



The Reverend Frank Wang  
Mark 14:43-65

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English Standard Version

## *Betrayal and Sovereignty*

The 42<sup>nd</sup> Sermon in a series on The Gospel of Mark entitled  
*“The King and His Cross”*

### 1. Welcome

- a. Good morning! Again, welcome to Potomac Hills Presbyterian Church. I’m Frank Wang. I’m one of the pastors here. If you would turn with me to Mark 14:43-65, we’re continuing our series in the Gospel of Mark. And as you’re turning there, a quick word of context. Last week, we looked at Jesus’s time in the Garden of Gethsemane. In many ways, the Garden kicks off the downward spiral to the Cross. In literary terms, it’s when everything starts to go wrong for the heroes, leading to the climactic point in the plot where everything turns. And that’s the Cross and Resurrection. This morning as we examine Jesus’s arrest and subsequent hearing, we find ourselves feeling like suddenly things are unraveling for our Lord. And yet, we’re going to see how all of the things that “go wrong” are, in fact, all part of the plan. And naturally, there’s a ton of things to learn from the passage. The details are fascinating and add so much depth to the passage. But we don’t have time for everything. So we’re going to be focusing on betrayal, sovereignty, and identity this morning. So let’s read.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The background and exposition of this text is adapted from the commentaries *The Gospel of Mark* by William L. Lane, pp. 523-540; *Mark* by R.C. Sproul, pp. 375-387; *The Message of Mark* by Donald English, pp. 222-225; *Mark* by R. Kent Hughes, pp. 359-369.

## 2. Read passage

*And immediately, while he was still speaking, 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. 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." And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" And he kissed him. And they laid hands on him and seized him. But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out as against a robber, 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." And they all 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.*

*And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'" Yet even about this their testimony did not agree. And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death. And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, "Prophecy!" And the guards received him with blows.*

## 3. Pray

- a. Father, as we look at the arrest of your Son and our Lord, our hearts tremble with indignation and contempt for Judas. But humble us, for we ourselves are betrayers too as we consistently sin against You each day. Would you show us the depravity of our hearts while also showing us the sovereignty that is the foundation of Your grace. Show us Your Gospel this morning in Your Word, we pray. In Jesus name, Amen.

## 4. Introduction – Who is this man?

- a. Since I'm preaching, you know that there's a good chance that we're going to start with a movie reference. How many of you have seen the 1998 action thriller, *Ronin*, starring Robert DeNiro? It's a movie about a team of mercenaries hired to steal a briefcase to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Russian mafia. And as with most spy-related movies, betrayal, intrigue, and a myriad of plot twists make the movie gripping. But as characters betray each other and reveal their true identities, Robert DeNiro's character, Sam, seems to remain true to himself. And that makes you wonder who he actually is. In the end, spoiler alert, there's a final twist that reveals that Sam has been working on something completely different, masterfully directing all of the different players in his hidden scheme.

- b. If you want the details, the movie is well worth a watch. But at the center of all of it is the question, “Who are you really?”. It’s asked time and again in the mind of the viewer as betrayals and reveals pop up left and right. It can be kind of hard keeping track of who is on whose side. And yet, we know that Sam is going to come out on top. There is a sort of plot sovereignty that directs things toward Sam’s desired end, simply because we know that Sam is the hero. Sam’s perceived and true identities drive both the betrayals and his inevitable victory.
  - c. And the same could be said here in Mark 14. The question, “Who is Jesus?”, has been the focal point of Mark’s whole book up to this point. Way back in Mark 4:41, right after calming the storm, the disciples wonder, “*Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?*”. Everyone has a take on Jesus, and the question on our minds this morning as things unravel toward the Cross is, “Who is this then that is being betrayed and arrested and will ultimately head to the Cross?”
  - d. By this point, we’ve already seen that Judas was intent on betraying Jesus, but just who was Jesus to Judas? And when we come to the Sanhedrin, we have known for most of the book that they’ve been gunning for Jesus. But who is Jesus to them? Both of those takes on Jesus are held in contrast to Jesus’s true identity, which He finally confesses in verse 62.
5. **Roadmap:** And so, as we go through the betrayal, arrest, and trial, we’re looking for how Jesus’s identity is at the center of everything that happens. Hopefully we’ll see what led Judas and the Sanhedrin to betrayal, and we’ll see how Jesus’s true identity drive everything toward the Gospel salvation that awaits at the Cross.
6. **Transition:** So let’s start with Judas’s betrayal.
7. **Judas’s betrayal – Who is Jesus to Judas?**
- a. As we look at the worst betrayal in human history, the question of motivation always comes up. Why did Judas turn on Jesus? Didn’t he know that Jesus was the the Messiah? How could he not know? He was one of the disciples! And while we don’t get an explicit motivation for this particular sin, for this particular betrayal, we can piece together some biblical evidence that will help us try to understand what’s motivating Judas.
  - b. We don’t really get much about Judas Iscariot in the Scriptures, but probably the most important piece of evidence is what we find in **John 12:5-6**. For some context, Mary has just anointed Jesus with some expensive ointment.
    - i. Judas is speaking here. Verse 5. “*Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?*” John’s revelation of Judas’s motivation and character is in verse 6. “*He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.*”
  - c. And so, what we’re seeing is that John identified Judas as being motivated by personal gain. The objection wasn’t because of a righteous care for the poor. He simply wanted to skim the proceeds out of the moneybag. And so it’s not just pilfering, but he’s actively trying to push things toward his own personal profit.
  - d. If we connect that to the price he was paid for betraying Jesus, 30 pieces of silver, we can see a pattern, a condition of the heart that was incompatible to the Gospel. Judas was out for himself. He stuck with Jesus when he thought it would be advantageous. But as soon as the nature of the Jesus’s kingdom and the suffering the disciples would

endure became clear, Judas wanted no part. Remember, we are to be like our savior. **Romans 8:29** reminds us that the Christian desires to be conformed to the image of Christ. And that image isn't one of a glorious, conquering king at the head of a great army (Jesus is that too, but only later). Rather, it's one of a suffering servant who died on a cross innocently for the sake of others. It's not possible to be about yourself and to be a Christian. For we have been crucified with Christ, and we no longer live, but Christ who lives within me. It's not easy to be a follower of Christ. The Christian life is one of grace, of forgiveness, and of suffering, clearly not what Judas wanted.

- e. We can see just what Judas thought of Jesus in the way in which he betrays Him: that infamous kiss. It's so utterly incongruous with what Judas was doing. The Greek word here isn't the usual one for "kiss", but rather an intensified form of the word. It's a kiss that is lavish, that communicates a deep sense of affection and honor. But here, the intense, lavish love that was supposed to be communicated by the kiss is flipped on its head because of the context. After all, context is king. And so the betrayal turns the kiss into one dripping with hatred and contempt.
  - i. Maybe the subtext in Judas's mind went something like this. "This is how much I want to twist the knife in your back, Jesus. You thought that I was your friend, that I loved you. Well some friend you were to me! You didn't give me what I want! We could have been great leaders together, rich, famous, living the glorious life. Now you're under arrest."
- f. And ultimately, what did he accomplish with his betrayal? Absolutely nothing. After all, the Cross was always where Jesus wanted to go. Even the ultimate betrayal, the betrayal that meant that it would have been better that Judas not have been born, was worked sovereignly into the plan of the Gospel. Because though Jesus was a meal-ticket to Judas, Jesus's true identity as the Messiah meant that He was always after something else, just like Sam was in our opening illustration. Judas thought that the whole game was himself, his pleasure, and his comfort, and so he went after it by any means necessary. But Jesus was after salvation, redemption, and glory for others.
- g. There's even grace here in the Garden for Judas too. **Matthew 26:50** tells us that after Judas kissed Him, Jesus said to Judas, "*Friend, do what you came to do.*" Even as Judas betrayed Him, Jesus called him, "friend". It wasn't the expected angry shove accompanied with a curse. Rather, a tender plea to Judas to repent. Think about how we would react to such a betrayal. Think about what Jesus must have been feeling when one whom He had spent years pouring into betrayed Him. And in the midst of all that hurt and righteous anger, Jesus extended grace. It was the Gospel reaching out to the worst of us.

## 8. Transition:

- a. And before we turn our attention to Jesus's hearing before the Sanhedrin, there's that interesting tidbit that you all have been wanting an explanation for. What is the account of the young man fleeing naked from the mob doing here? Let me quickly address it before moving on.
- b. To be honest, I asked Dr. Dave last week what I was supposed to do with these verses. They're kind of random. Dr. Dave suggested that I should have a streaker run through at this point in the sermon. I said, "No." Anyway, many theologians think this was the author of the book, Mark himself because most of the details fit.

The linen cloth undergarment was rather expensive, and Mark was from a family of means. Furthermore, his house was important in the early church era. He might have received word about the mob heading out to capture Jesus. Hence the need to dress in haste. Anyway, this tidbit could be Mark's way of saying that he was there and witnessed the events, lending authenticity to the account. It could also simply be an anecdote that further highlighted the utter aloneness of Christ, since not just the disciples fled, but also onlookers.

c. Which brings us to the hearing.

## 9. The Trial – Who is Jesus to the Sanhedrin?

- a. If we look at verse 55, we'll see exactly what the chief priests and the whole council wanted. *“Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none.”* R. C. Sproul rightly noted in his commentary that this wasn't a truth-seeking mission. They weren't looking for facts. It was a witch hunt plain and simple. If we look at the details of the account, what the Sanhedrin thought of Jesus becomes even more clear.
  - i. If we go back to verse 43, the mob was heavily armed. The Sanhedrin was prepared to take Jesus by force in the face of resistance from his disciples. They sent a powerful force because they perceived Jesus to be a powerful threat.
  - ii. In verse 48, Jesus complained about being treated as a common criminal. *“Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me.”* The complaint isn't just with the violence that had erupted around Him (remember Peter cutting off the servant of the high priest's ear?), but also with the fact that the Sanhedrin was doing this in the dead of night under the cloak of darkness away from the eyes of the crowds. They thought that Jesus would cause an uproar when He was arrested, completely missing Jesus's willingness to go to the Cross. And so, they're not just worried about Jesus's ability to put up a fight, but also the threat of His popularity with the people.
  - iii. And when we look at the trial itself, there were a number of irregularities and broken laws when it came to Jesus's trial.
    1. First, the trial didn't happen in the usual public meeting place. Instead, it was held in the private home of the High Priest.
    2. Also, this is the only recorded instance of a Jewish trial happening at night. That's because it was *illegal* to conduct a Jewish trial at night.
    3. Furthermore, Jewish law forbade a trial to be held on the Sabbath, a feast day, or the eve of a Sabbath or feast day. Well, it's the eve of the Sabbath. So there goes another law.
    4. Let's not forget verse 56 either. It says, *“And some stood up and bore false witness against him.”* That means that members of the Sanhedrin itself stood up to bear false witness after they got frustrated that their prearranged witnesses' testimonies didn't line up. Surely, knowingly producing and allowing false testimony in court is a crime. And then when that didn't work, they resorted to breaking the 9<sup>th</sup> Commandment themselves. In case you're wondering, the 9<sup>th</sup> Commandment is, that

you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. So much for upholding the 10 Commandments.

5. And lastly, if a criminal was convicted of a capital crime, Jewish law required for the Sanhedrin to meet again the next day to confirm the judgment. That law was specifically designed to prevent rash, improper, or sudden judgments in capital crime cases. Well, you get the picture.
- iv. And so what can we take from the willingness of the Sanhedrin to leave a trail of broken laws in their haste to convict and execute Jesus?
  1. Jesus was a threat. That's easy. But we can also see betrayal in the Sanhedrin too. The Sanhedrin, consisting of the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders, were sworn to uphold the Law of God. They were sworn to serve God in righteousness as they judged God's people. By breaking all of these laws, they have not only sinned, but they have also betrayed the oath that they took before God.
- b. But as we've seen, betrayal was overruled by sovereignty. Let's look at Jesus's words and the last few verses of our passage this morning. Starting in verse 61.
  - i. *But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death. And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, "Prophecy!" And the guards received him with blows.*
- c. What's Jesus saying here? Not only does He finally confirm that He is both the Messiah and the Son of God, but He also quotes from Daniel 7:13-14. Let me read that too.
  - i. *And behold, with the clouds of heaven there come one like a son of man, and He came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him; His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.*
- d. The picture is one of power and of sovereignty. Jesus was saying that their betrayal wasn't going to work out the way they thought because there was going to be another trial. Only this time, He'd be the one sitting in judgment of them, with all authority, dominion, and glory being given **to Him**. It was a warning He didn't have to give, a grace that was utterly missed by the Sanhedrin.
- e. And isn't it interesting that in the midst of the Sanhedrin's condemnations, beating, humiliations, and mockery, Jesus again displayed His sovereignty? The Sanhedrin ironically called upon Jesus to prophesy, mocking Him. But by doing this, they themselves fulfilled Jesus's prophecies that we find in Mark 8:31, 9:31, and 10:33-34. Those are the prophecies on the way to Jerusalem about what would happen to Jesus there, namely that He would be condemned to death (check!) and that the chief priests and scribes would mock Him (check!), spit on Him (check!), and flog Him (coming soon!).

**10. Transition:** I hope that you see that all of this is Jesus driving to the Cross. Jesus didn't have to say a word to defend Himself. And yet, He said gracious words of warning that led to His "conviction". Do you see how even this sham of a trial fulfilled Jesus's prophecies and the Scriptures about the Messiah being silent, like a lamb that is led to the slaughter? Jesus was and is in complete control. Up to this point, we've spent our time talking about how wrong Judas and the Sanhedrin were about Jesus and seeing how Jesus sovereignly overruled all of those betrayals. But I think that all of this has merely set us up for one more question: "What about us?"

### 11. Our Betrayal and Salvation

- a. Friends, we tend to look at the betrayals of Judas and the Sanhedrin as things that we would **never** do. We tend to shake our heads out them as if we haven't done essentially the same thing. Friends, we're all traitors and betrayers **every...single...time** we sin. But it gets worse. As Christians, our sinfulness could be seen to be **worse**. Judas clearly wasn't transformed in his heart. He wasn't united to Christ. He was still in the grip of his depravity. But Christians are **different**. We have been united to Christ. We have been freed from the power of sin. We are currently new creations in Christ. In short, we **know** better and **are** better than Judas and the Sanhedrin. And yet, we still spit in Jesus's face every single time we sin. When we sin, we say, "I don't care about what you said Jesus. I don't care that you died for my sins so that I wouldn't have to do this thing that I'm about to do. I'm going to do it because I want to do it." In the end, we **are betrayers and traitors**, just like Judas and the Sanhedrin.
  - b. We're about to sing *How Deep the Father's Love for Us*. In it we sing, "It was **my sin** that held Him there...". It was my sin, our sin that was being poured out on Jesus on the Cross. But notice that the song says that my sin **held** Him there. Usually we would say that it **put** Him there. But just as with the betrayals by Judas and the Sanhedrin, Jesus didn't do anything He hadn't already planned to do. We didn't **put** Jesus anywhere. Jesus wasn't made to do anything He didn't want to do. He chose to go to the Cross. And He could have come down whenever He wanted. But He wanted to stay until it was finished. And finish it He did. Jesus had you and me in mind as He died, and He had you and me in mind when He rose in victory from the grave because all of Jesus's sovereignty was working for His people, for you and for me.
12. Transition: It is in Jesus's sovereign choice to die to save that we find our hope. Because we've been asking the wrong question all morning. We've been asking what Judas and the Sanhedrin thought of Jesus. Who was Jesus to them? But that's ultimately the wrong question. The right question is, "Who am I to Jesus?", which is where we will end this morning.

### 13. Conclusion: Who am I to Jesus?

- a. You see my friends, salvation isn't ultimately about what we think about Jesus. It isn't about who Jesus is to me. It's not even about acknowledging that Jesus is Lord. Even the demons do that. Rather, salvation is ultimately about what Jesus thinks about me. Salvation is about who I am to Jesus. Sovereignty means that Jesus is in control, and what I think doesn't matter at all.
- b. **Matthew** 7 makes this clear. Starting in verse 21, "*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my*

*Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'*"

- c. And why do I bring this up? Because Judas said just that, "Lord, Lord" when he kissed Jesus. In the ESV, it's rendered, "Rabbi". But in some manuscripts, it's actually "Rabbi, Rabbi" or as the KJV puts it, "Master, Master". Judas's problem wasn't that he didn't know who Jesus really was. Judas's problem wasn't that he was selfish and self-absorbed. It wasn't even that he betrayed Jesus. Judas's problem is **that, ultimately, Jesus never knew him in a saving sense.** Judas's problem is that even though he outwardly did great things as one of the disciples and had the privilege of being right there with Him, Jesus never knew him. And to be clear, Jesus knew who Judas was, but to be truly **known** by Jesus for salvation means that He calls you to be united to Him, that He has made you His, and that you are now a member of the family of God. Judas wasn't known on this level. He got a taste of it, simply by being in Jesus's presence, but he wasn't brought out of the darkness and into the light. And so, Judas departed from Him as a worker of lawlessness.
- d. This can a hard way to end a sermon, sitting in the sovereign hand of God, knowing that we can do nothing to tip the scales one way or another. And that's the proper place to be, because it reminds us that the grace that we receive in Christ Jesus is just that: grace. We don't deserve it, and we did nothing to get it.
- e. If you're not sure that you have been united with Christ, if you don't believe upon Him for salvation, today is the day to hear His call to you to repent and believe. If you are a Christian and profess Jesus as your Lord and savior, we can have full assurance in our hearts that we **are** known. Our hope for salvation rests upon Jesus alone, and Jesus is faithful.
- f. We'll end with some scripture. This time from Hebrews chapter 10:19-23.
  - i. *Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, **for He who promised is faithful.***

14. Let us pray.

- a. Father, you are faithful to a faithless bunch of sinners, traitors, and betrayers. You sent your Son to die for us while we were yet sinners. Lord, we are so thankful that we are known by You. We're so thankful that though we have sinned, You have sovereignly chosen to save us on the Cross, to take all that we deserve on our behalf. Father, You are mighty to save, and Your love for us is so deep. The wonders of Your Gospel are amazing, and in Your loving hands we rest. May we remember all of these things we pray, in the matchless name of Jesus. Amen.