For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Harmony

Matthew 26:45 Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46 Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

⁴⁷ While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. ⁴⁸ Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." ⁴⁹ Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him. ⁵⁰ Jesus replied, "Friend, do what you came for." Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. ⁵¹ With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. ⁵² "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. ⁵³ Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴ But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" ⁵⁵ At that time Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me.

⁵⁶ But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Mark 14:41 Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

⁴³ Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. 44 Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." 45 Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. 46 The men seized Jesus and arrested him. 47 Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

⁴⁸ "Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? 49 Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled."

⁵⁰ Then everyone deserted him and fled. ⁵¹ A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, ⁵² he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

Luke 22:46 "Why are you sleeping?" he asked them. "Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation."

⁴⁷ While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him,

⁴⁸ but Jesus asked him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"

⁴⁹ When Jesus' followers saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, should we strike with our swords?"

⁵⁰ And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear.

⁵¹ But Jesus answered, "No more of this!" And he touched the man's ear and healed him.

⁵² Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs?

⁵³ Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour-- when darkness reigns."

John 18:² Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. ³ So Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons. ⁴ Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?" ⁵ "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) ⁶ When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground. ⁷ Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." ⁸ "I told you that I am he," Jesus answered. "If you are looking for me, then let these men go." ⁹ This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me." ¹⁰ Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) ¹¹ Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" ¹² Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him