

“Christ’s Passion: His Nighttime Arrest”

March 3, 2019

Luke 22:47-53

SI: It’s seven weeks until Easter.

In order to prepare ourselves we’re spending each Lord’s day leading up to

Christ’s resurrection by meditating on his suffering for us. His passion.

The word passion used to mean suffering. The meaning has changed in our time.

The church has historically called Christ’s suffering the passion.

The passion began after the last supper, when Jesus went up on the Mount of Olives to the Garden of Gethsemane with the disciples and it includes all the events that happened up to and including the cross.

This morning we’re going to read Luke’s account of Jesus’ betrayal by Judas and his arrest by the Jewish religious authorities.

If you read the sermons and devotional literature about this part of Christ’s passion most of them focus on Judas and how Jesus suffered betrayal from own disciple.

Jesus betrayed by a kiss. We all know the story.

Even the name Judas has entered common speech as a betrayer.

Christ’s betrayal is certainly an aspect of his suffering that is sermon-worthy.

But I want to focus our attention instead on Jesus’ arrest and why he had to suffer arrest for us and what it means for us.

I think there’s a very practical and powerful grace that comes to believers through the arrest of our Lord Jesus.

INTRO: How should a Christian respond to unjust treatment?

Many of the Psalms deal with unjust treatment. We read one this morning, Ps 27

When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh

Psalm 37 is another one:

Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;

do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil.

We have examples of believers in the Bible who responded to unjust treatment with faith and even with kindness to people who wronged them like

Joseph and Stephen and Paul and Silas.

In Paul's prison letters like Philippians he is rejoicing in the Lord in the midst of his unjust treatment.

Probably the passage that comes most forcefully to mind is Matthew 5,

Jesus himself speaking in the Sermon on the Mount:

You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

This certainly doesn't mean Christians can't appeal to the civil authorities or seek the protection of the law or redress through the courts.

Paul insisted on his rights as a Roman citizen and appealed to Caesar.

But the Psalms and many of the examples in the Bible and even Jesus' words are addressing especially those circumstances where wrongs and injustices have been done and there isn't any human appeal or help.

The Bible says wait on the Lord, fret not because of evil schemes against us, turn other cheek, give to those who wrong you, rejoice in persecution.

But when we are wronged and when we are treated unjustly, it's so hard to respond that way.

Every fiber of our being goes against God's word—

Those commands are so hard to keep and instead we unleash worry, fretting, anger, revenge, bitterness—and of course that comes right back around and hurts us.

Often our response to being sinned against is more damaging to our souls than the actual wrong done to us.

What does this have to do with Jesus' arrest? Here's the answer:

Trusting in Jesus Christ's arrest enables you to respond to unjust treatment in a God-honoring way.

His arrest enables you to keep all of these amazing, impossible commands of God.

Every part of Jesus' passion was for you—not just the cross.

There are real spiritual benefits that flow to you from Jesus Christ's arrest.

He was arrested for you.

Christ's arrest marked the beginning of unjust treatment at hands of men.

If you believe in Jesus and walk by faith in him, you will receive benefit

from his arrest, and in particular, you'll be enabled to respond to unjust treatment in a God-honoring way.

Let's look at his arrest. For study, consider under two headings:

1. Jesus' arrest was substitutionary
2. Jesus' arrest is exemplary

MP#1 Jesus' arrest was substitutionary

Years ago our next door neighbor's son and daughter-in-law got a divorce.

There was a lot of acrimony.

They had one child, a little girl, and the mom had custody.

Our next door neighbor, who was the little girl's grand-mother stopped by her granddaughter's elementary school at lunch one day.

She got a pass in the office, went into the cafeteria, ate lunch with granddaughter.

Her former daughter-in-law, the girl's mother, found out about the visit, and as part of this acrimonious, hateful behavior, she called the sheriff and claimed the grandmother had tried to abduct the grandchild.

Our neighbor, who is a very sweet person, picture your own grandmother, she had no idea this was going on until a deputy showed up at house.

He arrested her, put handcuffs on her in own driveway, took her to sheriff's office.

She said the deputy: I'm a law abiding citizen. If the sheriff had just called me and told me I was under arrest, I would have come right down and turned self in.

And why do you have to put handcuffs on me? I'm not a threat.

The deputy who cuffed her apologized and explained that this was procedure.

Of course she was exonerated, charges were dropped.

But even though her name was cleared, she still felt shamed by the arrest.

She told us how humiliating it felt to be treated like a criminal.

All four Gospels record Jesus' arrest, each one adds or leaves out different details.

I'll mention a few of Luke's details later since we're focusing on him.

But Matthew, Mark, and Luke all careful to record one identical detail.

It's when Jesus says:

"Am I leading a rebellion that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me?"

Another translation says:

"Have you come against me as a bandit with swords and clubs."

This word means a violent criminal—robber, rebel, terrorist, bandit.

That's how Jesus was arrested, like a violent criminal.

Jesus pointed out that this was totally unnecessary in his case.

Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me.

He was a public person, nothing to hide, not violent, respectful of authority.

But Jesus was arrested like a robber and rebel. Why was Jesus arrested this way?

Most obvious answer is that authorities didn't want to risk a public scene.

On several occasions the Gospels say they were afraid of the crowds.

So they arrested him at night, under the cover of darkness.

Jesus points that out to them.

But this is your hour—when darkness reigns.
And they brought swords and clubs for intimidation.

On human level, Jesus was arrested like a criminal because criminals arrested him
But there is a deeper reason Jesus was arrested this way.

I'm going to cheat a little here and leave Luke for a minute and dip into Mt and Mk.

Both Matt and Mark record Jesus saying:

But this has happened that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.

So Jesus saw his arrest as a fulfillment of prophecy.

What prophecy might he have been thinking of?

Back to Luke. Luke tells us the exact prophecy Jesus had in mind.

Earlier in chapter 22, right before he left the upper room to go to Gethsemane,

Jesus said in vs. 37:

It is written: "And he was numbered with the transgressors"; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment.

Jesus quoted Isaiah 53. He was numbered with the transgressors.

It's a prophecy about the Messiah, about God's Suffering Servant and it saying
he's going to be treated as a lawbreaker. He's going to be treated as a criminal.

That prophecy began to be fulfilled in Jesus' arrest.

Jesus' arrest as a criminal was an essential part of his work as Savior.

This is the reason: Jesus' arrest was substitutionary.

Before God saved you, you were by nature a robber and a rebel in His eyes.

The essence of sin is rebellion. It's insurrection against God and His law.

It's saying: God can't tell me what to do. I'll do what I want to do.

God can't tell me what to be. I'll be who I want to be.

I'll pursue my goals, my pleasure with my money, my time, my body

Sin is rebellion and it's also robbery. Robbing God of honor due to him as Creator.

Refusing to see all of life as a gift to be used for His honor.

What does God do when his patience runs out? He arrests people.

Death is God's arrest of rebels and robbers.

The jail he puts them in his hell.

Hell where people await their final sentence on the day of judgment.

That was your fate but Jesus was arrested in your place.

He was numbered with the transgressors.

His arrest was the beginning of the injustice he suffered for you.

How does believing in Jesus help you respond in the right way to unjust treatment?

How does this help you wait on Lord, not fret over plans of evil people,

rejoice in sufferings, and turn the other cheek, bless and not curse?
Does so in two ways: Jesus' arrest humbles you and lifts you.

Jesus' arrest humbles you. I was a rebel and a robber in God's eyes.

But instead of getting what I deserved, Jesus suffered injustice for me.
The knowledge that Jesus got what you deserve can't help but humble you
so that you don't overreact when you are wronged. I deserve to die and go to hell.
If people wrong you, you're getting to share in Christ's suffering.

On the other hand, Jesus arrest lifts you.

It gives you a tremendous confidence.

The big issue of life is settled. Jesus has suffered arrest for me, I am free.

Death no longer summons to judgment, it's a doorway to freedom.

And if death can't hurt me, then what else can really hurt me?

Can unjust treatment by people really hurt me in eternal sense?

No, it can't. It can hurt me a lot here. Very painful here.

But because Jesus suffered injustice for me at the hands of men,
then the hands of men can't do me eternal harm.

John Hus was a priest who lived in Bohemia in 1400s. Czech Republic.

He began to preach and teach the good news of salvation by grace alone and the
Catholic Church condemned him. He summoned to a church council to defend
his views and was promised safe passage. But instead he was arrested, tried,
and condemned to be burned at the stake.

His response to that unjust treatment and his final words show exactly this effect

I'm talking about—Christ's passion both lifted John Hus and humbled him.

He said to the crowd: "Now you will cook the goose. (Hus means goose in Czech).

But there will come an eagle in a hundred years that you will not reach."

The good news of Jesus will not be suppressed. Boldness in Christ's suffering

But when fire was lit he began to sing: Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.

There's the humility. I deserve much worse.

Do you believe that Jesus is your substitute?

Do you believe that everything he suffered he suffered for you—

he suffered on account of your sins, so that you would not have to suffer?

When you believe that, it's the first step toward responding to unjust treatment
in a way that glorifies God.

After you believe in Jesus' substitution, you have the power to follow his example.

You can't follow his example first—his example will crush you—it's too great. But if you start by believing he suffered for you—really believe that—push it down deep into your soul—that give you power to walk in his steps. So let's see how Jesus' arrest is exemplary.

MP#2 Jesus' arrest is exemplary

What should it actually look like when a Christian is responding in a godly way to unjust treatment? Jesus' arrest is our example. Two things stand out:

1. When you are treated unjustly, you must be kind to your enemies

Judas was one of Jesus' trusted disciples. In fact, he was the treasurer.

He had witnessed all miracles, heard all the teaching.

Had been sent out by Jesus to preach Gospel.

In ministry had cast out demons, seen people repent and believe.

We don't know for sure why he betrayed Jesus.

Was he disappointed with Jesus for not being the Messiah he had expected?

Was he jealous of Jesus? Was it just about the money? Told loved money.

Luke just explains it earlier by saying Satan entered him.

As I said, this is worthy of another sermon.

What this teaches us about people in the church who abandon the Christian faith and deny Christ and turn into enemies of gospel.

When that happens it shakes us and can lead to doubt.

This is called apostasy, when people who once followed Jesus turn away.

I just wanted to acknowledge that this is a very important teaching here.

But instead I want to focus on something else, and that's Jesus' response to Judas and to the other people who came to arrest him.

He exemplifies what it means to love your enemies, to bless and not curse.

Luke records just one sentence that Jesus spoke to Judas, a question:

“Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”

You have to remember, the Gospels are very condensed accounts.

Each of the Gospel writers was very selective in the material he included.

So Jesus certainly said more to Judas than just one sentence.

But Luke records this as the essence and heart of what Jesus said to him.

“Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”

Let's ponder this question.

Jesus called him Judas. He spoke his name.

Jesus didn't say Traitor. Ingrate. Satan. He humanized him. Judas. Even though Jesus knew that this was a settled, evil decision he didn't caricature him as we sometimes do to people who have wronged us. He still spoke to him by name. It's important.

Then Jesus named the wrong he had done.

Are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss? Jesus mentioned both the wrong that is done and the particular detail of the wrong that made it so egregious. A kiss between friends. That make it even worse. You could have just pointed at me, but you kissed me like old times.

Why did Jesus put this as a question?

Often when people are wronged, they are surprised and ask why. Just this weekend someone told me about a marriage that ended when one spouse told the other out of the blue: I'm leaving. The wounded spouse said: Why? He was stunned and caught off guard by her betrayal. But Jesus knew this was going to happen. So he wasn't asking Judas why he did it. I think the question was a last attempt by Jesus to get Judas think again about what he had done and repent. It's an implied offer of forgiveness. Judas, is this really what you want to do? Is this really what you think is right? The damage is done but I'm willing to forgive.

So let's pull all this together as Jesus' example for us.

When you are wronged, kindness requires you to continue to regard the person who wronged you as a fellow human being with a name. It requires you to point out the wrong and name it. and to do so in such a way that an offer of pardon is extended. The person should know from your words, tone, demeanor, that if they ask for forgiveness, you would give it..

Whether or not they respond to your kindness is in God's hands.

Have to leave it there. Judas didn't respond to Jesus' kindness. But sometimes God uses that kindness, even years later to bring repentance. You are simply called to be faithful.

2. When you are treated unjustly you must rely on God's protection.

Jesus had warned Peter and others to watch and pray. Knew test coming. Instead they slept. Suddenly woke up, Jesus was surrounded.

One disciple (know Peter) pulled out sword, tried to cut off head, got an ear.

Jesus said to pray—use spiritual weapon—Peter chose a weapon of the world.
Peter thought he was being faithful by waving sword around.

Jesus told him he had it all wrong, had to rely on God.

It was not God's will to use a sword. Wanted disciples to trust Him.

When unjustly treated, are you inclined to fight or rely on God to defend you?

What's your first response? Is it to pray or is it to fight?

Do you first say, I believe the Lord defend me, or do you plot your strategy?

John Calvin was a lawyer before he became a minister and theologian.

He says this about Peter using his sword when he should have been praying.

“All (Christians) who are impelled by their restlessness and excessive anxiety to stretch out their hands to forbidden remedies for evils, do unquestionably remove the provision of God.”

If your motive for fighting unjust treatment is restlessness and excessive anxiety,
if it's anger, if it's defending your rights or making someone pay—
you will inevitably reach out and grab a sword and start swinging.

You will try to take care of things your own way.

You'll make use of a remedy for evil that God doesn't want you to use.

When you do that, will miss the provision God has in place for your deliverance.

Won't be able to say—

I was wronged, I waited on the Lord just like Psalm 37 says, look what God did!

I was wronged, I turned the other cheek just like Matt 5, and look what God did!
Because you've rushed forward with own plan of attack.

This doesn't mean that Christians can't seek lawful redress for wrongs committed.

Examples of that in the Bible—Paul appealing to Caesar.

But question of motive must be always before you.

The desire to follow God's will and trust his protection must be foremost.

That sometimes means you have to bear the cross of injustice for a time,
as Jesus did, with faith that God will defend you.

Doesn't mean thing will work out as you expect—will get the job, get vindicated.

You might die. Christians have died under unjust treatment—like John Hus.

That might be God's protection, take home to heaven.

But if trusting, will see God's hand.

CONC: I want to read to you something that I read to you just a few months ago but it's so powerful.

If you've followed any of the news coming out of China, know there's been a massive crackdown by the communist government on the church.

Pastor Wang Yi of Early Rain Covenant Church knew he was going to be arrested so he wrote a document for friends to publish online about why he has chosen to disobey the state when it comes to worship.

He was arrested as well as many members of his church.

Here's the end:

Those who lock me up will one day be locked up by angels. Those who interrogate me will finally be questioned and judged by Christ. When I think of this, the Lord fills me with compassion and grief toward those who are attempting to and actively imprisoning me. Pray that the Lord would use me, that he would grant me patience and wisdom, that I might take the gospel to them. Separate me from my wife and children, ruin my reputation, destroy my life and my family—the authorities are capable of doing all of these things. However, no one in this world can force me to renounce my faith; no one can make me change my life; and no one can raise me from the dead. And so, respectable officers, stop committing evil. This is not for my benefit but rather for yours and your children's. I plead earnestly with you to stay your hands, for why should you be willing to pay the price of eternal damnation in hell for the sake of a lowly sinner such as I?

Don't you hear echoes of Jesus' arrest in those words?

Don't they lift you and humble you at the same time.

Part of Jesus' passion was his arrest for you.

He was taken as a criminal.

The holy and good Son of God was treated like a robber and rebel in your place, so that God would never treat you that way.

Do you believe that? Are you living it?

If you do, it will give you humility and hope when you face injustice.

And you can say: Like my Lord, I'm going to face this injustice in the same way—with kindness toward my enemies, trusting God's protection.