Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

This is the second sermon about the arrest of Jesus. And I preached the first sermon a few weeks ago when four people publicly professed faith in Christ. And we noted then that the arrest of Jesus is probably not the first passage that most people would turn to to prove that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. In fact, it would be easy to mistakenly view Jesus as a kind of victim here who had kept the Jewish leaders at bay up till now but finally they get Him. But that is not the case at all. So we wanted to see how **even** **the arrest of Jesus reveals Him to be the Son of God**.

And we did this in the first sermon by considering **the events that lead up to His arrest**; we kind of took a tiki tour through John’s Gospel to see how Jesus was in complete control of this moment. Our key verse from this passage was **v4**: “*Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to Him…*” But we also looked at **10:17** where Jesus said, “*I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.*”

So Jesus was no accidental victim here; He was in complete control.

Well, today we want to look closely at the arrest itself to see how the details recorded here reveal Jesus to be the Son of God. And we will do this by walking through this account and saying a few words about **those who gathered to arrest Jesus**, and then **Jesus’ conversation with His arrestors**, and finally, **Jesus’ words to Peter**.

1. So we begin with **those who gathered to arrest Jesus**. And they are described in v3 as Judas and “*a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and Pharisees*,” who came “*with* *lanterns and torches and weapons*.”
   1. So let’s begin with **Judas**. Judas, as we know, had been one of Jesus’ twelve, hand-picked disciples. He had spent three years following Jesus around the country, seeing the miracles of Jesus and hearing all of Jesus’ parables and sermons. But where is Judas now? Is He still with Jesus, boys and girls? No. He is leading this band of soldiers and officers who have come to arrest Jesus. And these officers were “*from the chief priests and Pharisees*,” we are told. So Judas has joined with Jesus’ enemies; he has turned his back on Jesus. But we will say more about Judas soon.
   2. According to most Bible historians, the **soldiers** were most likely Roman soldiers from the garrison quartered in the castle of Antonia at the Northwest corner of the temple area. This was Passover time and with thousands of people joining the local population in Jerusalem, this was more than the local Jewish temple security guards could handle by themselves. So it seems that the Jewish officers and the Romans soldiers functioned as a kind of ready-reaction force when there were threats to public order. And in the eyes of the chief priests and the Pharisees, the arrest of Jesus required this ready reaction force.
   3. And we are told that they came with “**weapons**.” And of course, that makes perfect sense, doesn’t it. After all, think of the terrible things that Jesus had been doing – he had been, you know, healing people, and, and preaching sermons!!! So obviously He was a violent criminal who would need to be subdued. How absurd that they thought they needed weapons to arrest Jesus. And it is absurd for two reasons:
      1. I can’t remember which movie it was but I recall a scene where this FBI swat team with masks and bulletproof vests and night vision goggles quietly walk across the grass at night time and they silently enter the house through windows and doors, downstairs and upstairs, and their thermal imaging camera locates the room where their target is and they line up outside the door and then smash it open and run in yelling, ‘FBI, freeze, hands up!’ and there is a guy sitting in the bath with a soap bubble beard and a rubber ducky. And similarly, the idea that soldiers and weapons were needed to arrest *peaceful* Jesus was just silly!
      2. But there are other movies where soldiers or the police try to capture some giant creature or robot. And they shoot their guns but the bullets do nothing to the giant creature and the giant creature can flick the soldiers away like little mosquitoes. And similarly, if Jesus had not wanted to be arrested, it would not have mattered if they had an army with tanks and battleships and F16 fighter jets; they would not have been able to arrest Him or injure Him at all.
      3. So these weapons were useless when it came to the arrest of Jesus. And you know what? **Weapons are still useless against Jesus today**!
         1. For example, the Chinese government thinks it can bulldoze some churches and arrest some pastors and members to stop the church growing in China. Will they be successful, do you think? No they will not!
         2. Richard Dawkins and many like him think that the weapon of science can get rid of Jesus. Will they be successful? No they will not. Richard Dawkins might have many followers on Youtube and Instagram, and many people will pay $100 to listen to him mock Jesus Christ today, but one day Richard Dawkins is going to stand before Jesus on His throne of Judgment. And if has not repented of his wickedness, he will be condemned to an eternity in hell.
         3. All actual weapons and all philosophical or religious “weapons” are useless against Jesus. People can resist Him in this life, but the Bible is crystal clear, on Judgment Day everyone will bow the knee before Jesus, either as their Saviour or their Judge.
   4. But notice also that they didn’t just come with weapons, for John tells us that they also brought “**lanterns and torches**.” And it is worth thinking about this detail in the context of John’s Gospel.
      1. Do you remember how John introduced us to Jesus right at the beginning of his Gospel? Six times in the first nine verse of his Gospel, John refers to Jesus as the light. And later on he twice quotes Jesus’ own claim to be “*the Light of the world*.” And in **12:35-36**, Jesus said to the people, “*The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light*.”
      2. And here in the garden, Judas and the soldiers arresting Jesus in the dark of night is a picture of the sad fact that Judas has rejected Jesus as the light of the world and has been overtaken by spiritual darkness. And again, we shall say more about Judas and his choice soon.
      3. But even though Jesus was arrested when it was dark, and even though there were three hours of darkness while He hung on the cross (in the middle of the day!), and even though He was arrested and crucified by those who were sons of darkness, meaning those who lived in unbelief as followers of Satan, **John 1:5** says, “*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it*.” People of God, the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus was not a victory for darkness, it was a triumph of the light! This is how the devil will be conquered and how our salvation will be secured! And this is why when we sit around the Lord’s Supper table shortly, our hymn will not be a quiet hymn of reflection but a joyful hymn of triumph:

*Death cannot keep his prey – Jesus, my Saviour; He tore the bars away, Jesus, My Lord. Up from the grave He arose, with a mighty triumph o’er His foes.*

*He arose a victor from the dark domain and He lives forever with His saints to reign. He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!*

1. Well, that brings us next to **Jesus’ conversation with His arrestors**, which we see in vv4-9.
   1. And the first thing we are told is something we looked at in our last sermon – Jesus knew what was about to happen. So Jesus was in control of this moment. And we see His control in **what happens next** – He “*came forward and said to them, ‘Whom do you seek?*’”
      1. Boys and girls, if you have done something naughty and you hear Mum or Dad walking through the house calling out your name, including your middle name, which is always a sign that you are in big trouble, if your first instinct to go to them or to try and hide? It’s try and hide, isn’t it. But not Jesus! Oh no! *He* approached them! *He* initiated what happened next.
   2. And in v5, “*They answered Him, ‘Jesus of Nazareth*.’” And so we see that at least some of this group **did not know who Jesus was**. And we know this from the other Gospels also because Judas had said he would point Jesus out by kissing Him. But now everyone there knows who it is that they have come to arrest – Jesus.
   3. Well, there is an ad on TV at the moment where this really rough looking geezer walks into a bar and says, “**Which one of you is Eugene**?” So someone says, “I am Eugene,” and then another person says, “I am Eugene,” and pretty soon everyone is saying “I am Eugene.” And they all say this because they want to protect Eugene from the obvious thumping he is going to get from this person. But it turns out that the man just found Eugene’s wallet and wanted to return it to him. But there is no elaborate scheme of Jesus and His disciples to disguise Jesus or to present a substitute Jesus. Jesus simply says, “*I am He*.”
   4. And then we are told in v6 that Judas was with them and that “*when Jesus said to them, ‘I am He,’* ***they drew back and fell to the ground***.” What?! A group of soldiers and officers, who were armed, drew back and fell to the ground when an unarmed man tells them that He is the one they are looking for?! What a weird reaction! Why did they fall down?
      1. Well, what Jesus said, literally, was **I am**. The ‘He’ is added on just to make it smooth in English, which is why some English Bible versions put the “He” in italics. But Jesus literally said, “I am.” Does that ring any bells for you? **Exodus 3** – when Moses met with God at the burning bush He asked God for His name and God said, “I AM who I AM. Tell the people of Israel that my name is I AM.” So when Jesus said, “*I am*,” He was saying that He was the one that the soldiers were looking for but how He said it was Him declaring Himself to be Yahweh, Jehovah, Adonai, Immanuel, Eternal covenant God. And because of the third commandment which is a warning against misusing the name of God, in Bible times and now also, Jewish people do not even write God’s name. Did you know that? They write G-d. You see, that way they cannot be accused of misusing God’s name. So when Jesus said, “I AM.” Wow! They fell down in amazement!
         1. Do you boys and girls remember the story of the **capture of the ark**? During the time of King Saul, the Ark was captured by the Philistines. They took it and put it in the temple of their idol god, Dagon. And do you remember what happened? The next morning their idol had fallen down in front of the Ark of I AM-Yahweh. So they put Dagon back up on his plinth. But the next morning Dagon had fallen face down in front of the ark again and his head and hands were lying cut off on the threshold.
         2. And that is basically what happened here in the garden. In the presence of Yahweh, these idolatrous, unbelieving, sons of darkness fall down and in effect *worshipped* Jesus. It was not the worship of love and faith, like the worship we offer to Jesus today; it was the worship of terror and astonishment, like the worship that all unbelievers will offer to Jesus on Judgment Day.
   5. And this is a perfect time for us to come back to **Judas** as I have said we will do. For notice that John is very specific in **v5**, “*Judas, who betrayed Him, was standing with them.*” So at this moment Judas was with the soldiers and the officers. And he would have been very popular with the Pharisees and the chief priests. But where would Judas soon be and who would he be with? Do you remember? Matthew tells us that when Judas saw that Jesus was condemned he realized his sin, so he went to the Pharisees and priests and tried to give them back the 30 pieces of silver they had given him for agreeing to betray Jesus. But they would not take them back; they said to him, You’re problem mate! Not ours! Ha! And then we read these chilling words, “*And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself*.”
      1. So in the space of a few hours, Judas went from being with Jesus and the other disciples to being popular with the Jewish leaders to being alone and taking his own life. What a sad journey. How awful to go from being physically next to Jesus to rejecting Jesus and suicide.
      2. And this is **a warning** for those of us who have grown up in the church or who have been at church for a long time. Being *next* to Jesus is not enough. Doing Christian things, like going to church and listening to sermons, is not enough. You must know Jesus and love Jesus as your Saviour. You must be troubled by your sins and confess them and believe that Jesus died on the cross for the forgiveness of your sins. And your faith and love needs to be seen in your eagerness to obey His commandments, because He said, “*If you love me, you will obey my commandments*.”
      3. Does this describe you? Boys and girls, many of you have been thinking about these things at HBC this week; do you love Jesus? Do you believe that He died for your sins? Are you trying to show your thankfulness by obeying your parents and telling the truth and not losing your temper, for example?
      4. Let’s not be those who *betray* Jesus; let’s instead be those who *believe* in Jesus!

* 1. Well, Jesus then repeated His self-identification, as we see in v8, but He added some words to make them more like a normal identification than a divine declaration: “*I told* *you that I am He. So if you seek me, let these men go*.”
     1. And here we see **His incredible love for His disciples**. V4 tells us that “*He knew all that would happen to Him*,” but despite this, His first concern was not for Himself but for the disciples. And we know that they were all let go.
     2. And then we read in **v9** that “*this was to fulfill the word that He had spoken: ‘Of those whom you gave me I have not lost one*.’” And this is a reference to Jesus’ prayer in **ch. 17:12**, where He asked the Father to keep and guard the eleven and noted that only Judas would be lost because he was the son of destruction. And we could park on this point for a whole chunk of time but let’s just quickly note that **this moment is a powerful picture of the doctrines of election and the perseverance of the saints**. Can you see that?
        1. Before the creation of the world, eleven of the disciples were chosen to eternal life and one was not, and that is what comes to pass in history. And it is not because the eleven deserved to be saved; they all abandoned Jesus, despite having promised not to, and Peter even denied Jesus, three times. But by God’s grace, they came to believe in Jesus as the light of the world while Judas rejected Jesus.
        2. And as Jesus asked (or commanded) that the eleven be let go, we see a picture of how the elect are preserved in salvation by the power of Jesus. This was a time of darkness and fear and doubt and even sin for the eleven; they were not clinging to Jesus; they took off at the first available moment! But Jesus was working all things together for good. He truly is a Saviour worth trusting! He is a Saviour who preserves the faith of His people. He is why we can sing, “O love that will not let me go.”

1. And that brings us, thirdly, lastly, and very briefly, to **Jesus’ words to Peter**.
   1. Up till now we have seen Peter get into trouble many times just by opening his mouth! But now he whips out a sword and cuts off the high priest’s servant’s right ear! Ouch! And we are told the servants’ name, **Malchus**, because John knew that his original readers could go and meet this man and ask him about all of this. It is another reason why we can be sure that the Bible is reliable! It has facts that could be and can be checked out. And John does not mention it but we know from the other Gospels that Jesus then calmly reached out and healed Malchus’ ear.
      1. And I don’t know if it’s like this in your household but I can remember many times in my house where one or other member of the family has come home with a “Guess what happened to me today? account. Does that happen at your place also? Well, Malchus sure had a tale to tell when he got home – Guess what! My ear got cut off and it was bleeding all over the place but then Jesus touched it and healed it!
      2. But hopefully he wondered what this revealed about Jesus. Hopefully he believed in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.
   2. And so finally, before He was arrested and bound, we read that Jesus said to Peter, “*Put your sword into its sheath;* ***shall I not drink the cup*** *that the Father has given me*?”
      1. Earlier in the service we sung **Psalm 116**. Verse 13 of that Psalm says, “*I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD*.”
      2. But it is not the cup of salvation that Jesus referred to here. The cup He was referring to was the cup of judgment and wrath that we read about in **Psalm 75**. Verses 7-8 of that Psalm say, “*It is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another. For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and He pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs*.” It is this cup of judgment and wrath that Jesus had just been praying about not wanting to drink if there was any other possible way for Him to save His people.
         1. But He knew now that there was no other way and that He had to take all of the wickedness and guilt of God’s people on His shoulders and endure the Father’s eternal wrath and judgment.
         2. So He drank that cup so that all those who would believe in Him would not have to drink the cup of wrath and could instead drink the cup of salvation. (Go down to table).
      3. And the cup of salvation is symbolized here at the Lord’s Supper table. This cup of wine is a sign and seal of what Jesus’ blood accomplished on the cross – the forgiveness of our sins. And whether you come to the table today or not, you either choose to drink the cup of salvation in this life, which means you put your trust in Jesus, or you will drink the cup of wrath in the next life.

Brothers and Sisters, young people and boys and girls, Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Even His arrest proves that! Amen.