

Betrayed with a Kiss

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[0 : 0 0] seated and you may like to have open the Bibles at page 809. This is part of our sermon series leading up to Easter on the last chapters of Matthew dealing with the last days and the last night of Jesus' life and let's pray. Heavenly Father speak to us from your word, write it on our hearts that we may believe it, that we may love the Lord Jesus Christ with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and we ask this in his name, Amen. In one sense this is a bit too anticlimactic, Hollywood would change it I'm sure, there's not enough tension of the chase, that is Jesus is about to be arrested, he's being betrayed by Judas, we know that that's going to happen and we would expect a chase, you know a decent car chase or helicopter chase or you know Bond has influenced us so much these days, that Jesus would be on the run and he'd be trying to find a place that's safe and hiding and they'd be looking for him and it would be building up over a long period of tension. The trouble is it's not like that. Jesus goes to the very place that Judas would expect him to go, a place that he's been many times before, the Garden of Gethsemane.

He doesn't seek to hide, he doesn't try to flee, he doesn't even resist the arrest when they come. It's all very plain in a way, it's not told with undue flourishes of tension, it's a simple straightforward narrative of what happened. Judas the betrayer comes to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. We're told and reminded Judas was one of the twelve. It adds in a sense an ironic intimacy. Jesus is being betrayed by one of his very own, the inner group of twelve disciples.

He's the one who's gone for that money and he's the one who's leading others to arrest Jesus. Jesus makes no effort to hide or flee or escape. Judas comes to him, we're told, with a large crowd who have swords and clubs and they come from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

Judas in betraying Jesus is doing exactly as Jesus had earlier that night predicted at the Last Supper which we saw two weeks ago as he announced that one of you will betray me.

Judas it is. It looks a little bit like an overkill by way of an arrest. Jesus has never been armed, he's not resisted arrest and here they come a large crowd with swords and clubs.

[2 : 5 9] We're told it's comprising people from the chief priests and the elders, that is the clergy and the lay people from the Jewish leadership. But as well as that we're told in other gospels that it included Roman soldiers, indeed a whole cohort of Roman soldiers.

So a huge number of people by contrast to just Jesus and his eleven remaining disciples, although one of them, as we see in a minute, also had a sword. They're strange bedfellows, the Jewish leaders and the Romans.

They're normally at each other's necks. The Jews resented the Roman supervision of their territory. They'd been ruling over that area for nearly a hundred years at this time.

The Roman leadership under Pilate hated the Jews and did nasty things to them. The Jewish leaders wanted the freedom to be a Jewish nation.

And yet enemies coming together because of a common enemy. We see it in politics these days. Sometimes you see strange countries in alignment because of a common enemy.

[4 : 11] It's probably part of the catastrophe of Vietnam in a way, about who America thought its allies should be. That is, my enemy's enemy should be my friend. But not always is it the case.

But here you get enemies joining together, which shows the perversity of their action, the desperation of their evil as they seek Jesus to be put to death.

We might think that they would recognise Jesus. Why should Judas need to point him out and kiss him? But of course we live in a multimedia visual age.

We know what people look like because we see them on the television screen. Most of them we've never seen in the flesh. But we know what leaders all around the world in obscure places of the world look like.

Many of them we'd recognise if we did see them. But of course in that age, even though Jesus had great fame and crowds flocked to him and came with him into Jerusalem a few days earlier than this, many of these people may not have actually seen him.

[5 : 16] Yes, he taught in the temple. But maybe without photos and newspapers and TVs, and of course in the middle of the night when it's dark, they needed clear identification.

Make sure they don't get the wrong person. So Judas, it seems, has given them the instruction. He said, The one I will kiss is the man.

Arrest him. It's as though Judas is actually controlling this and giving the instructions. The one I kiss is the man. Several years ago, the first time in fact I went to the Middle East and I'm sure Andrew's experienced this where he is as well, I was in Amman in Jordan.

And a chap at the hotel, I'd asked about going to get something to eat and he said, Oh, I'm going down, follow me, come with me. And we jumped in a taxi which cost about three cents in those days.

And as we got in this sort of minivan taxi, he climbed over a couple of seats and kissed the driver. And I suddenly thought, Uh-oh, what have I got myself into? It's just Middle East friendliness.

[6 : 26] The men will kiss on both cheeks in effect. And that's what Judas is doing here. It's an element of formality about it. He could well have greeted Jesus without a kiss.

But the sign of friendship of a kiss, in a sense, adds poignancy and a degree of tragedy to this.

That one who was a friend of Jesus, an intimate of Jesus, one of his inner circle, one who'd had a meal with him that very last supper and dipped his bread in the same things that Jesus had eaten, is the one who's betraying him.

He addresses him as rabbi. We saw that two weeks ago in that last supper, how the disciples call him Lord, apart from Jesus who calls him rabbi.

Judas, I mean, who calls him rabbi. Judas here is an element of respect, but an element of distance as well, by contrast to the other disciples.

[7 : 29] Now, Jesus is not fooled by this. He knows exactly what Judas is going to do. He predicted it a few hours before at that meal, back in verse 21.

Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me. He knows exactly who it is. And so his response to Judas is this. Friend, do what you are here to do.

It's not a question, what are you doing? He knows what he's doing. Do it, is what he says. He calls him friend. We should be careful about that word.

It doesn't mean the typical word friend as in best friend. This is my close friend. Different word would be used. This word actually only occurs three times in the New Testament, all in Matthew.

And they all have a sense of, not closeness of friendship, but on the other hand, not enmity either. There's an element actually of rebuke each time the word occurs.

[8 : 29] Back in Matthew 20, Jesus uses it in a parable. The parable of the laborers in the vineyard, the person complains because people who start work later in the day get paid the same as he. And the owner of the vineyard says, friend, I am doing you no wrong.

Did you not agree with me the usual daily wage? Now, they're not close friends, but it's a sort of, you know, mate or, you know, that sort of idea in a way.

We're not enemies, but there's an element of rebuke in what he's told in that parable. Similarly, in a different parable of the wedding banquet, the person gets into the wedding feast.

He's not wearing the robes for the wedding and he's addressed and said, friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe? Again, that element of rebuke, which I think is underlying Jesus' words as well.

We shouldn't overstate the friendship in that word that Jesus uses. It's a sort of loose term and an element of a bit of a put down, a bit of distance, a bit of rebuke as Jesus addresses Judas in that way in these words.

[9 : 39] Jesus knows what he's going to do. He doesn't evade it, flee from it or hide from it. He doesn't resist it. It's a voluntary acceptance.

He knows the cup that he has to drink, as we've seen last week in particular. What follows is a dramatic act of loyalty by one of the disciples.

Judas pulls out his sword, cuts off the slave's ear of the chief priest's slave. Verse 51. In John's Gospel, we read that this is Peter doing this.

In Luke's Gospel, we're told that Jesus heals the ear and also in John's Gospel, we find that the slave's name is Malchus. But Matthew doesn't tell us those details. Peter, if that's who it is, presumably, as we're told elsewhere, is actually trying to prevent the act of salvation on the cross.

Peter doesn't understand that, but it's not the first time either. When Jesus first predicted his death, Peter said, no, no, no, no, no, that won't happen. Jesus said, get behind me, Satan.

[10 : 45] So, this is at least the second time that Peter has maybe unwittingly tried to prevent the cross, the act of salvation.

And Jesus rejects that. He says to Peter, put your sword in its place. Put it away. Those who use the sword will perish by the sword, he says, in verse 52.

Probably he's just quoting a proverb there. He's not necessarily advocating total pacifism in every case. In this case, he's saying, this is not a time for a sword.

He's also saying, I don't need help. I don't need you to defend me and to resist this arrest either. In fact, he goes on to say, in verse 53, do you think that I cannot appeal to my father, and he will at once send more than 12 legions of angels?

A legion was 6,000. This would be 72,000 angels, at least, that God could send. That would fill most of the MCG, except as people philosophize over the centuries, how many angels can you fit on a pinhead?

[11 : 57] So, maybe they wouldn't fill the MCG after all. But Jesus is not even calling on his father to send all the angels. He's not looking for help. He's not looking for defence.

He's submitting to what is happening. He knows that the answer to the prayer that he's just prayed in the garden is that you will drink this cup. It is not possible for this cup to pass from you and for you to bring salvation to the world.

And so Jesus drinks the cup. Your will be done, not mine, as we saw last week. Behind all of that is a clear expression that what is happening is fulfilling the scriptures.

In verse 54, Jesus says, in rejecting any defence by angels or others, how then would the scriptures be fulfilled which say it must happen in this way?

And that's not the first time we've seen a note of that. Back in verse 24, the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, that is, to be betrayed.

[13 : 11] Back in verse 31, Jesus predicted that all his disciples left would be deserters to fulfil and he quotes then, as we saw two weeks ago, from the prophet Zechariah.

Now he's saying similarly, in verse 54, this must happen so the scriptures are fulfilled. fulfilled. And in verse 56, at the end of the paragraph, all this has taken place so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled.

That's not the only time, of course, in Jesus' ministry and indeed in his last days we find that sort of note. But here, four times, in just a few verses, this emphasis on the scriptures being fulfilled.

Jesus, I think, has firstly a general view that the scriptures will be fulfilled. That is, in general, the Old Testament will be fulfilled in his death.

There are some specific verses here and there. He quoted from the prophet Zechariah back in verse 31, that the disciples would desert him. And we saw there two weeks ago how that quote leads on to an element of hope that some at least will be restored.

[14 : 21] But Jesus may have had some other passages in mind here. He doesn't quote them, but his ancestor David famously said in Psalm 41, Even my bosom friend, in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted the heel against me.

And now David's great son has experienced the same betrayal. The one who ate of bread with him has lifted his heel against him to betray him.

But perhaps the most famous Old Testament passage of all that we find fulfillment in Jesus' death is a long passage from Isaiah. Isaiah 53.

Isaiah, for several chapters, has been anticipating a servant who would come, who would lead the people back to God, away from their exile, both in Babylon and away from God.

And we find in that long and famous and a passage that we ought to know well, some of these sorts of words. Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases.

[15 : 37] He was despised and rejected by others, a man of suffering. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet did not open his mouth.

Like a lamb that is led to his slaughter, like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, by a perversion of justice he was taken away. He shall, and in verse 12 of Isaiah 53, he poured out himself to death and was numbered with the transgressors, yet he bore the sin of many.

And here we find elements of that being fulfilled. In Jesus' silence and acceptance of his arrest, he doesn't resist it, he's like a lamb led to his slaughter and he's numbered with the betrayers.

This idea of the scripture being fulfilled is actually quite important and significant. It's a way God has operated all the way through history, not just with the death of Jesus.

That is, as God says this is going to happen in the future, the eventuality of that prediction, that coming true, makes it clear to us that it is God's hand.

[17 : 00] You see, without the prediction, Jesus' death could just simply be a terrible miscarriage of justice full stop. But we know that Jesus' death is much more than that.

We know that God is sovereign over these events because he predetermined them. Jesus' death fulfills Old Testament scriptures. not only what would happen but also telling us why it would happen to take the sins of many as Isaiah 53 says.

So when the events actually do occur as they do with Jesus, we see that God is sovereign bringing about his good purposes. Yes, it is a terrible injustice but that's not the full stop.

Over and above and far more significantly, this is the work of God for the forgiveness of the sins of many. This is God's plan. It's not, as some think, God's last idea, last gasp.

He's tried all sorts of things, they haven't worked. What am I going to do? Let me send Jesus. No. Indeed, God had predetermined his salvation method before the foundation of the world.

[18 : 14] Before he even said let there be light. Before Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit and sin came into the world, God had determined that Jesus would come and die. We might think, well, why would God even make the world when he knows that he needs to send Jesus as a saviour?

The Bible doesn't quite deal with that answer except to lead us down the path of saying what is best for us and most glorious to God is that Jesus should die for the sins of the world, that we be forgiven and that we actually understand the merciful heart of God more fully than ever we would have.

What it's showing is the complete sovereignty of God, predetermined events that Jesus willingly submits to. Your will be done, he said in his prayer in Gethsemane and he knows what God's will is because the scriptures speak it and Jesus is submitting to God's revealed will in the scriptures.

Jesus addresses the crowds with some degree of mockery to end this session. He says in verse 55, Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit?

The word is sometimes translated robber but it's got the element of violence, of rebellion about it as though he's a rebel, a traitor to the nation. Those who were crucified with Jesus, one on each side, they were also described with this word, rebels or bandits.

[19 : 45] Jesus is saying I'm not a rebel, I'm not a bandit. You might number me with the transgressors, that is fulfilling Isaiah 53 but I'm none of those things.

Day by day he says, I sat in the temple teaching. We know he's done that the last few days of this week but each year when he's come to Jerusalem for feasts he's done the similar thing. I've taught, I'm unarmed, you've had every opportunity.

So why do you come in such large number with swords and clubs? You've misunderstood who I am is what he's saying. And again scripture's fulfilled.

All this has taken place so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled. And then when we're told that all the disciples deserted him and fled at the end of verse 56, it fulfills not in a sense the scriptures at that point but Jesus' prediction of a few hours earlier recorded for us in verse 31.

He's left alone. Well, not alone but his 11 friends have deserted him in fear. Even Peter who drew his sword.

[20 : 56] The one disciple who's left has betrayed him with a kiss and he's with a great mob, a large crowd of the Jewish leaders and Roman soldiers armed with swords and clubs, a hostile environment.

And to all intents and purposes he is alone, despised, rejected, counted among the transgressors. Jesus' journey to the cross teaches us there is no other way for salvation.

he submits to God's will. If it is possible take this cup but it's not and strengthened through his prayer in the garden Jesus does not resist or flee.

He accepts he's arrested and in a few hours time will be crucified. It's important to grasp that point though because we often hear sadly in the church as well as by people outside there are lots of ways.

You can practice Buddhism to get to God or Islam to get to God or another religion or no religion. Basically if you're a good enough person you'll be with God many would say.

[22 : 22] But such words are completely despising of Jesus. Indeed such words are completely obnoxious to Jesus.

If there was another way the cup would have passed and he would not have gone to the cross to die. It is the only way and to suggest that there are more ways is to thumb our nose at Jesus and indeed at God.

There was no other way. It was a way that was gruesome costly and as we reflect on that way and Jesus willingness to die for us our hearts ought to be refreshed again with gratitude and faith knowing that Jesus has made the way to God that our sins are forgiven as predicted in Isaiah for example and that a life with God is possible certainly possible though we do not deserve it because of Jesus.

Let's pray.