

# Sermons on Matthew

## Betrayed with a Kiss

*Matthew 26:47-56*

*With Study Questions*

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And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and elders of the people.

<sup>48</sup> Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him." <sup>49</sup> Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed Him.

<sup>50</sup> But Jesus said to him, "Friend, why have you come?"

Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him <sup>51</sup> And suddenly, one of those *who were* with Jesus stretched out *his* hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

<sup>52</sup> But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. <sup>53</sup> Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? <sup>54</sup> How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?"

<sup>55</sup> In that hour 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. <sup>56</sup> But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled."

Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled (Matthew 26:47-56).

## God's Plan

That Matthew points out that it was while Jesus was still (*eti*) speaking (present active participle) that Judas came, confirms His knowledge and power over these dark events. He had predicted His own death (Matthew 20:18), Judas' betrayal (Matthew 26:21), the denials of Peter (Matthew 26:34) and the abandonment of all the disciples (Matthew 26:31). Of course He had also predicted His own resurrection (Matthew 20:19), but for some reason that prediction was all but ignored.

But no incident, good or evil, occurs by chance, as if God is merely seeking to manage life's crazy events. Peter specifically explains,

**For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together <sup>28</sup> to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before (*prooisen* – to predestine) to be done (Acts 4:27, 28).**

It's not as if God is merely making the best of man's evil decisions. The decisions themselves are ordained by God for His own glory and the redemption of man. This, of course, does not exonerate those who practice wickedness – for they mean it for evil, but God means it for good (Genesis 50:20).

Nonetheless it should be a source of great comfort for those who recognize God as their heavenly Father to know, as it is recorded in Isaiah:

***I am the Lord, and there is no other;* <sup>7</sup> **I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the Lord, do all these *things* (Isaiah 45:6, 7).****

The unparalleled comfort the Christian has in all of life's afflictions is the knowledge that God, our Father, works all things “**according to the counsel of His will**” (Ephesians 1:11).

### **At War with Jesus**

A great multitude comes against Jesus with all available forces – swords and clubs. Jesus, who had nowhere to lay His head (Matthew 8:20), let alone form a physical resistance to the powers of Rome and Jerusalem, is approached as if He were a military force.

Somehow they knew that in Christ was an unstoppable force of Truth, Life, Goodness and Justice. They approach with their clubs as if a club could halt a storm. Even Peter's attempt to physically engage the enemy by cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant is met by a mild chastisement by Jesus (not to mention the healing of the ear). There is no multitude and no weaponry that can cut short the power of the gospel. Nor is it by weaponry that the gospel wins.

Men have marshaled their efforts for centuries to lay hold of Jesus – to quarantine His message and hold His law and gospel in bondage. They

have done this through the persecution of His church, the perversion of His word and, today, through legislation – as if any message is allowed in schools, businesses and civil institutions except the message of Christ, Him crucified and resurrected.

They will try to lay hold of Jesus, but it is actually Jesus who will lay hold of them. The works and message of the ungodly will continually drift into obscurity but the person and work of Jesus endures throughout history into eternity. I am not generally one taken to poetic depictions of the life of Jesus. But I think there is unusual merit to the words of Pastor James Allan Francis, who in 1926 penned the popular essay of the unmatched accomplishments of the solitary life of Christ. He wrote of Jesus who,

...who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman, lived in obscurity until He was thirty. Then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never owned a home. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put His foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself...While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon a cross between two thieves. While He was dying His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth – His coat. When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Twenty long centuries have come and gone, and today He is the centerpiece of the human race and leader of the column of progress. I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that were ever built; all the parliaments that ever sat and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life (slight variations by author).

## The Unchained Gospel

Whether swords, clubs, assailants, lawyers, academicians, authors or critics – none have the armament to put a chain on the gospel. It is rather the devil who is chained, that **“he should deceive the nations no more” (Revelation 20:3).**

And the weaponry of Christ’s kingdom first and foremost is word and sacrament – it is a message, a good message, the gospel, the good news that Jesus **“came to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).**

Let’s make no mistake about it. The battle is one of thoughts, ideas, and propositions. The devil is not the father of armies, he is the father of lies (John 8:44).

Jesus makes it clear that twelve legions of angels (about sixty to seventy thousand) are at His disposal if for the mere asking. This is not unlike when Elisha was surrounded by the Syrians and his servant was filled with distress. Elisha calmed him saying:

**Do not fear, for those who *are* with us *are* more than those who *are* with them.”<sup>17</sup> And Elisha prayed, and said, “Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain *was* full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha (2 Kings 6:16, 17).**

No, it is not a matter of pure force. Kingdoms that advance by the sword will perish by the sword. The Apostle Paul gives the marching orders for the advancement of the eternal king.

**For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.<sup>4</sup> For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,<sup>5</sup> casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,<sup>6</sup> and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled (2 Corinthians 10:3-6).**

The world is redeemed through the redeemed hearts of men and men's hearts are redeemed when the lies are exposed and the truth is proclaimed.

## **The Kiss**

Jesus is betrayed by a kiss – by one of the twelve. Enemies of Christ are both inside and outside of the church. The world has no greater advocate against the Christian than defectors within the boundaries of the church. Jesus is betrayed by one who claimed to be His friend.

**Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up *his* heel against me (Psalm 41:9).**

He is now betrayed by a feigned display of intimacy and friendship

**Faithful *are* the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy *are* deceitful (Proverbs 27:6).**

There are all sorts of kisses. There is the kiss of death and betrayal, the shallow kiss of pretense; there is the kiss of fellowship (Romans 16:16, 20; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26); and there is the kissing of the Son, which we read of in Psalm 2:12. It means to embrace the discipline, to receive the instruction, to pay homage and to recognize His rightful place as King of kings and Lord of all. May we ever kiss the Son, not as a traitor but as our Lord and Savior.

## Questions for Study

1. To what extent is God in control of all events (pages 2, 3)?
2. What comfort does the Christian have in the knowledge that his Father in heaven governs all things...even evil (page 3)?
3. In what ways have men sought to make war with Jesus (pages 3, 4)?
4. Where does the battle lie for the application of redemption in the lives of people (pages 4, 5)?
5. Describe the different types of kisses. What does it mean when the Psalmist writes "kiss the Son" (page 6)?