

Light Shining in the Darkness

May 4th, 2014

Luke 22:47-53

"⁴⁷While 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, ⁴⁸but Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" ⁴⁹And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" ⁵⁰And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. ⁵¹But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him. ⁵²Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? ⁵³When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.""

I make no apology for the simplicity and redundancy of this message. What these words reveal about Jesus is something we've seen over and over again throughout our study of Luke's gospel: that Jesus is in sovereign control, and that He is filled with a wonderful, tender compassion. Control and compassion. Jesus is great, and Jesus is good. One, or the other, alone, would not be helpful, but in Jesus Christ we see both perfect control and perfect compassion.

I cannot be reminded of these things often enough. What a life of freedom flows from embracing these two truths! To know – to be absolutely convinced, not just doctrinally, but to have it explosively alive in your innermost being – that Jesus Christ (who upholds the universe by the word of His power and commands demons, stormy seas, illness, and even death itself) is totally, 100% FOR you, and that He rejoices to use His omnipotent power to compassionately do you good. What a rock!

They're both on display here. There are three interactions in this passage: 1. Jesus interacts with Judas (v.47-48); 2. Jesus interacts with the disciples (v.49-51); 3. Jesus interacts with the crowd of priests, officers and elders who have come to arrest Him (v.52-53). And in each interaction, I want you to see both the control and the compassion of Jesus on display. I hope your faith is strengthened this morning as we behold them again from this text.

Interaction #1: Jesus and Judas

We've already seen in this chapter the plot devised for Judas to betray Jesus (v.3-6), and we've seen Jesus predict His own betrayal at the last supper with His disciples (v.21-22). Now we see the wretched act carried out:

"⁴⁷While 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, ⁴⁸but Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?""

The Control of Jesus

Luke has already made it clear that Judas' treachery is not taking Jesus by surprise:

"²¹But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. ²²For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!"" (Luke 22:21-22; cf. Luke 18:31ff, John 6:70-71)

So we know that Judas is not frustrating the plan of God; he is (unwittingly) fulfilling it. And we see from the way this interaction unfolds, that Jesus is in control. He's in charge. How do we see that here? Judas has come, leading the crowd along, and as he draws near (but before he's done it), Jesus says, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" How does Jesus know that? He hadn't kissed Him yet, so how can Jesus say this? Because He knew; He knew everything. He knew Judas' heart, He knew about the plot, He knew about the kiss, He knew all the details. He's not being frustrated or caught-off guard in this moment of treachery. He's in control.

The Compassion of Jesus

But the question in verse 48 is not only a statement of Jesus' foreknowledge and total control of the situation; it is also (according to many of the commentators) a tender appeal of His compassion, even for this miserable traitor Judas. We know Jesus isn't asking the question as a statement of surprise, because He knew the plan. It is a

final, compassionate plea in which Jesus attempts to startle Judas into recognizing the horror of his act, and urge him to repentance. “Judas, how could you have chosen such a sign? Are you so dead, so beyond feeling, that you would use a kiss?”

And I think the compassion of Jesus here, and its intended effect on Judas, is worth pondering for just a minute. This is the last mention of Judas in this book, and it’s worth learning an important lesson from his tragic life. Because this tragic, treacherous act didn’t come out of the blue. It’s not as though he wakes up one morning, having fallen asleep the previous night brimming with devotion and loyalty to Jesus, saying, “I think I’ll betray Jesus today.” There was a slow, steady progression that led to this evil.

Indications are that it had to do with money. Judas was a thief. Surely, along the way, there were pangs in his conscience about the duplicity in his life. He began to disguise how he really felt about Jesus and His mission, by going along with things on the outside. There was a stark disconnect between his secret life and the public persona he had established. He was living a lie. And he got so far into this duplicity – into the promotion of this lie – that he reached a place where it was easier to just betray the Son of God, than to humbly own his sin, confess and repent. This dramatic, horrible act of betrayal did not spring up out of nowhere; it was the culmination of a long journey of compromise, dishonesty and hypocrisy.

Let that be a warning to you, and let the compassion of Jesus towards even this miserable traitor induce you to be honest about your sin. There’s no need to hide, run, pretend, defend. The love of Jesus is for the most miserable of sinners, but you cannot cling to your self-created falsehood and have His massive love at the same time. Hold onto your sin long enough, pretend it’s not happening, or it’s not that big a deal, become at peace with the disconnect between your public persona and your secret life, and you’re going the way of Judas. You may, in the

end, find your heart so hardened that you're unable to reach repentance, though you seek it with tears (Hebrews 12: 17).

Interaction #2: Jesus and Peter

Now at this point some things seem to start clicking for the disciples. All of a sudden, statements Jesus has made about a betrayal, some puzzling remarks Jesus had made to Judas, begin to come into focus, and they see this big crowd, with torches and lanterns and soldiers with weapons, and the religious leaders, and they finally realize what is going down, and they spring into action:

"⁴⁹And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" ⁵⁰And one of them (Peter, John 18:10) struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear."

The question is probably tied to v.36, where Jesus said, "But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one." It was a strange statement, and impetuous Peter doesn't wait for an answer. This plays right into the hands of the Jewish leaders, giving them exactly what they were looking for: a reason to find some legal basis for making a charge to the Roman rulers against Jesus. With Jesus' disciples pulling swords and using violence, they could claim that Jesus leading an insurrection, and that He and His band of disciples were a threat to public safety. But here also, Jesus rules with control and compassion.

The Control of Jesus

"⁵¹But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him" (there's a great lesson to be learned here about how Jesus means for the Kingdom of God to advance in His absence. Whatever Jesus meant by telling them to exchange their cloak for a sword, clearly He did not mean that they should use violence to defend or attack in Jesus' name. In a society which is increasingly becoming polarized over the claims and commands of Jesus, we need to remember that: "³⁶My

kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.””).

In an instant, the soldier’s ear is reattached and made whole, so that Jesus can legitimately say what He did in John 18:36. He rules over Judas’ craftiness, and over Peter’s confusion, transforming this potentially damaging moment into another breathtaking display of the character of His Kingdom.

The Compassion of Jesus

And this healing is a *marvelous* expression of Jesus’ compassion, isn’t it? Put yourself in the scene: soldiers and servants encircle Jesus. Peter, flushed with anger, pulls out his sword and lunges at those nearest Jesus. Malchus (John 18:10) flinches, but not enough. Blinding pain and blood surge where his ear had been. Voices speak, but Malchus only hears the screaming wound, which he’s grabbed with both hands. He feels a hand touch his hands and the pain vanishes. Under his hands is an ear. Stunned, he looks at Jesus, already being led away. Disciples are scattering. Malchus looks down at his bloody hands. What a picture of the compassionate control of King Jesus!

It’s a snapshot of the gospel. Jesus – at the very moment of His arrest – with blood on the ground and swords flying in the air, reaches out to one of His enemies and heals Him. His compassion extends to the men who have come to kill Him! That compassion vividly depicts the compassion that led Jesus to the cross, where healing and life and forgiveness flow to hell-deserving sinners who wanted Him dead.

That is what sin is, whether it manifests in active hostility and rejection of Him, or whether it’s treating Him as a religious garnish to be placed on the side of life, a prop on the stage of the self-centered drama that you are director of. Either way, it is a vain, wicked choice to dethrone

Jesus from the place of preeminence that He is worthy of. It's a desire that He be dead, so that you can exalt yourself as lord of all.

And it deserves the sword of God's wrath. Indeed, one day Jesus will come bearing that sword, striking down all who would not have Him as their King (see Revelation 19). He has every right to wield that sword in Gethsemane (and here, today, in Pitman, and everywhere else) against His enemies. But on the cross, Jesus undergoes the sword of divine vengeance, so that you and I all who embrace Him in faith can be forgiven, cleansed, healed. "By His wounds you have been healed" (Isaiah 53:5; 1Peter 2:24).

Interaction #3: Jesus and the Religious Leaders

Having shown so powerfully the character of His Kingdom in healing Malchus, Jesus turns to the crowd that has gathered:

"⁵²Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? ⁵³When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me."

With these words, Jesus is exposing this mockery of justice for what it really is, and exposing how lawless those who professed to love the law really were. "I'm not an insurrectionist, mounting a rebellion. Traitors plot and plan in darkness (like Judas, John 13:30), but I've been in your temple every day, teaching in broad daylight. Yet you come at night, like I'm an armed robber?" In the end, it was they who were outside the realm of justice, and they knew it. That's why they came at night.

Yet here, again, we see in Jesus both compassion and control.

The Compassion of Jesus

I see compassion here in that Jesus uses reason to appeal to the consciences of those who have gathered to arrest and kill Him, rather than simply use brute force to destroy them all, which He could have done. In Matthew's account of this story, after Peter strikes with the

sword, Jesus says, "⁵²Put your sword back into its place...Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" That's 72,000 angels, and in 2 Kings 19 one angel kills 185,000 Assyrians.

So Jesus is not defeated here! But rather than strike, He speaks. He calmly, coolly, reasons with them to confront them with their irrational folly. That's how the Kingdom advances today: not with swords, but with words (2 Corinthians 5:11). We proclaim the good news of Jesus with gentleness and respect, and live lives of devotion to Him. We proclaim the word of the cross, and walk in the way of the cross. Jesus triumphed over the forces of darkness through weakness, and as His ambassadors, we do the same.

The Control of Jesus

Finally, Jesus explains the reason for such irrational, unjustifiable conduct: "⁵³But this is your hour, and the power of darkness." And these words demonstrate the control of Jesus. When Jesus says, "This is your hour," He wasn't referring to 60 minutes, but a short, limited period of time in which evil men would have their way. This is the hour when Judas' deceit and the religious leaders' malice and Satan's prowling would triumph. But it's just an hour. He places a time limit on the power of darkness. *He* places a time limit on the power of darkness. That means He rules, even in the darkness.

Even the dark hour that seemed to belong to Satan was really Jesus' hour. That Jesus tells the forces of darkness which hour is theirs shows that He is the Lord of that hour, and every hour. Even the dark hour of betrayal was subject to the greater power of God, who was working our greatest good and shining the light of His glory most brightly, in that hour of darkness. By willingly suffering this betrayal and everything that followed from it, Jesus was paying the price for our sin and purchasing our salvation at the price of His life.

Though Satan *appeared* to triumph in Gethsemane, at Calvary, and in the dark days when Jesus was buried in the grave, the suffering, misery, and hopelessness that he wrought only lasted an hour. But the life, joy, blessing, glory, freedom, comfort and peace that Jesus' resurrection secures is forever. Jesus' hour of darkness bent upward through resurrection into His exaltation at God's right hand and His power to gather a redeemed people to celebrate the riches of His glory for all eternity. The resurrection power of Jesus triumphs over the power of darkness, wreaking all the havoc it can.

There is a word of great encouragement and comfort for us as we consider that reversal, isn't there? A Savior who triumphs in His darkest hour can deliver His children from theirs. Because of Jesus, you can have total confidence today that there is nothing that all the powers of darkness can dish out to you that Jesus won't bend upward and use to lift you to greater heights of glory and joy in your eternal home, where righteousness dwells, all things are made new, every tear is wiped away and the former things are remembered no more.

Each of you will suffer disappointments and miseries in this broken world. But each of you trusting in Jesus is like a homeless man who sleeps under a bridge and eats out of dumpsters. One day a limousine pulls up and out steps an attorney, who hand him a letter. A long-lost relative has died and left him a fortune. The check will arrive in an hour. Suddenly, the cardboard shelter doesn't feel so hopeless. He can live for just a little while longer, because he knows that a vast fortune is on the way. It's just an hour.

"³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. ³⁷For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay;"

"¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer."