

Arrest & Denial

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 00] We read Luke 22, and just looking at these verses that we read from verse 47 through to verse 62.

We read there in verse 47, while he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him.

But Jesus said to him, Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss? Verse 54, we see how then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance.

Then we read of Peter's denial, and we see in verse 61, and the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Now, while Jesus obviously stands at the center of the whole gospel, and particularly of this passage, and everything ultimately revolves around Jesus, two of his disciples figure very prominently here.

And the action of these two disciples are remembered, their actions are remembered for all time. Everybody remembers the actions of Judas.

[1 : 22] Everybody remembers the actions of Peter. And again, if you were looking at this incident from the outside, supposing you were sitting in the garden, a way up on a sort of a wee hillock, or a wee elevated part of the garden, and you were looking down at what was taking place.

And you were able to follow, as it were, at a distance, everything that was occurring. And over that period, you had seen the actions of Judas and the actions of Peter.

You would have said to yourself, I see that disciple Judas. What a loving, caring, affectionate man he is. Because he comes up to Jesus, there are all these soldiers and temple guards and all the religious leaders, and he comes to Jesus, and he takes hold of Jesus, and he tries to kiss Jesus. And you would say, look at him, look at the affection in that man. And if you had gone into the hall where Jesus had been taken, and you had seen Peter, and you had then watched Peter denying any knowledge of Jesus, swearing, invoking curses upon himself, about how Jesus was nothing to him, of how he never knew him, you would say to yourself, there's not a spark of grace in that man. What a traitor. What a deceiver. And you would write Peter off, and you would say to yourself, you know, Judas, he's a good man. And yet we know nothing, no judgment could be further from the truth.

[3 : 05] Because in fact, it was the very opposite. Judas was a traitor. That attempted kiss, kidding on display of affection, was actually a kiss of defection.

Judas had changed sides. Judas had never really, deeply loved the Lord Jesus Christ. Though he sided with him, though he was with him, and followed him in many ways, as we were saying about following the leader, he wasn't really following the leader.

He wasn't. Peter, on the other hand, was. And Peter shows us the potential, sadly, for disaster. The potential for falling.

So, we see these two disciples. And Judas is, as we say here, his actions really are awful.

Because his, the kiss, this action here is the very opposite of what a kiss symbolizes. A kiss symbolizes affection, of endearment. And Judas is kissing Jesus, in order to have him put to death.

[4 : 16] His kiss is the very opposite, of what a kiss should symbolize. And you know, in a sense, that's what sin is like. Sin is so deceitful.

Sin wears a mask. And sin is so often hypocritical. And sin is so often deceitful. And we see it paraded here in its ugliness, in a stomach-churning ugliness, you could say.

But you know, you see this sort of thing worked out in so many different situations in life. I suppose a classic example would be where a modern-day example, or not necessarily a modern-day example, but just an example, is a husband, lavishing gifts and flowers on his wife, while at the

same time seeing another woman on the side, pretending to be one thing, and yet being another. Well, that's the kind of person Judas was. That's exactly what Judas was doing. His front hid an evil heart. His front was hiding what was the true intention of his heart.

And you know, we've always got to be careful. And I suppose, in a sense, we've always got to examine our motives and to see what we do. Because remember, the Lord cuts through.

[5 : 36] He goes through the veneer of our life. And he's able to see and judge and assess exactly what it is we're doing and why we're doing it. He knows our motives.

We're always judging one another. The Bible says, judge not. Why? That we will not be judged. We look at what people are doing and we make our assessment upon what we see.

And so often, we are wrong. We're forever coming to the wrong conclusions. And I'm sure we've all said, you know, I really, I got that one wrong.

And you know, I think we get it wrong far more than we get it right. That's why we ought not to be judging. And as I said, if we had made a judgment on Judas and on Peter, standing at a distance, we most certainly would have got our judgments wrong.

Anyway, this band of soldiers and temple guards and the religious leaders come upon Jesus, this great mob. And they come with their swords and with their clubs armed to the teeth.

[6 : 44] And all of a sudden, Jesus' disciples realize what's happening. They realize, say, that the heat is on. This is dangerous. They realize that this group have come for Jesus.

And one of the disciples, and we're told in John's Gospel that it was Peter, he pulled out a sword and he slashed down and he cut off the right ear of the high priest's servant.

You know, when Peter had said earlier to Jesus, you know, he said to the Lord, when Jesus said, you know what, I'm going to be taken and I'm going to die. Peter said to him, Lord, I am ready. I'm ready to go to prison with you. Lord, I am ready to die with you. I believe that Peter, when he said that, meant it.

And when we're very hard on Peter for his denial, I want us to think back to this particular moment and realize that when Peter said that he was ready to die with Jesus, he meant it.

[7 : 52] And he was showing he meant it. He pulled out the sword and he's saying, really, by his action, Lord, I am here to defend you and whatever it takes, I will defend you.

And he shows that very clearly. His heart was on his sleeve and it was a heart that loved the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is so clear. But Jesus said to Peter, no, this is not the time for the sword. Put away the sword. And Jesus, in fact, healed the ear of the high priest's servant. You know, there's going to come a day when Jesus will come with the sword, the sword of his judgment and his wrath.

But that's not today. Today it is still that we are seeing today the love of the Lamb. We are seeing today the invitation of the Lamb.

Jesus is still in the business of healing. He is still in the business of drawing people to himself. He is still in the day of putting away the sword. It is the day of love and mercy and grace.

[8 : 56] And if you have never come to know this Savior, I would urge you today, please, please see to this all important fact that you are right with God in Jesus Christ.

Because the day is going to come when it is not the love of the Lamb but the wrath of the Lamb this world will see. And there's going to come a day when the world will cry to the mountains and the rocks to cover them and to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.

Jesus will ride in the clouds of the heavens and he will have the sword of his justice and judgment. But that's not how it is today. You make sure you come to know the Lamb, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

But anyway, Jesus, he puts a stop to what Peter is doing and he's saying no more of this. And I would say that it is at this moment that Peter goes out of his depth.

Up until this particular moment, Peter, Peter is an impetuous man. Peter knows how to react to situations. All of a sudden, you see, here's a crowd, there's going to be conflict.

[10 : 05] Peter's up for it. He's ready. He pulls out the sword. You want a fight? I'll give you a fight. Jesus says, no. Peter, put away the sword. And at that moment, Peter is out of his depth because no longer is he in control.

He no longer knows what to do. And so there's, undoubtedly, there's kind of confusion and he doesn't know how to cope. And we find then Jesus questioning the mob as to why they have come in this particular manner to arrest him.

Because they have come as if he was a leading revolutionary, as if he was sort of a really dangerous man. They've come armed to the teeth. And you see how absurd the picture is because Jesus is saying, this is a scene of nonviolence. yes, we have a sword, but it's put away. Yes, there's been an injury, but I'm healing it. I am not coming for a fight. Jesus, we've got to remember, is in absolute control. The mob think they're in control. They're not. Because it doesn't say it here when we go through it. [11:17] I think that's why at another time it would be really worth doing a study where we tie all the Gospels together because each Gospel writer throws a little light or a different shade upon the situation.

When Jesus tells Peter to put away the sword, he said to him, you know, I could call on twelve legions of angels. And you think of the havoc that one angel did. Which army came up and there was a hundred and eighty-five thousand men that came up against Judah? An angel went through the night and smote the army. Killed one hundred and eighty-five thousand men in one night. Mind-blowing. Can't really get their mind around that.

Just snuffed out their life. And Jesus is saying, I could call this moment, he said, I could call on twelve legions of angels. Obliterate the world.

[12:23] Just in a moment. But he's not going to because Jesus is in a voluntary mission. He's giving of himself every step. Jesus is in control. We must never lose sight of that.

It's something I think we've been highlighting in Jesus' journey towards the cross all the time. Knowing where he's going and yet he's in control and yet he's submitting himself, giving himself. It's an amazing thing. And so we find this is what what Jesus is doing. And it shows us how absurd the situation here with all these temple soldiers and guards and all these men with their arm to the teeth.

but it also shows us the absolute blindness of sin. Again, if we had gone to John's gospel, it tells us when Jesus asked them who do they want and they say Jesus of Nazareth that they, he said, I am he and as he said so they fell back to the ground.

in that one moment Jesus again is showing to them you do not have control over the situation. And I tend to think and I probably am completely wrong that if I had been amongst the temple guard that I would, if I was thrown to the ground by an invisible force at that moment and when I got back up I would say to myself, hey, I'm in something too deep here.

[13:50] I want out. But sin being what it is, that's probably not how I would have reacted if I had been there at that time. Because you see the prejudice and the blindness of sin is such that you cannot see the truth that's staring you in the face.

These men, they were so prejudiced and you know, prejudice, something we're always warning against. Prejudice is such a sin and it distorts life so that you cannot see reality.

You can only see it through the twistedness that prejudice brings. And these people were so prejudiced against Christ they couldn't see the good.

Isn't that extraordinary? The one perfect man who was living amongst them and they couldn't see that he was good. That shows just how distorted prejudice makes a person.

Anyway, Jesus, he goes with as it were, goes with the crowd and so they seize him and they take him to the house of the high priest. And it tells us then in verse 54 that as he seized him and led him away bringing him into the high priest's house that Peter was following at a distance.

[15:12] And if we're to take these words, yes, these are normal, actual, that's describing the situation, that's how Peter was going, he was following, as it says, afar off or he follows at a distance.

If you were to take these words spiritually, I believe that not only is it physically happening, it's spiritually happening.

Because if we follow the Lord spiritually at a distance, we're heading to trouble, we're heading for a fall. And Peter was following the Lord at a distance.

Yes, physically, yes, in the actual scene that took place, it was at a great distance. But it was also true spiritually because Peter wasn't prepared.

He wasn't praying. Remember, he hadn't been praying. Jesus was warning him. Jesus had warned Peter. He said, Peter, you are heading into the crisis of your life. Remember, we were looking at this, how Jesus said to him, Satan, Satan's after you.

[16:18] In fact, Satan's got a hold of you. Remember how he was going to shake him and sift him. But Jesus was telling Peter, you know, I'm praying for you, that your faith, your faith won't fail.

Not that you won't fall, Peter, but that your faith won't fail. And Peter is unready. He hasn't taken the warning of Jesus to heart. And that's always a problem.

If we don't take God's word seriously, then we're going to have problems. And if we're following Jesus at a distance, if we're not prayerful, remember again, Jesus had said to them, watch and pray that you do not enter into temptation.

Well, they were sleeping. They weren't watching. They weren't praying. So Peter wasn't spiritually prepared. He was following at a distance. Now, the positive side, we would say, to this is that Peter is actually following.

The negative side is that he is following at a distance. And let us make sure that if we're following the Lord Jesus, that we're following him as close to him as we can.

[17:29] Because the closer that we follow him, the more like him we will become. As we were saying to the young folk today about following the leader, the closer we follow, the closer our walk is to our Savior and with our Savior, the more like him we will become and the greater our impact for good will be in this world.

Now, we see that they went into the house and a fire was made in the middle of the courtyard. There would have been a cold night. And we find that Peter joins with them.

And again, we have one of the most powerful scenes and one of the best-known scenes in the Scripture where Peter denies the Lord Jesus Christ.

But there at verse 61, it's a verse that is very, very powerful in itself. Because we find there that Jesus turns and looks at Peter.

it. Now, as we all know that normally in life we communicate to one another by words. Words are powerful. Whether it can be the word of a song, I'm sure we all know that sometimes we can read books or we can read a poem or we can hear the words of a song.

[18:54] They can be incredibly moving and powerful. And we can be moved by what people say and it's usually the way that we communicate. But sometimes the most powerful communication can be visual and sometimes a look can say far more than a thousand words.

I'm sure we all remember situations where we saw a look from someone. It could be a look of love. It could be maybe you can think about it in loads of different ways.

Maybe there's a couple here today and you can remember the first time that you saw someone and you remember your eyes met and there was a kind of a look that said a lot.

A look that touched your heart and the rest is history. Or it could be a look of hurt in someone's eyes and said that the eyes are the mirror of the soul.

Well here we have one of the most powerful looks that was ever given anywhere where Jesus turned and looked at Peter. Quite often in the Bible we find God looking.

[20:12] It talks about God looking in different ways. We find God looking in judgment. For instance on the Egyptians when they were chasing after Israel when they came to the Red Sea it tells us God looked upon the Egyptians.

This was just before everything caved in at the Red Sea. We find for instance God looking in power on somebody. Remember Gideon.

Gideon was really worried about going to, he couldn't understand why God was choosing him to go and lead Israel. And God it says the Lord looked upon Gideon and said go in this your might.

In other words it was a look that empowered Gideon. Again you have the Lord looking at his people in pity. The Lord looked on them in their affliction.

So we find in various parts of the Bible it talks about the Lord looking. Well here we have this particular look. And it was a look that broke Peter.

[21:18] If Jesus had turned at that moment after the third denial after Peter had denied Jesus with oaths and cursements for the third time and Jesus had turned round and yelled at Peter and said Peter I told you that this is what would happen.

It wouldn't have been nearly so effective as Jesus just turning round and fixing his eyes upon Peter. And that look went right into the very depth of his being.

It was like a knife that was twisted round. Peter in absolute agony goes out into the night. A broken man. And you see Peter as we said had been following Jesus afar off from a distance.

And where did Peter end up? Peter ended up when he was following Jesus at a distance he ends up with Jesus' enemies. He's there with the wrong crowd. And you know this is often liable to happen.

And you know Peter although he was with the wrong crowd he had a wonderful opportunity for standing up for Jesus. As the crowd were finding fault with Jesus what an opportunity for Peter to stand up and say to them hey hold on a minute I want to tell you about this man.

[22 : 41] What a story Peter could have told. He could have told them about the Mount of Transfiguration he could have told them about the walking on the water. He could have told them about the raising of Jairus' daughter.

Incidents and scenes that were unique to Peter and James and John. Did he do any of that? No. Because he was following at a distance.

He didn't have the spiritual courage or the spiritual strength to stand up for Jesus. And when the time came the testing time came he failed miserably.

He fell flat on his face. Denying his Lord with oaths and with curses. And after that third denial when the cock crowed, the rooster crowed, it tells us how the Lord turned and looked on Peter.

What was in that look? Well I believe there was a look of we could say I suppose a look of reproach in the Lord.

[23 : 42] I suppose he was saying how could you Peter? How could you? Even although the Lord knew this was going to happen.

This is something that I think we've always got to take on board is the suffering of Jesus. Because sometimes in these situations we somehow think that Jesus was able to so easily cope with this that it kind of brushed past him.

No it didn't. that would have so hurt Jesus although he knew it was going to happen. Here is a disciple that Jesus loves.

One who was of that inner circle. The one that Jesus had said to him was going to be a leader in the church. And here he is in the company of Jesus with all the enemies of Christ and he's saying I don't know that man.

He means absolutely nothing to me. Don't for one moment think that Jesus' heart wasn't touched by that. Of course it was. In the same way your heart and my heart.

[24 : 55] Can you imagine if your own son or daughter or father or mother or brother or sister were to act in that way? How it would affect your heart. It would like a knife through it.

Well you think of our Lord. There's this, here's this, here's a friend amongst all the enemies and yet in this hour of need and it's no wonder the scripture says of Jesus comforters found I none.

Here's one you would expect comfort from but no, nothing. And I believe that that Luke also worked in Peter to bring to mind the words of Jesus because Jesus had said to Peter the very thing that had happened.

And it would all come flooding back and Peter would say oh no, I didn't think this is what would happen. And you know my dear friends how, you know there's something of Peter in this because I'm sure there are times that we too have been warned by God's word.

We read what God's word says to us and there are times we sit lightly upon God's word. We treat it lightly. We think we're stronger than we are. We think we can handle temptation.

[26 : 22] We think we can handle the situations and you know if we're trying to do it in our own strength we can't. You and I cannot beat temptation. We can't handle it on our own.

We need the Lord. But I also believe that that look conveyed to Peter love and mercy. Although Peter was denying Jesus, Jesus' love was not departing from Peter.

Peter might be denying Jesus but Jesus was not going to deny Peter. Peter might fail Jesus but Jesus was not going to fail Peter. the Lord will not take his love away from us despite our falls, despite our sin and praise the Lord for that great fact.

You know, I think myself at this particular time that Peter, although he continued with the disciples, I think Peter thought that he had fallen too far for any restoration.

I think that Peter, when he went out into the night and he wept bitterly, I think Peter thought that's it. It can never, ever, ever be the same again.

[27 : 41] I have let my Lord down too much. But you know, we've never really begun to understand the depth of God's grace and mercy and love and forgiveness to us.

And irrespective of how low we may go, how far we may fall, for how long we may fall, God is able in Christ to lift us back up, to restore us, to place our feet firmly so that we will know it upon that rock.

You see, grace, grace can never be lost. Once the Lord as a whole, no one, the Lord said that, no one can pluck them out of my hand.

Once a passion is in the Lord's hand, no power can prize open. Now, of course, that doesn't mean but that the Lord's people fall and stumble and as we've said before about the whole way of walking, how the, was it last Sunday night, we were there about talking about walking along the road.

Some people walk really briskly, really fast walkers. Some people walk slowly, some people slouch, some people stop frequently, just normally when you see people walking.

[29 : 05] And it's a shame in the kingdom. Some people, their growth is so rapid, they're away, they're converted and they're making giant leaps, they're progressing, they're racing as it were along the way to the celestial city.

others, it's a much slower walk. The important thing is that we are walking, that we're going that way. Peter was restored.

Peter repented. It was true and absolute repentance. That's what we find here. And what may I say, just as we come to conclude here, if you have never come to know the Lord as your own Savior, you know, Peter went out into a darkness.

But that darkness didn't remain darkness because the light of the Lord was still in his heart and that light came back. But if you're outside the kingdom, you're in a darkness. And maybe today you don't know just how dark it is.

But let me tell you this, that unless the light of the Lord will come into your life, one day you will discover just how dark that darkness is.

[30 : 21] And I would ask you today to pray to the Lord, Lord, please look upon me in love and in mercy. Look into my life, Lord, and if need be, break my heart in order to heal it again with your love, so that I might come to know you, to embrace you, to have you as my Lord and my Savior.

may your light shine into my heart, that light which will grow brighter and brighter until that perfect day.

Let us pray. Oh, Lord, we ask that we might know that light in our own heart, in our own life, shining upon our path as we walk along the way.

we give thanks, Lord, for the way that we are encouraged through the word, and although we face obstacles and difficulties, we give thanks that our Lord is greater and mightier than all, and we pray to help us because we need that daily help.

We pray for grace for every time of need. We pray to bless us all here today, our homes, our families, and all whom we love. May the presence of God be innocent upon us.

[31 : 46] Take us all home safely, do us good, and cleanse us from all our sin. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.