

Matthew 23-02-05a

Good morning, this is the fifth day of February 2023. Welcome to Grace and Truth Bible Church, Sunday morning in the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew chapter 26. Jesus and the disciples have left the upper room, they have traversed the Kidron Valley to the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane, the arresting party has arrived and the sword has been swung, the ear of Malchus has left and returned to his head.

And we saw last time the emphasis on the fulfillment of the scriptures. How then could the scriptures be fulfilled that it must happen thus? And this is where we will pick up this morning and move forward into the six trials of the Lord Jesus on this night. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and our study.

We'll begin. Father, it is always a wonderful reminder that you are aware of our situation, you watch us closely and we pray with David that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our heart will be acceptable in your sight because you are our strength and our redeemer. We thank you for the portion of scripture that is before us this morning and we ask your blessing on it and on us as we look at it together.

May your Holy Spirit find us ready pupils and well plowed soil into which the seed of your word can sink deeply to grow and bear its fruit in our lives so that we can represent the Lord Jesus Christ as his body in the here and now and prepare for service and function in the future. We ask it in Jesus name. Amen.

Let's read our passage. It's always good to have the context in our minds and to see the flow of events. So beginning in verse 47, while Jesus was still speaking and what is it he is saying? And before the words have died out of the air, rise, let us be going.

Look, my betrayer is at hand. My betrayer is at hand. At hand.

Think about that for a minute. Try to dig back. What is the first time you can think of in this gospel where something was at hand? What's the first thing that is at hand in this gospel? Remember John saying, repent, and then he gives a reason.

The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Now my betrayer is at hand. God comes near with the kingdom to man.

Man comes near to God with betrayal. My betrayer is near. My betrayer is at hand.

While he was still speaking, here is Judas and he is one of the 12. Is this a necessary detail? Do we not know this already? Why is it spoken of here in verse 47? Judas, one of the 12. This is emphasis on how utterly wrong this is.

It would be one thing if the servant who led the disciples to the upper room had then gone to the people associated with the high priest and the elders and the scribes and the

Pharisees and whatnot, but this is one of the 12. With a great multitude with swords and clubs came from the chief priests and elders of the people. There is a representative of Jesus' group which is Judas, one of the 12.

There are representatives from the chief priests and elders of the people. Did you find it? Matthew 26? Great. Verse 48, now his betrayer had given them a sign.

So we have him identified as the betrayer in verse 46. He is identified again in verse 48. His betrayer had given them a sign saying, whomever I kiss, he is the one sees him.

Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, greetings rabbi and kissed him. The point of observation here that can bear fruitful application for us, there is a way that seems right. There is a justification and a rationalization that we can offer ourselves that our behavior is justified, that it makes sense.

It can be approved by a large mob of people behind us who all think this is great. We are so happy you are doing what you're doing. A feeling of safety in numbers and a feeling of rightness because of the shared opinion of the many.

This is a large mob with one disciple at their head versus a small group with Jesus at its head. And the betrayer comes up and expresses greeting and affection, a seeming well-wish and acknowledgement of Jesus and who he is as teacher. So greetings rabbi, well-wishes rabbi with a sword and club equipped mob behind him.

And somehow in Judas's mind, this is okay. We are all made of the same clay. We are all as an unclean thing.

All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. We all do fade as a leaf and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away. That's Isaiah.

To look at Judas and say, how could he do such a thing is not the right question. The right question is, why do I sometimes do such a thing? To claim the name of Christ and yet reason away and justify standards and morals and opportunities to walk the narrow road or walk the wide road. It is scary in the extreme that we're capable of this kind of self-justification.

And as with so many things in scripture, it is dangerous to say, well, look at that guy. He really messed up. Look at Peter.

He really failed and not see ourselves standing there in Peter's sandals or in Judas's sandals. Judas has been with the Lord Jesus since early days. Judas went out under the ministry of the Holy Spirit and performed healings and preached the gospel of the kingdom.

Judas saw Jesus heal multitudes, individuals day after day after day, week after week,

month after month, place after place. Judas was present for the feeding of the 5,000 and the multiplication of the bread. Judas was present at the feeding of the 4,000 and the multiplication of the bread.

Judas was present on the Sea of Galilee when the storm was stilled. Judas was present when Jesus drove the legion of demons out of the man of Gerasa and into the herd of swine. Judas personally witnessed these things with his own two eyes.

And it is this same Judas who is now betraying the Lord Jesus into the hands of his enemies. Not just enemies who want to slow him down or want to discredit him. These people want to kill him.

And Judas knows that. There but for the grace of God and for actively claiming and pursuing the grace of God, we go. This can be us if we don't keep our spiritual priorities aligned, if we don't cultivate the presence and power of the Holy Spirit and the influence of the light of God's word in our souls.

We can and will do equally bad things. Paul tells the Galatians, you are an enemy of the cross. You have fallen from grace.

You are cut off from Christ by making similarly self-interested decisions, similarly short-sighted, similarly blind to realities. And passages like this lay bare the potential for destructive, bad thinking of which we are all capable. And it ought to scare us.

It ought to drive us to our knees in prayer. It ought to drive us to the repository of truth that resides in our souls. And under the presence, power, and convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit, to confess our sins, to ask for light, to ask for pardon, to ask for grace, to ask, seek, and knock, to be of positive service.

These things must come, but woe to him by whom they come. Jesus said to him, friend, why have you come? Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took him. They laid hands on Jesus and took him.

Jesus did not invoke divine power. He did not resist. How many times down through history, how many places in the modern day do you find people laying hands on Jesus and using him for their own purposes, pursuing their own agendas with him involved? It is painful to see people involved in political action who are at the same time waving crosses and pictures of Jesus and in very inappropriate and irrational ways, claiming divine sanction for their political actions or inactions, laying hands on Jesus and dragging him in a place he never intended to go, betraying the witness, betraying the message, betraying the purpose for short-sighted and ignorant goals.

Suddenly, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand, drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. Jesus said to him, put your sword in its place. There is a place for a sword.

This is not the time or the place to be using it. All who take the sword will perish by the sword, die by the sword. Do you think that I cannot now pray to my father and he will provide me with more than 12 legions of angels? Stop thinking in human terms, human leverage, human strength, human conflict, human tools of opposition and overcoming, and remember who we are.

Jesus says, you're down here, you're a fisherman with a sword. If this were the time for actual conflict and actual physical opposition, I've got way better resources by petition to the father. Jesus is parsing the situation.

If he needed intervention, if he needed deliverance, where would he go? Not to his disciples, not to security guards, but to the father. Our security resides in the father. Our blessing, our provision, our guidance all comes from God the father.

If we need protection, there are certainly steps we can take, but ultimately the time and the place, the exercise of such things is done by looking to the father. How then could the scriptures be fulfilled that it must happen thus? How does Jesus know that this is not the time to call for 12 legions of angels, that this is not the time to bring the kingdom in by force, to crush and to humiliate and embarrass the people who are so incredibly wrong, so hateful, so unworthy of the kingdom that God has presented to them. Why isn't this the time to show them and show them up? Why isn't this the time? We just take it for granted that, well, Jesus isn't going to do this because he's going to the cross.

In the moment, how would you know? How would Jesus know in his humanity that this isn't the time to split the skies, bring the heavenly armies and the fiery chariots and show these people what fools they are, what self-righteous, murderous, sinful people they are. Why isn't this the time? The scriptures have described this moment and Jesus knows his scriptures. How do we know when it is time to submit and when it is time to take up arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them? When is it time to submit to King George and when is it time to take up arms and create an independent nation? You think back to the late 1700s.

What is the difference in the American Revolution and the French Revolution? These are questions that are definitional in history and they are questions we can ask ourselves every single day. How do I know whether I should speak up or remain silent? We're going to see that as we move forward into the trials of Jesus. There's a silent time and there's a time when he speaks.

How does he know when to speak and when to remain silent? You say, well, he's Jesus. He's the Son of God. He just knows.

The Lord Jesus is operating in his humanity given the very same resources you and I have. He is showing us just like an instructor on the gun range who will take a weapon, describe its components, disassemble it, describe its proper use, and then demonstrate

its proper use perfectly. That's what Jesus is doing with divine power.

It is the Spirit and it is the Word and everything Jesus does on this night is in that strength and that strength alone. This is why he is in the garden praying to his Father and not confidently sitting back against a rock waiting for the arresting party. Well, I'm the Son of God.

I've got this in hand. I've got divine power at my disposal. The power that Jesus has is the same power you and I have by choice, by prayer, by God's grace, and knowing when and how to use it, when and how to endure, when and how to resist and oppose.

It is the scriptures. This is such an important verse. Matthew 26, 54.

How then could the scriptures be fulfilled? We can ask ourselves this question every day. Well, if I'm assassinating someone with my speech, if I'm undercutting someone, if I'm damaging the cause of Christ by my conversation, by my action, by my inaction, by my wrong priorities, how are the scriptures going to be fulfilled? The way of salvation and the way of righteousness, the way of self-sacrifice, humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God that we might be exalted in due time, all comes from paying attention to the scriptures. That's the key.

This is how Jesus is going to perfectly negotiate this most horrible of all nights, this most despicable of all attacks, this most unjust of all accusations, this most heinous of all crimes. Jesus at the center, Jesus as the victim, willingly allowing himself to be manhandled, to be spit on, to be mocked, scourged, and ultimately crucified. Jesus does this, oddly enough, it is the strength from God that enables him to endure what the world would call weakness.

He is not opposing, and yet he is the strongest person in the room. He is the strongest person on the planet as he is being misused and so unjustly treated. How then could the scriptures be fulfilled? It must happen thus.

It is, interestingly, the Old Testament scriptures that are guiding the Lord Jesus. There's not word one of the New Testament that has yet been written down. The Old Testament scriptures tell Jesus.

We saw this last time. It's so interesting that the two on the road to Emmaus, Jesus opened to them the scriptures. He explained to them from the scriptures why these things had to be so.

It was all in the Old Testament. Then Jesus said to the multitudes, Have you come out as against a robber with swords and clubs to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and you did not seize me. You did not come out with violence.

Jesus came voluntarily into their midst, and they did not seize him. They are now seeking

him out and coming to his location. He came to them and taught in their streets.

They didn't oppose. They didn't arrest. They didn't reject and seize and try to kill him.

Now he is off by himself. He's not intruding into their space at all. He is by himself.

He's with his disciples. He is not creating an issue, and now they are coming after him. They would have had more justification seizing him when he is teaching and saying, Look at the bad influence you're having on the public.

You're out here speaking seditious words. You're creating an insurrection against religious authority or against civil authority. We've got you on the spot.

We've got you red-handed out here doing these things. At a time when Jesus isn't doing anything, in the dark, in the night, they come to him. But this was done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.

The scriptures of the prophets have foretold this and described not only the events, but the kind of people who would perpetrate this. The prophets, why does Jesus invoke the prophets? He doesn't say you're breaking the law of Moses. He says this is the fulfillment of the prophets.

What is the primary message of the prophets? It isn't, let me tell you the specific events that are going to happen on the night that the Messiah is delivered into the hands of men. The prophets describe the terrible heart condition of the people of Israel. This people draw near to me with their lips, but their heart is far from me, teaching his doctrines, the traditions of men.

They are an adulterous woman. They are an unfaithful wife. Over and over again, the message of the prophets, as we saw in our Kings and Prophets study, is a litany of charging the people who are supposed to be the covenant people, supposed to be the people of light and the people of blessing to the world, with going their own way, serving themselves, self-gratification, self-deification, and ignoring and rejecting the God of their deliverance and God of their salvation, their covenant God.

The scriptures of the prophets are being fulfilled, Jesus says, as you fill up the measure of your fathers who slew the prophets, and now you are about to slay the very Son of God. You're fulfilling the prophets. All the disciples forsook Him and fled.

Now, beginning at verse 57, we come to the record of the trials of the Lord Jesus. And just by way of outline, so that we can organize this material and understand it, there are going to be six trials, three before the Jews, three before the Romans. The first of these begins in verse 57.

Those who had laid hold of Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the

scribes and elders were assembled. Caiaphas, apparently, and we have to piece some of this together from Roman history sources, Caiaphas is the son-in-law of an older man named Annas. Annas was the high priest from the early years A.D. until about 15, A.D. 15.

Just so you know, you're supposed to say A.D. in front of the number, B.C. comes after the number, because it's Anno Domini 15, the year of our Lord 15. But Annas had served for over a decade. I've seen various sources talking anywhere from 13 to 18 years as high priest, but evidently he malfunctioned in some way.

He was corrupt and his corruption caught up with him because the high priest office was supposed to be fulfilled for life. But the Romans evidently deposed Annas and Caiaphas was put in his place, his son-in-law. So Annas is still the spider at the center of the web, but he is operating through his son-in-law, Caiaphas.

And the two of them together are the godfather and the active face of the high priesthood. So those who had taken hold of Jesus led him first to Caiaphas, who is on paper and for purposes of the Roman government, the high priest. And the scribes and elders are assembled there.

This is the Sanhedrin. So they're ready. When the arresting party goes to find Jesus, these guys are roused out of their homes because it is after dark and they assemble in the night.

Peter followed him a distance to the high priest courtyard. He went in and sat with the servants to see the end, to see the outcome. The chief priests, I don't think the elders are in this text, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put him to death.

But they found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last, two false witnesses came forward and said, this fellow said, I'm able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.

I keep repeating this point, but all of this is exceedingly difficult to accomplish. If you believe that this is in fact Passover night, where people have partaken of the lamb and the bitter herbs and the whole Passover ritual with the cups and hiding the bread and the family indoors, you've got all 70 members of the Sanhedrin present. You've got the enormous mob with clubs and swords.

You've got various false witnesses. Evidently a couple of dozen people are interviewed. They are haled down to the court and questioned, but they can't get any two testimonies to agree.

And even these guys in their hypocrisy and their legalism can't put over this sham trial if they can't get at least two or three witnesses to say the same thing. And no two of these

can collude and get their story straight. And this goes on for some hours.

Evidently they finally get two witnesses who will say the same thing. This fellow said, I'm able to destroy the temple of God and build it in three days. Did Jesus talk about the destruction of the temple and its restoration in three days? Yes, he did.

This is a twisted truth. Jesus did talk about the temple. He did talk about destruction and three days, but it is misconstrued, misconstrued, misattributed, and totally misunderstood.

So the high priest arose in verse 62 and said to him, this is Caiaphas speaking. Do you answer nothing? What is it these men testify against you? But Jesus kept silent. This to me is the highest expression of the greatest fruit of the spirit, which is at the end of the list in Galatians, where the fruit of the spirit is love at the beginning and self-control at the end.

Self-control. It is so difficult to answer nothing when you are wrongly, falsely, ridiculously accused of things that are nowhere near the truth. Unjust, unfair, untrue, unkind.

Jesus said nothing. Now, if Jesus starts out saying nothing, why is it we've got some red ink down in verse 64? Why is he going to speak? What is it these men testify against you? With these false accusations, Jesus says nothing. At this point, any average human being would have stood up.

If you've ever watched Perry Mason, they can't keep the defendant quiet when he hears false testimony and lies being spoken about him. He'll jump up at the chair and say, that's not true. You're lying.

And the high priest Caiaphas is surprised that Jesus is looking calmly on. And as these, and they know their lies because nobody can agree. They know their lies and they see Jesus listening to these lies and making no response whatsoever.

Should this not have been a clue that Jesus is right and the liars are wrong? They are cultivating and interviewing and trying to employ liars to get their objective accomplished. Many times we can identify this is by way of application. We can identify that a cause is wrong because of the methods that are being employed to effect it.

A cause becomes wrong. If the only way you can get it done is to engage in immoral, unethical, nefarious, and sometimes criminal activity. People justify this all the time.

The extremes are easy to use as illustrations. People who are violently against abortion, why are they against abortion? Because you're taking human life. So what do they do? Shoot abortion doctors.

I will take life because I'm against the taking of life. How hypocritical can you get? But

there have been numerous people who have somehow made this equation balance in their own mind. We need to be thoughtful people and the grist for our thought mill needs to be the grain of the word of God to examine ourselves and see if we are in the faith.

God never calls upon us to accomplish a right thing in a wrong way. If it takes illicit and false and unfair means to accomplish a thing. If you have to sneak, if you have to skirt, if you have to avoid observation, this is not the way of God.

This is not the will of God. There are certainly times when you are being invaded by a foreign power. You're not going to go give yourself up at the first opportunity.

All of you Christians come out of the woodwork. We want it is okay to hide. Rahab hid the spies and lied to the inquiring soldiers about their whereabouts.

The soldiers that came to take Elisha were told a fib and taken to the king in a state of blindness. This is not peaceableness to the point of ridiculousness. We can certainly protect ourselves.

We can avoid being taken. Jesus avoided those who wanted to destroy him for years. This is a particular time and a particular occasion where Jesus knows according to the scriptures, it must happen thus.

But we can look at the actions of this supposed religious body that is constituted to adjudicate what is right and what is lawful and what is pleasing in God's sight. Their ostensible purpose in meeting is to run the nation before God in a way that is pleasing in his sight and according to his law. They are breaking it right and left.

Even their own traditions and regulations are being broken. It was a law of the Sanhedrin that they were not allowed to conduct a trial at night. They were not allowed to bring a death penalty charge at night.

They are violating both of those. It seems a bit redundant. Why would you bring a death penalty if you can't even meet? But they had specific regulations for the Sanhedrin that they could not charge someone and convict them and sentence them to death at night, nor could they assemble and conduct a trial at night.

Both of those things were prohibited. They are doing both of them right here. This, by the way, is one of the reasons that there are going to be three religious trials because after this trial, he is going to go to his second trial and the third one will be in the morning at daylight because they realize that they can't make this stick because it happened at night and they're going to have to have a do-over in the morning.

What is our observation on the positive side? Verse 54, how then can the scriptures be fulfilled that it must happen thus? What are the scriptures that define our lives? In this world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. You

will be hated by all men for my namesake, but keep your peace.

If you are hailed in front of authorities, it will be given to you in that hour what you should say. Pray for daily provision. Pray for daily guidance.

Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Give us this day our daily bread. Take no thought for the morrow.

Your Heavenly Father knows what you need before you ask Him. Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, I am thy God.

We have abundant scriptures that even in the face of tribulation, even in the face of hardship, Paul will say later, after you have suffered a while is when you inherit the promises. Suffering is a part of God's program for us, thus say the scriptures. Scriptures tell us we must endure hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus, Paul to Timothy.

That's the positive side. This is where we go for guidance, for strength, for comfort, for encouragement, for knowing when to speak and when to remain silent, as the Lord Jesus does. He is going to speak in a moment, and this is also going to be according to scripture.

Jesus is not focusing on the testimony of the witnesses. He is focusing on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Who are you going to listen to? Do you want to listen to falsehood and be swayed and impelled and motivated by it, or do you want to be swayed, motivated and impelled by the Word of God? We make this choice every day.

Am I going to listen to the world, or am I going to listen to the Lord? Am I going to be moved by the news, or am I going to remember, thus saith the scriptures, thus saith the Lord? That's my compass, that's my gyroscope, that's the steadiness that comes into my life. False people are going to be false, always have been, always will be. Speaking up against them isn't going to change their minds.

Jesus says, I've been teaching in your streets for years. That didn't convince you. Do you think me speaking up now, do I think that's going to have any effect? If the teaching in a calm environment didn't do it, me opposing you in this moment certainly isn't going to change your mind.

So he says nothing. Well, we're going to pick up after the break in verse 63. Jesus kept silent.

The high priest is now going to answer and say something that will cause Jesus to speak. We'll see that when we come back.