

Dr. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Matthew 26:47-56 | The Kiss of Judas Iscariot
Sunday March 29, 2026

WELCOME:

- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.
- My sermon notes are in the foyer—please take them home with you.

REVIEW:

We continue our verse-by-verse exposition of Matthew's Gospel this morning.

Last Sunday, we examined the events that took place in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Charles Spurgeon said of that particular passage, “No man can rightly expound such a passage as this.”

Other theologians said that we are to “approach it upon our knees” and “our best response to it is hushed worship.”

I do hope and pray that you experienced the reverence, mystery, and holiness in which we examined the Garden of Gethsemane.

The Holy Spirit taught several practical and theological principles from it.

First, we learned about community and friendship.

Last week KEYPOINT 1:

We are not designed to do life alone.

We saw how God has built community into the very fabric of human DNA.

Even the Son of God surrounded Himself with twelve men, three of whom were close friends, and ultimately with one Disciple who was His closest.

Second, we learned the price of the sinfulness of sin that Jesus alone had to pay.

We watched Jesus struggle in prayer with His destiny to redeem the elect.

Last week KEYPOINT 2:

Jesus didn't grieve physical death—He grieved the spiritual punishment that must first take place.

The spiritual punishment was the Father's wrath on our sin.

As students of God's Word, we've seen small amounts of God's wrath on sin:

1. The flood—God killed and judged every human except for Noah and his family, along with the animals in the ark.

2. Sodom and Gomorrah—God rained down burning sulfur balls on both cities, killing and judging everyone who lived in those cities.

3. Korah challenged Moses' leadership during the Exodus—God split the ground open and swallowed Korah's family, including 250 other men.

Why? Because of God's justice on sin. - Temporary.

But Jesus must endure all the sins of every Believer.

We witnessed how he didn't want to bear the cross - He asked if there was another way to redeem the elect.

Third, we learned about disobedience and obedience.

Last week KEYPOINT 3:

There is one thing worse than experiencing the Father's wrath for our sin—and that's failing to do His will. (Disobedience.)

Justice

Last week KEYPOINT 4:

Obedience is love—yielding/submitting to the Word of God by the Spirit of God in the community of God, regardless of the personal cost.

Jesus demonstrated perfect love and obedience to us last week in the Garden of Gethsemane, saying, ***“Your will be done.”***

That's A review

INTRODUCTION:

This morning, we witness the fruit of betrayal.

Betrayal has many consequences, and we'll see that now as *the Passion* narrative picks up speed toward the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today, we'll witness Judas Iscariot implement his wicked plan to betray the very Son of God.

Things to note:

1. The duplicity and hypocrisy of an unbeliever.
2. The plans of man.
3. The sovereignty of God.

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 26:47—While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, suddenly arrived. A large mob with swords and clubs was with him from the chief priests and elders of the people.

Matthew 26:48—His betrayer had given them a sign: "The one I kiss, he's the one; arrest him."

Matthew 26:49—So immediately he went up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him.

Matthew 26:50—"Friend," Jesus asked him, "why have you come?" Then they came up, took hold of Jesus, and arrested him.

Matthew 26:51—At that moment one of those with Jesus reached out his hand and drew his sword. He struck the high priest's servant and cut off his ear.

→ *Timeline - 24 hours*

† **Matthew 26:52**—Then Jesus told him, “Put your sword back in its place because all who take up the sword will perish by the sword.

† **Matthew 26:53**—Or do you think that I cannot call on my Father, and he will provide me here and now with more than twelve legions of angels?

† **Matthew 26:54**—How, then, would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen this way?”

† **Matthew 26:55**—At that time Jesus said to the crowds, “Have you come out with swords and clubs, as if I were a criminal, to capture me? Every day I used to sit, teaching in the temple, and you didn’t arrest me.

† **Matthew 26:56**—But all this has happened so that the writings of the prophets would be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples deserted him and ran away.

God's words to us this morning - receive them as such.

† **PRAY:**
Now it is not an enemy who insults me—otherwise I could bear it; it is not a foe who rises up against me—otherwise I could hide from him. But it is you, a man who is my peer, my companion and good friend! We used to have close fellowship; we walked with the crowd into the house of God. (Ps. 55:12-14)

EXEGESIS:

As we reviewed last week, there was nothing more that Jesus needed to do in the Garden of Eden.

He prayed to His Father and received His answer—Jesus must bear the Roman cross and experience the Father’s wrath for our sin.

Justice

There’s also nothing more the Disciples were willing to do—tragically, when Jesus needed them the most, the temptation of sleep overwhelmed them, and they couldn’t keep their eyes open.

† **Matthew 26:45**— “Are you still sleeping and resting? See, the time is near. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

† **Matthew 26:46**— Get up; let’s go. See, my betrayer is near.”

Even as Jesus spoke those words, Judas Iscariot appeared.

So, please understand that even though we are beginning a new study this morning, the events of Jesus’ *Passion* are rushing forward.

There is no lapse of time between last week’s passage and this one.

As soon as Jesus finished praying, Judas arrived.

† **Matthew 26:47**— While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, suddenly arrived.

This is the first time we see Judas since Jesus dismissed him before the first Lord’s Supper was celebrated.

Matthew, our Gospel writer, highlights the irony, treachery, tragedy, and pain of Judas being considered one of the Twelve Disciples—***Judas, one of the Twelve.***

† **Matthew 26:47**— A large mob with swords and clubs was with him from the chief priests and elders of the people.

Judas did not come alone.

He didn’t show up with a small committee of religious leaders.

He didn’t bring a couple of police officers either.

No, Judas came with a very large group of people—people carrying weapons just waiting for an excuse to use them.

Think about how intimidating this must have been for the Disciples.

Put yourselves in the Disciples' shoes:

- They've been up for the past 24 hours.
- It's pitch black,
- They just woke up from a nap,
- They've been scolded by Jesus for sleeping,

And by the time they stood on their feet, they saw Judas leading the National Guard with torches, lamps, and weapons, headed straight toward them.

How's your anxiety level? Even though you've done nothing illegal.

It appears that the entire police force from the Temple (Temple guard) came to arrest one person.

The Romans have swords because they legally have the authority to kill.

The Temple Police carry clubs because they have the authority to control.

Although this verse says, "a large mob"—this is not a group of people wanting to loot storefronts and turn police cars over.

This large group of people has been sent with the highest government authority in the land—Rome.

Today, it would be similar to the governor and the district attorney leading the charge, backed by state police—sent by the White House.

Why so many people to arrest one person?

Maybe the Jewish leaders were not taking any chances.

Maybe they remembered when the people of Nazareth were so angry at Jesus for His preaching that they wanted to throw Him off a cliff, but instead, “But he passed right through the crowd and went on his way.” (Luke 4:30). It wasn’t time.

On another occasion, the Temple police were sent to arrest Jesus, but came back empty-handed.

They told this incredible story: “*No man ever spoke like this!*” Then the Pharisees responded to them, “Are you fooled too? (John 7:46). It wasn’t time.

Maybe they remembered the time when the Pharisees themselves were ready to kill Jesus in the temple, “*So they picked up stones to throw at him. But Jesus was hidden and went out of the temple.*” (John 8:59). It wasn’t time.

So maybe the Jewish leaders remembered how Jesus evaded them in the past—and chose not to take any chances.

But now is the time! *IT'S THE FATHER'S TIME.*

How many people were there to arrest Jesus that night?

When you consider all four gospels, it becomes evident that there may have been several hundred—possibly as many as one thousand — men to arrest the Lord Jesus Christ.

 **Matthew 26:48**—His betrayer had given them a sign: “The one I kiss, he’s the one; arrest him.”

Notice the demonic duplicity between the sign (kiss) and the command (arrest).

The kiss is a sign of affinity and a command, a sign of hypocrisy.

Why is a sign needed? Doesn’t everyone know who Jesus is?

Yes and no. Most people know Jesus by name only.

NO NEWSPAPERS or social media -

Some people will recognize Jesus, but keep in mind it's pitch dark.

As the Son of Man, Jesus is so ordinary looking—He looks like an ordinary Jewish rabbi wearing ordinary Jewish clothes.

At the moment, the only way you can really see someone is with a lamp or torch because it's probably 2:00am or 3:00am on Friday morning.

And since there were so many people, Judas chose a kiss as the sign—otherwise
Jesus would not have stood out in the crowd.

TO ARREST JESUS.

Let's talk about this kiss.

In first-century Jewish culture, a kiss was a greeting.

It typically involved a peck on the cheek, forehead, or beard—never on the lips.

This practice was strictly gender-segregated—men kissing only men and women kissing only women, and it carried no romantic significance whatsoever.

This greeting was a healthy sign of affection and care for someone.

A kiss on the cheek was only for people whom they knew.

The kiss revealed a close friendship between the two people.

Now, what about people who didn't have a close friendship or were strangers?

Next, there are greetings/kisses of status.

Ordinary servants would kiss the back of someone's hand.

Those above the level of servant would sometimes kiss the palm of the hand.

To kiss the hem of a person's robe was a sign of reverence and devotion.

A slave would kiss the feet of his master.

An enemy begging for mercy would also kiss his feet.

Matthew 26:49—*So immediately he (Judas) went up to Jesus*

In addition to those greeting protocols, certain protocols also governed the rabbi-student relationship, and these rules were never to be broken.

One of those rules was this: If a rabbi saw one of his students on the street, the rabbi was to speak first, extending his greeting to the student.

It was considered exceedingly rude, presumptuous, and arrogant for a student to speak to his rabbi before the rabbi spoke to him.

The rabbi always initiates the greeting, but look what Judas does here...

Matthew 26:49—*“Greetings, Rabbi!”*

In the midst of Judas' betrayal, he violated this fundamental rule of courtesy.

Second, the term “Greetings” wishes peace upon someone.

What irony! Judas intends violence—not peace.

Judas is not only a thief because he stole money as the treasurer of the group, but he's also a liar.

Third, notice that Judas refuses to call Jesus “Lord,” as the other Disciples do.

Judas continues to call Jesus “Rabbi/teacher,” which is also a lie.

Jesus was never Judas' Lord in the first place, and He is no longer his teacher either.

 **Matthew 26:49**—*and kissed him.*

When it came to the student-rabbi relationship, a student would never kiss the rabbi first.

The student could return the kiss, but only if the rabbi offered it first.

So Judas' kiss on the cheek was completely inappropriate, just as his initial greeting.

Judas is one despicable man— not because of the kiss itself but because he perverted his relationship with Jesus to the highest level of betrayal.

And it wasn't just one kiss—it was repeated.

The Greek tense indicates that Judas kissed Jesus repeatedly.

It's possible that Judas kissed Jesus repeatedly, not only to identify Him, but to occupy Him.

Maybe Judas was hoping that Jesus wouldn't pull a fast one and do a miracle or call down some angels.

In other words, Judas weaponized this sign of friendship to betray Jesus.

Judas has perverted this innocent greeting.

He exploited his status as a Disciple to carry out his betrayal.

Think about it, Judas could have given countless other signs that would have been just as effective.

- Judas might have given a verbal signal—some code word.
- He could have called Jesus by name.
- A physical gesture would have worked: a raised hand, a touch to Jesus's shoulder, or standing beside him.

But all those signs would have been too simple.

Judas was making a point—he's angry and wants revenge.

So his kiss is much more than meets the eye today.

† **Proverbs 27:6**—*The wounds of a friend are trustworthy, but the kisses of an enemy are excessive.*

Psalm 41:9 has now been fulfilled.

† **Psalm 41:9**—*Even my friend in whom I trusted, one who ate my bread, has raised his heel against me.*

How does Jesus respond?

† **Matthew 26:50**—*"Friend," Jesus asked him, "why have you come?"*

"Friend" is not used in a friendly manner.

The Greek noun *Philia* refers to friendship and love.

*—Think of King David?
Saul's son Jonathan*

The city of Philadelphia is known as the City of Brotherly Love.

But, Jesus is not referring to anything brotherly or lovely here.

He doesn't use *philia*; instead, he uses the Greek noun, *hetairos* (ha-tear-ohs).

Hetairos refers to comrades, associates, or colleagues—people who are not friends.

Almost every English translation renders this Greek noun as “friend,” but “fella” would be more accurate.

2 Examples:

We see the term, *hetairos*, “fella,” used in Jesus’ parable of the vineyard workers when the workers start complaining about their pay.

Matthew 20:13—^{Boss}“He replied to one of them, ‘(Fella), I’m doing you no wrong. Didn’t you agree with me on a denarius?’”

We see this term in the parable of the wedding clothes:

Matthew 22:12—“So he said to him, ‘(Fella), how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless.”

It’s amazing how changing the term “friend” to “fella” changes the tone of the entire passage.

Now, ^{second,} depending on your translation, you may have a statement rather than a question.

CSB: “why have you come?”

ESV—do what you came to do.”

LSB— do what you have come for.”

The reason for these differences is that Greek is extremely difficult to translate.

The original Greek manuscripts contained no punctuation marks.

The Apostles practiced what came to be known as *scriptio continua*—a continuous writing style without punctuation.

This passage can be understood either as:

1. a command telling Judas to do what he has come to do, or
2. as a question asking him what he is doing.

What's fascinating is that none of the Gospel writers record Judas' response.

Either way, these were the last words Jesus ever spoke to Judas.

Matthew 26:50—Then they came up, took hold of Jesus, and arrested him.

There is no doubt that this exchange between Judas and Jesus occurred very quickly.

As soon as Judas kissed Jesus, the police surged forward and seized Jesus.

Matthew 26:50—took hold of Jesus, —physically laid hands on him.

Now we have Jesus, the Son of God, who was placed under arrest.

↳ SAVER at the wall

This is the same God:

- Who was “In the beginning”, Genesis 1:1.
- That said, “Let there be light” in Genesis 1:3.
- Who placed Adam in the Garden to work in Genesis 2:15.
- Who performed surgery on Adam to create Eve in Genesis 2:22.
- Who appeared to Abraham at the oaks of Mamre in Genesis 18. —before Sator
- Who wrestled with Jacob in Genesis 32:22
- Who appeared to Moses in a burning bush (Exod 3:1–6).
- Who went ahead of Israel in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to lead them (Exod 13:21–22).
- Who stood in Balaam's path with a sword (Num 22:22–35).
- That Joshua saw Him as the “commander of the LORD's army” (Josh 5:13–15).
- That said to Gideon, “The LORD is with you, valiant warrior” (Judg 6:11–24).
- Who announced to Manoah's wife that she would conceive and bear a son named Samson. (Judg 13:2–23).
- Who passed by Elijah with a great wind, then an earthquake, then fire, but finally appeared in a whisper (1 Kings 19:11–13).

- That Isaiah saw seated on a high throne with angels standing above Him, singing “Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD” (Isa 6:1–8).
- Who Ezekiel saw sitting on a throne, surrounded by brilliant light (Ezek 1:26–28).
- Who will return again, but this time wearing a robe with a golden sash, eyes like fire, sword coming out of his mouth, and a voice like cascading waters, hair white as wool, and wearing many crowns, with a tattoo on his thigh that nobody can read, and feet like bronze. (Revelation 1:14; 19:12.)

This is the God Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, that these people now have under arrest.

How is this possible? How do sinful people physically take hold of God, who is wrapped in flesh and bones?

→ Jesus before CHRISTMAS

Because in the OT, when the preincarnate Lord revealed Himself, everybody thought they were going to die.

Regardless, Peter didn't like the police taking hold of Jesus either...

 **Matthew 26:51**—*At that moment one of those with Jesus reached out his hand and drew his sword.*

At that moment, Peter took action.

Matthew doesn't give his name because Peter was still alive when he wrote his gospel, and it might have put him in danger—but John does name Peter because John's Gospel came later.

Remember that just a few hours ago, Peter vowed that he would never leave or deny Jesus.

So Peter is going to put his money where his mouth is...

 **Matthew 26:51**— *He struck the high priest's servant and cut off his ear.*

Maybe Pete forgot that he used to be a fisherman and not a soldier.

Maybe Peter remembered how the Lord used Samson when killing a thousand men with the jawbone of a donkey (Judges 15:15)

Maybe the Disciples thought this was their moment to prove their loyalty—but the only thing that it proves is that they weren't listening.

Peter continues to act like he hasn't learned a thing from Jesus over the past three years—especially self-control.

When we lose our cool, anger and fear will come out of us—and when it does, there is always regret.

According to John's Gospel, the man whom Peter assaulted was Malchus (John 18:10).

According to Luke, Jesus healed him. (Luke 22:51).

Why did Peter cut off his ear? He was trying to cut off Malchus's head!

Peter failed this test.

But what he didn't anticipate was that his real test would come later, when a servant girl asks him a very simple question—and Peter lies.

So it is with us. We think our tests are physical—especially as an older congregation.

But in all reality, our true tests are spiritual—God uses our failing aging bodies as the means to get our attention.

Matthew 26:52—Then Jesus told him, “Put your sword back in its place because all who take up the sword will perish by the sword.

Jesus was reiterating two divine principles—one from the OT and one from the NT.

Genesis 9:6—Whoever sheds human blood, by humans his blood will be shed, for God made humans in his image.

Romans 13:4—For it (government) is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not carry the sword for no reason. For it is God’s servant, an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong.

Jesus’ point to Peter was that those who choose violence will face judgment.

Matthew 26:53—Or do you think that I cannot call on my Father, and he will provide me here and now with more than twelve legions of angels?

Jesus asks a rhetorical question.

Of course, the Son of God can ask the Father for help.

A Roman legion consisted of six thousand soldiers.

Twelve legions equalling one legion for the eleven Disciples and one legion for Jesus, totalling 72,000 angels.

If a single angel could kill 185,000 men in one night (2 Kings 19:35), imagine the power of 72,000 angels!

But Jesus didn’t ask for 12 legions of angels because that kind of warfare is not the way of the Kingdom of God.

This moment is not an insurrection—it is a fulfillment.

 **Matthew 26:54**—*How, then, would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen this way?"*

Jesus knew that He must bear the cross.

The cross was the plan from the very beginning.

God had made it known through His prophets, and those prophecies had to be fulfilled, or God would be a liar.

When God in His sovereignty decrees that something will come to pass, not only will it come to pass, but it *must*.

So Peter not only steps in the way of God the Son again, but also God the Father.

Peter simultaneously opposes Jesus' arrest while opposing the Father's plan of redemption. That's not a good day!

We've learned five things from Peter—things not to do:

Peter boasted too loudly, prayed too little, slept too much, and acted too fast; therefore, he continued to oppose God.

 **Matthew 26:55**—*At that time Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out with swords and clubs, as if I were a criminal, to capture me? Every day I used to sit, teaching in the temple, and you didn't arrest me."*

Jesus' statement was obvious and rhetorical.

Jesus is not physically dangerous, so why are there so many police officers and weapons?

What crime had Jesus committed? Was Jesus running from the authorities? Jesus had been teaching in public places throughout His entire ministry.

He could have been arrested at any time without all this drama.

† **Matthew 26:56**—*But all this has happened so that the writings of the prophets would be fulfilled.*

Instead of resisting arrest, Jesus insists that these events are fulfilling Scripture. And they do...

† **Matthew 26:56**—*Then all the disciples deserted him and ran away.*

Running away is what deserters and cowards do—the military calls it AWOL—*absent without leave/permission*.

Jesus knows what's in the heart of man—and those Twelve Disciples represent each one of us—because we've all abandoned the Lord in some way, form, or fashion.

Therefore, Jesus' prophecy came true whether the Disciples wanted to admit it or not.

Such is the sovereignty of and mystery of God.

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