



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Mark 14:43-52 Mark

“Betrayed, Arrested and Forsaken”

TRANSCRIPT

Our text and the Scripture reading is Mark 14:43-52. You remember the Lord has been in the garden of Gethsemane. He has been seeking the Lord’s will, His Father’s will, asked that the cup be taken from Him, but that is not God’s will. God’s will is that He drink the cup and that He suffer. And so now He, having received that and come to that conviction, He comes to His disciples. He says, “Arise – ” verse 42 “ – let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!” And then in verse 43:

“Immediately while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a multitude with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now he who was betraying Him had given them a signal, saying, ‘Whomever I shall kiss, He is the one; seize Him and lead Him away under guard.’ After coming, he immediately went to Him, saying, ‘Rabbi!’ and kissed Him. They laid hands on Him and seized Him. But a certain one of those who stood by drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. And Jesus said to them, ‘Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me, as *though I were* a robber? Every day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me; but *this has happened* that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.’ And they left Him and fled.

“And a certain young man was following Him, wearing *nothing but* a linen sheet over *his* naked *body*; and they seized him. But he left the linen sheet and escaped naked.”

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May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it together. Let’s bow now in a word of prayer.

Our gracious heavenly Father, we do thank You for the time that we have again to come together and to open the Scriptures and study Your Word, to continue through our study of the gospel of Mark and this very crucial night in our Lord’s life, and look at some very distressing events, events that were distressing to Him. And yet, to see how He triumphed over them as a man of faith. And we pray, Lord, that You’d teach us and instruct us as we consider this picture that we receive of our Lord, we might also see in Him how we are to live and how we are to act and gain the confidence that He’s leading us, this One who has gone before us in all of the trials of life.

Father, we pray that You’d prepare us this morning for the week to come, to do that by focusing our attention on Your Son and, in doing so, remembering the great grace that You have extended to an unworthy people. You sent Him to suffer all of the sufferings of hell itself on the cross, to drink the cup of Your wrath for a people who were not seeking You, who had no claim upon You, who were enemies, who were children of wrath, sons of disobedience. And yet, it is of such as us that You chose Your people and You sent Your Son to purchase us. We praise You for that. We thank You for it and pray that You’d instruct us in these ways this morning to give us a great appreciation of the grace that is Yours that has been poured out upon us.

We thank You, Father, that in that grace that we have received is the privilege to come to You in prayer as we’re doing now. And a corporate prayer, prayer as a church, as the body of Christ, and we in that great privilege do intercede for those in need. We think of those who are sick, those who are in particularly difficult straits at the present time. Bless them, Father, and help them in the midst of their affliction to look to Christ. We pray for those in financial difficulty. Bless them. Bless those who are healthy. Bless us who are not experiencing times of financial difficulty or marital difficulty. But Lord, help us to remember that that is the case, our good situation is so

because of You. And help us to be thankful and to be diligent, that we might be pleasing to You.

We pray for our nation, Father. Pray You’d bless it. Pray that You’d give wisdom to our leaders in times of difficulty. And we pray that You’d give wisdom to the people of this nation, that they might seek wise leaders. And we pray, Lord, for our church again. We pray Your blessing upon us at this time and not only at this time, but this evening when we come together to remember the Lord, remember His death on our behalf and all that we have in Him. We pray You’d bless that meeting as well as this, and edify us and build us up in the faith.

Do that, Father, with this final hymn that we sing. Prepare our hearts for the ministry of the Word and give us attentive hearts as we listen to the Scriptures, as we seek to study them together. May it be a good time for all of us. May we be edified. May You be glorified. May the name of Your Son be magnified. We pray in His name, Amen.

In the Hebrews 2:10, there is the description given of our Lord as “the author of our salvation,” meaning the originator of our salvation, the founder of our salvation. And yet that’s a description that really means more than that, at least it possibly can mean more than that, because that word “author” has more than one sense, and perhaps that’s the reason that the author of Hebrews chose it to describe our Lord. It can have the idea of a leader or a ruler, speaking of one who goes before others and leads them in the way. And so there are a number of different translations that have been given to that verse of Scripture. If you read the Revised Standard Version or the New International Version, it translates it “pioneer of their salvation.” The King James Version translates it “captain of their salvation,” picturing Christ as our guide or as F. F. Bruce says, “pathfinder,” the one who leads us in the way and goes before us.

So the picture emerges of Christ as our captain, as the One who saves a great host of people and then leads us through this world to ever higher ground in our experience, and ultimately into eternal glory. He has established the way of salvation, and we are following Him in it. Later, as you know, the author of Hebrews exhorts us

to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author – again that word – the captain, the leader and perfecter of faith. He is the One who is the great example of faith. He is the One who has brought faith to its perfection and if we want to know how to live our lives and if we want a guide in this life, if we want our faith built up to maturity, then we look to Him. We study Him. We consider Him, who is the captain of our salvation, who is that author of our faith. He’s the One who strengthens us. He’s the One who guides us. He’s our leader.

But He’s not our leader simply because the Bible calls Him our leader and our captain. Every great leader proves Himself in the heat of battle and becomes by His example the kind of man that men, women want to follow, and the Lord has certainly done that. He has proven Himself to be a great leader because He’s walked through this life just as we have. He has experienced all of the difficulties, all of the temptations that you and I experience. He wasn’t above all of that. He experienced it all. In fact, to a greater degree than you and I will ever experience it, because He experienced it without sin and felt the full intensity and force of temptation and of trials. And each time, with each test, with each temptation, He emerged triumphant and proved Himself to be our leader through the struggles of life.

Those struggles and sufferings were experienced by Him all through life, but they were particularly intense at this time of His life, this last stage of His life, these last hours of His life, and they became very great on this last night of His life before the crucifixion. It was the night in which He was betrayed by His disciple, arrested by His enemies, and forsaken by all of His friends. Terrible events unfold this evening and Luke’s account of it gives us a different slant, a different set of facts. And in that, Luke tells us that when He was arrested, He said to His captors, “This hour and the power of darkness are yours.” It’s your hour. But we know that it was their hour only because He allowed it to be.

What is clear from the events that unfold in our text is that He is in control of all of them. As He says in verse 49, “*This has happened* that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.” The whole night unfolds according to the will of God. And though He’s forsaken by His disciples, and though He’s in the power of His enemies, nevertheless,

He’s the master of the night. And that’s the kind of leader that we want to follow. We don’t want a leader who can simply lead us through easy paths, who can take care of us when times are good. We want a leader who can lead us over treacherous terrain, who knows the way when we don’t know the way, who sees through the dark and can lead us, and that’s exactly what our Lord proves Himself to be, the leader, the captain of our salvation.

Well, His agony in the garden is over. He has accepted the cup of wrath that His Father has held out to Him. He is ready for His hour. He is at peace. He is composed, and He is prepared for the events that now unfold very rapidly. “While He was still speaking – ” Mark writes. That is, while He was telling His sleeping disciples to awake, to arise, the soldiers arrive to arrest Him. And it was a large band of soldiers, “a multitude,” Mark writes. And we know from John’s account that it was made up of both the Jewish temple police as well as a detachment of Roman soldiers sent by the Sanhedrin, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. In fact, we know from Luke’s account that some of them were there that night with the arresting party, probably in the background hiding in the shadows, but they were there and their soldiers were well armed. They came carrying torches and swords and clubs.

They were going to make sure that they arrested Him. They had not been very successful at doing that in the past. One example of that is found in John chapter 7. The Lord was teaching in the temple and the priests and the Pharisees sent the temple police to arrest Him, to seize Him. And then sometime later they come back empty handed. And the priests want to know where is He? Well, why did they fail on their mission? And they explained in amazement, “Never did a man speak the way this man speaks.” Evidently, He frustrated them in their plans by virtue of His teaching. It was that great. It was that powerful. There was such a presence about Him that they couldn’t touch Him, just by His teaching. And so knowing the power of this man, they came prepared to ensure His arrest, so they bring all of their weapons.

William Hendrickson has seen some irony in all of this. He writes, “Torches and lanterns to search for the Light of the World, swords and cudgels to subdue the

Prince of Peace.” But then they never understood Him in that way. They never understood Him in terms of being the Prince of Peace, or the Light of the World, or the Lamb of God. They took His claim to be the Messiah as a threat to establish a worldly kingdom like the Roman empire, a kingdom that would overthrow their position in that realm and one that would overturn the status quo. And so they didn’t want any of that. They were afraid that He was going to establish a kingdom like that kingdom of Rome, a worldly kingdom established by worldly means, by force of arms.

And so they came prepared for resistance, which again is ironic, bringing clubs to subdue the creator, the almighty. Think about it in those terms, you see that these men were very foolish, very blind. And yet, it’s no different than what we see today. We can still see the same kinds of irony among the great men of this world who still oppose the Lord. He’s not with us physically, and so they don’t need clubs. It wouldn’t do any good. What they do is they use their words. They oppose the Word of God with their words. They seek with worldly wisdom to overthrow the wisdom of God, and of course it can’t happen and it doesn’t happen. In spite of all of their efforts, the Word of God prevails. Christ establishes His church and continues to establish it and protect it. But nevertheless, that’s the way of the world. Not the way of faith. It’s the way of sight. And here we see the same thing. They come with their army to overthrow the creator, and yet no army no matter what the size, no matter what the strength, could have arrested Him if it had not been His will.

Now John records that when they approached and asked for Jesus of Nazareth and He responded, “I Am,” they fell to the ground. A display of His power, of His might, a little glimpse of His glory, evidently. He could have tread the wine press of His wrath. He could have destroyed all of them in a moment with one word, as He will at His second return, if that had been His will to do so. But He hadn’t come to pour out wrath. He’d come to receive wrath at the cross of Calvary. And so He would allow them to take Him, and He would allow Himself to be found by their guide, by their leader, by their pathfinder, Judas, whom Mark identifies as “one of the twelve.”

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Now, of course, we know that he’s one of the twelve and Mark is not trying to inform us that he was a disciple. He knows we know that. But Mark states it, as do Matthew and Luke, in order to punctuate the treachery involved in this in order to show the enormity of his guilt. Betrayed by one of the twelve, one of His friends, one of those who had been close with Him, one who had sat at His feet, one who had enjoyed His teaching, and His fellowship, and His ministry, who had enjoyed His counsel, no doubt, who had looked into the face of the Son of God, received nothing from Him but good, nothing but kindness from Him, and now he turns on Him and betrays Him, betrays His benefactor.

It must have been a very painful moment for our Lord. I think we sometimes forget that, but our Lord, though He is the Son of God and though He is the eternal Son of God, and above all things, nevertheless, as a man, He felt the pain that men and women, that people feel when a friend comes and betrays. It’s painful. Betrayal is always evil, but the evil is increased when it is betrayal by a friend. And yet, Judas magnifies the crime even more by the means by which he does betray Him, betrays Him with a kiss. That was the prearranged signal that he had made with the arresting party to identify the Lord. It was dark and even though they had torches, the torchlight could play tricks on the eyes. And so he would give this signal to point Him out. As he says, “Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him and lead Him away under guard.”

It was a cruel deception, because it was customary in that day for students to greet their rabbis with a kiss. It was a symbol of friendship. It was a symbol of affection in the east. In fact, this particular word that’s used is an intensive word and so it was a kiss that showed great affection when he gave it. Might have been a prolonged kiss in order to make sure that they saw him identifying Christ. But it was one that showed affection, at least outwardly. But of course, it was anything but affection. This was a singularly evil and cynical act on the part of Judas.

And so we read that as the army approached, Judas immediately stepped forward, saying, “Rabbi,” and kissed Him. The Lord, of course, wasn’t fooled by any of this. Mark doesn’t record His response to Judas, but Luke does. And he writes that

Jesus said to him, “Judas, Are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?” And once again, He unmasks Judas as He had done in the upper room some hours before. And when He handed him the **sop**.

And once again, He shows from all of this that He knows the thoughts and the motives of our heart. We can’t hide that from Him. He sees to the very heart of men. We look on the outward form, but God looks upon the heart. This is God that we see here. And in doing this, He again shows that He was not being carried away by events. He wasn’t a victim of these events, that He was in control of all of them. That’s made very clear in that passage in John that we referred to a moment ago, which may have occurred at this point. It’s difficult to know exactly how all of these events come together and to harmonize them, but some have harmonized them in this way.

At this point, Jesus steps forward to meet the soldiers and identifies Himself with those words, “I Am.” And when they ask for Jesus of Nazareth, and this is when they fall to the ground. The significance of that event is to be found in the meaning of that expression, “I Am,” which is very familiar to us from the book of Exodus. You remember Moses was out the backside of the desert in Midian, and he’s out there shepherding the sheep, and he sees this bush that is burning and yet not being consumed. And so he draws near to see this very curious sight, and that’s when the Lord speaks to him out of the bush and identifies him by saying, “I Am who I Am,” meaning “I am the Self-Existent One.”

And so by repeating those words and causing such a powerful effect by them, the Lord was revealing that He is that One in the Old Testament. He is that One who spoke from the bush. He is the God of the Old Testament. He is Yahweh, or He is Jehovah, who crushed the armies of Pharaoh and if it was His desire to do so, could crush the army of Caesar and the priests. But that was not what He desired to do. He’d already settled the matter in the garden with His Father, and He had decided to do what He desired to do most of all, and that was to do the will of God. “Not what I will, but what Thou wilt.” And that was to go to Calvary.

And so when He didn’t resist, the soldiers seized Him, verse 46 states, but the disciples were not prepared to go without resisting. And one of them “drew His sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear.” And John tells us that that disciple was **John** and that the name of the slave was Malchus, the slave evidently of Caiaphas, the high priest. He’s out there right in front, right next to Judas in the front of all of this. And it was one of those typically impulsive acts by Peter that may have been touched off by the Lord’s display of power when He sees the soldiers, all of these men with their torches and their swords and their clubs sprawled out before Him. Perhaps Peter was emboldened at that point and grabs his sword and he is, at that point, ready to take on the whole army single-handedly.

It was a brave act by Peter, but it was also a stupid act. Peter wasn’t a soldier. Peter was a fisherman. His skill was with the net. It wasn’t with the sword. And you see that very clearly from what he does here. He steps up to the plate, he swings for a home run, and he gets a foul ball. See what I’ve been entertaining myself with lately here in October with the pennant races and all. But it’s very much like that. He’s going to be a soldier. He takes his sword and he had every intention to split Malchus right down the middle, or chop off his head, but the best he could do was lop off an ear, or maybe just a piece of an ear.

As I said, it was impulsive. It was an ill-conceived act because it was a misguided act. Peter, for all of his zeal, he still didn’t understand the nature of our Lord’s mission and ministry. He didn’t realize the necessity of the cross, in spite of the fact that the Lord had given extensive teaching to both him and the other disciples. He didn’t understand that before the kingdom, there had to be a cross. Before any of us could enter into the kingdom of God, we had to be qualified for that kingdom. We couldn’t be citizens of God’s kingdom and be unrighteous. We had to be justified. We have to be sanctified. We have to be glorified. And that could only occur by means of the cross.

But not understanding that, he and the other disciples really differed very little in their understanding of the kingdom from that of the understanding that the priests and the Pharisees, the whole Sanhedrin had. They were looking for a worldly

kingdom to be built by worldly means, and evidently thought that when they resisted, the Lord would resist, that this would be the moment that they had been waiting for, that the battle would begin and the kingdom would come. As I say, it was zeal, but it was zeal without knowledge, and in the end, that always proves destructive. Now, for all of this bravery that we see in Peter, it accomplished nothing. At least, it didn’t accomplish anything of value to our Lord.

Now, it may have added some support to the charges that the Sanhedrin would bring against our Lord that He is no friend of Caesar. He’s Caesar’s rival. He’s seeking to overthrow that kingdom and establish a kingdom that will overthrow Rome. And they could point to this incident. See? His disciples carry swords and they swing them. We know there was one other sword in the garden, as well. Luke tells us that two swords were brought, so perhaps Simon the Zealot carried his sword in there, too.

But all of that would have undermined our Lord’s mission, and so the Lord quickly put an end to it, put an end to this resistance. Luke records the Lord’s words, “Stop. No more of this.” And then turning to the slave, “He touched His ear and healed him.” And with that, the Lord restored order. And again, in doing so, He proved Himself to be the Son of God. He proved Himself to be the Great Physician, the Prince of Peace. He would not accomplish His mission by the sword. He would do it by the cross. He would accomplish His mission His way. It illustrates the nature of His mission, I think, because it shows in the way He dealt with that slave, the way He dealt with His disciples in telling them to put up their swords that He came to heal.

He came to save. He didn’t come to destroy. And He would conquer, but He wouldn’t conquer by worldly means and He wouldn’t conquer by force of arms. That’s they way of false religions. False religions conquer by force, like the armies of Islam, pouring out of Arabia, moving across the Middle East and north Africa, forcing converts by the edge of the sword. Now that’s fanatical zeal, not love for God, not love for His truth. Now we are soldiers, to be sure, and Peter had that much right.

And Paul would later instruct us in Ephesians 6 to put on the full armor of God. We’re soldiers, but we’re soldiers of a different kind. Our armor and our

weapons are made of spiritual stuff. And as Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 10, “the weapons of our warfare are not the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” It’s a battle that’s waged in terms of thought with words, with truth. It’s a spiritual battle. And the truth of God, the gospel of Christ, that is our weapon and it is the most effective, the most powerful weapon on earth.

That may be hard to believe, but that’s the clear testimony of Scripture. Paul was convinced of that. Paul says in Romans 1:16, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” And with that confidence and that conviction, Paul swept through the world of his day conquering spiritual mental fortresses with the Word of God. That’s our weapon, the Scriptures, which is the power of God. And in addition to that, prayer, the kind of prayer that moves mountains. We’ve been well equipped. We’ve been well armed. And so God doesn’t need armies and swords and force to advance the truth and to change lives. In fact, it won’t advance the truth and force won’t really change lives. The Lord told Peter, He said, “All those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword, so put it away. Don’t use a sword.”

We are in a spiritual conflict and the only weapons that will succeed are the spiritual weapons that we have been given. But I think in reality we have to admit that we see something of ourself in Peter and the way he responds to this crisis. We’re all a little bit like him. We see a problem and what do we do? We grab a sword and we start swinging and we want to solve this problem that we have by worldly means. It’s natural to do that. We want to find something tangible to deal with the crisis.

And I don't know, that may be occurring to some extent within the evangelical church with its involvement in politics. Now, I want to be very careful here because I believe that there are good politics and there are bad politics and Christians above all people should be good citizens and be involved in that aspect of life. We should be politically literate. We should be politically educated. We should be involved

politically as good citizens. But you’ve seen what I’ve seen on the television or other places or on the radio and know of ministers, good ministers, who preach on social and political problems rather than the Word of God. And they may say good things and we may tend to agree with what they say. Oftentimes they’re simply preaching to the choir. But nevertheless in saying those things, they’re not changing lives. It’s not politics that changes the heart or really affects the world. That’s a worldly sword.

And if we think that our mission is a political one and that our sword is a political party, then we’re acting like Peter and the result of that can be confusion. In fact, it has been confusion. And I think there are plenty of people today that confuse the gospel with a social agenda or a political agenda or so-called family values. What’s the gospel of Jesus Christ? Well, it’s living like a conservative. And they don’t want to hear it. And they fail to identify the gospel with the truth, which is Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who became man in order to die for sinners and obtain their forgiveness and eternal life. Well, that’s our mission is to preach that, and it can be confusing when we don’t, confusing not only in the things that we say and what we represent, but confusing in terms of our life and how we spend our time and our energy because it can all be channeled into a political cause rather than spiritual causes.

And the devil’s quite content for us to do that, I might add. The devil is quite content to have a conservative nation, a very moral state. Just look at Salt Lake City. He must be very proud of that. He’s content to have morality without any conversions, without any spiritual change. We can see it nationally, I think, but we can see it personally. We do the same thing. We can become focused upon the moral and not focused upon Christ. We can fix our mind on details of how to live our life and become legalistic and not walk with the Lord. Now if we walk with the Lord, we’re going to deal with the moral. It’s going to take care of that. But Satan is quite content to get our minds off Christ and fix it on how we live our life rather than who is the One that leads us in our life.

Or we can pick up a fleshly sword in a crisis, a personal crisis in which we decide we’re going to take matters into our own hands rather than follow the Word of

God, rather than pray about it, rather than wait upon the Lord to work it out. We do these things when we fail to consider the plan and the purposes of God, just as Peter had done. He wasn’t thinking about what the Lord had taught him. He wasn’t thinking about Christ’s purpose and what He was going to do. He wasn’t thinking about the things that had been taught to him. And we do that, we do the same thing. We respond the same way when we are in ignorance of the truth of Scripture and when we are thereby distracted by the things of this world. That’s why the church must recognize that its mission is to give spiritual light, to proclaim the gospel, to teach the Word of God, to enter into prayer diligently for its people, for one another, so that we will be built up in the truth and be able to deal with the challenges of life every day when they come upon us.

And that’s how we look to Christ. That’s how we look to Jesus. If you think about it, that might be a puzzling exhortation that the author of Hebrews gives us, to look unto Jesus. It’s a very significant one, though. We look unto Jesus by looking at Him in the Scriptures. And so we’ve got to be devoted to the Scriptures. And it’s interesting to consider that phrase because it has a sense of looking away from other things unto Jesus. Don’t look at the distractions around you. Remember he’s speaking there about running a race, and you get rid of everything that encumbers you. You have to be one of a singleness of mind and focus and you have to look at Him and not at all of the distractions around us, whatever they may be. Focus upon Him. Well, we do that by looking at Him in the Scriptures, by looking at Him right here as He dealt with this crisis and how He responded to His enemies in the night. And that’s how we focus upon Him.

So we’re to be looking to Him, and the Lord does not strengthen His people, He does not bless their efforts regardless of the zeal that may be behind them, when they are acting with zeal without knowledge. As the prophet Zechariah writes, “Not by might, nor by power – ” the kind of power that Peter was trying to apply to the situation, not by that “ – but by My Spirit says the Lord.” And so the Lord said to Peter, “Stop. No more of this.”

Then He turned from the disciples to those who had come to arrest Him and exposes their cowardice, and He exposes their hypocrisy. He does it with a question, verse 48. “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me, as *though I were* a robber? Every day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me.” Well, they didn’t seize Him because He’s innocent and they knew He was innocent. If He’d been guilty, of course they’d have gone in the open and they would have seized Him. No problem about that. But they chose the cover of night to hide their guilt and because they were afraid of the crowds, afraid of the multitudes. And so there’s fear in this and there’s guilt in this.

It was all wrong, and yet He would allow Himself to be arrested because, as He explains, “*This has happened* that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.” In other words, this was no accident. He hadn’t been caught by surprise. They were actually carrying out His Father’s will. As evil as it was, it fit within the plan of God. It was to fulfill the Scriptures. And so by means of this, He would go to the cross. He would fulfill Psalm 22. He would fulfill Isaiah 53. He would fulfill Zechariah 13:7. The shepherd would be struck down and the sheep would be scattered. Everything that took place was simply the outworking of God’s plan to make atonement for the sins of men in order to provide the propitiation, to actually affect that propitiation for the world.

So what we see in all of this is not chaos. It’s not the work of God coming to nothing. It is actually God’s will coming to fruition, God using their evil to produce blessing. He does that. He actually does that. And that’s reason for great comfort and great courage for each of us. It was their hour and the power of darkness, but God had not lost His grip. He was in control and it’s no different today. We naturally become discouraged by a number of things that happen personally, corporately. As we look out on our nation and think of our society, we can’t help but be disturbed by what we see. There would be something wrong with us if we weren’t disturbed by it. Can’t help but be somewhat disturbed by what we see going on in churches today. And yet God almighty is the One who is ruling over this world and He is still ruling over His church, He’s still in control, still building His church, still working out His

will and bringing everything to His appointed end. His plan cannot be frustrated and so even in the darkest hour, we are to follow Him. We are to keep our eyes fixed on Him and allow Him to guide us through it with the confidence that He will, He’ll do that.

Unfortunately, the disciples couldn’t do that. When they saw that Jesus wouldn’t join the fight, that He had surrendered Himself to the enemy, all of their courage evaporated and they cut and run. Mark writes, “They all left Him and fled.” So just as the Lord said, the sheep were scattered. It’s a tragic picture and no doubt it grieved the Lord to see His closest companions, His closest friends, His disciples that He had poured His life into scatter, leave Him, abandon Him. But it didn’t surprise Him that He had told them that it would occur. Verse 27, “You will all fall away,” He said. And they did. He had warned them about this. You remember He told them that “the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” He had instructed them to keep watching and praying, be diligent in that. And they didn’t do that. And this is the result. Rather than keeping their eyes on Christ, they looked at the enemy. They fixed their eyes upon the enemy. And so their faith failed because they were overcome by fear.

Fear frustrates so many Christians in the Christian life. The things that we can do but that we don’t do because we’re afraid to do it. And there are things that are fearful. It may be in the evening meeting. It’s a fearful thing to stand up and speak, to share something that the Lord has done in your life or something that you’ve seen in the Scripture. So we don’t do it because we’re fearful. What are they going to think of me? What if I make a mistake? Well, we can multiply the examples. A fear of giving the gospel to someone at work. Let’s be honest. That’s not easy. That’s kind of scary. We’re frustrated by fear because we look at the situation around us. We don’t look at Christ. We don’t focus on Him. And when we don’t do that, we will do just what the disciples do. We’ll be overcome by fear and we’ll scatter because if it’s true of the disciples, men who walked with the Lord, it’s true of us. There are illustrations of just how much the faith of a true believer can fail when that believer is not fixing His eyes on Christ.

And so all 11 disciples fled: Peter, James, John; all who had vowed loyalty to death, who said they could drink the cup that Christ would drink. They were confident. All of them said it to one way or another, “We’re not going to forsake You.” And yet, here they go. They escape into the night, all 11 of them. But one person remained. Not one of the 11, an anonymous person whom Mark identifies in verses 51 and 52, identifies only as a young man who had followed the Lord and His disciples into the garden. He was clothed in only a linen sheet, so he seems to have followed them hastily. And when the disciples fled, evidently he doesn’t flee immediately. Perhaps he was able to muster up more courage than they were and he didn’t want to forsake the Lord. And so he stands there until the soldiers grab him, and then his courage failed, as well, and he struggled, managed to get away, but only by leaving the sheet behind and escaping naked.

It’s a mysterious incident that he records here, even a bit strange, I guess. Only Mark records it, and so it’s, as you can imagine, raised a lot of questions. Who is this young man? What’s his identity? And what’s the point of this to the narrative that Mark has recorded? Some people have felt it’s trivial. Must have been added later on. Well, these are the kinds of things that raise questions, and naturally they raise questions. A number of guesses have been made as to who the young man is, but the consensus of opinion is that it was Mark himself, which might explain why he alone of the gospel writers includes it. He’s the one who was particularly interested in it. It touched his life.

And that would fit with the tradition that that last supper had taken place in his house, that is in his parents’ house, and he as a young man was there, not in the meal at the meal itself, but he perhaps had listened to what was going on, and he went to bed, but kept listening, and then when he found that they had left, he hastily followed after them, threw this linen sheet around himself and went out. That may be the case. But what’s important, however, is not the identity of the person but the description that’s given of him.

Mark describes him as “a young man.” That’s a word used by other writers of men who are strong, who are valiant, who are faithful, who are wise. We have an

example of this in 1 John 2:14, where John writes, “I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.” So young men are strong. Young men overcome the evil one, and yet this young man doesn’t do that. He doesn’t overcome. He is overcome. He’s overcome by the evil one. His courage fails. His faith fails. And He flees. And that seems to be the point of the incident. Jesus was totally forsaken by men. Not even the strong and the brave could stay with Him. The hour was too great for even them, and He was left all alone, betrayed by His disciple, arrested by His enemies, forsaken by His friends. Alone because the disciples had forsaken Him, for sure, but also and more importantly alone because He was following His Father’s will. He was doing what His Father had called Him to do.

And we can be sure that if we are following God’s will in our life, there are going to be times in our life when we are going to be alone. It might be because we make a decision that’s not popular, that goes against conventional wisdom that calls for us to give up ease and comfort, and we don’t want to do that. Following the Lord can be hard and we may find ourself as a husband with a wife that isn’t particularly interested in following along with that, or vice versa, or at work we find that people don’t want to come to us when we take such a stand. Friends can forsake us for a lot of reasons. And we may have trials, hardships in our life that they don’t want to be a part of, they don’t want a share in, and so they just don’t come around anymore. And I’m speaking of Christian friends that can do that. Because remember, these are disciples of our Lord. These are true believers who have deserted the Lord himself. Don’t think they can’t avoid or forsake you or me or that we can’t do it ourselves.

And so if we find ourself in that kind of a situation, we should remember that it’s happened to the Lord. We’re not alone in it. He understands. He knows what it is to be alone in the night surrounded by your enemies, and because of that He can be a High Priest that sympathizes in all of our difficulties, all of our situations. And so as the author of Hebrews tells us, we’re to draw near to Him that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Look to Him. Fix your eyes on Jesus. And He can help us also to sympathize with and be charitable toward those who have

failed us because He Himself did that. He forgave and restored all 11 of these men, all 12 of them counting this young man, Mark, who deserted Him. Each of them came to a conviction of their sin. Each of them were forgiven. Each of them were lifted up from that terrible failure to even greater service of our Lord.

We can be used of God even when we fail Him miserably. That’s the greatness of our Lord. And we see His greatness here witnessed in this whole scene that we’re studying. He stands alone forsaken by friends, surrounded by enemies, and yet we see in all of this as William Hendrickson says, “His unshakable and majestic composure.” That’s the captain of our salvation. He towers over all of these men. Disciples have fled. There are these nervous soldiers all around Him. And He towers above them. That’s the One on whom we rely in times of difficulty when we have to walk in the night, when we have to travel through danger. He’s passed through it already. He’s gone before us. He was unshaken in the midst of all of it. He has established the way and we should look to Him. We should rely upon Him to lead us through it.

And we see His greatness not only in the way He is composed in the midst of all of this, but in His willingness to be there, His willingness to be forsaken. He voluntarily put Himself in that place where He would be alone. He knew exactly what would happen. He voluntarily entered into it. He voluntarily accepted it for the sake of His people, for the sake of those who fled from Him. He voluntarily accepted that knowing that in a few hours He would be forsaken by His Father, as well, and the greatest moment of forsaking, voluntarily suffered the isolation of that night, which led to the isolation of the cross, which was hell on Calvary. He did that in order that we wouldn’t experience that hell, that we wouldn’t experience that eternal isolation, that we would be united with one another, that we would be in eternal fellowship and eternal joy with Him. That’s what He undertook on our behalf.

And again, in the meantime, He’s leading us through this world in control of the hard and the challenging events that touch us just as much and just as completely as He was in control of those events that touched Him. He is our captain. We are His soldiers. And even at those times when we feel that we are forsaken, we are really not

forsaken. He is with us, and we are to keep our minds on Him, keep our focus on the mission that we have and not the distractions that are around us.

There is an old picture of the Christian that was done by Albrecht Durer, the great artist of the Reformation entitled “Knight, Death, and Devil” that illustrates this point I’m making, I think. It pictures a knight in full armor riding a horse, and yet alone. Not completely alone because at his side along the path that he is traveling stands death with an ugly grin on his face and an hourglass in his hand that he’s holding up to the knight to show that time was running out and that danger was always present. And behind the knight stands the devil, a monstrous-looking creature with a very mean-looking weapon in his hand. But the knight doesn’t fix his eyes on either of these distractions, but on the path that’s before him that leads to a castle on the hill.

And that’s what we are. We are knights. We are soldiers. We are men and women in His service, carrying out His mission, and the way to carry that out is not to look at the dangers around us, which are real, which are there, but to keep our eyes on the path, to keep our eyes on Christ and follow Him, and know that there is an end to this journey that we are on, and we will safely arrive at that end and He will guarantee that because He’s with us. He’s our captain, in control of the events. We’re on that journey if we’re believers in Jesus Christ.

But my question to you as we come to the end of our hour is are you on that journey? Are you a believer in Jesus Christ? Because you are on a journey one way or the other. You’re on a journey to a glorious end or you are on a journey and on a path that leads to destruction. And if you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, if you have not looked to Him first of all as Savior and then as captain, then you are on the most perilous of journeys because He is not with you and you truly are alone in the midst of enemies and leading to a tragic end. And so if that is your case, let me close with this exhortation. Flee. Not from Christ, but flee to Christ and trust in Him, whom to trust in is to be saved, to enter into the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. May God help you to do that, and may God help each of us to continue to follow our captain, who has proven Himself to be worthy of us, worthy of our trust

in all that we do. May God help us to do that. Shall we stand now for the benediction?

Our gracious heavenly Father, we do thank You for the great blessing it is to know that Your Son is going before us as our captain, as the author of our salvation, the originator of it, the founder of it, and the protector of it, the guide of our souls. Father, help us to trust Him more completely and to live lives of bolder service to Him.

We confess that we don’t do that. We are like those disciples and when opportunities come to serve and come to stand for Him, we oftentimes turn and flee. We don’t keep our eyes on Him because they’re fixed on the enemy and we’re overcome by fear, not faith. Help us to be ruled by faith. Help us to have that faith, produce that faith within us, that we might be good servants, faithful knights as we live in the midst of danger and live with you at our side, we pray. Bless us to that end, in Christ’s name, Amen.