

The Night Before Calvary

Mark 14:43-72

Introduction

We are approaching a passage today, in our continuing study of the Gospel of Mark, that every time I read it, as I have had the privilege of doing this week in my study, it leaves me somewhat stunned. It also leaves me somewhat angry, as I view these people who are venting their wrath against the Lamb of God. Yet, it leaves me with a sense of thankfulness in worship, as well, because I know, had I been there, I would have joined that crowd. Jesus still, as we will read today, took their wrath, and ours as well.

The Betrayal By Judas

Turn to Mark, chapter 14. We will begin in verse 43 today.

In order to set the stage, we need to remember that earlier, in Mark 14:10, Judas had gone to the religious leaders determined to betray Christ. We do not know and can only speculate as to why he turned; why he became a traitor; why he became treasonous. Perhaps the only reason he was following Christ was because he thought Christ, being the Messiah, was going to become the ruler over the Roman Empire. Then perhaps, at a particular point in time, he discovered that Jesus was not going to overthrow Rome; was not going to establish His throne at this time, but instead, was going to die. Judas, being a zealot, could not comprehend the man that he had followed for three years, giving up, as he perhaps perceived Jesus doing.

Judas, as a result, for thirty pieces of silver, sells the Lord. It has been suggested that this was perhaps, remuneration for his three and a half years of poverty. I am not convinced because thirty pieces of silver

would equal, in today's economy, about twenty-five dollars. It was, in fact, the price of the poorest or least capable slave. In that day, if a slave had been gored by an ox; maimed, he would be worth only thirty pieces of silver.

I think Judas was perhaps, doing something out of bitterness. He was saying, in a sense, "Jesus is no good to me. In fact, He's less important than a maimed, crippled slave. Just give me thirty pieces of silver and He's yours."

That set the stage and gave the religious leaders exactly what they needed.

Jesus, as we previously studied, was in the Garden of Gethsemane praying. At the end of that prayer meeting, He says, in Mark 14:42,

Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!

Notice, as we go through this passage today, that nothing is taking Jesus by surprise. He knows exactly what is coming next.

Judas arrives with a crowd

Look at Mark 14:43.

Immediately while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs, who were from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

Note the phrase "one of the twelve". It is almost as if Mark is shocked. He is saying, "The murrer comes and, can you believe it, he's one of the twelve!"

The word “crowd,” or “multitude” as it may be translated in your version, in the original, is “speira,” which was one tenth of a legion. We know that a legion was six thousand soldiers. So a “speira,” or one tenth of a legion, would be six hundred. This tells us that six hundred men were coming to that little garden to capture one man.

These men were heavily armed, as well. We are told that they had swords, meaning the little “machaira,” which was the little hand sword, and clubs. This crowd of men from the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, evidently anticipated a struggle.

Understand, historically, that just a matter of days prior to this event, these men had captured an insurrectionist. We have perhaps, clear record that Judas and others went to the priests suggesting that Jesus was an insurrectionist; that He needed to be put down because He was claiming to be the king. In Pilot’s mind, this probably raised fear because they had chased one particular insurrectionist all over the countryside before finally capturing and imprisoning him. You know him as Barabbas. So they expected a struggle.

John adds, in John 18:3, that the crowd of men came there carrying lanterns. In that part of the country, the moon would be bright, so perhaps they were expecting Jesus to either fight or hide and carried lanterns to find Him, should He hide in the bushes or in a cave.

Continue to Mark 14:44.

Now he who was betraying Him had given them a signal, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him and lead Him away under guard.”

I do not know, but perhaps Judas speculated that one of the disciples would step forward and say, “No, I’m Jesus.” Perhaps he thought Peter would do this. So Judas told this crowd of six hundred soldiers, “It’ll be the one that I go up and kiss, just in case they try to deceive you. That will be the signal. And when I kiss Him, you seize Him.”

John gives us an insight that is fascinating. Turn to John 18:3-5a and notice what happens next.

Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. So Jesus, knowing all things that were coming upon

Him, went forth and said to them, “Whom do you seek?” They answered Him, “Jesus the Nazarene.” . . .

Then Jesus says something very interesting. In the original, He says simply, “Ego eimi.” That means, literally, “I am.”

Jesus does not say, “I am He,” or “I’m the One you’re looking for,” He says, “I Am.” Does that sound familiar?

You may remember, in Exodus 3:13-14, when Moses was talking to Yahweh and says, “I’m going back to the sons of Israel. They’re not going to believe that I’ve been talking to God. You’ve got to give me some information. What can I tell them about You? What’s Your name?”

God says, “You tell them, ‘I am.’ I am the existed One. You can’t bind Me to time. You can’t put a label on Me. Simply, ‘I am.’ I’m sovereign.”

So Jesus, when these men come to Him saying, “We seek Jesus of Nazareth,” responds by saying, “I am.”

Notice the response to Jesus’ words, in John 18:6.

So when He said to them, “I am . . .” [implied “He”], they drew back and fell to the ground.

Now, imagine with me, that you are in the garden and there are six hundred soldiers armed with all these weapons on their way. They rush into this garden and there is Jesus standing calmly. Then, Jesus says, “Who are you seeking?”

Infuriated, with their swords raised and their lanterns swinging in the night air, they say, “We seek Jesus of Nazareth.”

Jesus responds, “I am.”

Then, *boom!* They fall like a big group of dominoes, flat on their backs, stunned.

What happened? I think, for one split second, Jesus pulled back the blinders from their eyes so that they could see that He was God. They did the same thing you and I would do, they fell flat.

Understand that in this garden, this is not some radical whose plans have just been found out. We are not looking at an impostor who has just been crushed and his plans have just been discovered. These are Jesus’ plans. He is a sovereign Christ who, for just one moment, let them see that they were, in fact, arresting God in the flesh.

Judas advances with false affection

Turn back to Mark, chapter 14, where we will look at what Judas does next. He is probably picking himself up off the ground after Jesus revealed who He was.

Judas probably staggers toward the Lord and with fake affection, in Mark 14:45, says,

... **“Rabbi!”** ...

“Rabbi” means, “Teacher, Master”. Up to the very end, Judas is playing a role; is deceiving – as if Jesus did not know.

There is nothing more despicable than a turncoat. I am sure you would agree. When was the last time you ran into someone named Judas? Would you name your son Benedict Arnold? No! There is something about it that just makes us cringe.

Up to the very last second, Judas comes to Jesus and says,

... **“Rabbi!” and kissed Him.**

The word “kiss,” in this verse, is an intensive word.

In that day, they did a lot of kissing. If a slave would show affection, he would kiss his master’s feet. An inferior would kiss the back of a superior’s hand. If they were very close, the inferior, perhaps a pupil, would kiss the palm of his teacher’s hand.

However, only intimate friends would kiss on the cheek, as Judas and Jesus did, according to their custom. Judas comes up and kisses Jesus on the cheek, as if He is an intimate friend.

It makes my “blood boil” to think that because Judas was a man who was possessed by Satan and Jesus was a Man who was possessed of God, God in the flesh and Satan in the flesh were embracing in the garden. I can imagine that the sparks of that kiss were heard throughout the universe.

Yet, Judas feigns affection. In fact, the verb “kiss” is present tense, which actually means he continually kissed Jesus. He kissed Him over and over and over again.

I would imagine the Lord just stood there as Judas kissed Him in mock affection, time and time again. Finally, Luke tells us, in Luke 22:48, that Jesus responds, probably with all the compassion in the world,

... **“Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”**

Then, Matthew includes, in Matthew 26:50, that Jesus said,

... **“Friend, do what you have come for.”**

In other words, “Get it over with.”

If I had been Jesus and Judas had gotten that close, I think I would have popped him good. But here is One who knows exactly what is happening; who sees the deception. He, in fact, knows that Judas is being controlled by Satan himself. Yet, Jesus still would call him, “Friend.”

Peter attacks with a sword

In Mark 14:46, we read that after Judas kissed Jesus,

They laid hands on Him and seized Him.

They really did not need to do this, of course.

Then, in Mark 14:47, we read,

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

We are told in John 18:10 that it is Peter who does this.

Peter gets another chance to show his true character. He pulls out his little sword and whacks off the ear of the servant of the high priest.

As I thought about this, this is so typical of Peter. He always talked without thinking, and in this verse, he is shooting without aiming. Perhaps he is really aiming for the high priest. We do not know. I would imagine he was a better shot than this, but as he pulls out his sword and probably lunges at the high priest, perhaps at the last second, the servant pushes him out of the way and Peter clips his ear.

The Lord does something that He had not done before – He healed a flesh wound. Luke tells us, in Luke 22:51,

... ***And He touched his ear and healed him.***

Perhaps Jesus picked up the fragment of ear and reattached it. I would imagine that ear heard better than it had ever heard before.

They then, went on their way.

Jesus announces His sovereignty

Notice what Jesus says, as they began to depart from the garden. He announces His sovereignty in Mark 14:48-49.

. . . “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me, as you would against a robber? Every day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me; but this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures.”

Let us read a couple of passages. Acts 4:27-28 says this, as Peter is speaking,

For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.

Note that phrase, “to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.”

In Acts 2:22-23a, Peter is again, preaching,

Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, . . . this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God . . .

This gives believers a tremendous sense of the sovereignty of Christ. He knew prior to the event, and He knew after the event exactly what was going to happen. This was not taking Him by surprise. Jesus was not fooled; He was not shocked by this event. In fact, He could have snapped His fingers and the six hundred men would have turned to dust.

Jesus voluntarily gave Himself up to die. What a sovereign Christ.

The Refusal of Jewish Leaders

Now, we will look at the next few verses in Mark, chapter 14. Although we will not take a lot of time to go through the proceedings of Jesus’ trial, we will note three points about the injustice of the Jewish leaders.

1. First, the Jewish leaders had predetermined Jesus’ sentence.

Look at Mark 14:55.

Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, . . .

Notice that these leaders had already determined that Jesus was going to die. They just needed to somehow, find some incriminating statement. They had already determined that He was guilty, so they had predetermined the verdict.

2. Secondly, the Jewish leaders produced false testimony against Jesus.

Look at Mark 14:56-59.

For many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not consistent. Some stood up and began to give false testimony against Him, saying, “We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.’” Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent.

According to the Old Testament Law, these men should have been taken out and stoned. They were guilty of perjury; of lying. Yet, this was not being done, even though they were lying before the high priests – the ones who were to uphold the Law of Moses.

Do you remember the Pharisees? Every jot and tittle; every single element of the Law, they followed. Yet in this trial, they were watching in mockery, the Law being set aside.

3. Thirdly, Jesus was denied proper defense by the Jewish leaders.

These leaders predetermined the sentence, produced false testimony, and prevented proper defense.

Notice something interesting in the first part of Mark 14:60.

The high priest stood up and came forward and questioned Jesus, . . .

In that day, it was against the law for the high priest, who was the judge, to become the prosecutor. This was against all procedure. However, they were so infuriated and were trying so hard to catch Jesus in His words that finally, the high priest got up from behind his bench, came down, and got right in the face of Jesus.

Look at Mark 14:60b-61. The high priest says,

. . . *“Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?” But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?”*

Jesus then speaks.

Jesus' declaration

It is interesting that Jesus does not vindicate His cause until He is asked to make a claim to His deity. Now, He speaks.

In the original, in fact, the high priest literally, put Jesus under an oath. He says, “Under God, if You remain silent, You are incriminated. So You might as well speak up. Are You Christ?”

Jesus then, affirms His deity. He says, in Mark 14:62a, and notice the first phrase that He once again says,

. . . *“I am [“Ego eimi”]; . . .”*

Jesus also pronounces judgment, in the last part of Mark 14:62,

“. . . and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”

This is future tense, “and you shall”. In other words, “One day,” which is middle voice, “with your very own eyes, you shall see Me in the heavens, coming with power and majesty.”

Why did this infuriate the high priest so much? Because in Daniel 7:13, Daniel had a vision. He saw, as Jesus quoted in Mark 14:62,

“. . . the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”

So Jesus quotes from one of their revered prophets. He says, “I’m the One that Daniel was prophesying about. I’m the One he had a vision about. I am the Son of Man.”

Jesus pronounces judgment because, “You, with your very own eyes, will one day see Me coming, seated at the right hand of Power.”

This reminds me of Philippians 2:10-11. One day,

. . . *every knee will bow, . . . and . . . every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord*
. . .

However, by that time, it will be too late. By the time they recognize Him, it will be all over.

So Jesus pronounces judgment and He reaffirms His Messiahship.

The Denial By Peter

While Jesus’ trial is taking place, there is a subplot going on outside. Notice Mark 14:66. Peter is having his demise.

As Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came,

Now there are three denials by Peter. Let us look at each one.

1. The first denial is to a servant girl. Peter is very frustrated.

The servant girl speaks and Peter responds in Mark 14:67-68.

and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with Jesus the Nazarene.” But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you are talking about.” . . .

Peter’s response is a typical response. When you are lying, you just say, “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Peter was kind of frustrated.

I think Peter would have gone to the cross if Jesus had said, “Hey, there’s Peter! Peter, come here.”

Peter would have marched right in.

“Peter, will you go to the cross with Me?”

I think Peter would have said, “You bet – to the end.”

Yet, Peter is caught off guard by a little servant girl, who says, “You were with Him weren’t you?”

He is paralyzed with fear.

This is a little test. Peter was expecting a big one. The little one threw him off guard and he kind of said, “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

This was denial.

We then read in Mark 14:68b,

. . . And he went out onto the porch, and a rooster crowed.

2. The second denial occurs to another servant girl who sees Peter after the rooster, or cock, crows. Peter is a bit infuriated.

Look at Mark 14:69.

The servant-girl saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, "This is one of them!"

This time, the servant girl is saying this to the bystanders. She is letting everyone in on it. She is just talking full tilt. Peter is probably saying, in his heart, "Hush," as she says to the bystanders, "This is one of them!"

Peter then has to match it with a little bit more infuriation. We read in Mark 14:70a.

But again he denied it. . . .

Peter denies it. The tense is imperfect, meaning that he continuously denies it, over and over and over again.

3. Now this courtyard scene with Peter's denials are taking place over a two hour period. So perhaps, near the end of the two hours, as Jesus is being tried and being slapped and buffeted about, the bystanders finally recognize Peter. To them, he makes his third denial, with a curse.

The bystanders speak to Peter, in Mark 14:70b.

. . . And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean too."

Peter responds, in Mark 14:71,

But he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this man you are talking about!"

It is amazing that Peter, just a couple of hours before, rushed six hundred soldiers with a sword. Now, he is denying Christ in front of a few.

When Peter curses, the Greek word used is a compound word, "katanathematizo". In the middle of that is the word "anathema," which means to invoke the judgment of God on your head, if you are lying. You are saying, literally translated, "If I am not telling the truth, may God damn me to hell."

Peter says to this crowd, "If I'm lying, may God strike me dead."

I would imagine that he kind of ducked after saying this. Peter called an anathema down on his head, hoping that that would convince them. I'm not sure whether it did or not, but I do know, according to Mark 14:72, the cock crowed again, the second time.

Luke freezes this moment like a picture. In Luke 22:61, we are told that at the moment the cock crowed,

The Lord turned and looked at Peter. . . .

So, the cock crows a second time and Jesus, who is visible, turns and catches the eyes of Peter. I want to freeze this scene and think about it for just a moment.

Jesus knew what was going on out on the courtyard because He is omniscient. He was facing His persecutors and being buffeted about, so we do not know that He had looked at Peter until this moment. Peter denies Him, calls down a curse from God, and happens to look over through the courtyard and see Jesus. Jesus turns to him and their eyes meet. Luke 22:62 then tells us that Peter,

. . . went out and wept bitterly.

"Wept bitterly," means, "to sob heavily".

The difference between Peter and Judas is seen in their repentance. In fact, the true Peter is seen, not in his denial, but in his repentance. You and I, ladies and gentlemen, deny Jesus time and time again. The important thing is that Peter went out and began to weep bitterly in repentance. Judas went out and ended his life.

I remember reading a story that is almost too hard to believe, of a woman who lived in an apartment with her baby daughter. Somehow a fire started in the baby's bedroom. By the time the mother rushed into the bedroom, the crib was on fire and the little baby was lying in a circle of fire. The mother reached through the fire and pulled her baby to safety. In the process, however, her hands and face were permanently scarred and disfigured. She was, in fact, a hideous sight.

The baby girl grew up to become a very beautiful young lady. One day, as a senior in high school, she went on a school trip. Chaperones were needed and her mother volunteered. Prior to this, her mother had not had anything to do with the school.

On the trip, the students were on a houseboat. This young girl and some of her girlfriends were sunning on the boat and her mother happened to walk by. The other girls noticed her as she walked by, and all said, "My stars! What a horrible looking person. Who is she?"

The mother heard her daughter casually reply, "I don't know."

Intensify that many times, when we, who represent Jesus Christ; who follow Him, are asked by the crowd and are given the opportunity to speak, and by our silence, say, "I don't know Him."

Application

Let us apply this to ourselves with a couple of thoughts.

1. This passage demands examination of ourselves.

God did not parade these people in front of us for us to point at them and say, "Uh-huh, Judas, I knew it! And, Peter, you should never have done that."

God did not bring these people before us so that we can get all puffed up and think, "Why, if I had been there, I would never have done that."

God brings these people before our view so that we can examine ourselves by looking at them, and in them, see ourselves.

When do you find it most difficult to claim that you follow Christ? Is it in the high school locker

room? Is it on the college campus? Is it in the philosophy classroom? Is it before that next door neighbor? Is it on the job? When do you deny Him by remaining silent?

2. This passage also commands our worship.

To believers, what a mighty God we serve. We must worship the Lamb of God, who voluntarily, though He was sovereign, died for us. With just the word, "I am," the people fell back.

Think of what Jesus could have done. He could have exonerated Himself; He could have gotten out of all of this.

Yet, for you and for me, Jesus went to the cross. So, in the believer, this should develop a heart of love.

If today, you do not know Christ as your Savior, I want you to see, in this passage, that Jesus was forsaken by everyone. If you believe in Him, you will never be forsaken. Alone, He faced His persecutors; alone, He died; alone, He went through all of this agony, so that you, if you believe in Him, will never be alone. "Hallelujah! What a Savior."

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