

Mark 14:43-50

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 he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. 46 Then they laid hands on him 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 (NRSV).

We live in society that has many people that choose not to believe in Jesus. One thing that I like to point out is a very important characteristic of the gospels. If this was a story of fiction it would be written much differently. The good guys would shine favorably with the disciples being portrayed as heroes. However, the Gospel of Mark does not sugar coat the message in order to make it more favorable. He tells it like it is.

Jesus has had it rough. He had problems with the crowds, he had some serious opponents, and he had trouble with his own disciples. While many in the crowds were in awe of his teaching and he was able to preach to multitudes, he had a serious crowd problem for people wanting to be healed. His biggest opposition was from the religious leaders. At first one might think that his main opposition would be demons and forces of evil. However, his opposition is ironic. Since he is the Son of God he should be welcomed by the religious establishment. But the religious leaders only want to stop him because he is a threat to their status quo. They have transgressed from the will of God and profit from corruption. They are unable to stop Jesus and resort to the worst of humanity by engaging in a conspiracy to kill him, use bribery to trap him, and they seize him with a mob for an illegal trial. The disciples have disappointing human weakness and desire. They are unable to grasp his true nature and fail to fully understand that he must be killed and resurrected.

During the Last Supper Jesus talked about his betrayal and he set up the sacrament of bread for his body and wine for his blood for us to always remember him by. Then they sang a hymn together. After this they went to the Mount of Olives where Jesus talked about his desertion. He reminded them once again that he will be raised but obviously they failed to understand. Then they go into the Garden of Gethsemane where the disciples slept when Jesus faced his hours of anguish.

Suddenly the action shifts to a mob scene. Judas arrives with a crowd carrying swords and clubs. This crowd is lead by the chief priests, scribes, and elders. Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss and they arrest Jesus. All of the disciples deserted him and fled. The Gospel of Mark shows us the injustice and the violence. This is not the temple police coming to arrest him with an authorized arrest warrant, the crowd is a mob that does not care that Jesus is not a criminal or that they could overtake him easily as he teaches in the temple. The kiss of Judas is now proverbial for the worst of betrayal. Judas violates all conventions of friendship; they recently shared meal and he uses a kiss to signal the mob. The act of affection is an act of betrayal. Jesus is then treated like a bandit, arrested in secret even though they know they can find him in the temple. These events match the prophecy of **Isaiah 53:12** he poured out himself to death, and

was numbered with the transgressors (NRSV). Everything takes place according to Scripture, is according to God's will, and happens as Jesus has predicted. The disciples desert Jesus just as he said they would **Mark 14:27** You will all become deserters; for it is written 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered' (NRSV). This is quoted from the prophecy of **Zechariah 13:7** Strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered (NRSV). The disciples fled, but not due to some direct threat, they fled due to cowardice. They got scared and ran away. All of them deserted him. All of them forsook him and fled.

There are three basic ways to abandon Jesus; apathy where you simply don't care, betrayal when you put your own wants and needs first, and flight when you fall away during times of trials. In our contemporary society there is always a danger that you will be the innocent victim of evil. My advice is to follow the example of Jesus. Have fearless human dignity and stand firm in faith. Focus on the will of God and trust that God's will be done.