

GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

87 – Cowards?

Announcements:

9/27 @7:30 -

Prayer

9/27 @6:30 -

Grace Group

10/1 @8:30 -

Sunday School

10/1 @6:00 -

FAMILY NIGHT

Large Group

10/15 @5:00 -

Joint Service With

La Luz

ICE BREAKER: Would you consider yourself a brave person? Why or why not?

READ: Matthew 26:47-56

Truly this passage is the beginning of a great series of injustices and tragedies that culminate in the crucifixion of the only good man to ever live. On Sunday, we looked at all the great failures of the people in this passage, but here what we will be looking at is the power of Jesus (and the fortitude of Jesus) as he gets the last word in -- even here. The beauty here is this: even in the face of betrayal at the hands of a friend who was "one of the twelve" even with a great crowd around him, even knowing that the whole deck is stacked against him, Jesus can pierce to the heart of the situation with one thought: "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. There's a ton here, so let's dive in!

Jesus opens by telling them that they come against Jesus as if he is a robber (a side note: if anyone in this passage is one, it would probably be the ones who feel the need to operate in the cover of darkness on the eve of a great holiday when everyone is distracted...). But then I would like to dive into the next thought, for with it Jesus pierces straight to their hearts. As Leon Morris points out, there are three thoughts that Jesus brings up to show the truth. (1) Day after day I sat in the (2) temple (3) teaching. That Jesus was there day after day points to habitual action, and the thought that, if at any time they wanted him, they could have had him. That Jesus was in the temple means he was not hiding at all. He was in the middle of the most public place. And finally teaching points to not just a lawful activity, but a praise worthy one. In other words, that they are here, doing this, at this time and in this way shows that "justice" is not very high on their list of priorities, whatever their lips might say!

DISCUSS: Why is this exposing of the heart of the captors important? What can we learn from it?

So if justice was not their goal, what was it? Simply stated, it is to get rid of their greatest source of trouble, and someone they despise. But why are they going about it here, in this way, on this night? It is because they are not *just* driven by hatred and disgust. They also have a great fear of people (for example, see 21:45-46 and 26:3-5). So while they are willing to go to great lengths to get Jesus because of the first two, they were willing to pay blood money to the betrayer and gather a rabble in the middle of the night for the third. You can begin to see their thought process here. Their hope is (and if we are being honest, this plan worked!) that if they do these things fast enough with enough darkness (both literal and spiritual) covering it, the people will just follow along for the ride. When reasoning with Jesus would not work, and trying to outwit him failed, these men decided that desperate times called for desperate (sinful) measures!

DISCUSS: In what ways do we see these same motives (disdain for God and fear of people) drive people today?

But finally I would like us to finish on the same thought that we ended Sunday morning with. There we saw that though it *seemed* like everything was failing, truly the purpose of God was ruling in victory, even on this tragic night. Here we can say the same thing, but with an important added detail. Surely these men had hatred ruling their hearts. Yes, they were driven by sinful, vile, evil motives. But what Joseph said to his brothers is even more true here than when he said it. "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today." (Genesis 50:20). This was all part of God's perfect plan to bring about the salvation of his people. This is why Jesus can both condemn these men for their actions then, in the same breath, say: "all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." The lesson: Even in the face of great evil and injustice, God is still sovereign!

DISCUSS: Why is this thought important for us to remember? How can we keep it in mind at all times?