

Arrested

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[0 : 00] I'd like you all to come with me this morning, including those out in the cry-run, and come with me at least in your minds back to about 30 AD, in the early part of the first centuries.

And on our time machine, I want us all to imagine that we're part of a large group, a large group of Galilean pilgrims. We're from northern Palestine, and we've travelled all the way south to Jerusalem, and we've come for the feast of the Passover.

And it's the evening of the first day of unleavened bread. And we've arrived, and we're just feeling a little bit restless. It's a spring night, it's a bit cold, and there's a full Passover moon.

And so us, us pilgrims from Galilee, decide to go for a walk, to get out of Jerusalem, to get away from those crowds. I mean, us Galileans, we always find Jerusalem to be just such an urban place.

So come with me on this trip. We leave the city, we cross the Kidron Valley, and we go up the slopes of the Mount of Olives. And after a while, at least, we walk, we need a rest.

[1 : 16] And we settle down, we sit down in an area rooted. In some ways, it's a bit like a garden, but it's full of olive trees. And that's when we, us Galilean pilgrims, become witnesses to an extraordinary scene.

You see, we see this group of men, about 12 in total, and then 4 break off from that big group.

And as we sort of, from our posse, as we look at this group, we realize that we actually know them very well. You see, we know them well because we've seen them out and about in Galilee.

There's Jesus the teacher, the miracle worker. And then, of course, the three fishermen, Peter, James and John. And as we're watching, we see Jesus lying prostrate on the ground.

He looks like he's praying. And even in this moonlight, we can see that on his face, his face is just lined with deep anguish.

[2 : 26] And some, of course, throughout Galilee and other regions, say that Jesus is the Christ, that he's the long-awaited Messiah. Well, I'm still trying to work that out.

But looking at him there praying, I wonder what he's praying about. I mean, he's just so deeply distressed. And that's the third time that Jesus has got up and come back to Peter and James and John.

And each time he's come back, he's found them asleep. And now this is his third trip back. Shh! Let's listen and see if we can pick up what he's saying to them.

Are you still sleeping and taking the rest? Enough! The hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Get up! Let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand. I mean, Jesus just always speaks with such authority, doesn't he? I mean, we remember that.

[3 : 31] We've heard him speak with the authority in the synagogues in our own area, in the region of Galilee. There's just something so special, so unique about him.

But what on earth is happening? I mean, what's happening? Can you hear the noise? We'd better just duck your heads a little bit. What on earth are these hundreds of Roman soldiers and this posse of temple guards doing here?

I mean, they're armed with swords and clubs as if they're going into some huge battle. I tell you, I don't know about you, I have never seen the Romans and the Jews cooperate like this, ever.

Let's just try and be quiet and stay still and watch what's going to happen. Because, can you see that man who's striding out in front of the soldiers and the guards?

He's coming right up to Jesus. Let's listen and see if we can pick up what he says. Rabbi. And now this man, he's kissing Jesus as if he was Jesus' close friend.

[4 : 48] I mean, that's putrid. That's disgusting. That's outrageous. I mean, the man is now stepping back and allowing the soldiers and the guards to rush in and arrest Jesus.

Arrest him! I mean, has the world gone completely mad? I mean, what on earth is happening? This is outrageous.

And the religious authorities, they're riding on the act. I mean, we're from Galilee. I mean, we've seen this Jesus out and about.

We've listened to him. He is no criminal. He's no insurrectionist. But the man is clearly a prophet. I mean, we're the ones who've actually heard him with our own ears proclaiming, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come near.

Repent and believe in the good news. And you know, I mean, we're from this region. The people up there are still talking about that amazing healing of the paralytic man who was lowered down through the roof in that house in Capernaum.

[6 : 02] We were there. We were part of that huge crowd. And do you remember the words that Jesus spoke that day? Well, remember back to that time.

I mean, the words were such that, well, it sort of made you wonder. In fact, was this indeed God in human flesh?

I remember the words that Jesus said so clearly in that crowded room. He said, which is easier to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven, or to say, stand up and take your mat and walk.

But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, I say to you, stand up and take your mat and go to your home.

Do you remember those words? That poor, crippled man, he stood up, he immediately took his mat. He left that house jammed, packed with people.

[7 : 04] And I remember as we stood there, we were just amazed. Do you remember that? And someone called out, praise God, we've never seen anything like this.

So, this is outrageous. This is a scandal. I mean, what unbelievable injustice that Jesus is being arrested.

And now look what's happening. I mean, someone has grabbed the sword and cut off the ear. Cut off the ear of that guy over there. I'm sure we've seen him around the temple.

I think, in fact, he might even be the slave of the high priest. It's a bit hard to see him right, but I think the one who did it was Peter.

I mean, we know how impetuous Peter is. It's known throughout Galilee. I mean, Peter always shooting from the hip. Well, he's really done it now, slicing the ear off.

[7 : 59] I mean, everybody in the Galilean fishing business knows Peter, acting before he thinks. Well, Jesus looks sure pretty cross with what Peter's done.

But, I mean, try and get a positive look at this. Jesus is actually putting the ear back on and healing the man.

I mean, when we go back, especially when we go back up home to Galilee, I mean, people are not even going to believe this when we tell them. It's just Jesus is, I don't know how to describe it.

I mean, he's just done so many great miracles so many times. And he just seems to literally ease with compassion and love.

And he's got such extraordinary miracle power. I don't understand how that can be. I mean, we've talked about this in the group. How could he have such power?

[9 : 03] I mean, maybe, maybe, maybe just perhaps this is indeed God in human flesh. And now Jesus is speaking to this mob of soldiers and guards.

Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching. And you did not arrest me.

But let the scriptures be fulfilled. I mean, exactly. That's the point, isn't it? Jesus has been in the temple. We've been there. We've seen him teaching.

But I don't know what Jesus meant by that comment. But let the scriptures be fulfilled. Let's, you know, when we get back up to Galilee, those scribes who seem to be so knowledgeable, let's ask them if they understand what he means by that.

But even as Jesus is speaking, look what's happening. I mean, all of his followers, all of his followers are running away. I mean, why on earth haven't they stayed to try and support him?

[10 : 09] Why would they do that? And also, look, the other one, that young man who we saw before who was following Jesus. I mean, they're grabbing him now.

He slipped out. But he's left his garment and he's actually run off without any clothes on. Well, friends, we've arrived back in Doncaster in April 2006.

The arrest of Jesus. But was this really an arrest? I mean, it certainly wasn't an arrest in an accepted sense.

If you've got your Bibles there, and I can keep them open at Mark 14, page 827. Look with me at verse 42. You see, Jesus turned himself in.

There was no running away. There was no attempt to escape. The scene that we've just been talking about was that through prayer, Jesus strengthened himself to drink the cup, to go to the cross.

[11:24] Why was he going to the cross? In order to give his life as a ransom. To give his life as a ransom for people like me. Like each one who's actually gathered here at Holy Trinity Doncaster this morning.

And if you look over the page on verse 49, Mark records Jesus' words. Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me, but let the scriptures be fulfilled.

You see, what was happening to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane was prophesied in the Old Testament.

It was prophesied and it was now being realized. When Jesus had left Jerusalem after the Last Supper and gone with the eleven disciples to the Mount of Olives, He quoted from Zechariah 13. Zechariah is an Old Testament prophet. You'll find it just towards the end of the Old Testament scriptures. And in verse 27, we read that. Jesus says to the disciples, You will all become deserters, for it is written.

[12:38] And now he quotes the Old Testament scripture. Zechariah 13 verse 7. I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.

You see, Jesus indeed will be struck. Jesus will be executed on a Roman cross.

But in so doing, he will be fulfilling the promises and the prophecies of a slain Messiah, who brings here to his people and deliverance.

And that's just as another Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, about half the way through the Old Testament scriptures, the prophet Isaiah records that in chapter 53 of Isaiah.

So you see, this scene in the Garden of Gethsemane is fulfilling prophecy. But the same is working with agendas.

[13:39] I wonder if you noticed some of those as we went through. Let's just highlight a couple. Let's first of all think of Judas. Judas expected Jesus to be a political hero.

His agenda was selfish ambition. But I think it is impossible to know Judas' exact motive.

Many have suggested perhaps it was money. But 30 pieces of silver wasn't something that Judas was going to be able to go and retire on. Perhaps his motive was that he was disappointed with Jesus.

That he was trying to force Jesus' hand. That is, Judas wanted Jesus to bring in a political kingdom by force. Perhaps that was his motive.

But whatever Judas' motive was, he approached Jesus with the kiss of death. And this was, in fact, an affectionate kiss.

[14:39] What betrayal, what blasphemy of spirit. Judas could not distinguish between the kingdom of God and his cultural aspirations.

And I wonder if, like me, sometimes when you've thought of the encounter between Judas and Jesus, that you've said to yourself, I mean, how on earth could Judas do this?

How on earth? How on earth could Judas do this?

There was certainly an agenda for Judas. What about the Jewish authorities? Well, they considered Jesus to be a blasphemous fraud. What was their agenda?

I think that's pretty clear. They wanted to keep everything just as it was. They wanted to keep their positions of power. You see, the religious authorities were leading the worship in the temple.

[16:03] But friends, and for those who've been going through Mark's gospel with us, you'll know that what they were doing was going through the motions of worship. They were not loving God with their whole heart, soul, mind, and strength.

And Jesus was clearly a threat. He was a threat to the Jewish authorities, to those Jewish authorities who sort of had cozy, privileged positions.

They seemed to be powerful, and there was certainly financial reward for them. And Jesus effectively undermined the authority of those people, of those leaders with the people.

So what was the response of the authorities? Well, they sent three groups of people from the Sanhedrin. The chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. And why would they send them? Why did they send them? To have Jesus killed. You see, that's why they needed to take Jesus to the Romans. So, we've got an agenda for Judas.

[17:08] We've got an agenda for the Jewish authorities. What about the Romans? Well, they completely misunderstood Jesus. They expected a rebel zealot. The Romans, of course, what were they interested in?

They wanted to keep power. It was so important for the Roman Empire to keep order. To keep things under control. To keep peace throughout this empire that spread throughout the known world.

They knew the popularity of Jesus. And thinking of the potentially volatile situation, they brought many soldiers armed with weapons.

So Roman authorities, Jewish authorities, Judas himself. We already see a number of agendas.

What about the disciples? I mean, surely the disciples would not misunderstand their master.

But the agenda for the disciples was safety. And their agenda of safety was just so contrary to what they had. It was like they'd just said it.

[18:13] Really like in just a few minutes before. You see, if you look back at verse 31, Peter says this. And you can really feel it, can't you?

Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you. And then we read that all of them, that is all of the disciples, said the same. But they all deserted.

Just as Jesus had prophesied. See, their resolve to follow Jesus was found wanting. Why did they flee? Fear.

And of course, if you were here with us last week, that response of the disciples would not surprise us. Because the disciples in the garden were not just physically asleep, they were spiritually asleep.

They were depending not on God for their strength. And so all this bravado, we won't leave you.

What did it turn out to be? Simply a puff of air.

[19:19] But what about that sort of unusual scene at the end of the passage, the fleeing of the young man? What do we make of that? Well, I can tell you if you read commentaries on Mark's Gospel, the commentators make lots about this verse.

Pages of it. Lots of speculation. Who was the young man? But friends, that's what it is. It's speculation. We're not told who the young man was.

But the young man stands for each one of us who has an attitude which is captured in that well-known line.

Every man for himself. Every woman for himself. Save yourself if you can. So when we think about the disciples, are there lessons for us in that?

Well, I think it's fair to say that as Christians, we can feel very comfortable in chatting about Jesus on a Sunday morning, morning tea, home group through the week when we catch up with other Christian brothers and sisters.

[20:27] But I wonder whether we have that same comfort when we are, if you like, to use the phrase, out in the world. We could be at work, college, at the sports club, at a senior citizens club.

You see, being a follower of Jesus, being a Christian, is simply being a follower of Jesus. It's him always being our Saviour and our Lord.

All of the time. And that's all of the time, even when it gets hot in the kitchen. All the disciples, the Jewish and Roman authorities, Judas, you already see so many different agendas.

So what about God's agenda? Well, as we've gone through Mark's Gospel, we see time and time again, sinful, fallen people, step by step, setting the stage for Jesus to be condemned to death.

And they are accountable for their actions. We could simply summarise that as human responsibility. Of course, on the surface, it does look like that the events surrounding Jesus are just spiralling out of control, doesn't it?

[21:46] I mean, religious leaders have come together, they've united against him. One of the disciples has actually betrayed him, and the other 11 have actually run off and deserted him. So, it's reasonable to ask, is God still in control?

The answer is definitely yes. You see, Jesus' mission was actually to come and save people from their sins, by himself becoming the perfect sacrifice for sin.

So, when all of the little powers of the cosmos conspired and used, if you like, human cohorts, conspired to kill Jesus, they did not throw God out of the universe. Rather, what God was, he used this extraordinary evil to bring about the most wonderful situation. So, God himself provided the once for all sacrifice for sin, for sinful people like me, for sinful people indeed like each person gathered here this morning.

And then we then finally, that brings us to the question of our own agenda. So friends, what's our agenda when we meet Jesus, when we're confronted by Jesus?

[23 : 18] Now, I appreciate we're not speaking this morning of being physically confronted by Jesus. But friends, for each one who's here this morning, hearing the scriptures read and spoken to, for each one who's here this morning, we are actually meeting Jesus and being confronted by him.

We're being confronted by him by the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, speaking to each one who's gathered here this morning.

So, as we are confronted by Jesus, the God-man, what's our agenda? I can't speak, I can't look into your hearts and know exactly what it is.

But I know many of the typical agendas that people have when they do meet and are confronted by Jesus. We might, in a nice sort of Western, middle-class way, politely nod at him and hope that he doesn't sort of notice as we sort of sidestep around him, thinking to ourselves, listen, we're just going to run our own lives, thank you very much, or that perhaps we might actually rise up with anger.

I mean, how dare we enter our world and call on us to repentance and faith. Perhaps we follow for a little while and then run away from him.

[24 : 55] Run away from him because life becomes too challenging, becomes too difficult. Or, perhaps we simply fall at his feet and call him Saviour and Lord.

We follow him, not for a little while, we follow him daily, regardless of the pressures of life. So, friends, God's plans are being fulfilled.

He is redeeming the world. One sinner after another sinner, after another sinner, being saved by God's grace, just as we sang.

He's saving people and he is judging continuously those who continuously reject salvation offered in his only son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

so, this morning, let me say as I close, if you've never turned to the Lord Jesus, if you've never embraced him as your creator, and as the one who gave his life for your sins, then, Jesus' call is exactly the same today as it was 2,000 years ago throughout that land of Palestine.

[26 : 19] and it's a call of repent and believe in the good news. Father, we thank you that in your just amazing love you sent the Lord Jesus Christ into our world, into our fallen world, into our very sinful world, into our very violent world, into our very rebellious world.

And Lord Jesus, we thank you that in taking on humanity you were perfectly obedient to the Father's will, and went to the cross to die as a ransom, to pay the price for our sins.

So Lord, I pray this morning that if there is any here this morning who have not braced the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and Lord, that this morning this moment that they would actually turn and embrace the Saviour, repent of their sins, put their simple faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ who died for them.

And Lord, for the many here who are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, I pray that we would, as we are strengthened by the Spirit, continue to keep our focus on the Lord Jesus, that we would be steadfast disciples, that we would consistently fire him.

And Lord, through your strength, through your grace, empower us to be witnesses of your saving gospel of the wonderful good news in the world in which we live.

[28 : 09] We ask this for Christ's sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Hey,■■■■■■■ durch.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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