

## ***REDISCOVER JESUS, PART 81: "JESUS CHOSE TO SUBMIT TO SUFFERING"***

### **LUKE 22:39-53**

Ps. Eric Yee

#### **Personal Introduction**

Hi everyone. If you don't know me, my name is Eric and I'm a pastor at HMCC of Jakarta, and it's my privilege to preach the Word of God to us today.

#### **Sermon Series Introduction**

We're currently in Part 81 of our sermon series called "Rediscover Jesus," where we're going through the Gospel of Luke together.

So let's get right into today's sermon: "Jesus Chose to Submit to Suffering."

#### **Introduction**

One of the things I learned early on in marriage is that Tina doesn't just want me to do things, but she wants me to *want* to do things. She wants me to do things without her telling me to do things, like washing the dishes, picking up a meal for her, buying her flowers, and so forth.

Of course, this can become a bit problematic at times because I *want* to do what she wants me to do, but I sometimes don't *know* what she wants me to do until she *tells* me.

But of course, I think the sentiment is something that we can all relate with.

In general, most of us appreciate something *more* when someone *chooses* to do it for us rather than simply feeling *obligated* to do so.

So if a friend writes you an encouraging note on his own initiative, you will probably value that more than the encouraging words you receive from co-workers during your routine 360 review.

Or if your sibling tells you on their own initiative how much they appreciate you and how good you are at something, you will probably appreciate that more than if they only said those things because your parents made them say it.

And the same is true when we think about our Savior. Was Jesus simply *obligated* to suffer and die for us as sinners? Or did he really *choose* to do it for our sake?

When we realize how agonizing this decision was for him and how he still *chose* to submit to suffering for the sake of sinners, it should make all the difference in our response to him—and it should make all the more sense why he alone is worthy of our worship.

## **The One Thing**

*Jesus chose to submit to suffering for the sake of sinners.*

### **Scripture Introduction**

Turn your Bibles to Luke 22:39-53.

Just want to give a bit of context before jumping into today's passage.

Everything has slowed down since the beginning of Luke chapter 22, as we've entered into Jesus' last 24 hours before his crucifixion.

- Jesus has eaten his last Passover meal with his disciples, where he also instituted the Lord's Supper.
- Jesus told his disciples that one of them will betray him, and they began to question one another, which quickly spirals into a dispute about who is the greatest.
- Jesus says that Satan will "sift [them] like wheat," specifically saying that Peter will deny him three times, but then assures him that he has prayed for him that his faith may not fail.
- And Jesus uses the figurative language of a sword to tell his disciples that they will experience increased persecution after his crucifixion, but they don't understand what he's saying as they present to him two physical swords.

And that's where we are in today's passage.

### **Scripture Reading**

Let's read Luke 22:39-53.

<sup>39</sup> And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him.

<sup>40</sup> And when he came to the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." <sup>41</sup> And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, <sup>42</sup> saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." <sup>43</sup> And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. <sup>44</sup> And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. <sup>45</sup> And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, <sup>46</sup> and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

<sup>47</sup> While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him, <sup>48</sup> but Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" <sup>49</sup> And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" <sup>50</sup> And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. <sup>51</sup> But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him. <sup>52</sup> Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? <sup>53</sup> When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

This is God's Word.

## **Overview**

We'll look at this passage in two parts, and we'll see two *kinds* of suffering that Jesus *chose* to submit to for the sake of sinners.

- I. The agony of the cup (vv. 39-46)
- II. The betrayal of the kiss (vv. 47-53)

### **I. The agony of the cup (vv. 39-46)**

Look at verses 39-40.

[<sup>39</sup> And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. <sup>40</sup> And when he came to the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."]

Previously, Jesus and his twelve apostles were in "the upper room" of the house, where they ate the Passover meal and observed the first Lord's Supper.

Now, there is a scene change, where Jesus and his disciples go to the Mount of Olives, specifically to "the place," which we know as the Garden of Gethsemane at the foot of the Mount of Olives (Matt. 26:36; Mark 14:32; cf. John 18:1).<sup>1</sup>

And at the garden, Jesus exhorts his disciples to pray that they may not enter into temptation.

The "temptation" (or "trial" or "test") is most likely regarding what Jesus spoke about earlier—the impending increase of persecution that his disciples would soon face after his crucifixion (vv. 35-37), and how Satan demanded to "sift [his disciples] like wheat," so that their faith in Jesus may fail (vv. 31-32).

But just as Jesus said that he was praying for them, he now asks them to align *their* prayers to *his* prayer for them—that their faith in him may not fail.

<pause>

Now as we'll soon see, this was one of Jesus' *darkest* hours.

Look at verses 41-44.

[<sup>41</sup> And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, <sup>42</sup> saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." <sup>43</sup> And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. <sup>44</sup> And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.]

Here, we begin to see a Jesus who is "greatly distressed and troubled" (Mark 14:33; cf. Matt. 26:37). In fact, in the other Gospel accounts, Jesus explicitly *tells* his disciples, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch [or keep awake] with me" (Matt. 26:38; cf. Mark 14:34).

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<sup>1</sup> We also know from another Gospel account that Judas has already left to betray Jesus (John 13:26-30), so it's just Jesus and his *eleven* apostles with him in the garden.

This is not the composed and controlled Jesus that we have seen throughout the rest of the Gospel of Luke, but only here in the garden and later at the cross do we see a Jesus who is in insufferable distress.

In verse 41, we should know that Jews at the time typically prayed standing up with their eyes lifted to heaven, so it is unusual that Jesus “knelt down and prayed.” Other Gospel accounts say that “he fell on the ground and prayed” (Mark 14:35), or “he fell on his face and prayed” (Matt. 14:39). It’s as if the burden of sorrow that he was feeling was so heavy that he collapsed to his knees and fell on his face to pray.<sup>2</sup>

And in verse 42, we hear that Jesus was wrestling in prayer to submit to the will of the Father, which he knew was to undergo great suffering for the sake of sinners.

Just as Jesus was earlier tempted in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13), Jesus is once again tempted in the garden to avoid the cross before the crown, to avoid humiliation before exaltation, to avoid suffering before glory.

<pause>

Again, this is not the composed and controlled Jesus that we are used to seeing. So what’s going on here?

Now, in order to understand what is going on here in Jesus’ prayer, we have to understand that Jesus is fully God and fully man; he has a divine nature and a human nature that cannot be divided but can be distinguished (Chalcedonian Definition, A.D. 451).

As such, Jesus as the God-man has both a divine will and a human will (Third Council of Constantinople, A.D. 680). With respect to his *divine* nature, the Father and the Son are one and they share the *same* will; but with respect to his *human* nature, Jesus distinguishes here between *his* will and *his* Father’s will.

Therefore, in his *human* nature, he must *choose* to do or submit to the will of the Father.

But even as a perfect human being, Jesus had the same desire to *live* just like any other human being. We would say that something is very wrong with someone if it was their *will* to suffer horrendous torture and crucifixion. Nobody in their right mind would be happily skipping to their impending horrific death.

But it’s actually not merely *physical* death that Jesus is wrestling with; he doesn’t say “Father, if you are willing, remove this *death* from me,” but he says “remove this *cup* from me.”

The “cup” was a familiar Old Testament image for the *wrath* of God (Ps. 11:6; Isa. 51:17; Ezek. 22:33-34; Jer. 25:15).

We have to recognize that Jesus was not wrestling merely with the certainty of his physical death, or even the horrendous method of death by crucifixion. After all, there were other men who had been crucified, and we have known many brave martyrs who have faced their deaths with “less agony and more apparent bravery” than Jesus is exuding here.<sup>3</sup>

Rather, Jesus’ suffering and death is *unique* in that he is suffering in the *place* of and for the *sake* of sinners. The cup of God’s wrath was equivalent to what *we* deserve for our sins—eternal punishment in hell.

<sup>2</sup> R. C. Sproul, *A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1999), 395.

<sup>3</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke, REC* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009).

As believers in Jesus Christ, all *our* sin was imputed to him and he bore the full *wrath* of God, the full *judgment* of God, the full *curse* of God for *our* sin. “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21).

The agony of Jesus was not the fear of death, but it was the agony of the cup of God’s wrath. His agony was “from the deep sense of God’s wrath against sin; which He as our sacrifice was to bear; in greater pain than mere dying.”<sup>4</sup>

<pause>

We should never think that somehow all of this was easier for Jesus because he was the Son of God. No, this was a conscious *choice* that Jesus made in his human nature to submit to the Father’s will—to submit to suffering for the sake of sinners. This was not an easy, automatic choice for him, but he wrestled with it in prayer.

And Jesus’ prayer is honest and raw in his struggle. In his *human* nature, he *longed* for “this cup” to be removed from him.

Jesus is staring *sin* and the *wrath* of God in the face, and he is deeply struggling with the prospect of drinking that cup of wrath down to its dregs.

And yet, his prayer ends where all our prayers should end: “Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” Jesus models what he calls all his disciples to pray, “Your will be done” (Matt. 6:10).

In the end, Jesus, in his human nature, can submit himself to the Father’s will *because* he knows him as his perfectly loving and good and sovereign *Father*.

<pause>

But notice, even though his prayer seems to end with a definitive sense of submission, we see that this is *not* a “one-and-done” prayer. In the other Gospel accounts, we know that Jesus didn’t just pray this once and have it settled, but he continued to pray multiple times these very *same* things (Matt. 26:42, 44; Mark 14:39).

But the way Luke presents it is interesting.

In verse 43, it says that an angel appeared from heaven to strengthen Jesus. This is similar to earlier, when Jesus was being ministered to by angels after 40 days of fasting and temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4:11)—except that was at the *end* of his praying and temptation. Here, the angel comes in the *middle* of his praying and temptation to strengthen him, so that he can keep on praying!

<pause>

And in verse 44, the word “agony” doesn’t just describe inward pain, but it means that there was a “fight within his soul.”<sup>5</sup> It “implies no common degree of sorrow, but such extreme distress that his nature had a most violent conflict with it, as a man that wrestles with all his might with a strong man.”<sup>6</sup>

In a very real way, this struggle was tearing him apart inside.

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<sup>4</sup> Richard Baxter, as quoted in J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, Luke* (1858; reprint Cambridge: James Clarke, 1976), 2:427.

<sup>5</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke, REC* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Edwards, “Sermon VI: Christ’s Agony,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1979), 2:868.

But in the midst of such violent conflict within his soul, Jesus prays “*more earnestly*.”

Usually, in pain and sorrow, we try to escape to sleep (like we’ll see the disciples doing later) or to distraction, but Jesus presses in even *more* into prayer.

And in verse 44, Luke begins to describe *physically* what he has been describing mentally and emotionally of Jesus’ distress; he says that “his sweat became like great drops of *blood* falling down to the ground.”<sup>7</sup>

Now, we would think that Jesus’ *crucifixion* would be described with his blood falling to the ground, but there’s no mention of that there; but here in the *garden*, as he is wrestling in prayer to *choose* to go to the cross, *this* is where his blood is mentioned.<sup>8</sup>

Even *before* the cross, Jesus was near the point of complete collapse. The prospect of drinking the cup of God’s wrath for our sin nearly killed Jesus in Gethsemane even *before* he ever made it to Calvary.<sup>9</sup>

In a sense, Gethsemane is where the real battle was fought. At Gethsemane, Jesus did not *drink* the cup, but he *chose* to drink it for the sake of sinners like us.<sup>10</sup>

<pause>

Let’s keep going now to verses 45-46.

[<sup>45</sup> And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, <sup>46</sup> and he said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.”]

In verse 45, Luke gives a reason for their sleeping; they were “sleeping for *sorrow*.”<sup>11</sup>

Remember, they had probably never seen Jesus like this before. In every other place before this point, Jesus had been composed and controlled, yet here, he seemed to be unraveling.

He had told them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death” (Matt. 26:38; Mark 14:34). They saw the agony and distress of their Master and, being just “a stone’s throw” away, they could hear his distraught prayers.

And so, because they saw the pain of their beloved Master, they couldn’t help but to feel, to some extent, the sorrow of Jesus.

But unlike Jesus, who pressed deeper into prayer amidst his sorrowful agony, his disciples did what perhaps most of us are tempted to do when we’re filled with sorrow—they escaped to sleep. They didn’t want to get out of bed (so to speak).

<sup>7</sup> Study note on Luke 22:44 (in *ESV Study Bible* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008]) notes: “Though the word ‘like’ may indicate that this is to be understood metaphorically, there are both ancient and modern accounts on record of people sweating blood—a condition known as *hematidrosis*, where extreme anguish or physical strain causes one’s capillary blood vessels to dilate and burst, mixing sweat and blood. In either case, Luke’s main purpose is to highlight the intensity of Jesus’ emotional and physical trauma.”

<sup>8</sup> James R Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: IVP, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, REC (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> Leon L. Morris, *Luke*, TNTC 3 (Nottingham, England: IVP, 2008), 329.

<sup>11</sup> The other Gospel accounts focus on another reason—“for their eyes were very heavy” (Mark 14:40; cf. Matt. 26:43)—but this is not in contradiction to the reason that Luke gives; both could be contributing factors for their giving into sleep. Perhaps there was something to be said about having just eaten the Passover feast (i.e., food coma) and the late evening (i.e., natural tiredness), but Luke chooses to focus on the sorrow of Jesus by highlighting the sorrow his disciples felt in witnessing their Master so distraught.

Now, of course, sometimes sleep is the right answer; perhaps most of us would be living in greater obedience to God by honoring our God-given limits by consistently sleeping more.

But here, Jesus had specifically told them to “watch” or “keep awake” with him (Matt. 26:38; Mark 14:34), and to pray.

So, Jesus’ question of “Why are you sleeping?” is not because he doesn’t know, but because sleeping is not the right response right now. It’s like when someone does something foolish and you ask, “Why did you just do that?”

Jesus, then, exhorts them again in the right response, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” It’s what he had already *told* them to do. It’s what they had already *seen* him do. And it’s what they had already *heard* him do.

<pause>

So what are some takeaways for us at this point? Let me offer three life applications.

[Life Applications

1. Pray honestly, submissively, knowledgeably, and persistently about your sorrows and struggles.]

**First**, pray honestly, submissively, knowledgeably, and persistently about your sorrows and struggles.

There’s a lot here, so let me break it down a bit.

If Jesus, the perfect human being, prayed in such a raw and honest way to the Father, then we also ought not be afraid to pour out our hearts honestly to the Lord in prayer. We don’t have to come all tidied up, we don’t have to be concerned if our prayers sound eloquent enough, we don’t have to be worried about saying the wrong thing, but we have the freedom to come as we are—broken, distraught, weak, and needy.

So we come honestly, but also come *submissively*. We come with a heart that is resolved to submit to the Lord’s will, no matter what. We can make our requests known to him, but we don’t make demands, threats, or ultimatums with God. No, in the end, we acknowledge that God is God and we are not, and we trust that his will alone is good, acceptable, and perfect (Rom. 12:2).

And the reason we can do that is because, in Christ, we *know* God as “Father” (Luke 11:2). Even if we struggle or lack understanding, if we trust the character and competency of our Father, then we can submit to him. He is all-loving, all-good, and all-powerful. “He who did not spare his only Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32). We pray with a deep trust that our Father’s plans for us are not to harm us but to give us a hope and future (Jer. 29:11). We pray *knowledgeably* that, in Christ, God is our Father.

And we pray *persistently*. Jesus’ prayer wasn’t a “one-and-done” prayer, but “being in an agony he prayed more earnestly” (Luke 22:44). He needed to be strengthened by an angel in order to continue to persistently pray. He prayed the same things repeatedly and with greater intensity to the point where he’s described as having “great drops of blood” fall to the ground (cf. Heb. 12:4). If that’s how the perfect human being with the perfect relationship with the Father prayed in this time of struggle, then we shouldn’t expect that praying about our struggles should be simply “one-and-done.”

And notice, Jesus prayed about a *sorrow*. His soul was very sorrowful, even to death (Matt. 26:38; Mark 14:34). He doesn't try to escape or distract himself from his sorrows, but he goes to the Father in prayer amidst his sorrows. And Jesus is only doing what we see many saints have done all throughout the Psalms. They bring their sorrows to God, and there, it's the simple truths of who God is, what he has done, what he has promised, and who we are in light of all that—those are the things that can truly soothe our sorrowful souls. And the context by which we experience that over and over again is in prayer.

Jesus also prayed about a *struggle*—a violent conflict within him—regarding obeying the will of his Father. We often pray for our health, our family, our work, our church, the nations. We pray for decisions to be made and things regarding the future. But that temptation that you are prone towards—anger, lust, envy, unforgiveness, bitterness, cowardice... whatever it may be—how often and how intensely do you pray about that struggle? How often do we pray that we would obey God's will no matter what and that our faith in Christ may not fail?

As we're in this One Desire Fast as a church, this is a great time to turn towards our Father in prayer. Like Jesus, let's resolve to pray honestly, submissively, knowledgeably, and persistently about our sorrows and struggles.

[Life Applications

1. Pray honestly, submissively, knowledgeably, and persistently about your sorrows and struggles.
2. Take the wrath of God for sin as seriously as Jesus did in Gethsemane.]

**Second**, take the wrath of God for sin as seriously as Jesus did in Gethsemane.

As Jesus starred in the face of *sin* and the *wrath* of God that our sin deserves, he was not calm about it. He was physically, emotionally, and mentally distraught about it.

If we trust in Christ as our substitute Savior, then yes, all our past, present, and future sins have been paid for "once-for-all" by him. That's the gospel message that we rejoice in!

But that doesn't make sin any less serious or heinous. In the midst of our forgiveness, we must never lose sight of how distressing, destructive, and damning sin really is.

So what sins are you currently struggling with?

As it's been famously said, "Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you" (John Owen). We ought *never* to get comfortable with sin in our lives, but as believers in Jesus Christ, we of all people ought to take the wrath of God for sin as seriously as Jesus did in Gethsemane, and do all we can, by his power at work within us, to rid ourselves of it.

[Life Applications

1. Pray honestly, submissively, knowledgeably, and persistently about your sorrows and struggles.
2. Take the wrath of God for sin as seriously as Jesus did in Gethsemane.
3. Praise, thank, and trust Jesus who *chose* to submit to suffering for the sake of sinners like us.]

**Third**, praise, thank, and trust Jesus who *chose* to submit to suffering for the sake of sinners like us.

Perhaps, for some of us, the gospel has gradually become an assumption that has ceased to move us—"yes, I know that Jesus loves me and died for me."

But for Jesus, it was never an assumption that he was going to love and die for sinners like us. It wasn't an easy, automatic, "of course" kind of thing for him.



Rather, he *chose*—he made the *conscious decision*—to submit to suffering for the sake of sinners like us. Just let that sink in for a moment. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, then he *volunteered* to be your substitute—to endure the hellish suffering of the wrath of God for your sin that you deserved.

Now, how does that affect your understanding and your treasuring of the extent of Christ’s love for you?

Our God became a man *so that* he could *choose* to suffer as our substitute Savior. No other god or person could or would ever *choose* to do this for you. And because of this, our God knows  *firsthand* what it is like to suffer, and so he can relate with our own sufferings and temptations, yet he was without sin (Heb. 4:15); he understands us on the most personal level, and yet, he can call us and empower us to overcome whatever we’re going through.

When we see the agony of Christ in his human nature, we do not have *less* but *more* reasons to worship him.

So as that truth sinks in, praise and thank and trust him afresh for *choosing* to submit to suffering for us.

<pause>

If you’re not a believer in Jesus Christ, this is the essence of the gospel. God created us and we are accountable to him, but all of us have miserably failed to live according to his Word and so all of us rightfully deserve his wrath for our sins against him. But in love, God came in the person of Jesus Christ to live the perfect life we should have lived and to suffer and die to take the punishment of sin that we deserved. So now, all who repent of their sins and believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior are saved from that wrath and are given eternal life.

I pray that you would see the love of Christ in the agony of Christ, and that you would trust him today. If that’s you, please share with the friend you came with today or with any of the pastors. We’d love to help confirm your faith and come alongside you in your followership of Christ.

<pause>

So first, the agony of the cup; and second...

## **II. The betrayal of the kiss (vv. 47-53)**

Look at verses 47-48.

[<sup>47</sup> While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him, <sup>48</sup> but Jesus said to him, “Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?”]

So Jesus was still telling his disciples to pray that they may not enter into temptation, there is the sudden appearance of a crowd.

Jesus was ready for this moment, but the disciples had just woken up, and having squandered their opportunity to pray, they were not ready for this moment at all.

And who is leading this crowd? It’s “the man called Judas.”

At this point, we obviously know who Judas is, but the way Luke presents him here is as if he is being introduced for the first time—as if he were separate from the rest of Jesus’ apostles, as if he’s not the same Judas we have known throughout Luke’s Gospel account.

But then, Luke says that he’s “one of the twelve,” telling us that it’s the *same* Judas—and *that’s* the heart-wrenching part of it all.

- Judas was personally chosen by Jesus to be in his inner circle.
- Judas heard all Jesus’ teaching about the kingdom of God, including all his warnings regarding money.
- Judas witnessed all of Jesus’ miracles and was even included in on miracles like feeding the five thousand and four thousand.
- Judas was entrusted by Jesus to preach the gospel and empowered by him to cast out demons and heal the sick.
- Judas heard Jesus’ straightforward warning that one of his own would betray him.
- And Jesus had even washed his feet earlier that night!

Nobody had loved Judas better than Jesus had. And yet, it is Judas, “one of the twelve,” who is leading this crowd to betray and arrest Jesus.

In fact, it’s *because* of the closeness of relationship with Jesus that Judas is even *able* to betray him. Only the *apostles* had been with Jesus at that hour in the Mount of Olives each night “as was his custom,” so only one of his *apostles* would know that he would be there away from the crowds that night.

The religious leaders wanted to arrest and kill Jesus, but they were afraid of doing so amidst the crowds for fear of the repercussions (Luke 22:2), but it was *Judas* who not only *gave* them the information, but he personally *led* them to him.

And not only that, “he drew near to Jesus to *kiss* him.”

The kiss was a common form of greeting in that community, even among men. But it was more than a handshake, but it was a sign of friendship or affection.<sup>12</sup>

Now, of *all* the ways that Judas could have betrayed someone, how could he use a *kiss*—the symbol of friendship and affection?

That’s what Jesus is getting at in his question to Judas in verse 48: “would you betray the Son of Man *with a kiss?*”

- Could he not have pointed Jesus out with his finger?
- Judas was there at the Passover meal, so could he not have just told the crowd what Jesus was wearing?
- The religious leaders were there and they had just engaged with Jesus earlier that week in the temple, so surely they already knew what Jesus looked like, so couldn’t Judas just have told hem where to find Jesus and not have been there at all?

Jesus’ question is not one of shock; he already *knew* that Judas would betray him. Rather, the question he asks is more for *Judas*.

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<sup>12</sup> E. E. Ellis, “Kiss,” in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. I. Howard Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, and D. J. Wiseman, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), 657.

Jesus is pricking at his conscience, as the question exposes to Judas how far he has strayed: “Judas, how could you have chosen such a sign? Could you not have employed another way? Are you so dead, so beyond feeling, that you would use a kiss?”<sup>13</sup>

Even to the point of betrayal, Jesus is seeking to keep Judas from ruining himself by calmly showing him “the hideousness of his act.”<sup>14</sup>

Jesus is not reacting in surprise but he is reaching out in love to Judas to lead him to repentance—“Judas, it’s still not too late for you. Turn from this wicked betrayal.”

<pause>

Perhaps for some of us, we may feel some level of betrayal from family members, friends, or even fellow church members. In fact, it’s the *closeness* of our relationship with them that leads us to feel such pain of betrayal. Simply put, we expect love from loved ones, and when we receive evil for good, we feel intense pain and almost disbelief—“how could this person do this to me?”

Now, as we look to Jesus, we shouldn’t think for a moment that this was any *less* heart-wrenching for Jesus as it would be for us.

This was the worst kind of betrayal, where Jesus received the worst kind of evil for the best kind of good that he showed Judas. There was no pettiness or misunderstanding here; this was very likely the worst betrayal in the history of the world.

And yet, Jesus responds in love to Judas. In the midst of his heart-wrenching pain, Jesus is still concerned for the spiritual well-being of his betraying friend.

But that’s not how the rest of his disciples respond.

Look at verses 49-51.

[<sup>49</sup> And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?” <sup>50</sup> And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. <sup>51</sup> But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him.]

Upon seeing Judas’s betrayal, you can imagine the surprise and anger that the disciples felt. All the disciples had earlier been questioning one another who would betray Jesus, so nobody suspected Judas as more likely than the rest (Luke 22:23).

The other eleven disciples also see the crowd armed with swords and clubs, and they know that they have come to arrest and kill their Master, and so they think it’s best to strike *first* and try to overpower them.

Perhaps they thought about what Jesus said before about having a sword (which they terribly misunderstood) and how they presented two swords to Jesus, and perhaps they thought that this was the time to put those two swords to use.

So in verse 49, the disciples ask Jesus, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?”

<sup>13</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Luke*, PTW, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971), 252.

But in verse 50, “one of them” doesn’t wait for an answer from Jesus before he strikes “the servant of the high priest,” cutting off his right ear.

We know from John’s Gospel account that “one of them” is Peter and “the servant of the high priest” is Malchus (John 18:10).

Here, Peter seems serious about what he said earlier: “Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death” (Luke 22:33). But this was foolish in so many ways.

First of all, Jesus didn’t need any help. He could have called down more than twelve legions of angels (Matt. 26:53).

Second, we know from John’s Gospel that, along with the religious leaders, there were also Roman soldiers present (John 18:3, 12), so they were attacking government and religious officials, which of course is against the law.

Third, they only had two swords and this crowd was armed with swords and clubs; they were definitely not going to prevail but would have likely died themselves. Peter obviously also had terrible aim; he was a fisherman, not swordsman.

Fourth, the religious leaders were about to spend all night trying to find some legal charge against Jesus. If his disciples attacked the crowd with swords, they could easily claim that Jesus was leading a violent band of rebels.

Jesus, therefore, would not have been able to say to Pontius Pilate later on, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world” (John 18:36).

If Jesus didn’t immediately remedy Peter’s blunder by healing Malchus’s ear, Jesus wouldn’t have been able to make this claim.<sup>15</sup>

Fifth and most importantly, this was against God’s plan of salvation. Jesus had told his disciples *three times* that this was going to take place according to God’s plan, and yet Peter was violently going against it (John 18:11).

<pause>

So Peter’s rash act was foolish in so many ways, but aren’t many of us prone to such foolish responses?

We “pray” (or ask Jesus) what to do, but then we don’t wait for his response before doing what we think is best.

Remember, Peter *also* felt an intense sense of betrayal by his friend Judas. He was angry and he wanted revenge. He felt before he thought, and he did something very foolish.

For us, in situations where we feel a smaller sense of betrayal or injustice, many of us resort to slander or bitterness because we feel the need to stand in judgment of them in some way.

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<sup>15</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Luke*, PTW, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

Perhaps ...

- we talk negatively about them behind their backs,
- we stop listening to them,
- we think the worst of them,
- we stop praying for them,
- we refuse to forgive them,
- we avoid them.

In one way or another, we pick up the sword (so to speak) to punish them for their wrongdoing—whether in our hearts or with our lips.

But that is not the way of Christ.

As believers in Jesus Christ, we know that either Jesus has chosen to pay for their sins, if they trust in him to have paid for them all on the cross, or they will pay for them themselves one day before God.<sup>16</sup> Either way, God will someday right every wrong, so we don't need to pick up our swords (so to speak).

Rather, like Christ and in the power of Christ, we can respond to even the worst pains of betrayal with loving concern for the spiritual well-being of our family member, friend, or even fellow church member.

<pause>

Going back, we see that Peter's foolish act was about to get them all killed. The crowd was probably beginning to unsheathe their swords and raise their clubs at the sight of Malchus's bloody, detached ear.

But in verse 51, Jesus quickly stops *both* sides by saying, "No more of this!" and by miraculously healing Malchus's ear. And in so doing...

- Jesus saved all his disciples' lives,
- he showed that his church is not to wield the sword,
- he displayed his compassion for his enemy,
- and he demonstrated his willingness to undergo injustice for the sake of the glory of God.<sup>17</sup>

And therefore, we *also* ought to treat others—even those who have hurt or betrayed us—with such compassion by...

- not wishing or doing harm to them,
- *choosing* to show them grace and mercy,
- and continuing to pray for them.

Now, look at verses 52-53.

[<sup>52</sup> Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? <sup>53</sup> When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."]

The term for "robber" has the connotation of "a man inclined to violence."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Timothy Keller and Kathy Keller, *God's Wisdom for Navigating Life: A Year of Daily Devotions in the Book of Proverbs* (New York: Viking, 2017), 54.

<sup>17</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, REC (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, "Luke" in *Matthew–Luke*, ESV Expository Commentary 8 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021).

But Jesus was the gentlest man who ever lived and who never took anything that did not belong to him. So the religious leaders coming out with a crowd armed with swords and clubs as if he were a “robber” was totally inappropriate.

Jesus was teaching publicly in the temple day after day, so the religious leaders could have arrested him at any time during the day, but they feared the people (Luke 19:47-48; 22:2). So by coming with swords and clubs in the cover of darkness, it was the *religious leaders* who were in fact acting like armed robbers.<sup>19</sup>

Jesus was exposing their cowardice and guilt. They were not courageous nor righteous enough to arrest him during the day, so they resort to doing so in the dark.

But then, in verse 53, Jesus says something startling: “But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.”

“Your hour” is not referring to sixty minutes, but Jesus is saying that this is the period of time when they would have their evil way. This is when his apostle and close friend Judas would betray him. This is when the religious leaders would act like armed robbers to unjustly arrest him. This is when the Son of Man would enter great suffering all the way to the cross.

“The power of darkness” is a phrase that is used in other places in Scripture to refer to the rule and dominion of *Satan* (Eph. 6:12; Col. 1:13).<sup>20</sup>

So in short, this was the definite period of time where evil men and Satan would seem to triumph over Jesus.

<pause>

But the very fact that *Jesus* is declaring “this is your hour” shows that *he* is ultimately in control. There is a time limit on their “hour” and “the power of darkness.”

Sin and Satan seem to triumph at Jesus’ arrest in Gethsemane and in his crucifixion at Calvary, but three days later, we see Jesus “breaking the power of darkness and bringing the light of salvation to everyone who believes in him.”<sup>21</sup> On Easter Sunday, Jesus conquered sin, death, and Satan; in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, *sin* has lost its power, *death* has lost its sting, and *Satan* has been disarmed.

And what’s more is that “this hour” that *supposedly* belongs to evil men and to Satan is really *Jesus’* hour.

All throughout the Gospel accounts, “the hour” or “his hour” is frequently talked about in reference to Jesus’ suffering and death (Mark 14:35, 41; Luke 22:14; John 2:4; 7:6, 30; 8:20; 12:23-24; 13:1; 17:1).

So all the supposed triumphs of evil men and Satan—the treacherous betrayal, the unjust arrest, the horrific crucifixion—all of it was in fulfillment to God’s Word and according to God’s plan.

The suffering and death of Christ was ultimately for the salvation of sinners, as Jesus bore the wrath of God that our sins deserved.

Therefore, the hour of Satan’s power was also simultaneously the day of our salvation.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Luke*, PTW, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

<sup>20</sup> Philip Graham Ryken (*Luke*, REC [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009]) notes: “The Scripture calls Satan’s realm ‘the domain of darkness’ (Col. 1:13). It says that our struggle against evil is a struggle ‘against the cosmic powers’ that rule ‘this present darkness’ (Eph. 6:12).”

<sup>21</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, REC (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009).

<sup>22</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, REC (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009).

As believers in Jesus Christ, we do not live in the power of darkness, but we have been delivered from the dominion of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of the beloved Son (Col. 1:13).

As believers in Jesus Christ, we know that our present trials and whatever darkness we're facing will not last forever, but we live in the light of our salvation and the eternal hope we have in Christ.

## **Conclusion**

Do you question the *sovereignty* of God in the midst of your suffering?

Then look to *Jesus'* suffering and see how he is *Lord* over the darkest hour, even employing the sins of evil men and the supposed triumphs of Satan for the sake of saving sinners—and see how God is always at work for your good.

Do you question the *love* of God in the midst of your suffering?

Then look to *Jesus'* suffering and see the agony of the cup of God's wrath that he *chose* to drink on your behalf and see his response of love even for his beloved friend who would betray him with a kiss—and see how great his love is for you.

As we look to the suffering of Christ, may we always remember that he *chose* to submit to such suffering for *our* sake—and may that truth comfort us, guide us, and empower us to trust him, praise him, and imitate him for the sake of *his* glory.

## **The One Thing**

***Jesus chose to submit to suffering for the sake of sinners.***

Let's pray.