

## Mark 14:43-52 — The Kiss Of Death

October 11, 2020

It is an honor to be with you. Jordan and I meet at least once a week for coffee and planning. When we are together, I love hearing about you. When I knew I had a chance to be here this week because of our pulpit swap, I started looking forward to this weekend. I love being with you. Some of you, I have known for years. You were part of the launch team from Spirit Lake. Others of you I have known for a few years. Still others of you I have yet to meet. This is one of the beauties of being multisite. Not only are we stronger together but we have the joy that comes with being together.

Another benefit of being a multisite church is we preach on the same text each weekend on both campuses. That allows Jordan and me to fill in for one another in a crisis or to swap pulpits when desired. That means this morning is simply a continuation of our study in the Gospel of Mark. Turn in your Bibles to Mark 14:43-52. We are studying the betrayal of Jesus. The title of this morning's message is, "The Kiss of Death." This is the Bible passage that created the phrase "kiss of death"

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. Mark 14:43–50 (ESV)

We will begin with a little background to get everyone on the same page then we will study each verse of this passage. We will close with a few practical applications to take into our week.

## **The Background**

The Jewish ruling council, the Supreme Court of Judaism, was called the Sanhedrin. It was made up of a collection of religious leaders. There were Sadducees in the group. They were the liberals. They only believed in the first five books of the Old Testament. They didn't believe in a resurrection, life after death, or angels. There were also Pharisees in the Sanhedrin. They were the conservatives. They believed all of our Old Testament books were from God. They believed in the resurrection, life after death, and angels. In addition, there were some scribes in the Sanhedrin. They were a subset of the Pharisees. They were the theological lawyers in the group. With a group of liberals and conservatives tasked with making important decisions for the nation, you can imagine what their meetings were like. Just like in our political world, the liberals and conservatives were fighting all the time. While they rarely saw eye to eye, there was one thing they did agree on. All of them wanted Jesus dead. With a few exceptions, such as Joseph of Arimathea, they wanted Jesus dead and buried.

Why did they hate him?

They were jealous of him. Which of them could raise the dead? Could any of them give sight to the blind? Hearing to the deaf? Make the lame walk? Cure disease? Cast out demons? Control storms? Create food? They were jealous of Jesus' power — a power they didn't possess.

They were also jealous of his popularity. The crowds loved him. When Jesus arrived in the city on Monday for the Triumphal Entry, the entire city hailed him as their king. Even though it was with palm branches, they gave Jesus a red carpet welcome. There were thousands of people singing his praises. None of the religious leadership were loved by the people like Jesus was loved by the people.

They were also upset about the way he ruined their crooked financial schemes. On Tuesday, Jesus threw the money changers and animal sellers out of the temple. The animals they sold were overpriced. The excessive costs were a kickback used the line the pockets of the religious leadership. Everyone forced to purchase animals in the temple knew they were being ripped off by the temple's religious leadership. When Jesus took them on and kicked them out, the people were cheering his actions while the religious leaders were infuriated by his actions because it took money from their pockets.

The religious leaders also wanted to get rid of Jesus because he made them look bad in public. The religious leaders frequently tried to debate Jesus and to trap Jesus in his words. We saw that a number of times in this Gospel. Each time, Jesus evaded their trap and made them look like fools. They left with egg on their faces. This infuriated them. This is another reason they wanted him dead.

While they agreed about killing Jesus, they were afraid to arrest him during the Passover. They feared the crowds that loved him would riot to rise up and protect him. In Mark 14:1-2, we see they were committed to destroying

Jesus, but they didn't want to arrest and kill him until the Passover was over because they were afraid of the people.

Amazingly, the tables turned their way. In Mark 14:10, we learn that Judas — one of Jesus' inner 12 disciples — decided to betray Jesus. Judas approached the chief priests and offered to turn Jesus over to them away from the crowds in a way that would protect them from a riot. Remember, they didn't come to Judas. Judas came to them. They offered to pay Judas money, 30 pieces of silver, which was dirt cheap to betray a life. It was the price of a cheap slave. Jesus meant so little to Judas that even after spending three years with Jesus, Judas agreed to betray Jesus' life for almost nothing.

Incidentally, this was not a surprise. God had prophetically spoken through the prophets long ago in Zechariah 11:12-13 that Jesus would be betrayed for that exact amount of money, 30 pieces of silver.

As we learned in previous weeks, Judas' decision to betray Jesus to the Sanhedrin wasn't a last-minute decision. He made that decision in his heart early in the week, even before the Triumphal Entry took place, after he was disgusted that Jesus allowed a lavish amount of perfume to be poured on him by Mary, a woman that was extremely grateful to him.

All week long Judas was searching for an opportunity to betray Jesus to the religious leaders away from the crowds. Unfortunately for Judas, that opportunity never came his way. Each day, Jesus taught the crowds in Jerusalem, but in the evening he left Jerusalem with the crowds and lodged on

the Mount of Olives near Bethany or Bethpage, just out of reach of the religious leaders.

Thursday night, things were different. That was the night the Passover was observed. The Jewish law stipulated the Passover meal needed to be eaten inside of Jerusalem at night. This was the opportunity Judas was waiting for. Jesus would be inside Jerusalem within grasp of the Jewish leaders. It was at night under cover of darkness. It was after the crowds went away. Jesus would be confined to a room, not roaming the streets. Judas realized the betrayal of Jesus was finally within his grasp.

Nothing was a surprise to Jesus. Even though Judas kept his desire to betray Jesus to himself, Jesus knew his heart. That is why Jesus set up the Passover supper in a coy manner so nobody knew the location until he arrived. That kept Judas from betraying Jesus before it was time and the supper was complete.

At that last Passover meal, not only did Jesus transform the last Passover into the first Lord's Supper, which we celebrate today, but Jesus also revealed to his disciples that he knew one of them would betray him that very night.

During the supper, when everyone was having a good time, Jesus dropped a bombshell that left the room dead silent when he said these words in between bites of food: "One of you will betray me." All of them were shocked. Each of them, one by one, asked Jesus during the evening if he was the one who would perform such a heinous and treasonous deed. Even Judas asked Jesus if he would betray him. At that time, Jesus unmasked Judas. Jesus told

Judas, “Yes, it is you. What you plan to do, do it quickly. Your plans for betrayal are no secret to me.” After that, Jesus sent Judas away so he could put his plan of betrayal into action.

It was late Thursday night during the Passover when Judas left to betray Jesus. That night, after the meal, Jesus took the remaining 11 disciples with him as he went for a night walk. They walked across the Kidron Valley just outside of the city. They waded across the Kidron brook and traveled a short way up the Mount of Olives to a garden, an olive garden that Jesus frequented when he wanted to find a place to pray.

Last week, we studied that passage. Jesus spend hours praying in the garden. He was very honest with God the Father. He said, “If possible, let this cup pass from me, yet not my will be done but your will be done.” In those words, we don’t just have a window into the way Jesus prayed that night but we have a pattern for us to use for our prayers. Should we let God the Father know what we desire? We definitely should. In prayer we must also submit our will to God’s will for our lives. We must tell God that his will for our lives is more important than our will for our lives.

Last week, as we listened in on Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane, we didn’t just learn a template for our prayer lives, but we saw the way God uses prayer in our lives. When Jesus’ began his prayer time in the Garden of Gethsemane, his divine will knew he came to die on the cross. His human will resisted dying on the cross. Who would desire to die one of the most painful deaths known to man and to be made sin in the process? Nobody! What we find is that in that night of

prayer, God the Father stamped God's will for Jesus' life into Jesus' will for his life. In prayer, God shapes our will for our lives into God's will for our lives. Jesus began his prayer time in Gethsemane resisting the cross. He left his prayer time in Gethsemane embracing the cross.

That is exactly what happens to us in prayer when we face an audacious challenge, just like Jesus. We go to prayer. In our wrestling with God in prayer, God the Father forms our will for our lives into God's will for our lives so we can embrace the trials and difficulties that God has ordained to come our way.

With that background, let's step into the scene.

### **The Confronting Crowd**

*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. Mark 14:43 (ESV)*

Let's begin with Judas. He is the ultimate in tragedy. He spent three years with Jesus, the very son of God. He lived under Jesus' teaching. He experienced Jesus' miracles. He held a position as an apostle that all of us would love to experience, yet after all that privilege, he turned his back on Jesus and betrayed him. The Bible tells us that when Judas decided to betray Jesus, Satan possessed his heart. In the book of Mark, we have seen what demonically possessed people look like. Judas was worse. He was not possessed by a demon. He was possessed by Satan himself. The Satan-possessed Judas had a lot of work to accomplish on Thursday night after he left the Passover meal. He had to travel to the Sanhedrin and assemble them in the middle of the night. He had to get their agreement that now was the time to spring into action and arrest Jesus under cover of darkness. Next, he needed to get permission from the

Roman authorities to secure a detachment of soldiers. The Jews were afraid to arrest Jesus, even though it was in the middle of the night under cover of darkness. They feared their temple police would not be sufficient to keep things under control if the people found out and a crowd gathered to riot in the city. Most of us didn't know Judas also secured a detachment of Roman soldiers to assist the Jewish leaders as they arrested Jesus. We find this in the Gospel of John.

So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons. John 18:3 (ESV)

John tells us Judas procured a band of soldiers. The Greek word for *band* is the word *speiron*. That means a tenth of a Roman legion. A Roman legion is 6,000 soldiers. A tenth of a legion is 600 Roman soldiers. The Romans had extra soldiers in Jerusalem during Passover. Those soldiers were normally housed at Caesarea but were brought to Jerusalem during Passover because there was a history of nationalistic rebellions during Passover in the city. The soldiers were housed at the fortress Antonia, which was next to the temple complex. The Roman soldiers had recently been used to put down a Jewish rebellion led by a man named Barabbas. He will show up later in the story. The Romans were quick to spring into action when they heard of rebellion and unrest in the city. When the Romans heard that Jesus, the one the people talked of making king, was within the city walls and the Jewish leaders wanted to arrest him, that was enough to spring the Roman soldiers into action.

It says the arresting party came carrying swords and clubs. The swords would have been carried by the 600 Roman soldiers. Roman soldiers carried short or long swords. The word used for sword in this passage tells us they were



carrying the short sword on this mission. The short sword was a large double-sided blade designed for hand-to-hand combat. The Roman soldiers were trained to use this sword to slit throats or slice through vital organs in a split second. The clubs in the arresting party were carried by the temple police. They were not allowed to carry swords so they used billy clubs. We call them night sticks.

The apostle John tells us they also carried lanterns and torches so they could see their way in the night. In addition to the 600 Roman soldiers and the temple police, there were the priests, scribes and elders. This means the arresting party was well over 600. It could have been as many as a thousand. The Jews were taking no chance in Jesus' arrest. They were prepared to beat back the crowds if a riot erupted.

Can you picture this night as it transpired? Jesus and his disciples were slightly up the Mount of Olives, so from their vantage point they could watch the crowd gather in the city with lanterns and torches. They saw the sea of lights cross the Kidron Valley and begin its climb up the Mount of Olives. Can you imagine the tension of that moment if you were Jesus and you knew what lay in store?

### **The Betraying Disciple**

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." Mark 14:44 (ESV)

This is just a reminder that Jesus, even though Jesus is God in the flesh, didn't look any different from you and me. He didn't glow in the dark. He didn't have a halo. At night, in a crowd, it would be easy to mistake him for someone else. There was nothing external that identified him as the Son of Man. They

needed a way to make sure someone else did not step up and say, "I am Jesus," during the arrest so they ended up arresting the wrong guy at night by mistake so the real Jesus escaped. This is why Judas gave them a sign the soldiers were to look for. Judas would mark Jesus out by a kiss.

A kiss is something reserved for a husband and wife in our culture. It is an intimate expression of love. In the middle eastern culture, kissing was not limited to a husband a wife. Two men could kiss one another on the cheek as a sign of respect and love. A kiss on the cheek between men in that day was similar to a hug between men today.

Judas planned to use a kiss, the sign of ultimate friendship, and bastardize it. He was going to turn it into an act of betrayal. That is why I titled this message, the kiss of death. That is exactly what Judas did to Jesus. He marked him for death with a kiss.

Here we also see the depth of Judas' wickedness. Not only did Judas plan to identify Jesus in the darkness of the night with a kiss, but Judas also told the Romand soldiers and temple guards what they should do to Jesus once Judas marked him with a kiss. They were to seize him and lead him away under guard. Judas was a man that was comfortable living a double life. That is a very dangerous thing. He had no problem faking his love for Jesus one moment, then instantly moving to the betrayal and death of Jesus the next moment.

These words were coming out of Judas after he spent three years with Jesus 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This is the Judas who was loved by Jesus for three years. This is the Judas who had his feet washed by Jesus only

hours before at the Last Supper. This is the Judas who sat in the seat of honor at the Last Supper. He had no problem kissing Jesus with affection one moment, then telling the Roman soldiers to arrest him and take him away the next moment.

This week, in your Life Group questions, you will study Judas and the danger of becoming comfortable living a double life. Let me tell you this ahead of time. Those who become comfortable living a double life, who become skilled at living a double life, will achieve some of the greatest levels of wickedness and depravity in this world, just like Judas. He was an apostle of Jesus by day, but the Bible tells us he was a thief stealing from the disciples' money bag by night. People who live a double life think they are fooling everyone, but the one person you cannot fool is Jesus. Jesus knew everything that was taking place in the heart of Judas, just as Jesus knows everything taking place in the hearts of those who choose to live double lives today.

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. Mark 14:45–46 (ESV)

The greeting Judas used was also a ploy. He called Jesus, "Rabbi!" That was a term of honor, a term of respect, a term of admiration. If you called someone your rabbi, it was a way of saying you admired that person and wanted to pattern your life after him. When Judas called Jesus his rabbi, he was lying through his teeth. He didn't honor, respect, and love Jesus. He wanted to betray and kill him!

When it comes to how Judas kissed Jesus, the kiss is interesting. It was not a peck on the cheek. The Greek word used to describe this kiss is the

standard Greek word for kiss, but it has a modifier in front of it to intensify the action. This kiss wasn't a little kiss. It was a super kiss. It was a slobbering kiss. Between a husband and wife, we would call this a making out kiss. It was a way over-the-top kiss of love coming from someone intent on taking Jesus' life for only 30 pieces of silver.

Judas was so over-the-top in his expression of love to Jesus because he was trying to fool Jesus. People who live double lives always think they can fool people. The one person you cannot fool is Jesus. Look what Jesus said to Judas at this point.

In Luke 22:48, it tells us Jesus said, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss? You think you have me fooled. You think I don't know what you are doing. I know exactly what you are up to Judas."

This reminds us of Psalm 41:9, where David prophetically spoke of how Jesus would be betrayed and who would betray him.

**Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me. Psalm 41:9 (ESV)**

That was Judas. The one Jesus loved was the one who betrayed him.

What happened to Judas?

This is the last time Judas is mentioned in Mark's Gospel. Since Mark doesn't tell us more about Judas, let me tell you what happened to him. Matthew 27 tells us the rest of Judas' story. After Judas betrayed Jesus, he hung around and watched what happened to Jesus from a distance. He watched the beating Jesus endured. He saw the crown of thorns pressed into Jesus' head. He saw the whips slash through Jesus' flesh. He watched the late night trial Jesus

endured from the Jews and the early morning trial from the Romans. He saw the crooked lawyers try to frame Jesus with contrived evidence and corrupt witnesses.

When Judas realized what he had done, he was filled with remorse. It was remorse in his life, not repentance in his life. There is a difference. We will discuss what that is in a moment.

Judas went back to the chief priests with the 30 pieces of silver saying, "I have betrayed innocent blood." They didn't care. They simply said, "That is not our problem. That is your problem. We don't care." Judas took the money, threw it into the temple and hung himself. He had great remorse for his sin. He didn't have repentance of his sin.

Acts 1 tells us Judas did not do a good job of hanging himself. Either the branch broke or the rope broke. He fell head-long and his body smashed on the rocks below and his guts came bursting out. That was the tragic conclusion to Judas' tragic life. This is why people don't name their children Judas. It is why people don't name their dogs Judas.

I said there is a difference between remorse for sin and repentance of sin. Judas had remorse for what he had done, but he didn't have repentance. Remorse is when you feel bad for your sin so you run from God. Repentance is when you feel bad for your sin so you run to God.

I don't know what issue of sin you are struggling with this morning. We have a choice of what to do with sin when it is living in our lives. We can run from God in shame or we can run to God looking for mercy. My friends, today I beg

you to run to God with your sin and look for mercy from God through Jesus for your sin. Don't run from God in remorse, like Judas did. The end is death.

Repentance and running to God is the only path of life.

### **The Retaliating Disciple**

**But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. Mark 14:47 (ESV)**

This is a strange scene. In the arrest, somebody whacked off the ear of the high priest's servant. What is the story behind this verse? We want to know more of what happened. While Mark doesn't give us this person's identity, the Gospel of John does. John 18:10 says the guy who chopped off the servant's ear was Peter. The servant's name was Malchus. Peter thought he would defend Jesus during the arrest. Notice he didn't go after a soldier with a dagger or a member of the temple police who held a club but a defenseless guy who was serving the high priest. That is not the most courageous thing to do on Peter's part. Luke and John tell us it was the right ear of the guy that Peter chopped off.

Why did Peter do this? Why was he so bold? Let me tell you what I think was going through his head. A little earlier in Mark 14, Peter made a bold promise that he would never deny Christ. He was willing to die with Christ. Only a few short hours after promising to die with Christ, he failed Jesus miserably in the Garden of Gethsemane. Instead of staying awake to pray, like Jesus asked him to, Peter kept falling asleep. At this point, Peter felt like he failed Jesus and had to make it up to him. That begins to account for his overzealous behavior with a sword.

John 18 tells us some additional information that is helpful. John tells us more of what happened on the evening of Jesus' arrest. When the soldiers, temple priests and temple guards arrived, Jesus walked up to them and said, "Who are you looking for?" They said, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said, "I am he." He spoke that in Aramaic. The words Jesus spoke when he said, "I am" are the very name of God. John tells us that when Jesus spoke the name of God, the entire group went backward and was knocked to the ground like they were struck with a shock wave.

When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground. John 18:6 (ESV)

They didn't sit on the ground. All of them were knocked to the ground. Let me ask you a dumb question. Does Jesus have the power to save himself? Yes! Jesus knocked the entire arresting party to the ground by just speaking a word. Nobody could touch Jesus that night unless he gave them permission.

If you were Peter, and you felt like you just failed Jesus, and you witnessed Jesus knock down a thousand people with just a word, don't you think you would be emboldened and start thinking now is the time to step forward and start defending Jesus? Fighting for Jesus? "Jesus, you keep speaking, knocking them on the ground and I will finish them off with my sword."

That wasn't the way Jesus planned for things to go. Matthew 26 tells us Jesus immediately put a stop to Peter's cowardly act of heroics and failed attempts with a sword.

Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" Matthew 26:52-53 (ESV)

When Jesus told Peter to put his sword away because all who live by the sword will perish by the sword, Jesus told Peter that if he started killing people in the crowd, the Romans soldiers would have a right to kill him. Here Jesus advocates capital punishment. This is a reiteration of Genesis 9 where it says, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man will his blood be shed.” “Peter, don’t start taking life. If you do, they have a right to take your life.”

With all the killing that is taking place in our society, especially by people who hold different political perspectives, this is a warning. Life is sacred. Jesus says, “Don’t treat life carelessly.” If you live by the sword, you will die by the sword. When it feels like the world is falling apart around you, don’t start taking human life. If you take someone’s life, the government has a right to take your life.

In addition, Jesus told Peter that he didn’t need Peter’s help defending himself. If Jesus called to his heavenly Father, he would send 12 legions of angels to come to his defense. Earlier we talked about how many soldiers were in a Roman legion. Does anyone remember the number? It was 6,000. Jesus told Peter he could have 72,000 angels come to his rescue at a moment’s notice if he so desired. That doesn’t sound impressive until you think about it for a few minutes with some Old Testament perspective. In the Old Testament, how many angels did it take to kill 185,000 Assyrians in a night. Just one. How many angels did it take to kill all the firstborn of Egypt in one night? Just one. Jesus could have 72,000 in an instant if he desired them. Do you think Jesus has enough fire



power at his disposal to defend himself if needed? Yes! He has more than enough.

The question is, why didn't Jesus call those angels? Why didn't Jesus defend himself? John 18 gives us the answer.

So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?" John 18:11 (ESV)

Jesus could have easily defend himself, but he didn't. The reason Jesus allowed himself to be arrested was so he could be beaten, so he could suffer, so he could die, so he could become sin for us and die on the cross to save our lives. Jesus didn't defend himself in the arrest and the cross because he planned to embrace the suffering of the arrest and the cross to die for our sin to save you and me. My friends, Jesus let all this take place out of love for you and me.

Another fun part of Jesus' arrest is found in Luke 22:51. After telling Peter to put away his sword, he picked up Malchus' chopped off ear and healed him on the spot. This is the only healing of a flesh wound in the miracles of Jesus. This is another reminder that Jesus did not have to be arrested. He had all the power to stop it any time he desired.

This just continues to highlight the power of Christ. He was letting himself be betrayed. He was letting himself be arrested. He could have stopped it any time. With just a word, he knocked a thousand to the ground. With the touch of his hand, he healed a severed ear moments before he was tackled, tied up, and beaten. Jesus was enduring all this because dying for us was the only way to save us, and he loves us.

## The All-Powerful Jesus

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.” Mark 14:48–49 (ESV)

Jesus was surrounded by the corrupt leaders who hated him. He was surrounded by Roman soldiers who were trained killers. Yet Jesus was not filled with fear. Why did Jesus have calmness in the midst of chaos? He knew that while the world was falling apart around him, nothing was happening that was not according to God the Father’s plan. As he said, “Let the Scriptures be fulfilled.” The arrest and crucifixion of Jesus looked like life spinning out of control to everyone who was part of it, except for Jesus. He knew the tragedy of his arrest was taking place just the way God had decided it would take place and he had prophetically spoke about the way it would take place centuries before.

Jesus knew everything was coming together according to God’s plan so at 3 p.m. the next day Jesus would die at the same time the Passover lambs were slain. Jesus would be the one true and final Passover lamb that would pay for sin. That is what God the Father always planned.

God was guiding all the events of that fateful day. What looked out of control from our perspective was completely in God’s control from Jesus’ perspective. Everything was happening according to God’s plan. That is why Jesus could be calm in the midst of chaos and not filled with fear when life was falling apart.

I don’t know what you are facing today, but I do know that while your life may feel like it is falling apart, from God’s perspective it is not. Everything is

proceeding according to God's good plan. No matter what wickedness is done against you, it cannot thwart God's good plan for you as his child, just as evil did not thwart God's good plan for his son.

### **The Cowardly Apostles**

**And they all left him and fled. Mark 14:50 (ESV)**

All of the apostles fled. Peter fled. Jesus told them this was going to happen, and it did.

### **The Mysterious Streaker**

**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. Mark 14:51–52 (ESV)**

Who was this guy? I have no idea. He doesn't appear in Matthew, John, or Luke. He only shows up in Mark, and he doesn't seem to fit the story. Let me tell you what we know and what are our best guesses about this streaker.

Whoever this man was, he dressed in a hurry. He only put a linen bedcloth around his body. He came from a wealthy family because linen bedsheets were only used by the wealthy, not by the poor. Apparently this guy heard the commotion of Jesus' arrest, wrapped a sheet around himself and ran to watch the arrest from the cover of the olive trees. When a soldier grabbed him, like Joseph running from Mrs. Potiphar, he left his bedsheets behind. He went streaking naked through the city streets until he found his home.

That is all we know about him. At this point, the speculating begins. Many people think this streaker could have been Mark, the author of this Gospel. We know Mark came from wealthy parents that lived in Jerusalem. Perhaps Mark saw the Romans soldiers moving through the streets, and like any curious

teenager, he followed at a distance to see what was happening. If so, this would be a cameo appearance — that is Mark writing himself into the Gospel in a tiny appearance. It is similar to the way the creator of the Marvel movies would give Stan Lee, the creator of Marvel Comics, a three- or four-second cameo appearance in each Marvel movie. If this is Mark telling us he saw Jesus on the night he was arrested, why would he include himself at this point in the book? I think Mark was saying, “It wasn’t just the apostles that failed Jesus that night. I was there, I also failed him and ran for my life.”

At this point, everyone was gone. The apostles were gone. The stalker left his bedsheet behind and ran for his life completely naked. Jesus was left alone to face the brutalities of these final hours without any support from his closest friends.

While he felt alone, he knew nothing was out of control. Everything was coming together just as God the Father has planned ahead of time and spoken about through the prophets as the Holy Spirit inspired them to write the Scriptures many years before. The world that looked like it was out of control was completely under control so Jesus would die at 3 p.m. the next day with the Passover lambs as he died for our sin.

### **Applications**

- 1. Those who try to destroy God’s plans will find their evil actions becoming part of God’s plans to accomplish his good purpose.** The Jewish leaders thought they were ruining Jesus’ plans and life. Judas thought he was ruining Jesus’ plan and life. In reality, nothing like that was taking place. Their evil plans were incorporated into God’s good plan and being used

to accomplish God's good will. This is incredibly encouraging. Nothing can ruin God's good plans for the advancement of his kingdom and nothing can ruin God's good plans for us his children. When evil is done against us, God promises none of it will ruin God's good plans for our lives. Instead God will incorporate that evil and use it as part of his good plan to accomplish what he wants for our lives. Does this mean God's will for our lives will be easy? Absolutely not. God's will for Jesus' life was to die for our sin. That was not easy. It was extremely hard. While God's will for Jesus' life was not easy, it was good. In the same way, no evil that is done against us can ruin God's good plan for us. That is why we do not lose heart. The evil that is done against us will bring suffering and tears, but it cannot derail the good plans God has for our lives, and for that, we rejoice. This is why we can claim Romans 8:28.

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28 (ESV)

- 2. While God uses the evil done against us as part of his good plan, that does not absolve anyone from the consequences of their evil choices and evil deeds.** While God used Judas' choice to betray Jesus as the way Jesus would go to the cross to die for our sin, that didn't absolve Judas from his sin. Sometimes we see God bring about good things as a result of people's sinful choices. When people see the good things that took place, they try to use that to justify the sinfulness of what they have done. That doesn't work. When good is brought out of evil, God gets the credit. The evil person doesn't get the credit. Look what Jesus said about Judas the

responsibility he bore after betraying Jesus even though God brought about the salvation of our lives through that betrayal.

“The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.” Matthew 26:24 (ESV)

3. **Beware of a heart that abandons Jesus when it is hard to follow him.**

Jesus warned the disciples they would fall away when the stress and trials of his arrest came into their lives. It is easy to fall away from Jesus at the first sign of trouble when it comes to following him. This is especially true in the pandemic. Many people have used the pandemic as an excuse to fall away from Christ and his church. I realized those who are high risk have reasons to stay socially distanced. I completely understand those reasons. But statistics say that almost 30 percent of Christians will use the pandemic as a reason to fade away from church completely and never come back. Don't be someone that abandons Jesus when it becomes hard to follow him.

4. **Beware of a heart that tries to justify violence and hatred to advance**

**God's kingdom.** Peter thought it was a good idea to help Jesus at his arrest so he whipped out his sword and tried taking a life. Thankfully, he failed miserably. Thankfully, Jesus healed Malchus' ear. Jesus rebuked Peter because God doesn't grow his kingdom with violence and hatred. God grows his kingdom through the good news of the gospel, truth, and love. Right now there are Christians across the country acting Jesus like Peter. The politics of the day leave them feeling threatened. They either literally pull out a gun to take a life or they use the hatred of their words to take a life. Should we discuss issues in our nation? Yes! Should we vote the way we think will

please Christ? Of course! We do not have a right to demean other Christians with whom we disagree. We do not have a right to launch personal attacks of hatred against those who are outside of the church. Let's remember what Jesus said to his apostles on the night he was betrayed about the way we are to treat one another as Christians, even when we disagree with one another.

**“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34–35 (ESV)**

What did Jesus say about our enemies? Didn't Jesus say we are to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us? In the next few weeks, the future of our country will be decided at the ballot box. Many are concerned our religious liberties and freedom of worship hang in the balance. What will happen if a party we do not favor is put into power and the world starts falling apart around us? Should we panic and think the world is out of control? Absolutely not. Just as God the Father had complete control of the world falling apart around Jesus during his arrest, God the Father has complete control of the world falling apart around us if the election doesn't go our way. The good news is that no matter what happens, no matter what evil choices are made, none of them can thwart God's good plans for the progress of his kingdom and the good plans he has for our lives and our future. The evil that is done against us will be incorporated into God's good plans and will be used to bring about God's good, wise, and perfect will. For that, we can rejoice.



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