

87 Mark 14:43-52

Title

Text

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.

A Feigned Friendship

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.

Last week we left off where Jesus returns the third time to find his disciples asleep. He says to them, "Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand." As he was speaking, the glow of the torches could be seen through the trees. Jesus remains unmoved but his disciples undoubtedly are wondering what is going on. They have just been awakened and now they see and hear the advance a large number of people.

When they come into view, it is Judas at the head of the group. Mark adds the comment that Judas was one of the twelve. This seems quite unnecessary since we know who Judas is. Mark includes that description not so that we can identify Judas, but to highlight the treachery of his act. He was one of the twelve. It is like identifying Sir Lancelot as one of the knights of the Round Table. It is not because we do not know, but because that fact makes any treachery all the more heinous. Geof Thomas writes:

The number twelve was not chosen by chance. It was chosen as being the number of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve patriarchs. Twelve was a necessary number not an accidental number. In choosing twelve Jesus Christ was saying that he is the Father of Young-Israel, just as Father Jacob was the father of Old-Israel, the Israel of the flesh. When Jesus chooses twelve he is gathering around him the new Israel, Young-Israel, the Israel of the Spirit. We are Young-Israel; we don't derive our ancestry from those twelve patriarchs but we are a spiritual building set on the foundation of the twelve apostles. Jesus has written the names of his twelve men on the foundations of the new Jerusalem. Those twelve men are to be the light of the whole world; they stand for expansion. Christ is going

to penetrate the world through the message of the Twelve. He believed that: "Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations." It took strong faith to give that universal commission in such terms, didn't it? Here is the world mission of Christ's kingdom. Jesus' whole soul is linked to the Twelve. He as the Messiah will rise or fall with these Twelve. He appoints them; he teaches and trains them; he commissions them; he needs each one of them. His office will rise or fall with the work of this beautiful unalterable Twelve! Now are you beginning to feel the brutal pain? Judas, one of the Twelve appears and he betrays him. The perfect round number of twelve is broken. All hell laughs in derision that this Jesus of Nazareth with his pretensions of world domination through his apostles - "You are the salt of the earth" - indeed! It's all crashing down at the first hurdle, isn't it, long before he gets to Golgotha? One of his hand-picked and personally-trained Twelve sells him! Judas tears up the whole neat symbolism. He reduces the twelve to eleven. What a foolish number! All this, I say, is part of the anathema that Jesus is entering. This holy and round number is shattered. Where is the foundation of the church? One of its main foundation stones has gone. The whole edifice to stand on it is already looking a bit wobbly. Where is Christian preaching heading? What an offense to Jesus' Messianic consciousness was this apostolic betrayal. Eleven - only eleven left - the perfect number is broken!¹

Coming with Judas is a crowd of people. There is some disagreement as to who this crowd is composed of. Obviously there is Judas. We learn elsewhere that Malthus, servant of the high priest is also present. The men with swords and clubs probably includes the temple police. This is a police force over which the Sanhedrin had authority. Another account speaks of a cohort, which traditionally refers to a division of the Roman army. A cohort was composed of 600 soldiers. It is not clear whether cohort was used in the typical way or whether this was just a way to describe the temple police. The word favors a Roman force, but it is hard to see why a Roman force would be needed at this point. Even if it was a Roman cohort, it was likely less than 600 men. The group had to be big enough that they could handle any contingency, but small enough so as not to cause a stir among the people. A group too big would certainly wake people as they made their way through the city.

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No doubt the Scribes and Pharisees knew who Jesus was, but it doesn't seem that they are present. Many of the people also knew who Jesus was, but most of the country is asleep now. There was enough of a question as to which one of the 12 men was Jesus that Judas arranges a signal. Undoubtedly most people knew of Jesus, but not everybody may be able to identify him by sight, especially at night.

The sign was a kiss. It was customary to greet one another with a kiss, especially among close acquaintances. Judas, perhaps wearing a smile gives a respectful and enthusiastic greeting, "Rabbi!" And he proceeds to kiss him. Feigning respect, feigning friendship, Judas betrays his master for 30 pieces of silver.

A quiet bringing of Jesus to the house of the high priest will not do. Upon the signal they are to

1. Geoff Thomas, "Judas the Betrayer," <http://www.alfredplacechurch.org.uk/Sermons/mark88.htm>

seize him; and seize him they do. There is no request for him to surrender himself. No command for him to come along quietly. They seize him and plan to take him under armed guard.

47 But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.

Again, we learn from a parallel account that this was Peter. As they seized his Lord, he drew his sword and attacked. A glancing blow removes the ear of the servant of the high priest. Jesus is the only one with his wits about him in this mess. This account is all about Jesus. Mark gives us none of the details that we long for. Who was the man who attacked? I let it slip that it was Peter. Who was this slave? Again, I gave away Malthus as his name. But Mark records none of these details. With the small army as has confronted them, and with their Peter chopping off the ear of the servant, how did Jesus restore order? We are not told. What happened to the servant's ear? We are not told. Rather, Mark moves to the point in the story where Jesus addresses his captors.

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."

He berates them for coming against him as though he were a robber. Is he some common thief who will lay in wait for people, beat them up and steal their money? Jesus has been the polar opposite of that. Everything he has done has been done in public. If he were guilty, everyone would know it for he was never alone. He taught in the temple day after day. There was ample opportunity to arrest him. It was not as though he were making himself scarce. It was not like they had to track him down like some fugitive.

The Fellowship Forsaken

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.

At this point, everyone flees. It seems that at least Peter was willing to fight for Jesus, but when it was clear that Jesus was not looking for a fight, things change. Again, we could offer some analysis on why they fled, but that is not the issue. The salient point is that they abandoned him just as it was written. They all fell away just as he had predicted. They are not willing to suffer the fate of their master. They are willing to fight his enemies, but when he goes willingly into their control, the loyalty ends.

That young man who ran naked into the dark leaving his night shirt behind is commonly believed to be Mark himself. We do know from Acts 12:12, that Mark lived in Jerusalem at this time, and Christian tradition held from the beginning that Mark actually lived in the home where Jesus ate the Passover meal. - Riddlebarger

As a curious young man, Mark followed Jesus and the disciples out to Gethsemane. Even this curious young man flees when they try to lay hands on him. Speaking of the forsaken Christ, Octavius Winslow observes:

As man, He felt this sword to enter deeply into His soul. For as man, He clung to man- to the companionship, the solace, and the sympathy of man- as we shall more fully show in a subsequent part of this work. But He, like many of His followers, was destined to learn

how vain was human help, how fickle was human love, how changeable was human friendship. He was forsaken by man, by the very men whom He had constituted His College of Apostles, whom He had admitted to His confidence, who had shared His love, and who had sworn eternal fealty to Him their Lord and Master. But now, in His deepest sorrow, "they all forsook Him and fled." But in this His prophecy was fulfilled which said, "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me." There was a fitness, a propriety in this that our Lord should accomplish the work of our salvation unaided by creature power, unsweetened by human sympathy. Oh, how different it is with us! There are few of God's people who taste the cup of human sorrow unsweetened by the element of Christian compassion and sympathy. The Lord gives us, what He denied Himself, the clinging, soothing, cheering presence and affection of Christian friends and fellow-disciples. He was utterly forsaken; we are not so. Few believers there are who tread the shaded valley, confront the sweeping tempest, unaccompanied, uncheered by one loving heart, one sympathizing spirit, one 'second self'. Jesus, insulated from heaven and earth, was alone!²

Application

Alan Carr comments that "Judas literally kissed the gates of Heaven and died and went to Hell."³ Will you find at the end that your life merely consisted of a kiss for Jesus? Is our life merely the kiss of Judas? We are happy to spend time with Jesus. We are happy to listen to his teaching. We are happy to walk with him and his other followers. We enjoy the company of others who follow him. But inwardly we serve a different god.

To those who may be listening who consider yourself too be a Christian, do you have grand plans for our life with Jesus? Are you ready to fight his enemies as Peter was? When things do not go as we expect do you then turn and flee?

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Have you been betrayed? Has a husband or wife betrayed your confidence? Has a friend betrayed your trust? Jesus too was betrayed. Have you at times been abandoned? Have there been times that you longed for someone to stand with you? Have there been times of trial that you wanted someone to come along side you? Jesus too was abandoned. He did not need them to fight for him, but a friend to encourage and support would have been nice. A friend to be there for moral support would have been nice. But he found nothing.

There are times when your life closes in on you and seems dark. At those times know, not only that Jesus has been there, but that he will not abandon you. In contrast to the faithlessness of his disciples, Jesus promises, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). You may feel at times that the weight of the world is on your shoulders, but remember that the sin of the

2. Octavius Winslow, *The Sympathy of Christ*, <http://www.gracegems.org/WINSLOW/Christ%27s%20Sensitiveness%20to%20Desertion.htm>

3. Alan Carr, "A Night That Will Live In Infamy," http://www.sermonnotebook.org/mark/Mark%2073%20-%20Mark%2014_42-52.htm

world was on him. More than that, the crushing wrath of the Father was on him. But he has told us, "my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:30). And so we may say with the apostle Paul, "For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me" (Col 1:29). We are encouraged to cast "all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).