



St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)

Worship Address : Cerritos High School Auditorium
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May 3, 2009

Theme: God Is In Control

Text: Matthew 26:47-55

Matthew's account of Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion is rather long. This should tell us something. It should tell us that this part of the Jesus' life is central and essential to God's plan of salvation. This means that the cross should have a central place in our preaching, teaching, worshipping, and living. The message of a crucified Messiah would have been a contradiction to most of the Jews of Jesus day. It may also seem like that too many modern people. Modern people want a cleaner Gospel—one where the bloody mess of the trial and crucifixion are cleaned up. Many want a Jesus who is a great spiritual teacher; but not a crucified Jesus. Faith in Jesus' crucifixion is the only way to salvation. This implies that human beings are basically sinful and that we cannot save ourselves. Modern people like to believe that we are basically good. Jesus' crucifixion says otherwise. But the crucifixion is a historical fact that declares the good news: The Incarnate Son of God endured a painful and humiliating death so that human beings could live a glorious life that is liberated from the death-grip of sin.

At the end of last week's section Jesus had said, "Arise, we must go! Here comes my betrayer!" This section begins with the words, "While he was still speaking..." Matthew constantly tells us that the destiny of Jesus' life, which is the cross, does not take him by surprise. Jesus knows that Judas is coming. Rather than running away to hide, like a military rebel might do, Jesus goes forward to meet him. He willingly accepts the destiny of the cross in order to be obedient to the Father's will so that we might be saved from our sin.

Jesus' arrest is a turning point in the account of his life. Matthew tells us that a large, armed, and hostile "crowd" came to arrest Jesus. This crowd is different from the crowds that Matthew has described so far in his Gospel. Until now, the crowds have been at least sympathetic to Jesus, unlike their religious leaders. They were at least amazed at his teaching and his miracles—not hostile like their leaders. Beginning with his arrest, things begin to break down. Eventually, Israel's leaders will turn the crowds against Him until they become an angry, ugly mob which demands that Pilate release a murderer rather than Jesus. The crowds and their leaders are all people who are in need of Jesus salvation.

Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss. In the ancient Middle East, a kiss was a common expression of warm friendship between two people. The kiss was not a kiss on the lips. The two parties would embrace and touch each other cheek to cheek. It would also have been a sign of affection between a teacher and his student. Normally, however, it would be the teacher who initiated the embrace. Judas' act of betrayal and the way that he chose to do it, reveal the depths of evil to which a human being can sink. Judas had spent three



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years with a man who was perfectly good in every way; yet, he had learned nothing from this exposure. He hands over the only truly innocent person who ever lived to his execution.

Luke and John tell us that Judas committed this evil act because he was inspired by Satan. Judas' actions reveal the blindness that Satan can bring to those who are under his power. We must remember, however, that Satan has no power over the believer. He cannot make us do anything; nor can he make unbelievers do anything. Satan's power over people comes in the form of suggestions and/or temptations. In another garden, the Garden of Eden, Satan did not force Adam and Eve to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He only suggested to Eve that if she would eat, she would be like a god, knowing good and evil. Eve ate and then gave some of the fruit to Adam who ate without even being tempted by Satan.

Yet again, Matthew reveals that Jesus is in control of the events which lead up to his death. Jesus commands Judas to do what he had planned to do. Furthermore, Matthew says that the hostile mob steps forward to arrest Jesus, only after he has spoken these words. Matthew writes that Jesus said, "Friend, do what you came for. Then the men stepped forward seized Jesus and arrested him." The mob is not free to act until Jesus has spoken. In the arrest, it is Jesus who gives the orders, not the commander of the armed forces who have come to arrest him.

John's Gospel tells us that it was Peter who cut off the ear of the servant of the High Priest. Jesus again shows that he is in control by commanding him to put his sword back in its sheath. Jesus explains to Peter that if he wanted to do so, he could call upon God to send thousands of angels who could immediately save him and destroy the mob which had come out against him. Then he asks, "But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen this way?" Right up until the end, Jesus is the perfectly obedient human being. Paul says of him, "...he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross." Jesus has left us an example to follow. We must become people who are sold out to do God's will as revealed in the Scriptures. He had said to his disciples earlier in this Gospel, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me."