

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Second Sunday in Lent, February 21, 2016**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 159, 140:1-2, 142:1-4, 516,

151:5-6. Lessons: Zechariah 11:12-13, Acts 2:22-24, and The Passion History Part 2.\*

Sermon Text: Matthew 26:36-56.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Last Sunday we left the disciples of Jesus leaving the upper room heading for the Garden of Gethsemane. This was a place they all knew well *“because Jesus had often met there with his disciples.”* (John 18:2 NIV) Jesus knew his life on earth was drawing to a close. You know that previously *“the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him. ‘But not during the Feast,’ they said, ‘or there may be a riot among the people.’”* (Matthew 26:3-5 NIV) Well, finally they found a way to get rid of Jesus – or so they thought! We read that *“one of the Twelve--the one called Judas Iscariot--went to the chief priests and asked, ‘What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?’ So they counted out for him thirty silver coins.”* (Matthew 26:14-15 NIV)

Even Judas knew the Garden of Gethsemane, so it was

**A “GOOD” PLACE TO BETRAY JESUS**

- 1. Jesus prayed earnestly in the garden.**
- 2. Judas betrays Jesus -- with a kiss!**

We may sometimes forget that Jesus suffered more than just when he was on the cross. He also suffered, enduring great pain and agony, in the Garden of Gethsemane.

When Jesus went to Gethsemane with his disciples on this evening, he prayed earnestly to his heavenly Father. While he was praying, he also suffered greatly. *“And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.”* (Luke 22:44 NIV) Even physicians will acknowledge that when humans are under great stress, blood capillaries can break near the skin and blood will “sweat out” of the skin.

Remember, Jesus suffered all the torments of hell that all the sins of all mankind deserved. He did this in our place, for us, in our behalf, so we would not have to suffer in that way.

When he went to pray, he took three disciples with him – for encouragement and support. We recognize this from the question he asked after they had fallen asleep the first time: *“Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?”* (Matthew 26:40) But you heard how they – in essence – abandoned him by falling asleep two more times.

His prayers surely included prayers for all mankind and especially for his disciples. But he especially prayed in this way: *“Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.’* Listen to the essence of his second prayer: *“He went away a second time and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.’”*

And when he found his disciples sleeping again, *“he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.”*

Of course Jesus recognized the inevitability of what was to happen. He knew what had to happen to redeem mankind from sin, death, and the power of the devil.

After praying three times, ***“he returned to the disciples and said to them, ‘Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!’”***

You can be sure that Jesus also prayed for Judas and those he knew would be taking him prisoner. Judas had arranged to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. This would have been about half of a year’s salary – not enough to support him through a normal life-span. And, of course, his life was shortened excessively and hopelessly when he had no faith in the forgiveness of sins, and committed suicide. Because of this, he was condemned to eternal damnation in hell. Exodus 21 tells us that 30 pieces of silver was the price of a slave.

Jesus had earnestly warned him in the upper room as you heard last week and then dismissed him with a “well, if you have to do it, go quickly.” He told him ***“What you are about to do, do quickly.”*** (John 13:27 NIV)

Now Judas appears here. ***“With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: ‘The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.’ Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, ‘Greetings, Rabbi!’ and kissed him. Jesus replied, ‘Friend, do what you came for.’ Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him.”*** John tells us that Judas was ***“guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.”*** (John 18:3 NIV)

What were they thinking? Did they imagine that Jesus and his twelve disciples would put up a fight? The enemies of Jesus took drastic steps to capture and arrest Jesus. Were they afraid he’d try to escape? Were they afraid he’d have a large group of armed men – or even an army to protect him? Jesus did not need an army to prevent his capture. Remember that Jesus had told his disciples ***“Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?”*** Angels could have protected him far better than a human army.

Whatever Jesus’ enemies thought, they were ready to take Jesus by force.

And so it is with the world today. Sometimes they take outrageous steps when they speak out against and act against Christians. They gang up on Christians and try to do everything they can to belittle and shame and attack followers of Christ. And they distort the teachings of Christ to fit their own beliefs. After all, Paul warned ***“For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.”*** (2 Timothy 4:3-4 NIV)

In the garden at this time it was night – darkness, not only physically, but at this time the powers of darkness, the powers of Satan prevailed. Jesus asks ***“‘Am I leading a rebellion,’ said Jesus, ‘that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.’”*** (Mark 14:48-49 NIV)

Judas had secretly planned to betray Jesus. No one but Jesus knew. And now Judas identifies Jesus with a kiss – a greeting usually associated with love, but here it was a kiss of deception, not of love.

Did Judas really realize what he was doing when he agreed with the high priests to betray Jesus? Did he look forward and realize that he was betraying someone totally innocent? Did he realize how he was endangering his eternal welfare when he agreed to betray Jesus? How often doesn’t it happen that we don’t realize the implications and the results of our actions?

Jesus went willingly as a lamb to the slaughter. He did this willingly for us. We read in Luke’s gospel that ***“a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus asked him, ‘Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?’ When Jesus’ followers saw what was going to happen, they said, ‘Lord, should we strike with our swords?’ And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. But Jesus answered, ‘No more of this!’ And he touched the man’s ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him, ‘Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs? Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour--when darkness reigns.’”*** (Luke 22:47-53)

So Jesus was betrayed with a kiss, under the power of darkness. Many came out to capture him. But John reports that Jesus still showed his power in this way: ***“Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, ‘Who is it you want?’ ‘Jesus of Nazareth,’ they replied. ‘I am he,’ Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) When Jesus said, ‘I am he,’ they drew back and fell to the ground. Again he asked them, ‘Who is it you want?’ And they said, ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ ‘I told you that I am he,’ Jesus answered. ‘If you are looking for me, then let these men go.’”*** (John 18:4-8 NIV)

The powers of darkness have their hour. ***“Then the detachment of troops and the captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him.”*** (John 18:1-12 NKJV)

Judas didn’t even get to enjoy his ill-gotten gains, his pieces of silver. Jesus had warned his disciples – and us – ***“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”*** (Mark 8:36-37 KJV)

Judas certainly did lose his soul – because of his impenitence. We read later in Matthew’s Gospel: ***“When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. ‘I have sinned,’ he said, ‘for I have betrayed innocent blood.’ ‘What is that to us?’ they replied. ‘That’s your responsibility.’ So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself. The chief priests picked up the coins and said, ‘It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money.’ So they decided to use the money to buy the potter’s field as a burial place for foreigners. That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: ‘They took the thirty silver coins, the price set on him by the people of Israel, and they used them to buy the potter’s field, as the Lord commanded me.’”*** (Matthew 27:3-10 NIV)

And what were the results of this betrayal? His disciples fled and he was abandoned by his closest friends, his allies, his supporters, the ones who believed he was sent from God to be the Messiah.

Jesus was dragged back to the leaders of the Jews who had sent these men to capture Jesus. He was put on trial – at night, in a totally illegal trial – to be falsely accused of all sorts of crimes. We will talk about that event next Sunday.

But remember the purpose of all this: that we might be released from captivity of Satan and death. Jesus endured this for us and for all mankind.

So, despite our sermon theme, this was not really a “good” place for Jesus to be betrayed. It was a place of great agony and distress and it led to his death. But it was good for us because that is where our Savior was taken captive on the road leading to the cross. The final result of this is our eternal salvation. May we rejoice as we look at these events and realize ‘this happened for me!’ Amen.

\* For the text of The Passion History, go to the [Weekly Sermons](http://www.lutheranlccf.org) page of the LCCF Website, [www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)