

Matthew 26:47-56

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[0 : 00] Amen. Amen. Have you heard this? These are unprecedented times.! Have you heard that? These are uncertain times. Have you heard that?

! I think as Christians, we have to say, don't we, these aren't unprecedented times. And as Christians, wonderfully we can say this morning, these aren't uncertain times.

Because we believe in a God who is sovereign, a God who is in control, a God who is working out his purposes.

As we look back into church history, we see that these aren't unprecedented, and this certainly isn't uncertain. And I think that helps us as we come to this passage from 47 to verse 56, the arrest of Jesus.

And so I've got two headings, and they're both, one word. First of all, the crown. The crown. Okay, so children, remember we said in Sunday school, you're going to kind of draw or make these headings.

[1 : 09] So the first heading that I want you to do that is the crown. Look at verse 47 with me. Look at verse 47. While he was still speaking, Jesus was still speaking.

He's coming out of the agony of Gethsemane. And now he moves from agony to treachery. So verse 47, while he was still speaking, Judas came. One of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

It's like Matthew can't get over it. One of Jesus' best friends. And you see what he's come to do? He's come with a large crowd with clubs and swords sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

And the authorities have come. They've always wanted to arrest Jesus, but the people loved him. He healed the sick. He made the blind to see, the lame to walk, the dead even to live.

He gave food to the hungry. He talked to the sort of people that no one would talk to. And so the authorities don't want to arrest him in front of the crowd.

[2 : 21] They don't want to start a riot. So they need to find another way. They need to find a moment when Jesus is alone. And for 30 pieces of silver, Judas is willing. And prepared to lead them to him.

One of the 12 in the garden where no one can see. And I take it the mob with swords and clubs are out of sight. So Jesus approaches.

Look at verse 48. Now the betrayer had given them a sign saying, The one I will kiss is the man sees him.

He'd agreed a signal. We shake hands, don't we? Or at least we used to. Some cultures rub noses. They greeted with a kiss on the cheek. Why doesn't Judas just point to him?

Why doesn't Judas just say, there he is? I think the reason that Judas thinks that he needs to catch Jesus unaware. He thinks if he went, there's the one, there he is.

[3 : 23] It would give the game away. It would give Jesus time enough in Judas' mind to escape. And so Judas acts as if everything is normal.

Greetings, Rabbi. And he kissed him. It's perhaps not as ordinary as high. How are you doing? But it is, this word greetings, a cheerful greeting nonetheless.

The word Rabbi is a title of respect. Jesus is not a rabbi. But here Judas gives him the title Rabbi.

He treats him with respect. And he kissed him. Literally, it's a continual tense. It could mean that he went on kissing him.

But I don't think it means that. It means that he kissed him with enormous fervor. And so it's very obvious, isn't it, that Matthew the writer wants you and I to realize that this betrayal is done in such a way that it is contemptible.

[4 : 28] But Jesus knows. Jesus knows exactly what Judas has come to do. And he said it over supper that evening.

Just look back with me at verse 23. He answered, he who dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me. And then in verse 25, Judas, who would betray him, answered, is it I, Rabbi? And he said to him, you've said so. And now verse 50, Jesus says to him, friend, isn't that puzzling? Friend, do what you came to do.

And so I'm thinking if Jesus knows why Judas has come, why doesn't Jesus run? Why doesn't Jesus flee? Why doesn't he escape into the night?

But he just stands there. And the men step forward from behind the trees, verse 50, and they seize him and they arrest him. And they tie up his hands behind his back.

[5 : 40] The disciples, they can't believe what's happening. They've just woken up, haven't they? And Jesus has just been explaining to them how all his plans will have come together.

How he come to save us. And now it looks like they have to save him. And one of the disciples draws a sword and swings it and clips the servant of the high priest's ear.

And Jesus is masterful, isn't he? Look at verse 52. He says, then Jesus said to him, put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword.

It's where we get. He who lives by the sword dies by the sword. He says, then, he says, do you think that I cannot appeal to my father and he will at once send me more than 12 legions of angels? He reminds them, doesn't he? Don't you realize who I am? Don't you know who I am? I'm the son of God who could call upon his father. And any time in 12 legions, that's 60,000 angels.

[6 : 49] Don't you realize I could summon 60,000 angels with a click of a finger? Do you see what that means? That means Jesus could easily overthrow this mob.

He could easily overthrow this mob with their swords and their clubs, but he chooses not to. Now the question is, why? And the answer is given in verse 54, isn't it? But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled?

That it must be so. And then if you mislaid, it's in verse 56 again. But all this has taken place that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.

Fulfilled, fulfilled. He says it twice. Because he doesn't want you to miss it. Why doesn't Jesus overthrow the mob? Why does he let them arrest him?

Because this is how Jesus is fulfilling God's plan. God's plan to save the world. You go back to Genesis chapter 3 and the Lord promised, didn't he, that the one who was descended from Eve would save the world from evil.

[7 : 56] And so through your descendants, this nation of Israel is going to bring blessing to the whole world. And then the prophet, then the promise focuses on the king of Israel.

And the prophets, they look forward in the Old Testament to a descendant of David, this great king who would come to save us. This great king who would be none other than God himself, come to save the world.

And how would he save the world? The prophets say this extraordinary thing that God's king will save the world by suffering. So Isaiah 53, we've spent a lot of time there, haven't we, the last few weeks?

And we will in the next few weeks. But 700 years before Jesus was born, the prophets describe what will happen to God's king. They're waiting for.

And we read there, don't we, in Isaiah 53 that this God's king, this saviour, this messiah was oppressed and was afflicted and he did not open his mouth. He was like a sheep before his shearers.

[9 : 04] He's silent. So he opened not his mouth. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And by oppression and judgment, he was taken away.

That was the promise, the promise of a king who would be led like a lamb to the slaughter. He wouldn't open his mouth. He wouldn't resist the rest. And Jesus had told all this to his disciples, didn't he, in chapter 17.

He said to them, when they came together in Galilee, he says, the son of man, that's him, talking about himself, is going to be delivered. And he's going to be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill him.

And on the third day he will rise again. And the disciples were filled with grief, they didn't get it. And you go to chapter 20 and Jesus says, we're going up to Jerusalem and so the son of man, he'll be

delivered up to the chief priests.

And the teachers of the law, they will condemn him to death and they will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked. And he will be flogged and crucified and on the third day he will rise again. But the disciples didn't get it, didn't get it.

[10:08] And that is why in the garden they swing their sword. This cannot happen. Jesus cannot be arrested. What about the plan, they think?

Ordinarily, when you arrest someone, it stops them from carrying out their plans. Let's say I decide that I want to go and paint the viaduct in Hanwell.

You know, the big viaduct bridge in Hanwell. Let's say I decide that I want to paint that huge viaduct luminous pink. And I want to put graffiti all over it. Well, if on the way there with my luminous pink spray cans and my luminous pink paint, I get arrested.

That is the end of my plan, isn't it? That stops my plan in its tracks. But now Jesus, he is arrested and his disciples think this is the end of the plan.

And the authorities are very pleased with themselves because they think clever old us. We've tracked him down. We've stopped whatever he was planning to do. And we've got away with it because the crowd don't know about it.

[11:21] And Jesus says to his disciples, you don't need to swing the sword. You don't need to defend me. And he is saying to the authorities, you do not need to show up here with swords to arrest me.

As if I'm going to resist arrest. Don't you realize I could summon 12 legions of angels, but I'm not going to. I'm not going to open my mouth in protest.

I'm going to let you arrest me. Why? Why? Why? Because that is how I'm fulfilling God's plan to save the world.

Because God's plan to save the world is a plan that turns on the son of man being arrested and killed. Verse 56.

But all of this has taken place that the scripture of the prophets might be fulfilled. Just like the prophet Zechariah had said. Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

[12:24] And I think that that gives you and I some solid ground. Because what we see in the Bible. Is that the Bible isn't just calling us to believe that God is in control.

The Bible is showing you that God is in control. The God of the Bible makes promises thousands of years ago. And he says this is what is going to happen.

There will be a nation. And there will be a king. And then there will be a descendant of David. And one of the prophets said he will even be born in Bethlehem.

And they said when he comes he will heal sick. He will open the eyes of the blind and he will raise the dead. And they said he would be taken away to be killed. And you see Matthew is writing to people who think that Jesus was just some political hothead who crossed the line and paid for it with his life.

And I think that's what many people think of Jesus. They think he was some kind of teacher. Some kind of ancient political activist. And it all went horribly wrong.

[13:34] And Matthew wants us to see that Jesus' arrest, his being taken away is not an accident. You look at Jesus in this passage and you see that God is keeping his promises.

And the world that we live in is not spiraling out of control. There is a God who made the world. And the God who made the world is unfolding his plan to remake the world. To make all things new. To fix the broken lives.

To bring all disease and death. To wipe every tear dry. He is unfolding his plan to save the world. We all know, don't we, moments like the disciples knew in the garden. We all know that there are moments in life when it makes no sense.

[14:36] And like the disciples, we are tempted to swing the sword and then to flee. But do you see, even in this moment, can you just see who is in control?

You've got treacherous Judas. You've got the mob with their clubs and swords. You've got the disciples panicking and then fleeing.

But there is one character, isn't there, who is in control. Totally in control. Jesus. And through him, God is unfolding his plan to remake this broken world.

And you see, as you look at Jesus, it gives you solid ground to stand on and not panic. I don't have all the answers.

And neither do you. But you look to Jesus and you see that this world is not spiraling out of control. There is one who is working out his plans to remake the world.

[15:37] And the moment that you may not be in, the moment that you may be in may not make any sense. But Jesus is in control, isn't he? Do you think that the plan has failed?

Do you? You see, the truth is, it's not that the plan has failed. But that he's not yet finished.

It's not that the plan has failed. But that he's not yet finished. And so I don't run from him. I stick with him.

That was his crown. Jesus is totally in control. My second heading, my second point is the heart.

The crown and the heart. There you go, children. You've got the two.

You might be thinking, God is in control. God is working on his plan. So what? Well, what I want you to know, and what you want to know is, does he care?

[16:43] Does God care what is happening to you? Well, in this moment of arrest, we see that he's not only in control, but we see how much he cares.

Look at verse 52. Verse 52 says, then Jesus said to him, put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword.

If you keep on fighting, you'll get killed. And Jesus hands himself over to the authorities. And the fact that he does so saves his disciples from harm.

Can you see that? It's a miniature version of the whole plan of God. You see, the plan of God was not for Jesus to come and teach us how to be good.

Or to be a good example for you. Again and again and again and again, Jesus says he must be killed. He must be killed. The whole plan of God is that he has come to hand himself over to death to save us from harm.

[17:48] And do you see the window that this moment gives us into Jesus' heart? Last week we saw Jesus in agony praying in the garden. And we saw that he faces up to death, the death that he was going to die, and he is overwhelmed by the horror of it.

But what does he do next? Does he pull out? No, he presses on. He faces up to the full horror of it. And the next thing he does is he hands himself over to be arrested and killed. And you see, we tend naturally to be suspicious of a God who is in control.

A God who is working out his plans. Because people who are in control, people who are working out their plans, usually works out their plans so that others feel small.

But you look at Jesus. You look at God made flesh. You see what the God of the Bible is like.

[19:01] He is totally in control. He is working out his plans. And that means he is making himself small. He is here letting himself get arrested.

He is laying down his life. He is dying on a cross. Why? To save us from harm.

To save his people from harm. And that is what he was prepared to do for us. To save us from harm.

To save us for a future. A future that is beyond disease and beyond coronavirus and COVID-19. To save us beyond death.

To save us beyond death. A future where all tears are dry. Life with him in a world made new.

[19:58] That is how much he loves us. That is how much he loves us. And so look around at the world. So many things that I'm not sure about.

Look at Jesus as he hands himself over to be arrested and killed. And I see that there is one thing that I can be sure about.

There's two things I can be sure about. That God is in control. And God loves me.

And that is solid ground isn't it? And that will keep you from going under. And that is what we need to tell one another this week. God is in control.

And God loves you. And that means I don't run from him. I stick with him. And it means I don't believe the narrative.

[20:56] That these are unprecedented times. And these are uncertain times. Because God is in control. And God loves me. And so I rest in him with all my heart.

Crown. Because he's totally in control. Heart. Because he loves us. Let's pray together.