



No Man Takes My Life From Me

Series: Matthew: The King and His Kingdom

Matthew 26:47-56

August 18, 2013

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We are still in Gethsemane, the “place of the press,” “the place of crushing.” We experienced, with Jesus, last week, the intense nature of His suffering and anguish as the Father placed the cup of His wrath before Him, the cup that Jesus would willingly drain to the very dregs to provide the offering for sin that the holiness of God demanded, the cup that would require the breaking of His eternal fellowship with the Father for a time to redeem our lives. We considered the extreme nature of His final temptation to depart from the path of the cross, but Jesus, for the joy set before Him of redeeming to Himself a bride, chose to endure the cross, despising the shame. Emboldened by prayer, Jesus rose from His knees in Gethsemane with sovereign authority, and with His face set like a flint toward the cross, He went forward to face what He knew would be His death, to give Himself over for all of our sins.

You may notice that the title of the sermon this morning does not come from the text that we have read. It actually comes from John 10. There Jesus said these words: “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”” (John 10:17–18, ESV) In this text that we are looking at this morning, we see the truth of those words by Jesus come into crystal clear focus. The laying down of His life is beginning in earnest. The cup is being filled. And as we work through these texts that take us through the passion and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, they are all intended to show us the uniqueness, the superiority, the supremacy of Jesus Christ. They are window into a side of His person that we do not often consider – His submission to the Word of God and the sovereign command of every aspect of His death. Jesus is orchestrating everything, every moment to bring Himself to the cross, to ensure His own death by which He will redeem His people. And in His deliberate and purposeful action is a picture of divine glory as revealed in His supreme humility and kingly restraint. And the refrain throughout it all is “Behold your God! Be amazed at your King! Wonder that the wondrous One!” Behold your God as we see the

Betrayal With a Kiss (v. 47-50) Pick it up in verse 47: “While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people.” (Matthew 26:47, ESV) Enter Judas, one of the twelve, the holder of the purse for the band of twelve men known as the disciples. Judas had secretly brokered a deal with the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council of priests and elders who despised Jesus, His popularity, and His message, a deal that would net Him thirty pieces of silver for the blood of the eternal Son of God. Though the plan to take Jesus and put Him to death was scheduled to take place after the Feast of Unleavened Bread, we can surmise that after Judas was sent away from the Upper Room during the Lord’s Supper, that he went and found some of the chief priests and elders and told them that the opportunity they were seeking was here, right now. Jesus was going to be in His secret prayer place that night, Gethesemane, and he could take them there.

Matthew records that after praying, while Jesus is still speaking to His disciples telling them that His betrayer was at hand, Judas shows up with the arresting party to take Jesus into custody. The crowd itself was a mixed bag. Weaving all of the gospel accounts together we can deduce that the crowd would have been made up of some of the chief priests and elders themselves, a number of what was known as the temple police, and a band of Roman soldiers, known as a cohort that was usually comprised of about 600 people. Judas had a prearranged with them a signal to identify Christ. In those days, before cameras and photos, it would have been needed. It is likely that many of the men dispatched to arrest Jesus had never seen Him before and some did not know Him well enough to identify Him. “Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; seize him.”” (Matthew 26:48, ESV)

But before he even has the chance to identify Jesus in this way, John, in His gospel, tells us what happened. In chapter 18 and starting in verse 4 we read:4 Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, “Whom do you seek?” 5 They answered him, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus said to them, “I am he.” Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. 6 When Jesus said to them, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground. Jesus steps forward and identifies Himself as the “I AM.” Like struck with lightning, they drop to the ground. These men find themselves before the presence of the King of kings and they are overwhelmed, overawed. There was, at that moment a faint glimpse of the brightness of His glory and just as Isaiah, when He saw Christ in all of His glory, these men are completely undone. It is as if Jesus drew back the curtain of His flesh for just a moment and they were

forced to behold the transcendent glory and majesty of God in the flesh. The arresting army is thrown back and falls to the ground, a consequence of the display of divine power. The message is clear. They first must acknowledge His power and His Kingship and Glory before Christ allows them to arrest Him. He is in utter control of the situation. If Christ wanted to end this all, He could have at this moment. But instead He stays true to the sovereign purpose of the Godhead and these men continue on their errand only by Christ's consent. In fact, listen to this, he has to bring them back to their senses so they can arrest Him properly by asking the question a second time in verse 7. 7 So he asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." 8 Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go." 9 This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one."

Why does Jesus do this? I think there are two main reasons. First, Jesus does this to demonstrate that He alone is utterly in charge of what is taking place. Though this crowd may think that they are exerting their will and laying hold of Christ by force, the opposite is actually true. They could not lay a hand upon Him except He allow them to do it and He is not making any effort to resist, or hide, or escape. He is allowing this to take place. The second reason that Jesus does this, I think, is to strip Judas of any credit in identifying Him. He beats him to the punch.

Yet even after this open display of His glory, this open confession that He is the One they are seeking, Judas still goes through with the formality of kissing Jesus in order to identify Christ. "And he came up to Jesus at once and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" And he kissed him." (Matthew 26:49, ESV) Judas went up to Jesus and he kissed Him. Literally, he kissed Him profusely. Over and over again, showering Him with kisses, putting on a false show of affection or is it? Why go through with this? Jesus had already clearly identified Himself. And why use a kiss, when a pointing of a finger would do? Judas obviously does not love Him. You need to understand the nature of Jewish culture to grasp just how vile Judas' betrayal of Jesus with a kiss really is.

In Jewish culture, it was not uncommon for a slave to kiss the feet of his master, or for an ordinary servant to kiss the hand. To kiss the hem of someone's garment was considered a sign of reverence and devotion. But an embrace and a kiss upon the cheek was a sign of intimacy and love, reserved only for those with whom you had a dear and cherished relationship. Between a rabbi and a pupil it was acceptable but only if the teacher offered it first. To initiate

such a greeting was to declare that you were above or, at least, on the same level with the one you were embracing and kissing. For Judas to kiss Jesus like this was not only a hypocritical display of love that he did not have but it was an open and final repudiation of Jesus' authority and His place as the Messiah of Israel. Judas is openly declaring that he believes Jesus to be a fake, a phony, a false messiah, no greater than he is. Judas was disappointed with Jesus when He did not prove to be the kind of Messiah that he desired Him to be. Despite His many displays of power, Jesus did not overthrow the Romans, did not give to Judas a place of power or prestige. Though Jesus had already identified Himself to the arresting party, Judas cannot miss the opportunity to publically repudiate Christ's authority. Judas' sign was not just a final public rejection of his relationship with Jesus; it was a deliberate insult. Judas profaned Christ's offer of friendship and profaned His person as Messiah. Remaining utterly composed, "Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came to do." (Matthew 26:50a, ESV)

Jesus turns the tables on Judas and identifies him and the public hypocrisy of his wicked heart. He calls him "friend" but the word that he uses is not the word that one uses for a close and intimate friend, rather it is a word that means: fellow, comrade or companion or acquaintance. He identifies Judas as totally outside of the covenant of God, outside of His love for His sheep. He is just another man. In essence Christ says: "You think you know me? You confess fellowship with Me? I know, and you know, what you have come for. Do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss? Will you take the sacred symbol of love and affection, of worship and are you so perverse to use it in order to insult Me, to repudiate me as Messiah, to betray Me into the hands of My enemies?" Jesus tears away Judas' mask of hypocrisy and treachery and his delusions of grandeur and self-importance. Jesus identifies Judas for who and what he is. He looks at him and says, "Do what you came to do." Those are the last words that Judas ever heard from Christ. MacArthur says "It was Jesus' farewell statement to the son of perdition." It was Judas' "Depart from me, I never knew you" moment.

What do we take from this? The truth is that Judas really only knew Jesus after the flesh. In other words, Judas Iscariot knew exactly what Jesus looked like, His height, His weight, the color of His hair, and the sound of His voice. He actually talked with Jesus, face to face, countless times. He knew Jesus' favorite foods, the places that He liked to go most often, His sense of humor, and all sorts of other personal traits because he was one of the very few who spent three whole years actually working and traveling with Jesus. Judas witnessed Jesus' miracles, had heard Him teach with authority and power and yet he never really understood Jesus' identity. Judas was blind to the glory and power of Christ, because his vision was so full of himself. Judas had followed Jesus for three years; none of it was from the heart. Judas was

not changed. The inward reality of God's grace whereby personally one knows himself to be desperate sinner before God and calls upon God in a broken heart for His mercy and grace - to this, Judas was a stranger.

We have said this before, but it bears repeating. Judas is the eternal prototype of the fake believer, of the sham Christian. He was only in it for his own glory. He desired only to use Jesus for his own sinful ends and when Christ did not deliver on what Judas wanted, he turned on Him. His entire life with Christ was marked with hypocrisy and deceit. He was only interested in serving his own sinful ends and never once was concerned with the glory, honor, majesty and worth of Jesus Christ. He treated the offer of salvation with contempt, refused to humble himself and become like a little child, and would not take up the cross and follow Him. He considered this life to be of more worth than his own soul, his wretched sin more to be loved than Christ, his reputation more to be desired than eternal life. He traded Christ for money and condemned himself to eternal hell, all the while, even up to this moment of publically renouncing Him in the garden, pretending to be a loyal disciple of Christ and he is not alone in the professing church. His spiritual descendants are many.

After Judas was exposed and rebuked by Christ, we read of the crowd: Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him." (Matthew 26:50, ESV) Behold your God and see Him in the midst of Peter's

Misguided Attempt at Rescue (v. 51-54) Look at verse 51: "And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear." (Matthew 26:51, ESV) John tells us that it was Peter who swung the sword, trying to rescue and deliver Jesus against impossible odds. Of course it would be Peter. Earlier this night he said that he would die with Jesus if need be, and it seems that he is willing to make that promise good. In an impetuous display of foolish bravery, he starts swinging a sword and cuts off the ear of the servant of the high priest, which incidentally, Jesus would heal. I'm pretty sure that is not where he was aiming, but Peter was a fisherman, not a swordsman. But Jesus will have none of it.

"Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Matthew 26:52, ESV) Jesus rebukes Peter and tells him to put his sword

away. But what does he mean by this saying: For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. This is not a blanket call for pacifism. It is not a maxim for all men at all times. No, Jesus is making a clear point at this particular moment concerning the Kingdom and it is this: The kingdom of God will never be ushered in by brute strength and the wielding of a sword. Those are carnal weapons and carnal weapons cannot win a spiritual war. It is going to take a cross, not a sword. And the Christian faith, the kingdom of God will not be established by winning carnal battles but by winning the heart and souls of men through the preaching of the gospel and the saving work of Christ upon the cross. You don't win converts by winning arguments and swinging swords.

Christianity is not that demonic religion Islam. That sham religion of peace. It is not the false kingdom of the pope and Catholicism, that sham religion of conquest and wealth. The sword is not to be used for the propagation and enforcement of the gospel. Men's souls are not changed by compulsion, by imprisonment, by brutality, by legislation, by punishment or by war. The Kingdom of God does not advance by the use of fleshy weapon or by fleshy strategy. Men's hearts are won by the spiritual warfare of preaching the gospel in the power of the Spirit and by the excellent lives of God's people. The battle is spiritual. Jesus tells him to put the sword away. Peter is acting rashly, foolishly, and ignorantly. This foolish lamb, trying to deliver the Lion of Judah, only shows how ignorant he remains of the significance of what is to take place in a few, short hours.

"Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53, ESV) With this rebuke, Jesus is reminding Peter of what he should have already known, that Jesus is not helpless and he does not need Peter's sword to deliver him from this crowd armed with clubs and swords. He is fully in control of all that is taking place, calmly accomplishing the will of God. Did Peter not just see what Christ had done when he called Himself the I Am and the crowd had fallen back upon the ground? He is all-powerful and even more, if he needed help to be delivered from this situation, which He didn't, He could have called upon His Father and instantly He would dispatch to His more than twelve legions of angels – that's more than 72,000. No one could stand a chance against that. But that is not Jesus' desire. He does not wish to be rescued. He is willing to be put to death on the cross.

Mark that down. Write it in huge, bold, underlined letters over this gospel – Jesus is willing! He is willing to save sinners. He has chosen to go to the cross. He is going to the cross not because

He is powerless to stop it, not because God lacks the power to deliver Him, not because He cannot call upon the omnipotent power of heaven, but because He wills to go to the cross and die! He is a willing Savior! A willing Forgiver of the repentant! A willing Redeemer of the lost! A willing Deliverer of the oppressed! A willing Propitiation and Atoning Sacrifice for the ungodly! He is willing to suffer what He will suffer in order to save everyone who calls upon His name and any theology that presents Christ in any other way is heresy! His heart was set upon accomplishing this great work.

In Peter's attempt to rescue Christ, he was actually lowering and diminishing glory of Christ's might and His love. We can obey Him, trust Him, love Him, worship Him, serve Him, praise Him, hear Him, submit to Him as Lord, but save or help Him – NO, NO, NO!

And then Jesus says it all – I could rescue Myself, Peter "But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" (Matthew 26:54, ESV) How could I do that and uphold the Scriptures? How could I do that and honor my Father? But even more, from our perspective – Who else could drink the cup? Who else could satisfy God's wrath in our place? How would you or I be saved? Christ must do it; no one else ever could. He is willing to be gracious! You must be willing to receive all that He has done!

What incredible restraint by our Savior. I am not sure that there is any greater display of His glory and His love in all the gospels, next to His cross and His resurrection, than Christ having all power in His hands to rescue Himself and to restrain Himself from using it. This is true power and love. To have the power to rescue Himself in the moment but instead to restrain Himself from using it and becoming the willing sacrifice by which His people, whom he loves even unto death, would be saved forever.

JC Ryle says: We see in those words the secret of His voluntary submission to His foes. He came on purpose to fulfill the types and promises of Old Testament Scriptures, and by fulfilling them to provide salvation for the world. He came intentionally to be the true Lamb of God, the Passover Lamb. He came to be the Scapegoat on whom the iniquities of the people were to be laid. His heart was set on accomplishing this great work. It could not be done without the "hiding of his power" for a time. To do it he became a willing sufferer. He was taken, tried, condemned, and crucified entirely of His own free will. Let us observe this. There is much

encouragement in it. The willing sufferer will surely be a willing Savior. The almighty Son of God, who allowed men to bind Him and lead Him away captive, when He might have prevented them with a word, must surely be full of readiness to save the souls that flee to Him.

Behold your God! And behold Him once more as He rebukes the cowardly crowd there to arrest Him.

Rebuke of the Cowardly Crowd (v. 55-56) Look at it in verse 55: “At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me.” (Matthew 26:55, ESV) Imagine the farce that this is. The crowd comes out with swords and clubs to lay hold of the Son of God. Swords and clubs? Against the omnipotent One, against the Lord of Hosts? They are fools and they are cowards and Christ pricks their conscience and lays them bare.

Why did they come at night? He sat in the daylight, teaching the Word of God in the temple. They could have arrested him at any time but they did not because they feared the people, they feared the crowds when the One they should have feared was God in the flesh. Why did they come with swords and clubs – Jesus was no insurrectionist, no revolutionary, no rabble-rouser. He has no defect in His character, no sin of which they can condemn Him. They have nothing with which to charge Him. He is guilty, if we can even say that, only of speaking the truth, of being Truth Incarnate, of rejecting their false religion and proclaiming the way of eternal life. Why are they there? Why will He allow them to arrest Him and take Him? He tells them.

“But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.” (Matthew 26:56a, ESV) He is making a clear declaration to these men. Jesus is saying, “All of you are doing just what the Scripture foretold because My Father decreed it before the foundation of the world. He declared it through the prophets who wrote it down in the Holy Scriptures and I came into the world in order to fulfill the Law and the prophets. You are instruments in the eternal plan of God. You are not taking me by force. I am giving Myself to be arrested in accordance with the will of God which I freely embrace.” Christ embraced the sovereign Scriptures of God because it brings God glory, it brings life to His people and He loves the people of God and God had promised to give to Him the reward of His sufferings. Even as He is being arrested, He is pointing to the Scriptures that testify that HE is the Son of Man come into

the world to save His people from their sins. Jesus delighted in the sovereignty of God, and He proclaims it even to that multitude of captors.

And in accordance with the Scriptures: “Then all the disciples left him and fled.” (Matthew 26:56b, ESV) Just as He had said, the disciples, these men of yet little faith, all of them, left Christ alone. Even as Jesus is being led away, the disciples escape the scene. Jesus had to face and bear the cross, and drink the cup alone. He is the only mediator between God and man; there is no other. He is set apart as the only true Savior.

What Shall We Say to This?

Through all of these events, at every moment of this encounter, we see this magnificent display of His sheer character and glory and that should draw us relentlessly to our Savior. The crowd arrested Jesus, Judas betrayed Him, His disciples fled but amidst all of this, the unwavering majesty and triumph of the Savior continued to reveal themselves as God’s Word was thoroughly fulfilled. In His deliberate and willing surrender is a picture of divine glory revealed in His supreme humility, kingly restraint and His glad submission to the Father’s will. His character, His resolution and His majesty boldly manifested and the refrain throughout it all is “Behold your God! Be amazed at your King! Wonder that the wondrous One!”

So I ask, do you wonder at Him? Do you glory in Him? Does this display of kingly humility cause you to pour contempt on all your pride? Does this display of glorious love and faithfulness stir your soul to greater devotion and faithfulness to Him who was faithful to you in your faithlessness? Does He command you soul, your life, and your all? That is the only reasonable response.

And to you who know Christ but only like Judas, after the flesh, as another figure in history, you must know that He is God!! He is willing to save you, even you, and the only thing that is keeping you from this willing Savior is your own unwillingness to forsake your sin and trust Him as Savior and Lord.

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