

## **The Hour of Darkness and the Sovereignty of Light**

### ***Luke 22:47-53***

#### **Introduction**

This morning we are going to return to the garden of Gethsemane and witness one of the most tragic events in human history. We are going to witness the depths of human depravity and share with Jesus the agony of betrayal. You may be thinking the same thing I was thinking when I began to prepare for this sermon that it seems a bit dark and depressing to be preached the Sunday before Thanksgiving. And in some sense it is. However, it is my prayer that by the power of the Holy Spirit, we will plummet the depths of this tragedy, and rise from the ashes in the victory of Jesus and find great comfort in the sovereignty of God. This passage is full of hope.

I'm going to spend some time teaching the text this morning, and then Lord willing, I will conclude by preaching the text. I know there are some questions as to the difference between the two, but perhaps you will see what I mean by the end of the sermon. We are going to first walk through the narrative, utilizing all the other gospels to give us a more comprehensive perspective on what is transpiring, and then we will take a look at how this applies to our lives today, and particularly how it speaks into our biblical worldview of depravity and the sovereignty of God. And by God's grace, hopefully we will see deeper into the humanity of Christ, and how he is truly one who can sympathize with our weaknesses in every respect and yet without sin. I pray, by the Holy Spirit this text will deepen our hatred for sin, strengthen our love for Jesus, and solidify our trust in the faithfulness of the father. And for some, perhaps to experience the saving grace of Jesus, and the freedom that comes with true forgiveness.

Let's pray, and then we will walk through this text together.

***While he was still speaking,***

Remember that Jesus had just had his experience with the weight of the moment crashing down on him and prayed that if the Father was willing to

let the cup be removed from him. But as we learned last week, he was in perfect submission to the will of the Father. He returns from that experience to find the disciples sleeping because of their exhaustion from sorrow. He said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.” We don’t have time to expound on it but we see a picture of how the disciples were living in the moment whereas Jesus was living in light of the big picture of what God was doing. There is a lesson to be learned there, but nonetheless we shall move on.

***there came a crowd,***

When we put all the gospels together we see that this was quite a crowd. It consisted of the chief priests, the temple police, the Sanhedrin (70 people), scribes, and a portion of Roman troops from the cohort stationed in Jerusalem during the Passover. This crowd could have consisted of around 1000 people. They were carrying torches and weapons.

This was a very strategic approach and for good reason. They knew that Jesus still had the support of the masses at that time. To arrest him in daylight would have caused a major disruption. They also knew he had performed miracles so I’m sure they felt that overwhelming him would be appropriate.

They were there to arrest Jesus because they had become convinced he was a threat to Judaism and the peace of Rome. The Jewish leaders had convinced the Romans Jesus was an insurrectionist just like Barabbas, who had recently been arrested. By this point the crowd had become convinced of Jesus’ guilt even though there was no actual crime committed and certainly no evidence of one. They were under a spell as we will see in a bit.

***and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them.***

This crowd was being led by Judas, one of the twelve. That is a very interesting description of him. We would expect a long list of adjectives to describe Judas as the vile traitor that he was, but all three gospel writers, Matthew, Mark and Luke simply describe him as one of the twelve. I will

argue a bit later that is the worst possible description that could be applied to Judas.

Nonetheless, he was leading the crowd because he intended to

***Draw near to Jesus to kiss him,***

This too was part of the strategy. The kiss would accurately identify Jesus so as to not mistakingly arrest the wrong person, and to possibly distract him while he could be grabbed and bound. Ultimately the kiss was not necessary for either of those purposes. According to John 18 Jesus willingly identified himself; more on that in moment. Also, as we will see, Jesus had no intention of resisting so distracting him was futile. Jesus even calls Judas out for the uselessness of his attempt.

***48 but Jesus said to him, “Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?”***

While the kiss was a useless and ineffective strategic move Jesus is rebuking Judas and exposing the hypocrisy in his actions. No act of betrayal could have been more contemptible than turning a symbol of devotion into a weapon of deceit. In Jewish culture there were a few types of kisses that were used to greet one another (hem of the garment, feet, back of the hand, palm, etc..) but the full embrace and kiss on the cheek was reserved for those who you were closest to and held the greatest amount of love and respect for. The Greek word used here, *philesai*, is the same word used for love. This type of embrace and kiss was synonymous with deep love. Phillip Ryken says in his commentary, “the same God, who gave us hearts for love, also gave us lips for kissing. In fact, the Greek New Testament verb, *phileo* that means “to love” also means “to kiss”. To kiss is to love.”

***49 And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?” 50 And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear.***

Only Luke records, the disciples, asking the question of whether or not they should strike with the sword. The other accounts all go straight to Peters

cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant named Malcus. Before we are too hard on the disciples response, we first need to look at a couple of reasons why it's understandable.

1. *In Luke 22:35-38 And he said to them, "When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing." 36 He said to them, "But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one. 37 For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' For what is written about me has its fulfillment." 38 And they said, "Look, Lord, here are two swords." And he said to them, "It is enough."*

That's why they had a sword and why they thought that it must be the time to use it. Perhaps Peter should have heeded the lead of the other disciples and asked questions first but we know that wasn't Peter's style.

2. The second reason they thought it was perhaps time to fight is recorded in *John 18:4-6 Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" 5 They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. 6 When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.*

When Jesus said, "I am he," the Greek phrase is ἐγώ εἰμι (ego eimi) — literally, "I AM." This is the same phrase God used in Exodus 3:14 ("I AM WHO I AM") and the same expression Jesus used repeatedly in John's Gospel to declare His divinity (e.g., John 8:58 – "Before Abraham was, I am").

In this moment, Jesus isn't merely identifying Himself — He is revealing His divine identity. When the Son of God speaks His divine name, even the armed soldiers and temple guards cannot stand before His authority. They fall back, not because He pushed them, but because they are overwhelmed by the revelation of His divine majesty.

Let's be honest, that might have encouraged us to want to fight also. However, Jesus rebukes them and cleans up Peter's mess.

**51 But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him.**

I wish I had time to preach a sermon on Jesus’ response, “No more of this!” While it is a bit difficult to translate and interpret, I believe the ESV has the most accurate translation and I believe his reference is crucial for understanding the timeline of redemptive history. God has used the violence of humanity to advance his purposes in the Old Testament. However, I believe Jesus is pronouncing the official end of that at this moment in the Garden. 2 Corinthians 10:3 says, *For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh.* Under the New Covenant our weapons are different. *Ephesians 6:11-17 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. 14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. 16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; 17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,*

As we are going to see in a moment, the essence of our battle is spiritual and to attack flesh doesn’t solve anything. In fact it makes it worse.

After Jesus heals the ear of Malcus. . .

**52 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? 53 When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me.**

Jesus is pointing out the hypocrisy of their efforts. They had to convince the Romans that this guy was a legitimate threat to Roman peace but when they showed up to get him he peacefully submitted himself into their custody. A true insurrectionist would have commissioned his followers to fight to their death to protect their leader and then when all else failed, he would fall on his own sword for his cause. But Jesus was no insurrectionist. *John 18:36 Jesus answered, "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."*

He goes on to interpret the events for Judas, the crowds, the disciples, and us. He says...

***But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."***

The other gospels say it like this:

*Matthew 26:56 all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled."*

*Mark 14:49 Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But let the Scriptures be fulfilled."*

*John 18:11 So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?"*

What is he saying? All of this is happening under the sovereign hand of the Father who is working to accomplish his purpose of redemption ordained before the foundation of the world. It was the very reason for which Jesus came to the earth and took on flesh. Now brothers and sisters, its time to preach.

## **1. The Enemies' Hour and The Power of Darkness**

You know the question, "How can a good and all powerful God allow bad things to happen to good people?" Known as the philosophical Problem of Evil. Here in the Garden of Gethsemane and all the way to Golgatha is the only true expression of a good and powerful God allowing bad things to

happen to a good person. In fact, there is nothing worse that could ever happen than what happens to Jesus, the only good person to ever live.

We only have two options for interpreting this; either God is not in complete control, and evil things happen outside of his control. He is then left with figuring out some ways in which he may bring good about from evil. Or that God is in complete control of all things. Nothing happens outside of his sovereign will. Therefore, evil must happen through the permission and allowance of God. I believe the Scriptures are clear which perspective is right.

The Scriptures teach about:

### **God's Sovereignty Over All Creation**

Psalm 115:3 – “Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.”

Psalm 135:6 – “Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.”

Isaiah 45:7 – “I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the Lord, who does all these things.”

Job 42:2 – “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.”

### **God's Sovereignty Over Nations and Kings**

Daniel 2:21 – “He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings.”

Proverbs 21:1 – “The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.”

Isaiah 40:23–24 – “He brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness.”

### **God's Sovereignty Over Circumstances**

Romans 8:28 – “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

Lamentations 3:37–38 – “Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come?”

James 4:15 – “Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.’”

### **God’s Sovereignty in Salvation**

John 6:44 – “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.”

Ephesians 1:11 – “In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.”

Romans 9:15–16 – “For he says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy...’ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.”

### **God’s Sovereignty in the Cross**

Acts 2:23 – “This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”

Acts 4:27–28 – “For truly in this city there were gathered together...to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.”

### **Summary**

God is sovereign over everything—from the rise and fall of nations to the details of our lives. Nothing happens apart from His will, and even human sin and satanic opposition serve His ultimate purpose.



## **Application:**

God restrains evil. History has shown that there are times, when he relaxes the restraints to give an hour to the enemy to unleash the power of darkness. He only does so to accomplish his perfect will, and we must take comfort, knowing that in his perfect will all things work together for our good, for those of us who love God and are called according to his purpose. We may not always see what that good is, or understand how good can come of it, but we must not pick and choose the works of God we like, based on our own understanding. Certainly, we are okay with his sovereign work from the garden of Gethsemane to the empty tomb, because we clearly see how it worked for our good. It brought about our salvation.

But we need not only accept and appreciate the hand of God at work when we see and understand how it directly benefits us. We, like Jesus, need to have a heavenly big picture of the work that God does in this world. We have to trust and believe that he has good purposes in everything, and all things will work for our good and his glory, just like the work on the cross. God is good; trust him. Has he ever let you down before?

## **2. True Apostasy**

The next thing we see in this passage is true apostasy through Judas. I mentioned earlier that the gospel writers refer to him as "one of the Twelve." That reference is extremely important to understanding the betrayal of Judas.

### **A. Definition of Apostasy**

Apostasy means a deliberate turning away from a previously professed faith, allegiance, or truth. Biblically, an apostate is someone who has been outwardly associated with God's people, has witnessed His truth and grace, and yet willfully abandons or betrays it.

See Hebrews 6:4–6 — those who “have tasted the heavenly gift” and then fall away.

1 John 2:19 — “They went out from us, but they were not of us.”

## B. Judas’s Outward Association

Judas was called as one of the Twelve (Luke 6:13–16).

He ministered alongside the other disciples (Luke 9:1–2).

He heard Jesus’ teaching, witnessed His miracles, and participated in ministry.

In every outward sense, Judas looked like a believer.

Yet Jesus Himself said, “Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.” (John 6:70).

He was included in the visible community of disciples but never truly regenerated.

## C. Judas’s Inward Rejection

Scripture is clear that Judas’s heart was never transformed.

John 12:6 — He was a thief, caring not for the poor.

John 13:2, 27 — Satan entered into him, showing his full rebellion against Christ.

Matthew 26:24 — Jesus said of him, “It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.”

Judas’s betrayal (Luke 22:47–48) was the final act of apostasy — a willful and decisive rejection of the One he once followed outwardly.

## D. Theological Summary

Judas was not a “backslider” (a true believer who sins and is restored); he was an apostate—someone who knew the truth, professed allegiance, participated in ministry, and then rejected Christ completely.

Some of you may be walking that line. On the edge of turning away. Hear the warning:

*Hebrews 6:4-6 For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.*

*Hebrews 10:26-31 For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. 28 Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. 29 How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

### **3. The Suffering Servant (Pain in betrayal)**

Some of you are here this morning and you're carrying the pain of betrayal. At some point in your life, you were betrayed in a way that has caused a deep-seated pain that you just can't get rid of. You're harboring unforgiveness. You know it's wrong and you know it's destroying you, but you just don't know how to forgive. You don't know where to begin.

Some of you are carrying an unbearable weight of guilt because you're the betrayer. You have destroyed people's lives through betraying their trust. You have confessed a million times, you've asked for forgiveness, but it just doesn't seem to do the trick. Repent!

Let's look at Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. *Hebrews 2:16-18 For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. 17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For because he*

*himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

You didn't deserve to be betrayed, but let's be honest, you're not perfect. Jesus was. Jesus wasn't just betrayed by Judas, he was betrayed by his own people, some of which he came to save. Even his closest disciples are going to turn and run. Peter is going to deny him three times. While they were all yet still sinners, he died for them. While we were yet still sinners, he died for us. If he can forgive the one hammering the nails in his hands, can we not forgive those who betrayed us?

True forgiveness and restoration is supernatural. It is not a work of the flesh. It requires the same power that carried Jesus through the passion week to lead us to forgive our betrayers and find freedom in it.

The Good News: The hour of the power of Light, The gospel offer, and the miracle of grace

It is true that in his sovereignty God unleashes his restraints on evil and grants an hour of darkness to the enemy. But, equally true is that God can tighten that grip on evil and send forth the power of light in the same way Jesus said, I AM. The enemy will back up and fall to the ground. There is a day coming when God will close his grip on the enemy and crush him to powder and unleash the full power of his glorious light eliminating the enemy and the power of darkness forever.

Until that day let us embrace the grace of God and advance his kingdom through the preaching of the gospel and the exercise of true forgiveness. When we forgive each other and receive that forgiveness we silence the enemy and the glory of Christ shines forth.

## CG Discussion Questions

1. What does Judas' betrayal teach us about the nature of hypocrisy and spiritual deception? How can someone be "among the twelve" and still be lost?
2. Why is the phrase "one of the Twelve" such a haunting description of Judas?
3. How does Jesus' calm submission in the garden contrast with Peter's impulsive reaction? What does that reveal about trusting God's plan versus reacting in fear?
4. Jesus rebuked violence with the words, "No more of this!" What does this statement teach us about the nature of the New Covenant and spiritual warfare?
5. Read 2 Corinthians 10:3–5 and Ephesians 6:10–17. How do these passages redefine what true battle looks like for believers today?
6. Jesus said, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." What does that phrase reveal about God's sovereignty even over evil events?
7. How can understanding God's sovereignty over suffering change the way we respond to betrayal, pain, or injustice in our own lives?
8. In what ways have you seen God bring good out of situations that initially seemed hopeless or unfair?
9. How can the church model Christlike forgiveness in a culture that thrives on retaliation?
10. How does the sovereign plan of God in Gethsemane give you confidence and peace in your present circumstances?

## Daily Devotions - Luke 22:47–53

### Day 1 — The Kiss of Betrayal (Luke 22:47–48)

Judas' kiss was the ultimate act of hypocrisy—an outward gesture of love concealing inward hatred. Jesus confronts him: “Would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?” Even betrayal served God's redemptive purpose. The darkness of treachery became the stage for the light of salvation.

Have you ever been wounded by someone who pretended to love you?

How does Jesus' response shape the way you respond to betrayal?

### Day 2 — The Sword and the Kingdom (Luke 22:49–51)

Peter's sword stroke shows our human instinct to fight fleshly battles with fleshly weapons. But Jesus says, “No more of this!” and heals His enemy's ear. He ushers in a new kingdom—not advanced by violence, but by truth, mercy, and sacrificial love.

What battles in your life are you tempted to fight in your own strength?

How does Christ's example transform the way we approach conflict and opposition?

### Day 3 — The Power of Darkness (Luke 22:52–53)

Jesus acknowledges the reality of evil: “This is your hour, and the power of darkness.” Yet this darkness is temporary and permitted. Even in its most violent moment, evil is under the sovereign hand of God. The cross was not a tragedy that escaped divine control—it was the very means of redemption ordained before the foundation of the world.

Where do you see evidence of “the power of darkness” in our world today?

How does the truth of God's sovereignty strengthen your faith in difficult times?

## Day 4 — The Sovereign Hand of God (Acts 2:23; Romans 8:28)

Peter later proclaimed, “This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed.” The same sovereign God who ruled over Gethsemane rules over our lives. Nothing happens apart from His purpose, and every sorrow can serve His redemptive plan.

How have you seen God use painful events to shape your character or draw you closer to Him?

How does this truth challenge the way you view suffering?

## Day 5 — The Light That Cannot Be Overcome (John 1:5; Luke 22:53)

Jesus called it “the hour of darkness,” but even in that hour the light of His obedience never dimmed. He faced betrayal, violence, and death with unshakable faith in the Father’s plan. Darkness had its hour—but light has the final word.

Where do you need to trust the power of Christ’s light to overcome darkness in your own heart or circumstances?

How can you reflect that light to others in your church and community this week?