



# SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

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"I Was There" - Hope Restored Sermon Series

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**G**ood morning, I'm Chris Pan. I'm on staff at the church as Executive Director.

We are in week 61 of our Hope Restored Sermon series. We are going verse by verse through the entire gospel of Mark, for more than a year now. Looking at how Jesus restores hope to a world in need.

Our passage today is Judas' betrayal of Jesus, and Jesus' arrest.

To put our passage today in context, here's a quick review of where we've been: Our passage occurs late on Thursday night, the night before Jesus is crucified on Good Friday. Earlier that evening, Jesus and His disciples celebrated the Passover meal. Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper, or communion, with the breaking of bread and wine. Jesus reveals that someone will betray Him, and tells Peter and the disciples that they will deny Him, but they all vehemently say they won't deny Jesus. Jesus then goes to Gethsemane, and prays. His soul is in anguish, Jesus prays, "If possible, remove this

*cup, but not My will, but Your will be done."* That brings us to our passage today, when Judas shows up with an armed crowd to arrest Jesus.

As we go through our passage and our message today, ask yourself these two questions: What is God saying to me? What does He want me to do about it?

Will you please join me in prayer? God, what are You saying to us? What do You want us to do about it? May You speak clearly to us now. We invite Your Holy Spirit to transform us. We praise You for Your great love for us and for the forgiveness of our sins. We pray in the powerful name of Jesus Christ, and all God's children say: Amen!

*Mark 14:42-52 [Jesus says to His disciples:] 42 "Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand." 43 Immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders.*

*44 Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; arrest Him and lead Him away under guard." 45 So when Judas came, he went up to Jesus at once and said, "Rabbi!" and kissed Him. 46 Then they laid hands on Jesus and arrested Him. 47 But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear.*

*48 Then Jesus said to them, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as though I were a bandit? 49 Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest Me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled." 50 All of them deserted Him and fled. 51 A certain young man was following Jesus, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, 52 but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked.*

This is a action-packed and heartbreaking passage: Judas' betrayal of Jesus with a kiss, Jesus' arrest, a man's ear being sliced off, all the disciples running away and abandoning Jesus. Among all that action, there's one question that stands out.

**T**he question: What is up with the naked guy? Some naked guy, running away from the scene? Who is he? What is he doing there? Why is he included in the Bible? You know, we're not afraid to tackle the challenging questions here at First Prez, so rest assured, we will get around to talking about the naked guy by the end of this sermon.

But before we get there, let's look at the actions of some of the other people in this passage: Judas and the disciple with the sword. What do their actions as disciples tell us about us as disciples? What does it tell us about God?

First, Judas. Is there anyone here named Judas? We have lots of Peters, Matthews, Marks and Marys. Why is no one named Judas? Obviously, it's because Judas is the ultimate bad guy. 2000 years later, and still, just his name is a synonym for treachery and betrayal. In Dante's *Inferno*, the famous 14th century epic poem, Dante assigns Judas to the 9th and deepest circle of hell, where Satan himself resides. The circle of Treachery.

In verse 45: *"So when Judas came, he went up to Jesus at once and said, "Rabbi!" and kissed Him."*

If you have ever wondered where the phrase "kiss of death" comes from – it's right here. "Kiss of death" is derived from Judas's kiss to Jesus. The word for "kissed" in verse 45, when Judas actually greets Jesus

isn't the same word as in verse 44. In verse 44, that word "kiss" is just a plain kiss, the customary greeting you would give in that time. In verse 45, the actual kiss that Judas gives Jesus, is described as the intense kiss of a dear friend, the kiss to a loved one. That's the kiss of death.

Judas betrays Jesus not just with a kiss, but with the kiss that you would give an intimate loved one. But isn't that the nature of betrayal? Have you ever been betrayed? Have you experienced the pain of betrayal? If you have, you know that betrayal is always an inside job. An outsider can hurt you, but its only betrayal when it's by an insider, someone close to you, someone you trust, someone you love.

Judas walked with Jesus for three years. When Jesus miraculously provided food for the 5000, Judas was one of the 12 who handed out the bread and fish to the crowds. Judas was there when Jesus healed the leper and healed the blind man. Judas was there when Jesus walked on water and restored life to a dead girl. Judas was one of the 12 that Jesus sent out from village to village, driving out demons and healing the sick.

There was a popular Christian hymn in the 14th century called "O You, Poor Judas."

The lyrics:

O poor Judas, what have you done that you betrayed your

master! That's why you have to suffer in hell, You have to be Lucifer's journeyman forever. Christ, have mercy.

Judas, the bad guy. Judas, who we blame for his betrayal of Jesus – for sending Jesus to the cross. Aren't we glad that we are not a treacherous betrayer like Judas? Aren't we glad that Judas is consigned to the worst part of hell, to suffer for what he did to Jesus? Christ, have mercy on Judas.

I'm going to tip my hand here. I have a lot of compassion for Judas. I know, it's weird, but bear with me. Because as we continue to examine the people in this passage today, I realize that *they* are not that different from Judas. And then I realize that *I'm* not that different from Judas.

The second person in the passage: The disciple with the sword.

Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss, and the armed crowd grabs Jesus. *In verse 47: "But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear."*

Mark doesn't name the disciple with the sword. He's wonderfully anonymous. It's just: "One of those who stood near" cut off the ear of the slave. Mark doesn't name the disciple because he might be trying to protect him. The gospel of Mark was the earliest gospel account written.

**E**ven though the book of Mark shows up as the second book in the New Testament, after Matthew, it is chronologically the first gospel written. Mark writes it maybe in the early 60s AD, or less than 30 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. So, the author Mark is being careful, to not name this disciple with a sword.

The author John, on the other hand, he's got no problems identifying our swordsman. The gospel of John is written 40 years after Mark, in about AD 100. By then, this sword-wielding disciple has already been martyred, so John writes, in the gospel of John 18:10: *"Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus."*

I think of John as every teacher's favorite student. The teacher asks: "What happened here?" And Mark says: "Eh, 'one of the guys' cut off that dude's ear." But John's like: "It was Peter! Peter did it! His full name is Simon Peter! It was the right ear, not the left ear. And the guy's name was Malchus. M-A-L-C-H-U-S." Thanks John. Thanks a lot.

But, we all already knew the disciple with the sword was Peter, right? Who else would it be? Peter, our lovable hothead, jumping out of a boat to walk on water, rebuking Jesus, telling Jesus, "You don't need to die," swearing, "I won't betray you!"

Pastor Steve preached two weeks ago, Peter's got this untamed fire.

Here's what strikes me about Peter in this passage. Peter is a fisherman. He's not his generation's greatest swordsman. He's not Inigo Montoya from the Princess Bride. He's not Jaime Lannister from Game of Thrones, the first season.

Peter is a fisherman with a sword. Why Peter the fisherman is bringing a sword to Passover dinner and a late night prayer meeting, I don't know. But I don't think Peter, the fisherman, takes out his sword and says, "I'm going to cut off that guy's right ear." And with the precision of a great swordsman, he measures it up, and cuts off the guy's right ear. Look how close my ear is to the rest of my head. If you were a samurai, that would be an impressive move, and Peter is not a samurai. He's a fisherman!

I'm not sure, but I think that Peter is out there trying to kill a guy. Like actually murder someone. He's out there, hacking away with his sword, and he catches Malchus with his wild swing. Or Peter is actually aiming for Malchus' head, but Malchus is wearing a helmet, and the sword slides off the helmet, cutting off Malchus's ear.

When we talk about Peter's untamed fire, this lovable hothead's passion, let's be realistic about what we're talking about. Peter is trying to kill someone.

Peter spent three years walking with Jesus. He's seen Jesus heal the leper, and the blind man. He handed out food for the 5000. He's seen Jesus restore a dead girl back to life. And Peter has heard on at least three separate occasions in the gospel of Mark, Jesus predicting that Jesus will go to Jerusalem, and that He'll be betrayed, and He'll be killed. And that Jesus will rise on the third day.

The first time Jesus predicted His own death, Peter argued with Jesus, rebuking Jesus. And Jesus called Peter, "Satan". "Get behind me Satan," Jesus said to Peter.

And when the moment finally arrives in the garden, Peter still thinks he's the hero in this story. He thinks *he's* going to save *Jesus*. He wants to save Jesus, even if it means killing this slave, who's potentially just forced to be there.

How do we feel about Peter, the attempted murderer? Peter, who goes on to betray Jesus, to deny him three more times in the next few hours.

We call Judas: The Betrayer. And we call Peter: The Rock. The Rock on which the church is built. What's the difference between these two disciples? For that matter, what's the difference between Judas and Peter and all the other disciples?

Earlier that evening, Jesus predicted to Peter and all the disciples that they would desert Him. But Peter and the disciples all say "No way!"

**I**n verse 31: “But [Peter] said vehemently, ‘Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.’ And all of [the disciples] said the same.”

A few hours later, verse 50: “All of them deserted Him and fled.”

All of them deserted Him and fled. If this were a boxing match, the ring announcer would say: In this corner, there’s a mob assembled by the religious leaders, coming with clubs and swords to arrest Jesus, to put Him to death.

And in this corner: There’s Jesus. With Jesus is... Judas the betrayer. Nope, sorry, my mistake, he’s actually in the other corner. Peter, the attempted murderer. Sorry, he ran off. John, the deserter. Simon, the deserter. Andrew, the deserter. Matthew, the deserter. Doubting Thomas, the deserter. These are the guys who are supposed to stand with Jesus. And they are all gone.

In this corner, is Jesus, all alone. At this moment of crisis, Jesus stands alone.

Well...not alone just yet. There’s still a certain young man, wearing a linen cloth there.

Verse 51: “A certain young man was following Jesus, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, 52 but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked.”

Now, Jesus is all alone.

So, who is this naked guy? And why is he mentioned here? Well, we can do some Bible detective work and follow the clues. This naked guy shows up only in the gospel of Mark. Not in Matthew, Luke or John. So, this naked guy is significant to the author Mark in a way that he isn’t to the other gospel authors. They don’t even mention him. So who would Mark be particularly interested in?

In the book of Acts, Chapter 12, we find out that Mark’s mother lived in Jerusalem, and had a house where the disciples would regularly gather to pray and meet. So it appears that our author Mark, as a young man, lived close to the Garden of Gethsemane.

In John’s gospel, John never mentions himself by name, but refers to himself obliquely as “the disciple Jesus loved” or “the disciple that runs faster than Peter.” So there’s a tradition of obliquely referring to yourself in your own gospel narrative.

The theory, based on these clues, is that the naked young man is none other than Mark himself, the author of the gospel. It’s like an artist signing a painting, or a Stan Lee cameo in every Marvel movie. Mark, a young man, is already in bed, wearing his linen bed clothes. But he hears the disciples that night, either as they have the last supper or as they go to Gethsemane, and he wants to follow Jesus. He follows the

crowd to the garden, but then he runs away too.

Every Easter, we sing the song, “Were You There?” Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Were you there when they nailed Him to a cross? Were you there when they laid Him in a tomb?

The mystery of this naked man running from the scene is that it is the author Mark saying, “I was there.”

I was there. When Judas betrayed Jesus, I was there. When Peter tried to kill the slave, I was there. When all the disciples deserted Jesus, I was there.

Jesus’ call was always, “Leave everything behind, and follow me.” And Mark says, I left everything behind, to get away from Jesus. I left the very clothes I was wearing to abandon Jesus.

I was there and I ran away, in shame and cowardice, like everyone else. I was there and failed Jesus. Just like Judas. Just like Peter. Just like all the disciples. I was there.

*Romans 3:23 says, “For there is no distinction, 23 since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*

Remember that popular old hymn from the 14th century called, Oh Poor Judas, What Have You Done? A few hundred years later, in the 1500s, someone re-visited the words to that popular hymn, and they changed the lyrics.

**T**he original lyrics, again:

O poor **Judas**, what have **you** done that **you** betrayed **your** master! That's why **you** have to suffer in hell, **you** have to be Lucifer's journeyman forever. Christ, have mercy.

The revised lyrics, from a few hundred years later:

O **we** poor sinners! **Our** iniquity, in which **we** are conceived and born, has brought **us all** into such great need, that **we** are subject to eternal death. Christ, have mercy.

The last line, "Christ, have mercy," feels a lot different in the revised version, doesn't it? It's no longer: Christ have mercy on poor Judas, that bad guy over there. It's: Christ have mercy on US. Christ, have mercy on ME!

In the gospel of Luke, Jesus tells a parable of two different people who go to the temple and pray. One is a Pharisee, an upstanding religious leader. And the other is a tax collector, a despised man. And the religious leader prays: God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector." And the tax collector stood at a distance, couldn't even look to heaven, and prays, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner.", in [Luke 18:13] Jesus commends the tax collector, the one who prayed, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner."

This Wednesday is Ash Wednesday, the start of the 40-day period of Lent, a time of prayer, and fasting and reflection. And like Judas and Peter, we've also walked with Jesus for a long time in this sermon series. 61 weeks and counting through the gospel of Mark. We've seen Jesus heal the leper and the blind man, feed the 5000, walk on water and raise a little girl to life. And now, we are approaching the shadow of the cross.

There's a quote by Billy Graham that a friend said to me recently. "The ground is level at the foot of the cross."

The ground is level at the foot of the cross. There is no better or worse real estate at the foot of the cross. There are no tiers for really bad, kind of good, not so bad. The ground is level. We all stand on level ground at the foot of the cross. Judas, Peter, the disciples, Mark, you and me, and all those people who may have betrayed God, and all those people who may have betrayed you. We all stand at the foot of the cross, on level ground, on equal footing. And our only salvation is not in our good deeds, or our hard work, or in our good intentions. Our only salvation is to cry out, "Christ, have mercy." To cry out, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner." We stand on the level ground at the foot of the cross, equally in need of a Savior.

And lucky for us all, we have one. Christ, have mercy.

Of course there is one more person in our passage today,

beside Judas, and Peter and Mark. It's Jesus. Standing in the garden. It's chaos in the garden. An armed mob; Judas, betraying; Peter swinging a sword; Malchus, bleeding everywhere; a naked guy running away. Chaos all around – except for Jesus.

Jesus stands in the midst of the chaos, and He is calm. "Let the scriptures be fulfilled," Jesus says. The scriptures have predicted that Jesus will die for our sins, and that He'll be raised on the third day.

We blame Judas, and call him a betrayer, make him the scapegoat for the death of Jesus. And Jesus, all alone in the garden, says, You've got that all wrong. Judas isn't the scapegoat. I, Jesus, I'm the scapegoat. I, Jesus, I'm the one who will carry your shame, and your blame, and your sin. And I do it, because I love you. I choose the cross.

Don't give Judas the credit for sending Jesus to the cross. Only Jesus gets credit for the cross.

In the gospel of John, chapter 10, Jesus says: "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord."

Jesus doesn't end up on the cross because Judas betrays Him. Jesus doesn't end up on the cross because Peter fails to fight off the arresting crowd.

Jesus doesn't end up on the cross because all His disciples desert Him. Jesus ends up on the cross because He chooses the cross. He chooses the cross for us. Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.

In Romans 5, it says: "6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. God proves His love for us in that while we still were sinners, Christ died for us."

There's a book written by Ray Anderson, a seminary professor of Pastor Dan and Pastor Tim at Fuller Seminary. And in the book, Anderson imagines a conversation between Jesus and Judas.

In reality, Jesus and Judas don't meet again. In the gospel of Matthew it tells us that after Jesus is condemned but before He is crucified, Judas is full of remorse and repents, and goes to the chief priests. He returns the money he received and says, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And the chief priests say, "What is that to us? That is your responsibility." Judas then goes and takes his own life.

So Anderson imagines the conversation that would have happened between Jesus and Judas. I have to confess: I haven't read the book. Pastor Tim just told me the title, but the title of the book is enough.

The title is: Judas, Come Home. All is Forgiven.

Does that shock you? Could Judas possibly have been forgiven? What kind of God could forgive Judas, the ultimate bad guy? Is God's forgiveness really big enough for Judas, the betrayer?

Is it big enough for Peter, the attempted murderer and denier? Is it big enough for Mark and the other disciples, the deserters? Is it big enough for the prodigal son? Is it big enough for Paul, formerly called Saul, who killed and persecuted the early church? Is God's forgiveness big enough for John Newton, the slave trader, who wrote the song Amazing Grace?

Is God's forgiveness big enough for you? And for me? Is it big enough for all those people out there who have wronged you, betrayed you, hurt you? Is it big enough for all those people out there, who will never set foot into a church, because they think God's forgiveness isn't big enough for them.

My heart breaks for Judas. Because the difference between Judas and Peter is that Judas couldn't believe that God's forgiveness was bigger than his evil. But God's grace and forgiveness is bigger than our sin. God's grace is bigger than Peter's rashness. God's forgiveness is bigger than the disciple's desertion. God's forgiveness, and grace and mercy and love is big enough, for all of us, who stand on the level ground at the foot of the cross and say: Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Jesus invites us all: Come Home. All is Forgiven. How will we respond?

On the night that Jesus was betrayed, He had a Passover meal with his closest friends, the same people who would betray and desert him in a few hours. And He invited them into communion with Him.

Jesus knew Judas would betray Him a few hours later. He knew Peter would deny Him 3 times, and that all the disciples would desert Him. But He shared a meal with them. And just like that, He invites us also, into communion with Him, and offers us forgiveness for our sins.

[Service of Communion]

*On the night Jesus was betrayed, He took bread, and after He had given thanks, He said, "This is my Body, BROKEN for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way, after supper, He took the cup and said, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, poured out for you. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again.*

Jesus invites you to communion with Him. Come home. All is Forgiven. The gifts of God, for the people of God.

*Note: Sunday sermon texts are also available at [fpchawaii.org](http://fpchawaii.org) The audio version can be downloaded from iTunes. To request an audio version go to: [fpchkoolau@gmail.com](mailto:fpchkoolau@gmail.com)*