

Mark 14:43-52

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[0 : 00] Father, we come before you as people, even the best of us, are frail and minuscule compared to you. What can we bring to you as if you have need?

So Lord, help us, by your Holy Spirit, come to you with arms open to receive. Lord, help us bring to you the only thing that we can truly bring to you, a humility before you, saying that you are God and we are man.

And Lord, as we open your word, help us to be people that are underneath your word, that submit to your word, that trust that your word is from you and that your word is good.

So Lord, we ask that you open our eyes, open our ears, prepare our hearts this morning. In Christ's name, amen. One of the best things I've watched, maybe, I don't want to say ever, that seems rather dramatic, but, I mean, say top five, is the HBO miniseries Chernobyl.

I really, I don't know, it gripped me. It was a fantastic miniseries. It's, as you could guess, about the nuclear meltdown in May of 86 in Chernobyl, what is now in Ukraine.

[1 : 15] A nuclear reactor exploded and the Chernobyl recounts the explosion, but really the aftermath of the official investigation.

After all the secrets and cover-ups and passing the blame on an institutional level, the lead character, a man named Valery Legazov, a true person, he really lived, he was standing in front of a tribunal.

After already lying to kind of an official UN-style delegation in Austria, he kind of towed the party line, but in front of this tribunal, he decides to tell the truth.

When asked why the nuclear reactor exploded, he boldly says this, because of our secrets and our lies. They are practically what define us.

When the truth offends us, we lie and lie until we can no longer remember it. Remember it is there, but it is still there. Every lie we tell incurs a debt to the truth.

[2 : 24] Sooner or later, that debt is paid. That is how an RBMK reactor explodes by lies. Very powerful scene, like, really powerful scene.

Lies, deceit, delusion, willful misrepresentation, betrayal. All enemies of the truth.

We come to the fateful passage of Mark. Mark, it seems like it's been leading up to it week after week. We're going to get there, we're going to get there.

Jesus finally is betrayed. His passion finally begins. Mark chapter 14, starting in verse 43. Jesus is betrayed by Judas into the hands of the religious establishment who will try to drum up some kind of accusation to then hand him over to the Romans who will eventually nail him to a crucifix and he is left to die.

We will see how the entirety of Jesus' betrayal and arrest, everything that follows, was built upon lies and deceit. None of the people that act against Jesus are doing so in a truthful way.

[3 : 44] In any, by, I mean, you could try to see it in a charitable way. There's just no chance you can. Lies and deceit, betrayal. Be they the personal lies that we tell others, ourselves, or big cultural lies that are perpetuated by trusted institutions.

Lies seem to be the most expedient way to deal with unwanted situations or unwanted people or unwanted issues. But the problem is, those lies can never keep the truth covered up indefinitely. For a season, for a time, for maybe even a generation. But the truth will always have victory over the lies. Lies perpetuate and grow until the facade that is built up comes tumbling down.

Truth cannot be denied forever. It can't be. So we're going to look at the betrayal of Jesus. We're going to look at it hopefully in depth, focusing on the actors involved.

We're going to look at Judas. We're going to look at the religious leaders. We're going to look at the disciples. We're also going to look at you and I in all of this. So let's take a look at Judas. We'll get

right into it.

[5 : 02] Verses 43. By the way, if you want to grab a Bible, there's still a few back there. If you can follow along, that'd be great. If not, just listen. Verse 43. Oh, a bit of a background.

Jesus, he... The Last Supper is instituted. Jesus foretells the denial of Peter. Everybody swears they're going to follow him to their grave.

Jesus prays in Gethsemane. The disciples that just swore up and down, they're going to be with him to the end, fall asleep. And Jesus, in verse 42, says, Rise, let us be going.

See my betrayers at hand. And this is that immediately. So this is like boom, boom, boom, subsequent events, kind of one after another. Verse 43. And immediately when he was still speaking, that is Jesus, 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.

Verse 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. Judas is called Judas in verse 43, and then the betrayer in 44.

[6 : 16] And after this section, we don't hear from him again. In other gospel accounts, in Matthews, for instance, I mean, we, in Luke's, I think in John's as well, there's a bit of an aftermath, kind of like the backstory of what happens with Judas after the fact.

Here, Judas, he disappears. He is on the scene. He betrays. He's called the betrayer. And then he is gone. Notice here that Mark makes it very clear that Judas, one of the twelve, he is described. Judas, I mean, up until this point, was still a disciple, a part of Jesus' inner circle. And a part of that inner circle meant that Judas had journeyed with Jesus for, I mean, three years, had been in the Galilee, had seen Jesus raise a paralytic from the grave, calm a storm, cast out demons, teach. He also commissioned his twelve, which Judas would have been one of, to go and do ministry in Jesus' name. Judas was an intimate part of Jesus' very group, and would have, at the very least, maybe he was a bit thick-skulled, and he didn't quite understand that Jesus was saying that he was the Messiah, fully man and fully God.

But at the very least, my guess, Judas knew that this was a special man, maybe a prophet. So it is very, very remarkable that twice Jesus warns the group, with Judas in earshot, and warns them that the one who will betray him will become a son of perdition, will be damned.

[7 : 59] That there will be no redemption for the one who betrays the Son of God. You'd think that he would maybe, maybe repent, have a dark night of the soul, and come to Jesus' aid, or maybe use now his position as a betrayer to upend the Pharisees, and the chief priests, and the scribes.

Like, if this was a mini-series, we didn't know the end from the beginning, we were just kind of watching it episode by episode. Verse 42 ends, Jesus says, Rise, let us be going, see my betrayers at hand.

End scene, roll credits, what's going to happen in the next episode? Is Judas going to follow through with it? Or will he kind of come to his senses, and be the guy to figure things out, and save the day?

But no. Time and again, he has opportunities to fix what he has done, to repent, but he does not do it. Judas did not want to believe the truth that Jesus was heading to the cross, and was worthy of having expensive ointment poured over him in preparation for burial.

Do you remember, a few weeks back, Jesus is reclining at Simon the leper's house, and this woman comes, she's unnamed, but she breaks open this bottle of expensive ointment, a year's wages, and pours it over him, and the disciples become indignant.

[9 : 34] What a waste of money. And it's clear that Judas here didn't hear what Jesus was saying. I'm going to the cross, I'm worthy of this, because I'm going to die for the sins of many.

This woman, she's doing a beautiful thing, don't scold her. Judas becomes entrenched in the lies that he believes. We're not sure what the lies are, but they're not the truth.

He doesn't believe Jesus, doesn't take Jesus at his word, and he becomes entrenched in his beliefs. He believes the lie.

He allows the offense that he feels at the act of this kind of huge, huge blessing of this unnamed woman to Jesus, trump all of the good and the true and the beautiful that he saw Jesus do during his ministry.

And he continued on in his plan of betrayal. He's nursing the lie. Nursing the lie. Notice here that Judas also mocks Jesus.

[10:43] He says, the one that I'm going to kiss, verse 45, and he went up to Jesus at once and said, Rabbi, Rabbi, and he kissed him. I mean, we could say in our minds, maybe Rabbi, like a handshake or like a greeting, but this is, this is 2,000 years ago in the Middle East.

This is a man who is showing, trying to show, pretending to show great love and affection and deference to his leader. This is a sign of just love, but it's empty, and he is doing it in a mocking way.

Rabbi, how are you? The best rabbi, the best teacher, embraces him, touches him, kisses him, a sign of intimacy, a sign of affection.

But there's a mob behind him with clubs and swords at night. He doesn't believe anything he is saying. He is mocking Jesus. Another example of an embracing of the lies because you don't mock the rabbi of rabbis, the teacher of teachers, the leader of leaders, the king of kings.

If you do that, you believe in something different, a falsehood, a lie. What we see with Judas is a man who is a betrayer and he is a mocker and who is eyeballs deep in deceit and self-deception.

[12:08] I mean, quite the character. Let's take a look at the religious leaders. Notice verse 43 as well. The second part of it. And Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders.

These religious leaders, they were kind of the top tier of society. The people that were the trusted authority on religion, on civil life, on social life, everything that it was to be an upstanding Israelite in the first century.

These were the ones that were supposed to lead the people, to know the truth, and to lead the people into truth. Except, from the beginning, they too have been nursing a hatred towards the truth, that Jesus is the one who is the Messiah, that he has come to upend false religion, and at least, just turn this down.

Anyways, there's a buzzing. I don't know if it's distracting, folks. Sorry about that. But at least since chapter 3, they have been colluding with one another to destroy Jesus. At least since chapter 3. And it's not like Jesus did stuff or claimed things in private. He was very public about his ministry. They had many opportunities to have their false piety, false religion, false beliefs be confronted with the truth.

[13:49] But time and again, they chose to believe the lie. They entrenched themselves. This is the thing with the truth. The truth is the truth. The truth stands alone.

It is on a foundation that can't be moved. But lies require this web of other lies and other deceptions and falsities and cover-ups and dust under the carpets and all of a sudden this big structure emerges and you take one away and the whole thing begins to topple.

Jesus is the truth and he is proclaiming the truth and it is offensive and it is threatening to the lie of the religious and social leaders.

The thing is truth by virtue of being the truth always exposes lies. It just always does. It has to. There is no idea of your truth versus my truth if the truths are incongruent.

You can't it's silly to somehow think that two opposing views can be somehow congruent when they are opposite. There's truth and there's not truth.

[15:09] There's lies and then there's lies and then there's lies and lies and lies but only one truth. You remember when Jesus goes to the temple he pronounces these indictments against it but really to the religious establishment.

He says that the temple has been made a den of robbers. This is back in chapter 11 and he exposes false religion. Why? Because it is rooted in lies.

So how are these religious leaders trying to suppress the truth? On one hand they treat Jesus as a revolutionary coming with swords and clubs. They're treating him the same way as the Romans would treat a zealot an insurrectionist a revolutionary.

I mean in our translation it's used as robbers that can work as well but there's more to it than that. They are treating him as though the kingdom that he has proclaimed is going to be instituted by sword and club like every other kingdom that has come before it.

but not the kingdom of God. And just on an aside this isn't this isn't this is bonus material I guess on an aside the kingdom of God never comes by way of force.

[16:28] And whenever there is a show of force in the name of God by whatever official sources you know proclaim it it isn't the way of God because the way of God is always to bring his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven where there is perfect peace.

That's not to say that God can't use horrendous decisions by really really bad people and leaders to somehow achieve his ends but it's never God's will to have some kind of holy war against evil people as a way of extending his kingdom.

So we'll get back I mean we got off on an exit let's get back on the highway here. So Jesus he sorry the religious leaders are trying to suppress the truth by treating Jesus as a insurrectionist as a revolutionary in essence perpetuating this false narrative that Jesus is violent and he's not.

On the other hand they oppose him at night while the city sleeps because their accusations aren't rooted in truth and can't hold up under any kind of scrutiny.

Notice that Jesus in next week's text will be in front of the council of the high priest and they are scrambling trying to figure out some kind of charge to lay upon him that will stick and they can't find any.

[18:00] But consider Jesus' words here starting in verse 46 this is what Jesus says they laid hands on him and seized him but one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck his servant of the high priest and cut off his ear and Jesus said to them have you come out as against a robber or as against a revolutionary with swords and clubs to capture me day after day I was with you in the temple teaching and you did not seize me but let the scriptures be fulfilled let the scriptures be fulfilled Jesus confronted them with truth all day for a long period of time he confronts them in day in public they confront him with lies in private at night it's a big difference between these two parties Judas given to lies entrenched in lies the religious leaders they were supposed to be in a sense the stewards of truth entrenched in lies how about you and I we have considered

Judas and the religious leaders we've looked at betrayal and mockery deceit lies but how about us I mean think of an experience that you have had with betrayal and mockery and lying I mean we live in a broken world you've I'm sure experienced things those of as the prayer book calls of more riper years have experienced more than us who are not as ripe but nevertheless what comes to mind you know I'm sure some of us have gone through some really tough things have been betrayed and mocked have been hurt have been misrepresented and there's something about Jesus and only Jesus where we can go to him and he can say truly say I know exactly what you've been through I can sympathize with you but how many of us when I ask the question about your experience with betrayal and mockery and lying thought of yourself as the victim but not as the victimizer not as the one who is the betrayer is the liar is the mocker

I know for myself when I was going through this initially earlier in the week I was just like that Judas he is a piece of work like I would never be like him at least that was my attitude but the reality is we although are on one hand victims at times we are also guilty of living lies and perpetuating them mocking people betraying people lying to people the great danger of reading a text like this like I mentioned is that we deceive ourselves into thinking we are not immune to deception or certainly aren't deceivers ourselves but a text like this what does it do it reminds us of our default setting and our default setting is that we are given to lies before we are given to truth that's our default setting the currency that we deal in is cover up in self justification downplaying our sin and up playing our virtue is up playing the right thing to say is to talk about how virtuous we are but because the scriptures are true they contain truth and are themselves breathed out by truth himself they confront the lies that we live we have an opportunity to either continue in that or do the hard work in a sense letting

God bring truth to the areas where we have lied and we have been given to lies but it's very important that we know that our hearts are shown to be in need of great healing jeremiah jeremiah 17 9 says the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick who can understand it you know the great irony with judas and the religious leaders is that they are breaking their own values and laws in order to maintain their lie they're not even true to themselves in their maintenance of a lie that they try to perpetuate because in the end judas gets so bent genuinely bent and angry at Jesus for wastefulness and in a sense treating money poorly and he's taking a bribe himself the religious leaders it's not very clear here in the text but they are breaking the sabbath to arrest Jesus big no no even Judas and the religious leaders to perpetuate a lie will break their own values and laws their lie in order to survive requires them to compromise their very essence the things that they hold dear so it's very clear lies have an insatiable appetite they can't be satisfied they can't it's not enough to say one lie and be done with it it comes back and it will consume until nothing remains but a hollowed shell this is our default setting some are less given to it than others but be honest with yourself it's your default setting that's why

Christ comes and he comes to save us from our sin absolutely to rescue us from evil absolutely but he also comes to transfer our citizenship from the kingdom of lies to the kingdom of truth that's what he does he is truth himself but what happens when after tasting the goodness of God and knowing truth and having light shine into darkness our citizenship is transferred from the kingdom of lies so to speak to the kingdom of truth what happens when we continue to lie and be given to deceit as Christians as mature Christians who have been in this thing for decades what do we do is it treason is there hope for us seems there's no hope for Judas is there hope for us what happens if we are all if we are still given to lies being deceived and deceiving after we are

[24 : 42] Christians is there hope look with me at verses 50 to 52 well let's go back to verse 49 Jesus says day after day I was with you in the temple teaching you teaching and you did not seize me but let the scriptures be fulfilled verse 50 and they all fled left him and fled and a young man followed him with nothing but a linen cloth about his body and they seized him but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked L the mother other my hisexpander is doing this this this morning for us what I want us to see along with all of Jesus' followers is this young man, everybody all fled.

Everybody fled. Everybody ran, all of them. It's emphatic in the original language. And it's emphasized because they all drank the cup at the Last Supper, the disciples did. They all pledged unwavering allegiance to Jesus and yet they all fled. And I think it's very instructive for us to see that even the most seasoned Christians can compromise.

I can run from Christ. It's really hard to live a life year after year, moment after moment, day after day, like year after year, continue.

Your whole life in truth, you're bound to slip up. You're bound to flee. I think we see the emphatic all because Mark and really God wants us to see that that includes us.

[26 : 36] We are bound to sin. We are bound to fall back into our old citizenship. We are tempted to embrace a false savior after we have encountered the true one. We are all susceptible to believing lies even though we have known the truth.

And the fact is, we are citizens of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of truth, but that kingdom has yet to come in its fulfillment. And this is a wonderful kind of insight into the scriptures is that the kingdom is now, in the moment, it is here, Jesus has come, but it's also yet to come, in its fullness. So we live in this kind of in-between time where we are citizens of heaven, the kingdom of God, but here on earth, where we're still also part of the kingdom of this world.

So we struggle. That's the reality of it. We struggle. So when, not if, but when we fail, when we flee, we can, by God's spirit, run back to him for help, to turn back to him, to flee the other way, to flee the lie into the truth, to truth himself, and trust that he will forgive and that he won't revoke our citizenship.

Jesus says in the second part of verse 49, what does he say? But let the scriptures be fulfilled. And it's specifically there talking about him being taken away as essentially a robber, even though he is innocent.

[28 : 04] It's a reference to Zechariah 13, verse 7. It says this, Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me, declares the Lord of hosts, strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.

Jesus quotes this earlier. I will turn my hand against the little ones. It also is a reference to the end of Isaiah, Isaiah chapter 53, verse 12.

And it says, I'll just read the one part, And he, that is the servant of the Lord, Jesus, was numbered with the transgressors. So, when Jesus says, let the scriptures be fulfilled, he's specifically, in the context, talking about his arrest.

They're both fulfilled in his arrest. But in a sense, it's a statement that God's word is always true. That it always comes to pass.

It is always right. It is always trustworthy. We can trust in God and in his promises. We can trust that he can use even the most heinous of lies to achieve his truth.

[29 : 11] We can trust in his ultimate victory. We can trust that he will not leave us or forsake us. We can trust that if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us of all unrighteousness.

That when we turn to him, he is more willing to forgive us than we are to run to him. Like, all of these promises in God's word, if it's fulfilled in just this little bit in verse 49b, we can be sure that all of his word is true.

Because he is a source of truth. He knows our weakness. And yet he welcomes us all the same. I'll end with a couple thoughts.

Lies cannot continue indefinitely. Because God created the cosmos, the earth, everything and all of creation on truth. And eventually lies crumble under themselves because they have no foundation. But God's foundation is, in a sense, baked right into our very existence. Truth is how he created everything. Chernobyl ends with Valery Legazov defying the gag order by recording his experiences so that the world can know what happens.

[30 : 25] And he says this at the end. What is the cost of lies? It's not that we'll mistake them for the truth. The real danger is that if we hear enough lies, then we no longer recognize the truth at all.

What can we do then? What else is left but to abandon even the hope of truth and content ourselves instead with stories? He emphasizes that, stories.

In these stories, it doesn't matter who the heroes are. All we want to know is who is to blame. Really powerful ending to this mini-series.

Jesus Christ, truth himself, he frees us from the prison of fear that leads to the lies and the life of lies and our default setting of lies.

He frees us from there. He frees us so that we can live in the truth. And what can stop someone who is truly free, who is not afraid of the consequences of telling the truth?

[31 : 33] Who can stop that person? I mean, you could physically stop them, arrest them, throw them into jail. They can rot and die. But the truth, in the end, is what they have and it can't be taken from them.

There is a boldness that comes with being a truth teller because we are empowered by the very one who is truth himself. Friends, let us trust that Christ himself is the greater truth teller.

That there isn't a better version of a self-help, this or that, or a narrative that just seems like it would work better for us. Let us not fall into that kind of lie.

It might present that way, but truly, it is not that way. Let us trust in the incorruptible one, the one that knows all, even the web of lies that we may find ourselves in today.

And we might be in a web of lies. We might have done a really good job of lying for the last, I don't know, 15, 20 years. Lying since high school, something that happened, whatever it may be, and you're carrying that.

[32 : 45] You don't think about it every day, but it's back there. It gnaws on the back of your head. Christ has come to free us from that. Freedom.

To live in truth. That is what Christ has done on the cross. That is what he has won. That is his victory that we get to share in. So I'll just say this. Lent starts on Wednesday.

Ash Wednesday is this upcoming Wednesday. It'll be here at 730. There's a shameless plug for coming to Ash Wednesday if you can make it. But Lent is a sweet season where we can be honest. Honest with ourselves before God and prepare as we journey towards the cross as Christ went to the cross.

And Lent, in a sense, isn't easy because it causes us to take a look at ourselves and ask God to reveal the junk and the sin and the deceit and the lies in our own lives.

[33 : 46] But what's the result? I mean, hopefully, to look at Christ and to know his truth and to live in that, to be free people.

To be free people. You don't have to come to Ash Wednesday to confess your sins to the Lord or to look to him for freedom. But it is a fine way to do it.

But as we approach Lent, let us ask the Lord to help us to be honest with ourselves about our sin, about our propensity to deceive. And then may we be free to live in truth, to live towards truth, to embrace the true one.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that your example here of how lies don't win and how truth wins and how even lies you use to upend lies.

You use death to upend death. That the truth will always come to pass. Lord, let us be honest with ourselves. Let us first be truthful with ourselves about who we are and who you are.

[34 : 59] Lord, let us not deceive ourselves any longer. Help us by your Holy Spirit to not just know the truth but to act upon it. Lord, we thank you for the second chances and the 80th chances and the 1,042nd chances that you give us.

and Lord, help us to embrace it. And Lord, as we continue on our service, we ask that you bless us, continue to bless the kids downstairs. We pray all these things in Christ's name.

Amen.