

Title: Under arrest but in control  
Text: Matthew 26.47-56  
Theme: The betrayal and arrest of Christ  
Series: Matthew #120  
Prop Stmtnt: Christ bore our shame through the mob rule setting of his arrest.

Garth Leno is the pastor a new church in Windsor, Ontario. I serve on a team that is overseeing and coordinating new church plants in the Detroit Metro region and on Monday night, our team had a meeting at Garth's new church in Canada. It was really encouraging to see what was going on there as well as to review what has taken place in the tri-county region in the past 12 months. I took my son Bobby with me and afterward we drove back through the tunnel from Canada into Detroit. I actually picked the line that was moving the fastest at the border patrol station and was looking forward to getting home when the patrol guard asked me what we had been doing in Canada. I told him briefly about the pastor's meeting. He asked me if I had any alcohol. No. Any guns or firearms? No. Then his demeanor and voice changed. He asked me for my keys. I gave them to him. He then ordered me to get out of the car and put my hands over my head and move to the back of my car. I figured that we had hit the border patrol lottery and my car would be searched for contraband. But looking up there were 12-15 officers coming at me from all directions, ordering me to keep my hands up, to move slowly. Some had their hands on their guns, others were shining flashlights. I decided that trying out my new Jason Bourne imitation at that moment would not be wise. (The sequel would be called, "Born Again") One guy cuffed me and the questioning began. Others were now getting Bobby. "Ok, which one is Robert Johnson?" We were separated and lead away. For what? I have no idea. Apparently, when my passport was scanned alarms and lights started going off. That is generally not a good sign. Inside I was searched again and answer some more questions. I was given no explanation, but after a while I was led to a lobby area where Bobby joined me. It is clear that we were not who they suspected us to be. I wanted to reinforce that, so I said to one of the officers, "Hey, do you know "so and so" (referring to a member of our congregation who had worked there)? He did. So I said that I was his pastor. I usually don't play that card, but thought that it wouldn't hurt. Eventually, we were given our passports, and drivers' licenses and we got back into my car and came home.

Somebody's identity and behavior has been causing me a lot of problems. This happened to me last fall when I came into New York from Europe. This also happened to me one time when I was going into Russia. I was taken by the border guards at the Moscow airport and locked into a little room where I waited for about 30 minutes by myself. That was a bit unnerving because I was completely out of control. I did not know the language. I did not know who had my passport. I did not know where my ministry partner was or if he had been detained. All I could do was wait. I had no options. I was in custody and at the mercy of others. In our text, Christ is taken into custody but here is the difference and it is a big one. Even though he was arrested, he was in complete control. Matthew emphasizes that and there is a lot in this text for us to consider.

Read Text:

## I. Christ was in complete control.

### A. **Though he was betrayed** (47-50)

Once again, Matthew points out that Judas was “one of the twelve” (v.47). In the next verse he calls him “the betrayer.” Betrayal by its very definition implies surprise. It is obvious from the gospel accounts that the rest of the disciples never saw this coming. To see Judas approaching Jesus followed by a large crowd would have been very confusing for these men. They would be completely blindsided by what was going on.

I have often thought of how evil and sinister it was for Judas to betray Jesus with a kiss. Men greeted one another with a kiss on each cheek, which is still common to this day in that region of the world. It is very interesting that Matthew uses the normal word for “kiss” in v.48, but uses a more intensive form of that word in v.49. Which leads us to think that when Judas kissed Christ, he did it in such a way that he was clearly marking him as the one to arrest and yet he did that with a prolonged and pronounced expression of affection, which only heightens the betrayal and deceit. There’s an old Michael Card song that captures this sentiment so well when he says:

Why did it have to be a friend  
Who chose to betray the Lord  
Why did he use a kiss to show them  
That’s not what a kiss is for

Only a friend can betray a friend  
A stranger has nothing to gain  
And only a friend comes close enough  
To ever cause so much pain

Betraying a friend, a leader, your Savior, with an expression of affection is so wrong. The scene reveals how deep Judas has allowed the bitterness to capture him. He is in a very dark place and he will not get out. But, as weighty as it is to think of how cold and wicked that is, there is something else that we ought to consider. Judas not only kissed Christ, but Christ allowed himself to be kissed. Imagine that. Would you let the enemy of your soul kiss you? Wouldn’t it make your skin crawl?

Then, Jesus called him friend. Judas is treating Christ as an enemy and doing so in the worst manner possible, while Jesus, with full knowledge of what Judas had been plotting all along and what he was doing at this very moment, allows Judas to kiss him and then calls him “Friend.” If this how compassionate Christ is to who betrays him, how gracious and patient is he to those who trust him? Then, underscoring how in control he was, he says, “do what you came to do.” What affect these words had on Judas, if any, we are not told. It seems to me that they did later on, but for now it is clear. There is no shock on the part of Christ. But, his lack of shock does not eliminate his grief. In fact, I would argue

that no one has felt betrayal deeper than Christ because no one has ever loved deeper than Christ.

### **B. Though he was arrested (50, 55)**

The soldiers reacted on cue. They “laid hands on Jesus and seized him.” Those phrases usually suggest that they man-handled him, or roughed him up a bit, which they probably did. To be seized obviously means that you are under the control of another. But, in this case, Christ is only being seized because he allows himself to be seized. No one is going to take his life from him. He is Savior and He is Lord. The only way he is going to die is if he lays down his life. The only way that he can be arrested is if he chooses to allow himself to be arrested. These soldiers, like every person who has ever been given a measure of authority, only think that they are in charge. As we will see in a bit, that Jesus takes control, even of his arrest. The truth is none of us are in charge. We are all under the authority of God. More on that in a minute.

### **C. Though he was deserted (56b)**

Back in v.31 Jesus said that his disciples would abandon him. And now they did. He was now alone. The hour that he spoke about over and over was here. And while he was completely alone, he was still completely in control. The circumstances around him appeared to be chaotic. Betrayed. Arrested. Deserted. The loneliness was now so intense he would have felt as if he was drowning. No human was ever designed to be alone. It is not good for us to be alone. That is what God said. And that is because we have been made in the image of God. Have you ever seen a child who was lost at a store? It is pathetic. We fear abandonment perhaps more than anything else because abandonment and loneliness is the greatest grief. Christ does not trivialize your loneliness by saying, “Oh you think you have it bad, look at me?” Nor does he dismiss it with a “been there, done that” response. He enters into your experience and empathizes completely because he has been there. He has felt it deeply and he does not forget. God is tri-unity. That is, God is a 3-person relationship (Father, Son and Spirit). For eternity, the Son has been in the God-head and has enjoyed a relationship that is perfect. But now, for the first time ever, he has lost the benefit of experiencing that deep, abiding, glorious, delightful and satisfying relationship, only to now experience the most dreadful and suffocating loneliness ever. But, while this loneliness threatens to overwhelm him, he does not panic. There was no fear in his eyes. There was sorrow, but no fear. How can you live in this world without fear? How can you face enemies and challenges without fear? The only way you can do that is if you place the treasure of your happiness in a safe that no one can steal.

Now, let me stop and explain something. As you know there is a large segment of “Christianity” that does not embrace the gospel. Last Sunday we looked at the very heart of the gospel when we looked at what happened in the garden. Christ became sin for us. Christ became our substitutionary atonement. Christ became our sin-bearing, wrath-absorbing sacrifice. This is the doctrine of propitiation. Apart from that, we have no hope. However, that truth is embarrassing to some. They think that it is crude and offensive, so

that aspect of what we call the passion of Christ is ignored. What is emphasized, amongst other things is that Christ is our great example and that his death was an example of caring for others more than he cared about himself. Many people do this and ignore his death as our wrath-bearing sacrifice. Was Christ our sacrifice or our example? He was both. But, even while he was bearing our sin and absorbing our wrath, he was at the same time our great example. He lived the life we could not live and died the death that we could not die. He did both. And even in his dying, he fulfilled all righteousness. Even as he died for our forgiveness he died in faith. His perfect death completed a perfect life that was lived in our place. That perfect life was both our substitute and our example. So, while we are called to trust in Christ as our Savior, our trust in Christ enables us to follow Christ as our example. And how he faced death is a great example for us. He did not fear because he knew that the treasure of his happiness was safe. The author Hebrews said that he endured the cross because he knew the joy that was set before him. He endured the cross in order to secure our joy (salvation). The securing of our joy was his joy because it was the Father's joy.

If I believe that having a great job with a great income is the ticket to my happiness, then I am going to be fearful of anything that threatens that dream. I may be in school and relying upon a degree or a GPA to open the door for me for grad school or a scholarship. Every test that I take is generally faced with fear because if I don't perform well, then my happiness is at stake. If I believe that having children who love me is my ticket to happiness then I am going to be fearful of their rejection and will do everything in my power to buy or demand their affection. If I believe that being respected by others is what will protect my happiness then I will be driven to do all sorts of heroic and sacrificial things in order to gain the respect of others. But my happiness is not safe with a great job or with children who love me or having people who respect me. And because of that I will be afraid of losing it and will panic when something appears to threaten it. Christ secured your happiness and shows you how to live and die knowing that your joy is safe.

Look at Christ. He was not afraid because nothing could dethrone him, nothing could threaten him, not even death. He was able even earlier that evening to tell his disciples to not be afraid because he goes to prepare a place for them. Fear cannot get a handle on him because he is in charge. So, how does that help us? He did not fear because he was in control, but we are not in control. But, here is where Christ is our perfect example. Look closer. He was in complete control because:

## II. **Christ surrendered his control to the Father.**

That is a very important truth for you to grasp. Some of you live in a great deal of fear because you try to control everything in your world and everyone else in your world for that matter. You have a schedule. You have a budget. You have a plan. You have a calendar. You have a system. And everyone knows that things have to go according to your schedule and within your budget and according to your plan. Now, I am all for efficiency, but where we get into trouble is when we think that we can manage our world through a calendar and think that control equals security and happiness. Just because you plan it, does not mean that it is going to happen.

What happens when you get sick? What do you say? “I don’t have time for this right now.” Like anyone else does? Who do we think we are? Every plan we make, must be held with an open hand. We say, “Lord willing” I will do this. Look at how this works. Christ has already said, “Lord willing.” He said that at great cost. He said that at greater cost than anything that we will ever pay. He submitted himself to the will of his Father and though he was arrested, and though it looked as if he was under the control of others, the truth was, they were under the control of him. They were doing exactly what his plan was. Knowing that his life was in the Father’s plan enabled him to be at peace, in spite of the chaos that was surrounding him. He entrusted himself to the Father and because of that, he was free. He did not have to manage things.

#### **A. He was free while others were bound.**

Here is another one of the great ironies. He was the one who was seized, but he was the only one who was truly free. And this is what is so amazing about Christ. He expressed his freedom by surrendering his use of it for his comfort, that we might be saved. Because he was surrendered to the will of his Father he was free to love Judas even though Judas betrayed him.

He was free to heal the ear of Malchus, who was the servant of the high priest who was injured in the garden that night. By the way, (warning, personal opinion is being inserted here) I believe that Peter was left-handed. Look at how Matthew explains this scene with four descriptive verbs. It gives you the sense of slow motion replay, doesn’t it? Peter stretches out his hand...draws his sword...strikes the servant...and cuts off his ear. Now, the reason I think that Peter is left handed is because I don’t think that Peter was going for the ear. That would not be Peter’s style would it? Peter is going for the head. And we find out from John’s gospel that Peter cut off the guy’s right ear. Since the verb that is translated “struck” means to kill, I think that Peter was swinging for the guys head and he ducked and Peter cut off his ear.

Now, freeze the picture for a second. What just happened? Peter about killed a guy, and for a moment, it might look like it. If you whack someone’s ear off, there is a good chance that you are going to hit the external carotid artery, which means, this guy is probably bleeding badly. Here is the making of a riot. Violence breeds violence. Blood demands blood. In that instant an already tense situation was just ratcheted up to chaos level. And yet what happens? Jesus takes over. The one who is under arrest is actually in control. He rebukes Peter, and according to John’s gospel, he heals the man’s ear. He completely diffuses the entire situation. Christ takes complete control of the scene and then, he gives it back. And just as he is willing to receive a kiss from Judas and call him friend, he is free to heal the ear of a man who has come out to harm him.

#### **B. He did not have to defend himself.**

Christ could have called 12 legions of angels. A legion was 6,000 soldiers. Jesus could have called 72,000 angels. If you remember that back in our study of Isaiah that Hezekiah

was rescued from the Assyrians by an angel of the Lord who went through the Assyrian camp one night and took out 185,000 of those bad boys, then you can multiply that by 72,000 and you get over 13 billion. Seriously, I don't think that was the point as much as it was Jesus was pointing out that he could call on a legion for each of the disciples. There were plenty at his disposal if he wanted. But, there was something more important than him being rescued from death and that was, the securing of our salvation.

Christ did not have to defend himself. He was free. He was following the Father. But there is another aspect of this text that I want you to see.

### III. **Christ submitted himself to the Word.**

Fourteen times Matthew records this phrase, "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled." Matthew is doing this because he wants us to see that Christ is the promised King. Christ is the promised Savior. Christ is the promised prophet. Christ is the fulfillment of all of that the OT was pointing to. But I want to suggest that Matthew got this idea from Christ.

Christ is the one who says that the Scriptures must be fulfilled. He says that to Peter. Peter, I can't have you taking guys heads off right now. It is not just a matter of Peter's protection (live by the sword, die by the sword), which was obvious that Peter was not going to win that battle since he was so outnumbered. But, there was a greater reason why Jesus couldn't let Peter do that. Jesus had to die. Jesus had to die because that it was the Scriptures said. And for Jesus, fulfilling God's Word was more important than anything. Jesus believed the Bible.

So, if Jesus takes God's Word so seriously then obviously, so should we. Jesus will do anything; even die on a cross, in order to make certain that God's Word is fulfilled. You can trust God's Word.

So, here he is, having been betrayed, now arrested and he asks in an instructive way, "you know why you didn't arrest me in the Temple don't you? I mean after all, you really don't believe that I am a robber that you have to use swords and clubs, right? The real reason behind everything is the Word of God. Christ is under arrest, but he is in complete control because God's Word will never fail.

Isn't that an amazing truth? God's Word will never fail. The word of the prophets will be fulfilled. The Scriptures will be fulfilled. Everything that they said about Christ at his first coming happened. As amazing as it was promised, he did it and he did it in a way that no one ever imagined.

I know that taking God at his Word is at the heart of becoming a follower of Christ and growing as a follower of Christ. This is why Christ died for us. He was committed to fulfilling the Word. And he did. You can believe him. You must.