

Jesus: The Silence of the Lamb

Locked Up with Nowhere to Go

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Gracious Father, we ask now for your blessing. Pour out your Spirit upon the reading and exposition of the Scriptures. Help us to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest and all for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Now this will be the last in the series that we began, I think, nine weeks ago called "Locked Up with Nowhere to Go," and today we are looking at the arrest of Jesus in Gethsemane and I would ask you to turn in the Gospel of Mark to chapter 14 and we'll be picking up the reading at verse 43. Mark 14:43.

43 And immediately, while he 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. 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." 45 And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" And he kissed him. 46 And they laid hands on him and seized him. 47 But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. 48 And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? 49 Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But let the Scriptures be fulfilled." 50 And they all left him and fled. 51 And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, 52 but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked. 53 And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. 54 And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire. 55 Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. 56 For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. 57 And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, 58 "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'" 59 Yet even about this their testimony did not agree. 60 And the high priest stood up in the midst and

asked Jesus, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" 61 But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" 62 And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." 63 And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need? 64 You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death. 65 And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, "Prophecy!" And the guards received him with blows.

So far God's holy and inerrant word.

Now the tradition is in verses 51 and 52 that the young man who followed Jesus after he was arrested through Gethsemane and down into the valley below and back into the city and to the place where the high priest was, that this young man who only had a linen tunic and in the process of seizing him, he managed to escape and ran away naked, that this is Mark himself, the author of the Gospel. And the one who cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest, Mark doesn't tell us here that that was Peter and he doesn't tell us either that his name was Malchus, nor does he tell us, as other Gospels tell us, that Jesus restored the ear of this young servant.

Well, we've been looking at folk who have been imprisoned, arrested and imprisoned: Joseph and Samson and Daniel and Jeremiah and Jonah, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, the Apostle John, and now finally the Lord Jesus himself. It is the eve of his crucifixion. He has just finished the lengthy discourse that we read in chapters 13 through 17 of the Gospel of John, the so-called Upper Room Discourse. He has told them not to be afraid. He has given a lengthy exposition of one that he will send as his representative agent, the Holy Spirit, and speaks of him as another advocate, another comforter, another paraclete. He's spoken to them at length of what they might expect in the future and much of what they might expect involves suffering and trial, that those who persecute Jesus will also persecute those who follow Jesus. John has given us a fairly lengthy account of an incredible prayer that Jesus offered up to his Father which we now know of as the great high priestly prayer of John 17. He had instituted the Lord's Supper in place of Passover, and many other things, and then eventually they left the Upper Room and made their way into Gethsemane. And I want us to look at this, this morning, and at two sections. We will only be dealing with the arrest of Jesus and the trial of Jesus. And in the arrest, five times Mark tells us that, well, he uses this word, this verb "to seize." They seized him. They laid hold of Jesus. And they came, we are told, with clubs and swords at the behest of Judas himself. These would be the military, not the Roman military, but these would be the guards, the temple guards under the authority of the Sanhedrin, the 71 elders, and here Mark refers to them as elders and chief priests and scribes. He's talking about the Sanhedrin and they would have a military force. The Romans allowed the Jews to police the temple precincts and they also gave to the Jews a measure of autonomy in civil matters, in trying cases and suggesting penalties and so on. And so now they come, they come to arrest Jesus and they come with clubs and swords, and yet it is perfectly clear

that Jesus' kingdom is not of this world. He never carried a sword, indeed, he had warned that he who lives by the sword shall die by the sword. One of his disciples was a zealot, Simon Zelotes, a zealot, a faction of Judaism in the late first century BC who sought to bring civil unrest and, indeed, insurrection against the Romans, and they would carry spears and knives and so on, to bring about what we might call a coup d'etat within Israel.

It's interesting that the place where this takes place is a garden, the garden of Gethsemane, and there is something that is significant about that because the very first sin that brought shame and condemnation upon humanity took place in a garden, in the garden of Eden. And when Jesus, John, you remember, will tell us that when Jesus rose, Mary thought that when he appeared in the opening of the tomb that he was the gardener, and John, I think, is saying in one sense he was the gardener. He had come to restore the garden of Eden. He had come to redeem this world and change it into a new heavens and a new earth. And John, you remember, when he describes that in Revelation 21 and 22, describes that scene of a river with fruit trees on either side bearing fruit. It's a restored garden. You see, Mark is telling you here, as all of the Gospel writers are telling you, that this Jesus is the last Adam, the second man who endures the flaming sword of the seraphim that guards the entrance to the garden of Eden, and he's come to bring back paradise for his people.

You notice in verse 49 that everything that is done here, Jesus says, is in order to fulfill the Scriptures. That's how Jesus lived his entire life. He read the Old Testament Scriptures and in the Old Testament Scriptures he saw narratives and prophecies and metaphors and similes and types and shadows that spoke of Messiah. He had drunk the cup of God's wrath and anger. He'd come to fulfill his Father's will. You remember in Gethsemane how he cried out, "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me." It's one of the most terrifying moments in all of history and the Father had remained silent and Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit resolved to do the work that he had promised his Father to do, and to obey all of the precepts and commandments that lay upon the Son of God. He was the suffering servant about whom he had read in the prophecy of Isaiah the prophet. You remember one of the most important statements, I think, that Jesus ever gave in Mark 10, that the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. And many Old Testament Scriptures, and not least the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, are being brought, as it were, and encapsulated within that statement.

He had come to fulfill all Scripture and all of the events that are taking place here in his arrest, and there are allusions here to Old Testament Scriptures but the focus is Judas Iscariot. He is the one in verses 44 and 45 who has orchestrated this arrest. He is the one that had gone to the Sanhedrin and secretly for 30 pieces of silver connive a way to hand over the Lord Jesus to the temple guards. And you notice Mark says in verse 43, "And immediately, while he was still speaking," with a kiss he betrays him. We have a saying, don't we, the kiss of death. It is based on this incident. The kiss of death.

He's one of the disciples. I want us to think for a moment about Judas. I want us to think about the morphology of apostasy. How does this come about? It's hard to believe that six months before when Judas was in Galilee and listening to Jesus teaching and preaching

and watching him perform miracles of healing and of raising the dead and so on, it's hard to believe that then he had a thought within his mind that six months from now, I will betray Jesus, because what he does here is cold-blooded. There's intentionality about it. There's malice about it. There's malice aforethought about it. There's premeditation. There's planning.

So how does this happen? And one of the things that the Gospel writers tell you and they tell you this after the fact because I don't think they were aware of it at the time, but after the fact John, for example, whenever he introduces Judas, the very first mention of Judas, John immediately reminds you that he is the betrayer, but John would not have thought of Judas as a betrayer when they were up in Galilee. But there was something that Judas did, he was the one in charge of the money. The disciples and Jesus, of course, needed money for lodging and food and we believe that it was some of the women who followed Jesus, women of some wealth, who contributed much of that money and Judas was the one in charge of it. But it appears after the fact that they are now aware that Judas stole from that source of money, and perhaps that is the morphology of apostasy, that you begin to do something that is relatively small and relatively trivial and then it becomes a habit or an addiction, and then it becomes a way of life, that you lie to people and you lie to yourself and you become desanitized, you have a conscience that is seared and is no longer sensitive to the things of God, to the commandments of God. You drift away from your communion and love for Jesus and all of a sudden you find yourself having drifted away and you're no longer in fellowship and in love with the Lord Jesus but you are there now for an entirely different purpose, and your heart has become hardened.

Is it possible to be a Christian and fall from grace? And the answer is yes, that you can be outwardly a Christian, you can be a Christian to your friends, you can be a Christian to the elders of the church, you can be a Christian to your family, but inside, internally you are not. You don't have a new heart. You're not indwelt by the Holy Spirit. You remember that Scripture gives warnings about apostasy and these warnings are given not to unbelievers, they're given to believers. They're given to the kinds of people that actually read the Bible. "Take care," in Hebrews 2, for example, "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God." And later the author of Hebrews uses a verb to drift away and the verb would be used of boats that are moored at the dock and that knot gets untied and the waves drive the boat out into the sea, drifting away. The Bible gives warnings of apostasy and then there are those, what I might call, conditional statements. "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil unbelieving heart, but exhort one another every day as long as it is called today that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." And then, of course, there are actual examples of apostasy, not just Judas but Demas, for example, in 2 Timothy, a friend of the Apostle Paul, the one who had probably delivered the prison letters of Ephesians and Colossians. And Demas has departed, having loved this present evil world, Paul says.

Yes, it's all too possible to fall away from grace, to in the words of Hebrews 6, to taste the heavenly gift and to share in the Holy Spirit and to taste the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the world to come, and crucify the Son of God afresh. Yes, it's

possible to be a Christian outwardly and you may convince yourself and you may convince others, it's possible but still to commit apostasy. And so there's a warning here, isn't there? There's a terrible terrible warning here. Where are you now in relationship with Jesus? Are you close to him? Are you praying to him daily? Are you talking to him? Are you in love with him? Or have things grown cold and you've begun to drift away and perhaps in this terrible season that we've been through? And perhaps there's a coldness in your spirit and here's a warning to you that you need to run back to the Lord Jesus and fall at his feet and say, "I love you with all of my heart." Call upon the Lord to pour out his Holy Spirit to fill you, to fill you with a sense that you are a child of God and to give you a love for the Scriptures and a desire to follow him with all of your heart and soul and mind and strength.

Well, there's the arrest of Jesus orchestrated by Judas Iscariot whose name has become a byword down through the centuries, and then there's the trial and Jesus is taken by this armed guard and he is taken to the house of the high priest, the palace of the high priest near the temple. It's fascinating that Plato in Plato's "Republic," he asks the question, "What would happen if a perfect man would inherit this imperfect world, and that he would inhabit this imperfect world?" And this is what Plato wrote and this is 400 years now before Jesus. "Our just man will be thrown into prison, scourged and racked, will have his eyes burnt out, and, after every kind of torment, he will be impaled." That was Plato's response to a perfect man inhabiting this imperfect world. Well, it was almost a prophecy, wasn't it?

He's taken to where the high priest is and the chief priest and the elders and the scribes, and what Mark is saying, this is the Sanhedrin that is trying Jesus, and everything about this trial is contrary to the law. Rome permitted the Jews some local control and capital cases like this one were never to meet at night, for example. They were to meet in the temple and not in the palace of the high priest. There's contrivance here, the so-called evidence that is passed against him; and notice the way Mark uses that term "against" in verses 55 and 56 and 57. They needed a guilty verdict. This is a mob. They needed to contrive the evidence in some way. They have those to give false testimony but these so-called witnesses cannot agree. The law was clear in the mouth of two or three witnesses, but they can't even get two or three witnesses to agree even in their connivance.

C. S. Lewis put it so extraordinarily pointedly in his book "God in the Dock," and he talks about in the past when man would come before God, it would be clear even to the natural man, it would be clear that man is the one in the dock and God is the one on the bench, but all of that is changed in our culture, and now when Lewis is writing in the 1940s, who knows what he would say today, but now it is perfectly clear that it is God who has to give an answer. He is the one in the dock. He is the one that has to explain suffering and pain and tragedy in the world. And only if he can give an explanation that satisfies and satisfies us in our own estimation of ethics and morals will we then let him out of the dock.

Well, Jesus is in the dock here and being charged. They're trying to find a verdict, they're trying to find testimony that they can issue a capital offense and put him to death. That is

the level of animosity against Jesus. The only thing that they could agree on and even on this they were in disarray, that Jesus had said something about destroying the temple and in three days building it again. He, I think, is alluding to the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7 when God enters into a covenant with David that on David's throne a king would come who would be none other than the Son of God. And just as David's son was the one to build the temple, this temple that is Jesus is the Son of a heavenly Father and they don't get that at all.

They're trying to find testimony to put him to death and Jesus is silent. Initially at least he is silent and why, you may ask? Why doesn't he simply explain 2 Samuel 7? And I think the reason is that he's fulfilling what was for Jesus the most dominant picture of who he was, namely the suffering servant in the fourth servant song of Isaiah beginning at the end of chapter 52 and running all the way through chapter 53 that contains those words, "As a sheep before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." And he is the lamb that is now being led to the slaughter on behalf of his people. Even the spitting and the blindfolding was also a fulfillment of one of the servant songs. "I give my back to those who strike and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard. I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting," Isaiah 50:6. Then he cites from Daniel 7, a passage that, I think, was dominant in his thinking about his own identity. He was the Son of Man, this powerful being who holds the universe in the palms of his hands, "You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

And that was it. And the high priest tore his robe and accused him of blasphemy because Jesus was claiming to be the Son of Man. He was claiming to be God. He was claiming to be the second person of the Trinity. He was claiming to be the creator and sustainer of this world, who had come Incarnate into this world in order to save and redeem sinners like you and me. He was obeying all that was necessary for him to become the last Adam and the second man. Behold the active obedience of the Lord Jesus marching into battle as the conqueror that he is.

And they blindfold him, and they slap him, and they ask him to prophesy which one of them had done it. You remember when our wonderful music ministry, and let me thank our music ministry for all that they have done for us in this extraordinary season, but you remember that occasion when they performed Bach's St. Matthew Passion? And what a wonderful evening that was and it is forever, I think in my mind, that our little church could put on such a wonderful program as Bach's St. Matthew Passion. But there was something in the liturgy that I think I probably knew but it came back to me and I've not forgotten it since, that when the choir sings about this passage that when they blindfold Jesus and they slap him and ask him to prophesy who had done that, and the choir sings, "Who is it that hit you?" And the response that Bach puts in is, "I, I and my sins."

You know, you can look at this passage and you can look with disdain on Judas, and you can look with disdain on the Sanhedrin, and you can look with disdain on the high priest but, my dear friends, we are all of us, we are all of us culpable of being exactly where they are and apart from the grace of God, we too would be a Judas, and we too would be this high priest. "It was I, I and my sins that condemned him." And thanks be to God that

he endured the suffering, and he endured the pain, and he endured the cross and rose again from the dead in order that my sins, my shame, my Adamic guilt might altogether be forgiven.

Maybe this morning you're not a Christian and I would urge you today, today while it is called today, to examine your heart and examine your soul and to run to Jesus Christ because it is only in union and communion with Jesus that you will find safety and forgiveness now and forever. May God bless his word to us.

Father, we thank you, thank you for this passage deep and dark and somber and tragic as it is from one level, but it was I and my sins that condemned the Lord Jesus. How beautiful grace is. How beautiful forgiveness is. What a wonderful thing it is to be a Christian this morning. Hear us, we pray. We ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen.