

The Arrest of Jesus

Luke 22:47-53

April 6, 2025

So we return to our study of Luke's Gospel and to Jesus and his men in the Garden of Gethsemane, and today we're coming to his arrest, which starts in Luke 22 verse 47. So you'll want to turn there in your Bibles, Luke 22:47. Previous section, Luke 22:39-46, is Jesus preparing for the cross, and he's really, in light of the trials that are coming upon him, he's encouraging his disciples to do the same, to prepare. And he's telling them not just once, but twice, "'Pray that you may not enter into temptation.'" Well, temptation is upon them, and we're about to see how these men hold up.

Let's start our reading for this morning back in verse 45 and continue on through verse 53. Luke 22:45, "And when he," Jesus, "arose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, and he said to them, 'Why are you

sleeping? Rise up and pray that you may not enter into temptation.' While he was still speaking, behold, a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the Twelve, was coming ahead of them, and he approached Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said to him, 'Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?'

"And when those around him saw what was going to happen, they said, 'Lord, shall we strike with the sword?' And one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus answered and said, 'Stop! No more of this.' Then he touched his ear and healed him. And then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple," and, "and elders who had come against him, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs as against a robber? While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not stretch out your hands against me. This hour and the authority of darkness are yours.'"

There are a number of characters that we see in that story. The crowd, Judas Iscariot, the disciples are there. We've got the high priest's slave. We've got the religious leaders, the chief priests, the officers of the temple, the temple, temple

guard, we call them, and the elders. Lots of people are here, and all of a sudden they are there upon them in the garden. Like a temptation entering into your mind suddenly and without any announcement, there they are. There the temptation is. Here it is for these men, for Jesus and his Apostles. Lots of people. All of a sudden, the serenity of the garden lit up by torches, disturbed by the noise of this large, rather diverse arresting party.

But of all the characters that we see in this account, Luke puts a single character at the center of the frame. Luke records really one voice, that of Jesus, and the only exception, really, to hearing another voice is when the disciples speak, and they address him as Lord, although ironically, they fail to treat him as Lord. They say his name, but they don't actually wait to hear what his command is and yet he is Lord, and that's what's on display, here. He is the one in perfect control in this chaos, is what you could call it. And he handles each challenge that comes to him calmly and in perfect peace. He, though he is the one being arrested, we can see that he is directing all the circumstances of his arrest. He's willingly entering into

custody, freely forfeiting his freedom, but he is in perfect control.

Jesus faces three challenges, here, at his arrest, which really follow the basic divisions of the text. First, we see the challenge of Judas the betrayer, and then we see the challenge of the disciples, who act impulsively, foolishly, here. And then we see the challenge of a potential danger, the overwhelming force represented by this arresting party. So there's three points for this morning, and I'll give you the first one here about the betrayer, number one: The deceptive show of friendship, the deceptive show of friendship. In verses 47-48 Jesus is confronting Judas' hypocrisy, and he's exposing his show, the false show of friendship.

Look again there at verse 47. It says, "While he was still speaking." This is when he's speaking to his disciples. He's challenging them about not being watchful, not being prayerful, but sleeping instead. "While he was still speaking, behold, a crowd came. The one called Judas, one of the Twelve, he was coming ahead of them." So he's still speaking to his disciples,

here. He's still talking to them about this watchfulness, this prayerfulness, the means of not entering into temptation when the very thing that he warns them about enters into the garden.

We can see immediately, this was never academic for him in his mind. This was never an abstraction, never theoretical. This is concrete temptation, visiting them right now. They didn't know that. They didn't see that. They were as dull as you and I tend to be. Now, Luke keeps our attention on Judas and Jesus, but it might help to kind of go back and think a little bit, consider what has been going on behind the scenes. We've been tracking with Jesus and his Apostles, watching them, but that's not all that's going on in the world at that time. That's not all that's going on in Jerusalem at that time. There's more going on in the meantime behind the scenes.

Meanwhile, while Jesus and his Apostles are there at the Passover and they're in the garden, other things are happening. Other things are afoot. The last time we saw Judas and where he was featured was back in verse 21 when Jesus noted the presence of his betrayer at the table. And then he pronounced, as we

remember, he pronounced a woe upon Judas, the one who would betray him, the one who would lift his hand against him. Prior to that, though, at the start of the chapter in verses 1-6, Judas left the disciples, left the company of the Apostles and Jesus for a meeting with the chief priests and the temple guard.

We know he conspired to betray Jesus at that meeting to deliver him into their hands. And while Judas looks for an opportunity to betray Jesus, the Jewish leaders leave that meeting from Judas and they go to visit Pontius Pilate. Why would they go do that? Why would they go see Pontius Pilate? Because to arrest and murder Jesus, they had to abide by Roman law. I mean, these are law-abiding men, citizens, right?

Let's, let's understand this just a little bit. The Sanhedrin, the chief priests, they had officers, they had a temple guard assigned to them, and they had authority to make arrests. But their authority was over religious matters, not civil matters. The jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin, the chief priests, the officers was over their nation and its religious laws, their authority, their jurisdiction or their authorities mainly within the temple complex.

So under Roman law, throughout the, at this time, throughout the city of Jerusalem, the wider Judean province, the Jews had no civil arrest authority in that region, let alone the authority to try and sentence and execute capital offenses. They had no authority to administer and execute the death penalty on their own. They were under Roman law. So the chief priests had to visit Pontius Pilate first. They had to go to him to obtain the lawful arrest warrant. They had to go to him to secure a detachment of Roman soldiers with arrest authority to come with them and make the arrest.

The legionaries were stationed at the Antonia Fortress, that, that fortress which was attached to the northwest corner of the temple. During feast times like this, that Antonia fortress housed a legion of soldiers, some 5,000 to 6,000 soldiers there. They, they beefed up the forces, they augmented all the troops, because zealots and revolutionaries, especially from Galilee, would tend to take advantage of the swelling population within Jerusalem, take advantage of large, large crowds, do their devious work, stirring up trouble, provoking riots and rebellions.

So with augmented forces to quell riots and rebellions like that, Pilot had troops for just this purpose. He took those threats seriously. According to John 18:3 Pilate gave the Jewish leaders a cohort. A cohort is, could be as few as 200 or as many as 600 soldiers, and a cohort, then, led by a *chiliarch*, John 18:12, a term that refers to the command over 1,000 troops. So a man went with them called a *chiliarch*. He was a commander of 1,000 troops. These men are detached or set aside for the use of quelling any riot, rebellion, and he sends this cohort with Judas, with the Jewish leaders. They're all standing by, ready to find and arrest Jesus. What justifies the numbers? What justifies such a, a force of arms here?

Remember the triumphal entry less than a week before that? Tens of thousands of people all thronging around Jesus as he entered into Jerusalem. He came riding on the colt of a donkey, like an incoming king, taking the pattern of Solomon in the age of, the golden age of Israel, a time of peace and prosperity and wisdom. He entered Jerusalem like a king, and everybody was saying, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." Make no mistake, Pilate had watched all of this. He'd

been keeping an eye on the Jews and on this Jesus, no doubt about it at all.

Chief priests, they're there that night, as we see in verse 52. They're attended by their slaves. It says in verse 50 Malchus is one of them. The officers that guarded the temple complex, they were there with their slaves, their attendants; elders, members of the Sanhedrin with their slaves, their attendants. So lots of people, hundreds of people are here this night. Could be even more than 1,000 people are here in, coming into the garden, which is the word that Luke uses in verse 47, *ochlos*, meaning, crowd or multitude. And it's referring to a large number of people. Same word that's used to speak about the crowds that are coming around Jesus as he's coming into Jerusalem.

Now to get all these people, at all these various parties there that night, in the middle of the night during Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, this has to represent no small degree of coordination and planning, communication, make sure

everyone is ready to go at a moment's notice to get up and pursue and find Jesus and his disciples.

All during the preparation for the Passover that we have read about and studied in Luke 22, all during the celebration of the Passover, all while Jesus taught his men, the fullest of that teaching recorded in John 13 through 17, all this time, as he's ministering grace and truth to his men, meanwhile, the religious and civil authorities are planning and preparing and scheming and coordinating to take him down. Evil never rests. There is an activity and energy in the dark wickedness of evil that is always at work, which is why we must always watch and pray that we do not enter into temptation.

The devil left Jesus in, when, in the wilderness when he was tempted by the devil in the wilderness, and having failed to entice Jesus to abandon his messianic mission, that says that the devil left him for a more opportune time. It's now. This is that time. At the head of the crowd, Judas Iscariot, he's leading them to Jesus. And since Judas, one of the Twelve, he knew these men, he knew exactly where they'd be, where they hung

out, he's leading them. He's the one who is their point man. He's their, he's their scout. He's going to take them into this arrest.

Judas had spent, as we know, part of the Passover with Jesus and the others, so he's taking, no doubt initially took the arresting party back to the upper room where they had been spending time together as disciples. And though the men were gone at that time, Jesus had left the upper room with his men, Judas knew exactly where to check next. Says in John 18:1-2 that "he went over the ravine of the Kidron where there was a garden, because Judas knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with his disciples. And so," John 18:3 says, "having received the Roman cohort, Judas and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, he came there with lanterns and torches and weapons."

They're aided by a full moon that night. They have the added light of lanterns and torches. So the, the visual layout of the scene is possible. But what the arresting party does not have, and what they needed Judas for, is not only to lead them to the target, but also to provide positive identification of

Jesus. Even with that lunar illumination, even with lanterns and torches, that low light level meant pouncing on the wrong man was a possibility at night in a garden. So Judas suggested to them a signal. "Whomever I shall kiss," Mark 14:44, "whomever I shall kiss, he is the one. Seize him and lead him away under guard." Judas' words.

So these men are armed and ready. These men are looking for the signal that they positively identified the target. And the arresting officers are falling close behind the one called Judas. Luke 22:47, "Judas, one of the Twelve, who approached Jesus to kiss him." There's Judas flanked by his new friends, or perhaps we should say flanked by his true friends, because Judas' true nature is coming out right here before us. He enters the garden. He's keeping up the facade. He's pretending friendship even though he has hatred in his heart. As the Psalmist said in Psalm 55, "His words were smooth like oil, but they were actually sharp like sword thrusts."

He goes right up to Jesus, and in Matthew 26:45, it says, he greeted him. He said, "Greetings, Rabbi." Greetings, hi,

hello. And then it says he starts kissing him. As if he hadn't seen him for like a year, he greets him with that kiss. Kind of strange even in a culture where it was normal for friends and even male friends to kiss one another. They greeted each other with a kiss, but not at every single occasion, only when they've been separated for a long, long time. So this is, this is odd even in a first-century Middle Eastern context for Judas, who's just seen Jesus, hours before, for him to come up and greet him in this way.

The verb for kiss is *phileo*. *Phileo*, you may recognize, is the same verb used for, for love, at times, also friendship or the loving affection of friendship, *phileo*. That's the verb that Luke uses in verse 47 and verse 48. It's also used of kiss, like the show, an expression of friendship. Curiously, Luke does not narrate the actual kiss. He doesn't portray it, doesn't show it. He just speaks of the intention of Judas, the reason that Judas drew near. We go to Matthew and Mark; they do portray the kiss of Judas. And when they portray that kiss, they actually use an intensified form of the verb *phileo*, *kataphileo*, to kiss repeatedly, to, to kiss fervently or over and over.

So this display of affection has moved from a bit odd, maybe one single kiss, which is a little bit strange because they've just seen each other. They haven't been separated that long. But then to move into the totally strange, fervent kissing; wouldn't one simple kiss of greeting have provided the sufficient signal for the arresting party? Why this ostentatious, over-the-top display of affection? Because when it's all over, I mean the treachery of Judas is going to be impossible to hide. What's he trying to do here? What's he pulling off? He's going beyond the prearranged sign for which a single kiss would have been sufficient, and he's pouring on the show of friendship and affection.

We know from reading that his wicked heart enticed him. We know the murderous Devil deceived and inhabited him. But still there is in the human Judas a nagging conscience that will not stop accusing him. It has to be silenced. So he tries to overcome his nagging conscience by pouring on the friendliness, pouring on the affection. This ostentatious display of affection, that's just, just odd.

"Judas," says John Calvin, "as if trembling for his master's danger, pretended by these words to have some feeling of compassion," as if he's struck with this unexpected thought. As he meets Jesus there in the garden, "Judas," continues Calvin, "Judas seems now as if he'd become suddenly alarmed at his danger to give the last kiss to his master, and thus he excels the rest in the appearance of his affection, when he appears to be deeply grieved at being separated from his master. But how little he gained by his deception is evident from Christ's reply." End quote.

J. C. Ryle provides a bit of further reflection at this point. He says, "We should learn the worst and most wicked acts may be done under the pretense of love for Christ. The false apostle Judas Iscariot has never lacked successors and imitators. There have always been people ready to betray Christ with a kiss and willing to deliver the Gospel to its enemies under the pretense of respect." End quote. Make no mistake, beloved. Just as Ryle has said, the false apostle Judas Iscariot has never lacked successors and imitators. Inasmuch as there remain today imitators of the Lord Jesus Christ by his grace, by the power of his Word, by the regenerating power of the Spirit,

by the Gospel, so there is also in our midst those who want to imitate the false apostle Judas Iscariot, those who pretend friendship and pretend fidelity to the truth and loyalty. Their hearts are all together somewhere else.

This we say by encouraging you to discernment, but also to encourage you that this is nothing new. It's been with us for millennia. Even David speaks of it, doesn't he? When we move to the Lord's reply, verse 48, we see that every word of his reply had to pierce deeper than a dagger into Judas' black heart. Jesus said to Judas, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" The Greek word order removes the mask of treachery. It says "Judas, with a kiss the Son of man, are you betraying?" He puts "with a kiss" up front as to emphasize the, the act of treachery, but then the meaning of it is in the present tense, which shows the, the continuous nature of it. You are betraying right now, in the midst of it, you're betraying the Son of Man.

He fires three shots. We see, if we put all the accounts together, we can see that Jesus fires three shots into Judas'

heart, hoping to arm his conscience and strengthen his conscience, perhaps even to win Judas back, if that were even possible. But the first shot he makes is relational, a relational shot at Judas. In Matthew's account, Jesus addresses him as friend, *hetairos*, companion, maybe even better, the word, comrade. Although that sounds a little bit Soviet Union to us, it is a really, really good word to portray what Judas was to Jesus throughout that three years. Because the word not just companion, but comrade, it emphasizes the mutually binding relationship that these men shared.

The sentiment of the psalmist we read earlier in Psalm 55, It's not an enemy who reproaches me. It's, it's not, it's not one who hates me, but it's you. It's a man my equal, my companion, my familiar friend, we who had sweet fellowship together. And now this? Friend? Here in Luke's much briefer, more focused account, Jesus simply calls his friend by his given name, Judas. Judas. It's a name. Judas means praise, thanksgiving, praise. Judas, with a kiss? What praise, Judas, is going to come from this vile act of treachery against me, your friend? Appealing to him on a relational level.

Ironically, Judas, Judah, is the name of the tribe into which both Jesus and Judas are born. Judas Iscariot. Iscariot, *Ish karioth*. *Ish* meaning, a man, *Karioth* meaning the town in Judah. He, too, is of the tribe of Judah just like Jesus is. So the second shot that Jesus fires at Judas' conscience to stay his madness and then perhaps to win his heart, the second shot is covenantal. Covenantal. So relational and then covenantal. When Jesus refers to himself in verse 48, he didn't refer, he didn't refer to himself with a personal pronoun, me. He reminds Jesus of who he really is. He's, he's the one who likewise is from the tribe of Judah.

"The scepter shall not depart from Judah," Genesis 49:10. "The scepter shall rise from Israel," Numbers 24:17, "to crush his enemies." Jesus is "the lion from the tribe of Judah," Genesis 49:9, Hosea 5:14, Revelation 5:5. He's from the root of David as well, and that's the sense that Jesus is trying to reawaken in reminding Judas that he is none other than the Son of Man, the root of David, of the tribe of Judah, the prophesied Messiah.

One last attempt, here, in the light of torches, under the light of the moon in the garden, help Judas see the significance of Jesus, his ministry, what they shared together, what they spoke of together, what they hoped for together, the prophetic revelation that really predicted this very outcome, the prophetic revelation that warned Judas against his taking up this, this dreadful role of the reprobate. "For indeed," Luke 22:22, "the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed." What is Jesus doing but just saying there again, summarizing what prophetic Scripture said, "Judas, don't be that guy. Let it be another man who's a reprobate, not you. Don't betray the Son of Man."

The basis of Jesus' three-fold appeal is first relational, then covenantal. Thirdly, another shot is moral. Relational, covenantal, moral. "Judas, with a kiss, the Son of Man are you betraying?" Judas, my close companion? Judas, my comrade in common cause for the last three years together? We went to the temple together. We ate and drank together. We slept out in the stars together. We travelled together. You've seen my life. You know me. We're from the same tribe, the tribe that's the hope of our nation. Is there any reason at all in me that you should

hand me over to them? Judas, are you on solid moral ground here? Is it right, Judas, for you to do this?

When the wicked make up their mind, when they decide to set themselves against you, no appeal to evidence, no appeal to truth, no appeal to righteousness will work. And yet Jesus, here, attempts it. What is this but love for Judas. Here at the very end, one last attempt to love him, to appeal to him. John 13:1, "Having loved his own, who were in the world, he loved them to the end," even Judas. Jesus washed his feet, too, Even Judas, who departed and went on his own way, Jesus loved him, even him to the very end.

And this, again, is the terrible mystery of sin. How do we explain this? I guess we could make it really personal and say, anytime I sin, how do I explain that? How does that make sense when our God has been nothing but good to us, when our Lord has led us always in the right direction into truth and righteousness and holiness and purity to receive his goodness and his blessing? Why does any sin make sense? It doesn't. Back up to Genesis chapter 3 and see it's been so from the very

beginning all the way up to this time. Judas is just another Adam. And Adam and Judas, we're in their pattern as sinners, apart from the grace of God.

We'll never really fathom, will we, how it is that sinners treat God, how sinners treat Christ, how sinners treat sincere believers, how they despise close fellowship, break promises, shirk friendship, malign those who they once called friends. No sense in trying to figure out the sinfulness of sin, trying to unscrew the inscrutable mystery of lawlessness. We can't figure it out. We weary ourselves and discourage ourselves doing so. But what we can do is to take refuge and comfort in the close friendship of our Lord, who knows far deeper than we do the piercing pain of betrayal.

John Calvin encourages us along that same line. He says, "Let us know that this evil, which Christ once sustained in his own person, is an evil to which the church will always be exposed, that of cherishing traitors in her bosom as the traitor who was one of the Twelve, that we may not be distressed by such instances, for the Lord intends to try our faith in two ways,

when without Satan opposes us in the church by open enemies, and within he attempts secret destruction by means of hypocrites.

"We're taught at the same time that we who are his disciples ought to worship God with sincerity, for the apostasies which we see every day excite us to fear and to the cultivation of true godliness. As Paul says, 'Let everyone that calleth on the name of God depart from iniquity,' 2 Timothy 2:19." End quote from Calvin.

Beloved, don't be discouraged. Don't be discouraged when you see sinners oppose and malign and be devious in their ways. Let it instead cause you to double down on your love for God, your appreciation and gratitude for his kindness to you in Christ. Let it cause you to be fearful about your own departure lest you should depart. Let it cause you to be watchful, prayerful, give yourself wholly to him without reservation, qualification. Oh, give your heart fully to him. He'll keep it safe.

That's how the watchful, prayerful Jesus handled the challenge of the deceptive show of friendship from Judas, his

betrayed. He spoke clearly to him, didn't he? Didn't mince words. He spoke straightforwardly. He spoke the truth, and the truth that he spoke is the very model of love. That is how he loved even his enemy, this betrayer, this wily deceptive, prideful betrayer. He's the very model of love.

Second point, as we move into verses 49-51, we see here in the disciples the impulsive show of fidelity. The impulsive show of fidelity, fidelity meaning faithfulness. We see this in verses 49-51 as Jesus rebukes and corrects the impetuous, foolish impulsiveness in his men, who because they were sleeping, not watching and praying as they should have been, but because they were sleeping, they come and face the arresting force, this arresting mob with this brash bravado, not the calmness of wisdom, not the level-headedness of peace, reasonableness. Look at verse 49. "When those around him," that's referring to the disciples, "saw what was going to happen, they said, 'Lord, shall we strike with the sword?' One of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear."

Once again, just as, as abbreviated account, focusing on the attention, all the attention on the Lord's words and the Lord's actions, but further insight into how this whole scene developed will help us to understand what's kind of going on in the background. So you might want to turn over to John 18 and take a look at this background. It's very important because after Jesus has encountered his betrayer, who was at the front of the party, and they have this, this one-on-one for a moment, we learned from the Gospel of John, John 18, that Jesus then immediately separated from Judas and walked around him to meet the arresting party head on. We pick this up at John 18:4, that "Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon him, went forth and said to them, 'Whom do you seek?'" We note the contrast in Luke 22:49, where Luke tells us, those around him, the disciples, they saw what was going to happen, and they decided swordplay was a good call.

Here, John tells us Jesus doesn't merely see what's going to happen; he knows what is going to come upon him. The action that he takes, not just seeing, but knowing, the action he takes, he says, let's clarify what's been authorized by you guys. Show me your arrest warrant. Whose name is on your

warrant?" John 18:5, "They answered him, 'Jesus the Nazarene.' He said to them, 'I am he.'" If that doesn't stand out to you, you probably should, you should probably pencil it in next, next to that section right there in your Bible.

Listen to it again, this time from the original, "He said to them, '*Ego eime*.'" *Ego eime*, the claim of deity, a repeated theme in John's Gospel, unmistakable to the Jews and very offensive to them, that Jesus would ever say, *Ego eime*, "I am." I am, is how God revealed himself to Moses in Exodus 3:14. He's taking that same name on his own lips and saying, *Ego eime*, "I am." He is one with God. He is one in essence with the great, I am, in his divine nature. Then it says in verse 5, "Judas, who was also betraying him, was standing with them. So when he said to them, 'I am,' 'I am he,' they drew back and fell on the ground." Now, most of the time when Jesus speaks, he is pulling his punches.

Let's, let's be honest, here. I mean the power that he has, which is the power of the Creator, who called all things into creation, John 1, Hebrews 1, the Creator God, who sustains all

things by the word of his power, as we see also illustrated in Colossians 1, he refuses to flex all of the muscle of his divine strength most of the time. In this case, though, he lets these people, and keep in mind this is a multitude of hundreds, perhaps 1,000 or more, here, many of them trained soldiers, well-armed, bracing for a fight, with revolutionaries and insurrectionists. In this instance, Jesus lets a little bit of that power come out.

Why? Read on. "Therefore he again asked them, 'Whom do you seek?'" After picking themselves up off the ground, they pulled out their arrest warrant, and they're shaking, hands are shaking. They're like, what just happened to us? Anybody else feel the earthquake? "They said, 'Jesus the Nazarene.' So Jesus answered, 'I told you that I am he.'" I told you I am. This time, lets them stand. "'So if you seek me, let these go their way.'" And then John interprets it for us, "In order that the word which he had spoke would be fulfilled, 'Of those whom you have given me, I lost not one.'"

As we can clearly see, there is no need at all, is there, for Judas' treachery to deliver over Jesus into their hand. They could have, they could have saved their money, frankly, because Jesus, clearly he's ready, willing to go with these guys, "knowing," John 18:4, "all things coming upon him." That's why he went forth. This is going according to the father's will and plan, "that I should be the sin-bearer, that I should drink the bitter cup, that I should be nailed to a cross for the sins of my people." He's rushing forward to do God's will. That role is his alone to bear, not theirs. So he says to them, you let them go.

Divine power flexed, here, for divine protection for his men, all the while freely giving himself to do the father's will. This is exactly what he's prayed in the garden mere minutes before this, preparing himself, keenly watchful, ready to do God's will. Now, at that point, according to Matthew and Mark, the authorities attempted to try to take Jesus into their custody. We read in Luke 22:49, and you can return there. If you're in John 18, go back to Luke 22:49. "When those around him saw what was going to happen, they said, 'Lord, shall we strike

with the sword?' And one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear."

None of the Synoptics name the disciple or his victim, but John does in his Gospel. Presumably the Synoptic Gospels, written much earlier than the Gospel of John, they protect the identity of the offending Apostle just as a matter of prudence in the early church. But by the time that John writes his Gospel, sometime in the 80s, Jerusalem had been, sacked, sacked by the Romans, the temple had been destroyed, so Sanhedrin no longer ruled, chief priest no longer in power. It's now safe when he writes to name Peter as the one who cut off the right ear of the high priest's slave whose name is Malchus, also named in John 18.

We knew it was Peter all along, though, didn't we? Didn't need to wait until John wrote his Gospel. We know exactly who these Synoptics are writing about, and it's not just what we've picked up of his nature, but what we're reading. Luke 22:33, "'Lord, with you, with you, I'm ready to go both to prison and to death.'" With you I'll do anything. Peter had every reason

for confidence, didn't he? With the Lord at his side, he can face anything. He pulls out his sword and said, hey, just do that, I am, thing again. Boom, knock them all over, and then he goes and start stabbing guys. It's a great trick.

Peter could face anything with Jesus at his side. But once again, we find Peter missing the point. Had Peter stayed awake in the garden, watching and praying rather than sleeping, he would have heard the Lord pray, "Yet not my will but yours be done." And that's his first error of judgment that we see here, that he, you might just want to jot this down, number one, he failed to think spiritually. He failed to think spiritually. He was not spiritually minded at this point. And that's the rebuke that Jesus gives in John 18:11: "Put the sword into the sheath. The cup that the father has given me, shall I not drink it?" Peter, you got the plan wrong. You're not thinking right.

In fact, that comes out in Matthew's account, where the Lord tells Peter in Matthew 26:52, "Put your sword back in its place, for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword." The kingdom of God does not advance by fighting and

using the world's weapons and means and methods. Weapons of warfare are not carnal, 2 Corinthians 10:4, because we don't face a carnal enemy. We don't wrestle against flesh and blood, Ephesians 6:12. You're going to find many voices on the Internet these days appealing to young men in particular, deceiving them, calling them into a carnal fight, stirring up their blood for some challenge, some argument, some debate, some fight, some even calling them to violence.

Don't do it. Don't fall into the trap. Listen to what Jesus told Peter, "'All those who take of the sword shall perish by the sword.'" He says, Peter, you're not destined to live or die by the sword. You're destined to live by the cross and to die by the cross. That's our lot, too, beloved. And it is an honor to live and die after the manner of our Lord. Peter, literally, according to church tradition, was crucified because he didn't want to be portrayed exactly like Jesus was, right side up. He appealed that they would turn that cross upside down. And so he was, according to tradition, crucified upside down. Again, had Peter prayed rather than slept, he would have been more mindful of spiritual realities, better prepared to think spiritually

rather than carnally, and to face this challenge in a spiritual way, not in a carnal way.

So first error, failing to think spiritually. Then he failed to reason. Secondly, he failed to think logically. He failed to think logically. This is what happens when we don't think spiritually, when we don't reason from faith. Logic just goes right out the window. If Peter had read the room, if he had seen the Lord, how the Lord had all this in hand, he single-handedly diffused the tension; first, by divine power knocking over 1,000 people with no more than a word, then by reasonably telling them, I'm your man; take me, let them go.

The nature of his rebuke in Matthew 26:53, he basically tells Peter, you think I need your sword? You're not thinking right. Did you see what happened? You think I can't appeal to my father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? You think a little Roman cohort's going to stand against twelve legions of angels? Come on, Peter, you're not thinking right. It's not logic you're following. So Peter and all the Apostles as well, when Jesus corrects them, he uses

the plural form of the verb. So it's Peter who pulls out a sword, but the rest of them are thinking it. It's just Peter's quick on the draw, quicker than they were. But they all failed to think spiritually, failed to think logically.

Then coming back to verse 50, failed to think submissively, thirdly, which means that also, fourthly, he failed to think strategically. He failed to think submissively, and he failed to think strategically. We see that Peter calls Jesus Lord, posing a question, but then he fails to wait for a response. He's not submissive, here. He's impulsive. Instead of acting, he's acting from carnal judgments. He's being led by his feelings, here.

Big today, isn't it? Don't think about it. Just feel and then act. Just emote. Pour it all out through your keyboard. Just sit in your bedroom where it's safe to pour out all your strong opinions like a bunch of Altoids, curiously strong, coming out through your keyboard. Your feelings, they tell you, are the truest you. Your feelings are the most authentic you. Be authentic. Don't resist them.

It's not how biblical submission works. Submission is a thoughtful submission, reasoning from faith, starting with spiritual-mindedness, which leads to logical, reasonable action. And then when we use the word Lord to speak of the truest Lord that there is, our Savior, we act accordingly. We act according to his Lordship. When we submit to our Lord, we acknowledge that he is the one with all wisdom, who sees perfectly, who sees from an omniscient point of view. He directs us from a divine perspective by his direction. As we set our feelings aside and do what we know to be true, our actions, then, become truly strategic in submission to him.

Peter, not so much. He failed to see how his rash action and impetuous bravado, how his impulsive show of fidelity and faithfulness completely driven by his feelings, it put the entire mission of the Messiah in jeopardy. Peter says, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" Not a question because he doesn't wait for an answer. He just pulls out his sword and starts whacking, takes a swing out of the, at the sla, sway, slay of the high priest and misses his head, cuts off his right ear.

Look, if it was a trained soldier rather than a fisherman who pulled out his sword and struck, we'd be reading about Jesus performing a resurrection instead of what we have here. It's more like miraculous cosmetic surgery. No trained soldier is going to speak up and telegraph his strike, telling everybody what he's about to do. He's not going to say it, because he wants to take his target by surprise. He doesn't want to give every, any opportunity to duck out of the way, which is exactly what Malchus did, here. Instead of getting a deep dent in his skull, he got a fatal, non-fatal wound on the side of his head.

I'd say that Peter just put the entire messianic project in jeopardy, here, because the arresting officers are deployed for exactly this reason. They've come here to quell any armed uprising. What does this look like from Peter? Armed uprising. Not skillful, armed uprising, nonetheless. By trying to cut off the head of the high priest's slave, he's playing right into their narrative, that Jesus is leading a band of violent revolutionaries. He didn't think that one through. Peter didn't. Not thinking, he's not thinking logically, strategically, submissively. He just put at risk the innocence of Jesus.

Up to this point, the religious authorities had no basis for charging Jesus. He's sinless. He's always acted with perfect dignity, with great wisdom. He's kept his men in line and under control. He's shown the most remarkable restraint, Jesus has, in the face of a lot of provocation, especially Luke chapter 20, in the temple. But now with Peter's sword strike, that gives them a basis to charge Jesus, doesn't it? Especially before Pilate, See, we told you. It's exactly why we needed those soldiers.

Again, I appreciate Calvin, who says this, "It is again evident that we are much more courageous and ready for fighting than for bearing the cross, and therefore we ought always to deliberate wisely what the Lord commands and what he requires from every one of us, lest the fervor of our zeal exceed the bounds of reason and moderation." End quote. So true. And the younger we are, the more we want to just jump right in and start flailing, just start swinging. It takes time and maturity to grow wisdom, to say that maybe jumping right in is not the best approach.

What may appear as bravery, as fidelity to Christ in Peter's willingness to fight hundreds of armed soldiers, but the fact that the next section in Luke's Gospel records his denials; by the fact that, as the other Gospel writers record, Peter and all the rest of the Apostles, they fled right after this arrest? What appears brave and faithful at first glance is nothing more than carnal excitement driven by feelings. A true test? Patient suffering. A true test of our spirituality? Enduring quietly to the end.

Well, Peter and the others should have seen how Jesus handled the situation as recorded in John 18:1-11. He diffused the tension, and by great wisdom he isolated the name on the arrest warrant, identified himself as the one they're seeking, thereby protecting the rest of them.

So once again we see the wisdom of the Lord and how he cleans up the mess his men were so quick to make. Verse 51, "Jesus answered and said, 'Stop, no more of this.'" That sounds stronger, like a rebuke, at this moment, but really he's saying, permit it to be so now, which is a little bit strange and

awkward in translation, but really he's saying, men, put your swords away. Permit this to happen. Let this arrest take place, is what he's saying. "And then he touched the ear of Malchus the high priest's slave, and healed him."

Peter and the other Apostles witnessed this great kindness as Jesus tends, here, not to a mortal wound. Like, he could have let the guy go without an ear as a little reminder of tussling with his dudes, you know? That's what you get. You could still hear out of the other ear. But he cares for what really amounts to a cosmetic wound. Shows great compassion, here, so he can go home to his wife and children with two ears. Says here clearly in the text, he didn't touch the man's head, cause a new ear to grow. He touched the man's ear either reattaching it or causing it to form again. It's the only instance, by the way, in the Gospels that we see of healing a wound that's inflicted in violence. It's kind of an interesting miracle.

But importantly, strategically, now with this healing, Jesus' enemies, they witnessed this neighborly love as well. First it's Malchus, slave of the high priest, who'd know about

this and really appreciate it. The commander and his soldiers, they would go back and report what happened to Pontius Pilate. What Peter had jeopardized, here, in his unspiritual, illogical, non-submissive, non-strategic thinking and just jumping out and acting, Jesus has rectified by his perfect wisdom and his merciful love and his healing power.

Those at the front of the crowd who saw this happen, those who heard the report from others, they knew there was no basis here for charging Jesus with leading a band of insurrectionists. That was so far from the truth. And that's why Jesus could say to Pilate when he's standing before him in John 18:36, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews, but as it is my kingdom is not of this realm. You got nothing to worry about from me and my men, Pilate. We don't fight like you guys fight. We're not of this world. We got a bigger purpose that transcends all your squabbles, fights, swords, torches.

What everyone saw on that night at this time, in real time and under great duress, is Jesus' love for his enemies once again, divine love matched only by divine power and authority and wisdom and compassion. Beloved, that is the opportunity we have as his disciples, to use our words and our strength, our resources, for love. But in the final verses, we see that his divine love does not let these men off the hook. Jesus has something to say to them. He's confronted and exposed the deceptive show of friendship from Judas. He's rebuked and corrected the impulsive show of fidelity from his disciples.

Now he confronts and condemns the authorities for a third, third, their excessive show of force, their excessive show of force. "Jesus said to the chief priests and the officers of the temple, the elders who'd come against him, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs as against a robber? While I was with you daily in the temple, you didn't stretch out your hands against me. But this hour and the authority of darkness are yours.'" We notice in this that Jesus doesn't condemn the civil authority. He's not speaking directly to the arresting officers. After all, the Roman soldiers that are there, they're just doing their job. They're under orders. They've been sent by their governor.

His condemnation is targeted at the religious authority, the leaders in his own nation. Those men we know from the rest of this Gospel, they're hypocritical liars. They've been maligning and misrepresenting him and his ministry since the very beginning. They're the ones responsible for the successive show of force. They led Pontius Pilate to believe that Jesus is dangerous, harmful; he's a threat.

It could be argued, it was, people ask, why, why were the chief priests? I mean, really, they're there, they're in the garden with all this kind of violence going on? Yeah. They're there to oversee the arrest. They're the ones who sought the Roman cohort from Pontius Pilate. Their credibility is on the line. If anything goes wrong, they gotta be there. The officers of the temple, they're not there to assist in the arrest. They have no arresting authority or power, no jurisdiction outside the Temple Mount. But they're there to protect the chief priests and the elders.

Who are the elders? Those are members of the Sanhedrin. They have, really, no reason to be out this late at night during the feast, right before the Passover. These are older men, Sadducees, Pharisees, respected, dignified. What are they doing crawling around at midnight, after midnight, in the dark, right before Passover? Very likely the chief priests and elders, being opponents of Jesus all throughout his ministry, they're not only there to oversee the arrest and watch the chain of custody carefully. We're going to see that chain of custody all through the rest of the chapter and into chapter 23.

These guys are on a tight timeline. They need to make sure everything kind of hits at at the right time and rush the legal proceedings along as quickly as possible because, once again, they don't want to violate the Sabbath. They need to murder before the Sabbath.

So they're there to make sure the arrest happens and nothing goes wrong. They're there to watch the chain of custody. But they're also there, I believe, to gloat, to relish the victory over this would-be pretended Messiah. They've judged him

to be a dangerous pretender from the beginning and in league with Satan. After all, how could he do those miracles unless some kind of supernatural power were at work in his fingers? Beelzebul. So they're there to gloat.

Jesus had confounded them in the temple, Luke chapter 20. He met and answered every single challenge they threw at him. He silenced the best of their scholars, embarrassed them on their own turf. So even at this late hour, at this great inconvenience, they're not about to miss his comeuppance, not about to miss it for the world. Now, when Jesus speaks, then, he speaks in confronting and condemning, not for their sake primarily, though there is certainly an element of love for his enemies here, too, in confronting. But the point of his confrontation is for the sake of public witness, to expose and interpret exactly what's going on here. Look at his rebuke. First of all, Jesus points out, look, guys, isn't this a bit of overkill, coming at me with swords, clubs, as if I'm some form of a robber? If I was a robber, if I was a dangerous criminal, violent insurrectionist, why didn't you arrest me any day last week in the temple instead of debating Moses and the prophets

with me? The more responsible thing for you to have done would be to arrest me then if I'm a robber.

That's important for the whole crowd, particularly for the Romans, but also for the collective conscience. Everyone would know that they sought to silence him out of envy. Mark 15:10 says that "Pilate was aware the chief priests had delivered him up because of envy." So Pilate is getting this narrative. He knows what happened that night, too.

Second, another reason for this confrontation, there's a bit of irony here, as if to say, look, guys, let's be honest, who's the real robber here? Not me. Last use we find of that word in Luke's Gospel, robber, *lestes*, not a thief, someone who steals secretly. A bandit, someone who uses violence to steal from others. That's the term. Last use of that term, Luke 19:46, where Jesus names these religious leaders because they have turned the temple, a house of prayer, into a robber's den. They're the robbers, not him.

So this confrontation, condemnation of Jewish religious establishment, represented by the chief priests and the elders of the Sanhedrin, is that they're driven by envy and jealousy, and they're, they're nothing more than robber barons driven by greed.

And then thirdly, there's a more profound and insidious reason for the condemnation, pointing it out, they're under satanic influence. "While I was with you daily in the temple, you didn't stretch out your hands against me. Ah, but here's the reason. This is your hour, and the authority of darkness are yours." At the heart of the opposition to the Lord Jesus, at the heart of the opposition to all his people, at the heart of the opposition to his church to this very day: Satan himself. "He is," Ephesians 2:2, "he is the prince of the power of the air. He's the spirit that's now working in the sons of disobedience." This is his hour, the dark authority that unites all of these parties, disparate and disagreeing as they normally are, but he brings them together in one purpose against Jesus Christ, to murder him.

All that's personified in these men, the religious establishment, the respectable pastors and scholars, shepherds. They're false shepherds. They're blind guides. Not everybody who says he's a pastor really is a pastor. Not everybody who says he's an elder or shepherd is one. These men certainly were not, though they had that reputation. Now, we've covered a lot of ground, I know, in a short time, but just to wrap it up briefly, take some of the different threads woven throughout this narrative. Let's see if we can tie these together into just a few closing points.

First, as we've seen running through the narrative, beloved, don't be deceived about the sinfulness of sin. Watch out for it. Be watchful and prayerful, first and foremost in yourself so that you do not enter into temptation. We can easily see that sin in the betrayal of Judas Iscariot. And even though we're bewildered at how he could do such a treacherous thing, we realize that that same treachery of betrayal and willingness to depart and throw someone under the bus, it's in all of us.

We'd see the envy, the greed, this influence of Satan himself in the false religious authority. We're all, we all can tend to follow false voices, false leaders. Give them a pass. We need to admit, though, that that same mysterious, perplexing sinfulness of sin resides in each and every single one of us. We need to be on our guard against sin. It's always there to entice and deceive, to lead us to do as Peter did, follow our gut instinct, listen to our feelings, not think, but just jump, act. Beloved, be on guard against the sinfulness of sin.

The second, second lesson that we can take from this is we should not fail to see the wisdom and power of God on such perfect, bright shining display in the perfections of Jesus Christ. Look at this, look at this Savior. Look at this Lord; he is our Lord, our Savior, he's our champion and look, we've blown it like Peter's blown it, haven't we? We've spoken or acted when we shouldn't, and we've been silent when we should be speaking. We've all failed in many, many ways. Look at how Jesus overcomes his disciples' failures. He is wise to deal not only with the betraying and the violent who come against him, but he's also able to deal with our unwitting, stupid failures.

Just because we do something wrong does not mean the entire divine plan is off track. I hope that's a comfort to you. It is to me because I daily commit sin. I daily think wrong thoughts, say wrong things. If you're anything like me, which you are, if you don't think you are, you need to get saved, if you're anything like me, you know that he is the most perfect Savior and most gracious Lord. And you notice how he dealt with his enemies and even more so, how quick he is to rescue his friends, to dig them out of the pit that they've created for themselves.

Even the rebuke is in love as he cleans up their mistakes, as he covers over their sins, as he uses even their negative things and their failures to accrue to his benefit because you know what? The report about him healing Malchus, that went right back to Pilate, and Pilate knew exactly what was going on with the Jews.

Third thing, final point, do not underestimate the love of God residing in Jesus Christ for sinners like you and like me. He will save you. If you humble yourself and ask, if you repent and believe in his Gospel, sinner, he'll save you. Redeemed

sinner, fellow Christian, he'll forgive you. Don't underestimate the love of God and the power of God to overcome your failure, your weakness, your sin. He's provided Christ for you.

And if he provided Christ for you while you were yet a sinner and an enemy of all righteousness and goodness, while you really kept league with the likes of Judas Iscariot and the false religious leaders, and you were part and parcel of the children of this age who are under the wrath of God, if he saved you in that condition, how will he not also with his Son, this God, freely give you all things? And he does, out of his infinite bounty of goodness and grace.

As we move on, we're going to see this hour and the power and authority of darkness unfold. Some very dark times, and yet we see the good purpose of God through it all that accrues for our salvation. Let's pray.

It's no wonder that the Apostle Paul cites in the cross of Jesus Christ that the wisdom and the power of you, our God, that's on display. We marvel at every text, in every chapter, in

every verse. Every word seems to reveal different layers of your glory and your wisdom and your power and your love, and we are so thankful to belong to you.

Father, thank you for saving us. Thank you for forgiving our sin. Thank you for covering us with the righteousness of Jesus Christ and giving that righteousness to us as a gift. Thank you for your kindness in him and the goodness of you that we get to enjoy and explore forever. You've created us for you, for your sake, for your glory; and in that great glory and revelation of your wisdom and power, we are the beneficiaries forever.

I pray, Father, that if there are any here who do not yet know you and know the grace of your forgiveness and love in Christ, that you would be pleased even today to open their eyes to the truth. Let them see their wretched condition, their sin before you, the danger of Hell that lies before them, gaping its mouth wide open to receive them. Let them turn in fear and trembling in reverence to you, to find refuge in the cross of your Son Jesus Christ, the one who died to forgive sinners of sins. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen