

Growing Deeper in Mark

MARK 14.43-65

VERSE 43: Jesus has watched and prayed, even if his disciples had not, and he was ready for what was about to transpire. Judas appears leading a 'crowd' armed with 'swords and clubs.' It sounds like chief priests, teachers of the law, and elders had rounded up whoever they could find at the late hour and sent them to bring Jesus back to them.

VERSES 44-45: Judas had chosen a signal that would keep up the charade of his faithfulness to Jesus. To greet your rabbi with a kiss would not be uncommon and though Jesus knew what Judas was doing, the other disciples would have been kept in the dark. It is, however, a profound act of betrayal to condemn someone to death with a kiss. We must search our hearts to be sure we do not betray Jesus with our actions and seek to cover it over with our fine sounding words of devotion.

VERSES 46-47: The crowd sees the signal and they quickly seize Jesus. 'One of those standing near' (Peter, we are told by John), draws his sword and takes a hack, catching an ear (which, Luke tells us, Jesus heals). The scene must have been chaotic, especially for bleary-eyed disciple who had just been wakened. They likely didn't think twice about Judas approaching Jesus, but then, suddenly, there is a crowd and they grab Jesus. Peter reacts...foolishly

VERSES 48-50: Jesus questions their tactics. They had made quite an elaborate mission out of capturing someone who was willing to go. Jesus calms the situation, and reminds his disciples what he had just told them in verse 27, "I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered." (Zec. 13.7). All the disciples desert Jesus, even Peter and his sword.

VERSES 51-52: Even a young man (presumably John Mark) run right out of his garment. Some point to this as a foreshadowing of Jesus rising from the dead. Death could not hold him; Jesus fled the tomb leaving his garment.

VERSE 53: Jesus is taken to the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish court.

VERSE 54: Peter follows, seeking to remain undetected. There he sits outside the residence of the high priest, amongst the temple guards, warming himself at the fire. What could go wrong?

VERSES 55-59: This is not a trial as we think of a trial. There is no impartial jury, there is no defense attorney, just a room full of people searching for any reason to put Jesus to death. Many false witnesses accused him, but none of their testimony agreed. There must be two witnesses who agree to put someone to death (Dt. 17.6), they could not produce such witnesses. One witness almost gets it right about Jesus' claim 'destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days' (Jn 2.19). But close wasn't good enough for these sticklers for the law.

VERSES 60-61: Finally, the high priest loses his patience. He wants Jesus to defend himself that he might incriminate himself, but Jesus remains silent. This forces the high priest to ask what he doesn't want to ask. I imagine to him even asking gives some credence to the idea. "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?"

VERSE 62: Jesus is no longer silent. He will not be put to death for any other charge. He will be put to death for claiming to be the Son of God. "I am," the words God gave Moses at the burning bush when he asked "who shall I say sent me?" "This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Ex. 3.14). This simple statement would have been enough, but Jesus adds on. He is one who has authority, not this court. They will one day be among those who bow their knee and confess that Jesus is Lord.

VERSES 63-65: This was blasphemy in the minds of the high priest and all the court. The tearing of his clothes signifies his condemnation of what Jesus has said. He declares judgment verbally, they needed no further witnesses, for they were all witnesses now. The rest of the Sanhedrin agreed with the high priest and in their contempt for Jesus they began the brutality that would take Jesus' life. These religious leaders, teachers of the law, elders all become a vile mob. Mocking, debasing, abusing, dehumanizing Jesus. The Son had condescended to become human, leaving his throne in

heaven. Now he was treated as subhuman by those he had created. By those for whom he would soon die. "And as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth." (Is. 53.7).

