

For most of my ministry career, I've spent my time serving students, specifically junior high kids. It's that time of life no one wants to remember or ever wants to relive. But I love that age group, maybe because I remember the ups and downs of that time of life. Jr. High Ministry is a lot of fun, but there is a dark side to it—Jr. High girls! They can be so mean! If you think I'm kidding, watch the movie *Mean Girls*; it's pretty accurate! In fact, most women can recall a story of a mean girl who was mean to them in Jr. High. I vividly remember my 12th birthday the summer before I went into 7th grade. We had a birthday party at my house with a bunch of my friends, and my best friend at the time managed to turn the rest of the girls against me at my own birthday party! I was hurt, alone, and felt betrayed.

This morning, we are back in the Gospel of Mark, where we will look at a story where Jesus was hurt, alone, and betrayed. We've spent about 50 weeks in the Gospel of Mark, seeking to know and follow Jesus. Just a few short weeks ago, we left off with Jesus having the last supper with his disciples, where Jesus makes a new covenant with humanity. From there, he and his disciples go to the Mount of Olives. There, Jesus predicts that all the disciples will fall away, and Peter will deny knowing Jesus three times before the rooster crows twice. All of them shared their undying loyalty to Jesus. From there, they all go to the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus asks the Father to take this cup from him but also tells the Father, not my will but yours. Each time Jesus came back, he found the disciples asleep. Jesus then tells them to watch and pray, yet they continue to fall asleep until it's too late; the betrayer has come! As Dan preached in his sermon on Gethsemane, Jesus was strengthened by his prayer time, and we will see how the disciples reacted due to their lack of prayer. That catches us up to where we've been and where we are going this morning.

### **The Kiss**

**Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. Now the betrayer had**

**arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. Mark 14:43-46.**

As we enter this part of the story, we will see that everyone but Jesus and Judas stay anonymous, almost like this is the final showdown between the two. Judas is reintroduced as "one of the twelve." This reminds readers how uncomfortable this situation was that Jesus' betrayer and subsequent arrest arose from his most trusted followers. And Judas has literally brought an army to arrest Jesus. This crowd was sent by the religious leaders: the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. The Gospel of John gives a little more detail about who this crowd is in chapter 18. We find out it's a mix of temple guards, Roman guards, and a Roman Tribune. All in all, about 600 men armed with clubs and swords to arrest Jesus.

Judas gave a prearranged sign to the religious leaders and the mob to ensure they arrested the correct person. Judas wanted to make sure he received his 30 pieces of silver. But what gets me is the sign. He chose to betray Jesus with a kiss. A kiss is a sign of affection. When Judas was concocting the plan, he used an interesting Greek word, *philein*, a kiss of courtesy given by a disciple to a master on each cheek.

But as the moment comes to surpass, Judas greets Jesus like a long-lost friend whom he deeply loves, almost as if to say, "Beloved, Master!" Mark's word for this kiss is *kataphilein*, a fervent kiss reserved to show the deepest affection, lavishly, even passionately. The title "Rabbi," meaning "great one," makes a mockery out of Jesus.

Betrayal is wounding to the soul. I can't even imagine the sting Jesus felt as Judas went about his betrayal. Betrayal is so damaging even Proverbs tells us, "*Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses*" (Proverbs 27:6). According to this proverb, true friends are honest with us to prevent worse pain in the future. True friends tell us things like, "Your habit is turning into an addiction." "You often talk over people, and they feel devalued," or something as simple as "You have spinach in your

teeth." It's done privately, not to embarrass you, but to help you. Those are faithful wounds. But the enemy in this proverb looks good on the outside but on the inside harbors hate, envy, ill-will, or bad intentions. This person maintains a loving posture while harboring ill intentions. So, let's freeze-frame this scene! Just as Jesus was betrayed by a kiss, he was seized and arrested. As this happens, violence ensues.

### **Fight Or Flight**

**The men seized Jesus and arrested him. Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. "Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." Then everyone deserted him and fled. Mark 14:46-50.**

Six hundred guards have come to arrest one man, and an anonymous bystander draws his sword and cuts the ear off of the high priest's servant. Today, we might term this response as the fight or flight response.

Carolyn Fisher, a licensed psychologist says, "The flight or fight response is a stress-released response in our body where all our bodily systems are working to keep us alive in what we've perceived as a dangerous situation." John 18:10 tells us the bystander was Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, and the earless man was Malchus. And Luke tells us Jesus healed Malchus' ear. Peter senses the danger and goes into action, thinking he is fighting an earthly battle. As I said earlier, the only people Mark identified by name were Jesus and Judas.

Some would say Mark declines to name Peter because he is not acting like a disciple. He was not acting like a disciple when Jesus asked him to watch and pray in Gethsemane. Jesus hoped his disciples would stay spiritually alert and be ready to react like his disciples instead of falling into temptation, as Jesus reprimanded them in Mark 14:38, "*Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.*" From here on out, because the disciples did not watch and pray, they acted out in their flesh and fell into the temptation to fight and flee, whether wielding a sword, running away, or eventually denying they ever knew Jesus. They did not prepare themselves in the darkness of Gethsemane for the darkness of Gethsemane. Jesus was preparing himself in the darkness of Gethsemane so everything he said and did would be the will of the Father.

Jesus stands up in the middle of the chaos and asks a rhetorical question, "Am I leading a rebellion that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me?" He knew they could have come and arrested him at any time while teaching in the temple courts in broad daylight and in public. Yet, they come flanked by 600 hundred men in the dark, where no one can see. You can almost hear Jesus say, "Why is this necessary?" He answers his own question, "But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." Jesus refers to Zechariah 13, "*Awake, sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me!*" declares the Lord Almighty. "*Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered...*" (Zechariah 13:7). And then we see that everyone deserted Jesus and fled. He was left standing alone with his captives.

In the middle of all the chaos and turmoil, you can see the peace of Jesus. He was prayed up, he knew the will of the Father, he knew what his role was to fulfill the scriptures, and he gives us a fantastic example of how to react amid turmoil. It's almost as if Jesus is leaving us a legacy of peace in the darkness of Gethsemane, where we can hear Jesus say, "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid*" (John 14:27).

### **The Streaker**

"A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind" (Mark 14:51-52). Then we have this recording of a streaker in the Bible! Again, Mark does not say who this young man is. According to the New Testament Greek, he is 12 to 17 years old. He is wearing a linen cloth, which tells us he comes from a wealthy background, and obviously, he wasn't one of the people out to get Jesus since he was dressed in today's equivalent of boxer shorts. Many scholars believe this is Mark's signature to his gospel. It would be like the artist's signature on a painting. Saying I was there too, I followed Jesus too, and I fled, escaping the mob by running out of my clothes and into the woods, naked, leaving Jesus alone. The prophecy of Amos has come to pass among all of Jesus' followers. "*Even the bravest warriors will flee naked on that day,*" declares the Lord" (Amos 2:16). It's a curious story that feels like it comes out of left field. Maybe some comic relief after such an intense moment. Either way, everyone has abandoned Jesus, and no one stands with him as he faces his enemies. Jesus stands alone, so we don't have to.

This story begs us to answer the question, where do we find ourselves in the story of this dark night? Every player in the story responds to Jesus' betrayal and arrest. When darkness falls around you, how will you respond?

Do you relate to Judas? It is foolish for us to think that we could never succumb to Judas' level. Judas' problem was his secret sin, his love for money. Secret sin is an indiscriminate killer, and those who think they are immune are the most vulnerable. Even though Judas was associated with Jesus and the disciples, his heart was not. On the outside, he looked like an intimate follower of Jesus. But on the inside, his love for money would overtake him, and he would betray Jesus with a kiss and make a buck simultaneously. We can associate with godly people, go to a great church, and even have lovely Christian friends, but it's our heart that matters! Charles Swindoll says,

**Associating with mature believers will not nourish the soul any more than merely sitting at a table in a restaurant will nourish the body. To grow wise and to develop spiritually, we must personally take in what Jesus has offered. Charles Swindoll**

Are you struggling with secret sin? Get it out in the open before you do something you never thought you would do! Come out of the dark and into the light by confessing it to Jesus! Honestly, he already knows about it. Tell a caring friend what you are struggling with and ask them to hold you accountable. Jesus stood alone so you don't have to.

Do you relate to Peter? Remember, Jesus asked Peter to watch and pray. Yet, instead, Peter's flesh was weak as he fell asleep. He was ill-prepared for this crisis in the heat of the moment. Peter was doing what he could to live up to his oath that he would die for Jesus. Despite Jesus' total rejection of physical violence and earthly might to advance the Kingdom of God, Peter armed himself, reacted with rage, and endangered the mission of Jesus.

How are your reactions? Are you angry? Have you loped off any ears lately? Are you endangering the mission that God has for you? Just like Peter, Jesus calls you to watch and pray. Jesus loves your loyalty and heart for him, but he knows your tendency to do it on your own, in your own flesh. As Jesus said, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. He wants to transform you into the person he desires you to be, which requires prayer and reliance on him. Jesus stood alone so you don't have to. As we learn later, Peter and Jesus would have a beautiful conversation

in John 21, giving him the vision of how Jesus would use Peter for the Kingdom.

Are you the unnamed disciples? Think about this: All drank the cup (14:23), all pledged to die with him (14:31) and all desert him! The "all" in verse 50 is made emphatic in Greek by placing it at the end of the sentence. The betrayal of Judas is thus multiplied by the widespread failure of the disciples; they all abandon Jesus and flee. (The Gospel According to Mark [The Pillar New Testament Commentary | PNTC]).

It's a natural response when things get hard, when pain presses in. This is the temptation I relate to most in this story. It's a struggle for me not to flee when the hard things come. It's not that I mind doing hard things; it's entering into people's pain that is hard and messy, which often makes me confront my pain. It never fails; when all the pastors are out on vacation, and I'm the only pastor in town, the worst tragedies happens, and I often feel inadequate and alone. In my instinct to run, the Lord reminds me, "No, Sandy, I'm standing with you. I stood alone so you don't have to. These people you walk with amid their tragedy are not alone because I stood alone so they don't have to."

We, too, will enter our own Gethsemane, a time where we are tempted to avoid doing what we should, knowing the cost. We spiritually prepare for those dark days when we watch and pray so we don't fight and flee. This is what I love about our ten-year vision of becoming Transformed People, Transforming the Peninsula. For 50 weeks, we have done a deep dive in Mark "to know and follow Jesus." This study has allowed us to know Jesus more profoundly. To see how he got away in silence and solitude, how he took a sabbath, how he prayed, how he studied the scriptures, how he practiced hospitality. We as a church are trying new habits that we hope and pray bring about a deeper connection with Jesus, where transformation happens individually and communally. We saw Jesus watch and pray in the garden. He was preparing himself for what he was about to endure, standing alone with the world's sin, becoming the final sacrifice for sin.

So how do we combat these temptations of betrayal, fighting in our flesh, or outright running away? Two things—watch and pray.

### **Watch**

Jesus calls us to watch. Watch for what? Watch for what God is doing, especially where his light is shining in the darkness, those glimmers of hope. Watch for

them! As a pastor entering into people's tragedies, I've learned to observe those glimmers of hope during dark times. Whether it was a song that played on the radio, a piece of scripture, a sunset, or a work of art, God uses those things to give us his hope. So slow down and watch.

## **Pray**

Jesus calls us to pray. Prayer is a powerful tool. Specifically, Jesus wanted his disciples to pray so they were strengthened by God and not act out of their own strengths and desires, their flesh. It's this time in prayer that we saw Jesus praying for the will of the Father to be done as he was about to carry the sin of the world on his shoulders. When the weight of the world is on our shoulders, Jesus calls us to pray because he stood alone so we wouldn't have to.

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

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