



No Greater Love-Part 2

The Ongoing Betrayal

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Imagine for a moment what it must be like to be a young girl in our culture with the name Alexa. Can you imagine what kind of chaos that would be? Especially if your parents brought home that voice-activated gadget and you're hearing in your house all the time, your parents are saying, "Alexa. Hey Alexa." Your head would snap around and they say, "What's the news?" Or "what's the weather?" Or "order some more dog food." Or "play some music," or whatever they're saying. I mean that was be a tough way to live these days. And if you would guess that, you'd be right. I mean, at least before 2015 gals seemed to like that name. It was very popular. The Social Security Administration said 311 out of every 100,000 young babies brought home, female girls, brought home from the hospital they name them Alexa. And most Alexas once they got grown up, you know, before 2015 at least, they liked their name, it's cute it's short, it's memorable. I mean, they were really happy with it. But then Amazon changed all that because of this gadget. Right? Now they don't like it as much. As a matter of fact, according to the Social Security Administration, within a matter of months the popularity, as it rose with Amazon's Echo, the popularity of the name Alexa plummeted 33% in a matter of months. People are going, "I don't know if I want to call my kid Alexa anymore." And you can understand the chaos. I look through our database and I saw several Alexas in our church and I wanted to call them and interview them. I mean, what's it that like to always be hearing in your home, "Sorry, I don't understand your question?" Just in normal conversation your name is going to come up. Well that's not a very popular name as it stands now. You don't want to call your daughter Alexa unless she wants some confusion.

But there's a whole lot less popular name for a more important reason. A name, which at one time, if you went back in a time machine, you'd find it was very, very popular at one time. As a matter of fact, if you went back 100 years before Christ you'd see this name everywhere, because proud parents were bringing home their little baby boys and they were naming them after a very strong, bold, brave military commander who had saved the Jewish state from a Hellenistic tyrannical king named Antiochus the Fourth.

The Book of Daniel prophesied it all in the fifth century B.C. and in the second century B.C. here comes this Maccabean patriot. Perhaps you know his name, his name was Judas Maccabeus. But the events of Luke 22 that we've reached this morning in the short time we'll have to study this passage, we find that that all changed. The popularity of the name, even by New Testament times, of course these people were born before the events of Luke 22, you had six different Judases in the New Testament. As a matter of fact, the half-brother of Christ, the biological brother, one of his brothers was named Judas. When Jesus picked the Twelve Apostles, two of them, according to Luke, were named Judas. Judas Son of James and Judas Iscariot. We have this throughout the Bible, this popular name but soon as this event happens that we're going to read about today people started going by nicknames. James' son, who was called Judas, by the time the Gospels were written his nickname, Matthias, became much more popular and that's what he was known by in most of the lists in the New Testament. Now, even Jesus' his half-brother who gets saved after the ministry of Christ, he doesn't go by the name Judas. Matter of fact, the second to last book in the New Testament is a book that he wrote. But we call it Jude, not Judas. I mean, it is amazing how that name had taken such a turn. I went through our database, found several Alexas, I didn't find a single Judas on our roster, and there are thousands of people on our roster. No Judases. I mean it is really the equivalent in American history of Benedict Arnold, is it not? I mean, think about that, the Turncoat. If you look up in the Cambridge English dictionary, you look up the word Judas, here's



what you'll find as the definition. It says, "A person who is not loyal to a friend who helps the friend's enemies." That's exactly what happened with Benedict Arnold. Right? He's a turn coat at West Point. He turned on them, joined the British forces again and here are all these patriots trained to secure their independence. And here you got a guy who was instrumental in turning on them going back and end up living in Britain. He became a pariah. I mean, he was despised by all the American patriots.

Well Jesus came to secure a much more important independence for us, to free us from the penalty of our sins. There was a very nefarious character who takes center stage in Luke Chapter 22 verses 47 through 53. And if you haven't turned there yet, I'd like you to look at this real quickly this morning and remind yourself of the betrayal by Judas who was at one time part of the twelve. And now, at this particular point, he's gone off at the Last Supper to make a deal with the chief priests and the elders and the officials of the temple. And now he's coming to betray Christ. You remember the scene from last time we were together? They're in the Garden praying, they're falling asleep, Jesus is stressed out with this sweat that is like rolling off of his brow. It would be like someone slicing open his brow, it was like it was bleeding. It wasn't blood but it was thick and he was sweating and it was stress sweat. And here he was wanting his disciples in verse 46 to wake up and pray because it was going to be a time of real temptation for them.

Verse 47, follow along as they read it to you from the English Standard Version, it says, "While he was still speaking," that is Christ of course, "there came a crowd, and the man called Judas," there he is, "one of the twelve," ouch, "was leading them." So there's a crowd. We know they're about to arrest Jesus and right at the front of it all, they've got torches and clubs and swords, here's Judas. Sat there with Christ, teaching, leading, doing evangelism, seeing the miracles of Christ firsthand. He's cashed it all in for 30 pieces of silver, the other Gospel writers tell us, and now he draws near to identify, in the shadows of Gethsemane, to identify Jesus to these leaders, some of whom, I'm sure, hadn't seen him up close, and he leans in to kiss him, the ancient near eastern sign of affection and love. Kind of, you know, some of you, maybe in your family, you do that, you kiss your family members on the cheek. That great external sign of affection and he's going to use that to identify Christ. Christ calls him on it, verse 48, Jesus says to him, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" Unbelievable, the depths to which you will go in this moment of disloyalty.

Verse 49. "And when those who were around him saw what would follow," they realized there were swords and clubs and they are going to arrest him, "they said, 'Lord, shall we strike with the sword?'" In verse 50, it's Peter, we're told in the other Gospels, we know it's him who doesn't wait for an answer. He just unsheathed his sword and he goes after the servant of the high priest and he's not a real good shot apparently because he doesn't split his head open, he cuts his ear off. "And Jesus said, 'No more of this!' And he touched his ear and he healed him." That's a weird scene. Right? But here he is taking a little bloody appendage off the head of this servant and putting it right back on and saying, "Now, that's not what we're going to do right now."

And then he turns, Jesus does, in verse 52, I mean, to really indict this mob, "Jesus said to the chief priests and the officers of the temple and the elders, who had come out against him," he says, "have you come out as against a robber," am I some kind of thug here, a criminal, "with swords and clubs?" Come on. "When I was with you day after day in the temple, you didn't lay hands on me" there. I am sitting there teaching, you could have done it. "This is your hour." I know why you're doing it. "This is the power of darkness." He gets poetic here with that phrase that he's used many times in his ministry.



Now betrayal is difficult for us to study and to understand and for just a few moments that we're together I'd like to, at least, to see the injustice of it all. The injustices, of course, you see that Judas had every advantage. Judas was an insider. Judas was loved for, cared for, trained by Christ. He'd done evangelism with Christ. And we see him now, he had every advantage, every favor, all of that advantage lavished upon him and he turns on Christ for thirty pieces of silver. That's an act of injustice. Let's just spend a few minutes in verses 47 and 48. Let's just kind of let that sink in that at the core of betrayal is a sense of injustice. That's just not right. Jot that down, number one, let's "Sense the Injustice of Betrayal." And I want you to sense that, not the way the Cambridge English dictionary would define it, which is "a friend being disloyal to a friend." I'd like you to think of it this way. Very different.

Let me illustrate it like this. We go to an event tonight. Say we're going to run up the 5 freeway, we're going to go to some event in L.A., a big auditorium, maybe it's a concert or a play or something. And we're going to go to this thing and it's crowded we drive up together, we find a park in the parking structure, and we come through the back into the lobby and you say, "Hey Mike, I need to, you know, I need to use the restroom, I'm going to go into the restroom. So you go to the restroom and say, "Well, I'm going to go on in." And so I go on in and I come down and everyone's kind of vying for a seat. And I go up to the front, fourth row down, I find a seat and I sit down. And after a while you're done and you come down the aisle looking for where I am and you see me there, but you see that there are no seats next to me because I didn't save you a seat. You'd say, "What a jerk my pastor is." Right? "Come on. We came here together and you didn't save me a seat."

You'd say that's a friend not being loyal to a friend because, of course, I should give you this seat. I should prefer you over the guy coming down the aisle that I don't know who's looking for a seat and he sits down next to me, I should say, "Oh no, no, no. That's saved for my friend." You would expect that kind of loyalty. Right? Special treatment.

Let me say this. If that's the way you view the betrayal of Christ, you're not seeing it the way you ought to. There's something much deeper and more profound here. Let me illustrate it this way. The idea of Christ being someone who had loyalty because of friendships is nothing different than the loyalty that's owed him simply because he is Christ. Let me follow with this. Everyone in the crowd who is not supportive and loyal and faithful and obedient and submissive to Jesus Christ is a betrayer. In other words, there's a lot of betrayers in this scene. Matter of fact, let's start with verse 47. While he was still speaking there came a crowd, that entire crowd. But if you look in verse 52, it is filled with chief priests and officers of the temple and the elders. We've always heard that there against him, they're frustrated with him, they don't like him, they don't want to do what he says. He teaches and they want to contradict him, they want to catch him. They want to do all these things again. Every single one of those people is a betrayer. Why? Because there's an injustice about this, that Christ being, by virtue of his deity, being lord of all, exclusively, absolutely, universally over everyone and everything, for anyone not to be pro-Jesus, for anyone not to say, "I'm submitting myself to what he says." For anyone not to be loyal to Christ. Betrayal.

Now Judas is at the top of the heap and as he comes first here leading that band, that's one thing, and we'll look at that in a second. But I just want you to see everyone who doesn't respond rightly to Christ is a betrayer. You notice the subtitle of the sermon this morning? "The Ongoing Betrayal." Let's just think of your neighbors. You might have waved as you went out of the driveway heading over to church. Right? While you're going to church, they're not. I bet you don't see them as betraying Christ this morning as you dutifully go to assembled together in the church that Christ has



designed, he's structured it, he's the head of the church, he's going to build his church, he's set up leaders over his church. This is a requirement. This is what God asked everybody to do, to submit to the leadership of the church, to be a part of the body of Christ, to be a functioning, highly committed participant, as we say around here.

Your neighbor is not one of those. Right? You just waved as they're going out to walk their dog or they're picking up their paper off the driveway or they're going to go play golf or whatever they're going to do this morning, go to brunch. They've known... But you don't see them as a betrayer. When Paul goes to Athens in Acts 17 and he speaks to the professors of the university there, and there he is dealing with people who have no loyalty to God at all, he starts by reminding them that God is the creator. He talks about the fact that as the creator, by virtue of being the creator, he has the right to make the rules and has the right to evaluate lives. He's appointed a judge and he's making it very clear by raising that person from the dead. And he says this, "You don't understand that God is a God who gives YOU life and breath and everything else. He gives you all of that. And you are ignoring him. You're doing nothing. He's put you in places on the timeline at certain particular times. He's appointed a time for you to be born, he's put you in a particular geographic location and all of that investment in you." We're talking about non-Christian professors here, Hellenistic leaders, philosophers.

All of that is so that you would grope for him, seek him and find him. In him you live and move and exist. He's all around you. He wants you to find him and give him attention. Why? Because you should. God is God. Everyone should be submissive to God. He setup a king. Everyone should follow the king's instructions. Everyone who was not loyal to God and subject to Jesus Christ, you need to realize is an act of betrayal. It's an ongoing betrayal and it's happening this morning all over the place. You're here I hope in part because you know that you are not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together. You pick up your Bible and you read it tomorrow morning because you know that you're not to neglect the Word of God, it's to richly abide in you. Those requirements apply to everyone. Do you understand that? Everyone should be living that way.

Now Judas, of course, we see as the nefarious leader of this band of betrayers, even though we may not have previously thought of them all as betrayers, but he is a betrayer because of his great advantages. And in that regard I don't think there's any bigger betrayal in our minds, if you were to think about it philosophically and theologically, than Eve. Think about that. Than Eve. If you want to talk about someone who had unmitigated blessing, it's you being made there in the Garden, given a perfect spouse, in a perfect place, with a perfect body, with a perfect environment, with a perfect relationship with God, and God simply says, "I am God. I'm going to make some rules. That tree, don't touch it, don't eat from it." That's the basic scenario.

And here she is saying, "Ah, I don't care. I like it. I want to do it." That is an act of betrayal, is it not? It's an act of betrayal that is ultimate. It's an act of betrayal that Paul says to the Corinthians, he says, "You guys, I don't want you..." I'll quote it now for you. It's a great passage, it's worth jotting down, Second Corinthians 11:3. He says "I don't want you, just as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning," he's really good at it, "I don't want your thoughts to be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion," read loyalty, "to Christ." Everyone should be loyal to Christ, in part because look at what he's done for you, look how good he is, look how virtuous he is, look how great he is, look at his authority, look at his gifts to you and, as Christians, look at his forgiveness toward us. We owe him everything. Amazing love. Right? Amazing Grace. All this amazing privilege. And all of that deserves our devotion.



Eve had it, Judas had it, we have it. And here's what we need to realize. There's nothing, nothing, that we owe our Christ that everyone else that you know in your world, every non-Christian, every atheist, every agnostic, doesn't owe the same thing. We live among a bunch of betrayers. And you and I are tempted constantly to be the same way. We are tempted to betray. And Paul says, listen don't let Satan do his work in your life to drag you away, lead you away, from a pure and sincere loyalty to Christ.

A second-grade teacher in Sunday school told me that he was teaching a Judas Iscariot. He asked the students, they're all seven-year-olds, he says, "Tell me who was it that betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver?" And one of the 2nd graders raised his hand and he said, "I know, I know. Judas the scariest." I reflected on that this week and I thought, you know what, as I'm studying Judas this week I'm thinking that's not a bad title for him, right there. It's the scariest. So like Eve you have every advantage.

There's a lot of things that scare me about being disloyal to Christ. And I have the right kind of, I hope and you have to, trepidation and kind of this vigilance about God. I don't want to be led away from this sincere and pure devotion to Christ. And I sense that. But man, think about Judas. Think about Judas, seeing all of the miracles of Christ firsthand. Having Christ put his arm around him and walk through the dusty streets of Galilee, to live in Capernaum with him, to travel in Perea, to go over in Judea, to walk the streets of Jerusalem and have the Messiah, the God-man Jesus Christ, looking right into your eyes and having conversations with you, caring for you, providing for you, having you join him in ministry. That is the scariest, to think that Judas could betray Christ.

"To him who thinks he stands, you better take heed lest you fall." I hope you don't recognize that you have some distinctions, some ontological distinction, that you can never betray Christ. I hope we're not like Peter who makes grandiose statements and then he goes out and does exactly what Judas does, in a different state, I understand that, as one of his, I get it. He's not the son of perdition. But next week we'll look at Peter's failure and we'll recognize this is the constant vigilance we should have. I don't ever want to engage in the injustice of a God who brings his sun up on the evil and the good, sends his rains on the crops of the just and the unjust, and I don't give him my sincere and pure devotion and loyalty to him. That is scary. So I want to fight it.

And speaking of that, that's exactly what Peter does. I'm going to fight this kind of thing. "There's no way these people should not bow down like we do and worship you and seek to obey you." And they say, "Shall we strike with the sword? You just talked about us having swords. Is it time now?" And Peter doesn't wait, verse 50, and he takes out his sword and he strikes the high priest's servant, cuts off his ear and Jesus goes, "No. Not time for your sword. Not time for you to be cutting people's ears or heads off. No."

We are to fight this and you should fight it. It should make you mad, it should scare you, it should become a cautionary tale for you. Your visceral reaction to the injustice of betrayal, whether it's the fear you have in your own life or whether or not you're looking at our world or your non-Christian neighbors, you ought to have a sense of that just not right. The definition of sin: something's not as it ought to be, when people do not honor Christ. Whenever every knee doesn't bow and every tongue doesn't confess, we ought to feel that.

Now how do we respond to it? Well, we should fight it. Number two on your outline with the right weapons. "We Need to Fight It With the Right Weapons." The wrong weapon is to take up a physical sword and to fight. Paul said we are in the flesh, but "The weapons of our warfare are not



according to the flesh. We have a weapon, an arsenal, a set of weapons that are powerful, "they're divinely powerful to destroy strongholds."

And then he says this, "It's to destroy every argument, every lofty thought that's raised up against the knowledge of God." Our job is to "take every thought captive to Christ." That idea of going to war, as he says elsewhere to the Corinthians, to have weapons in the right hand and weapons in the left, is not at all having to do with pulling out your sword. I know you told us to have swords and you should. There are times for physical swords. Certainly protection and justice and self-preservation. Jesus had said earlier, "If you don't have a sword you better sell your cloak to get one." Just like Nehemiah, he had everybody with a sword on their hip and a trowel in their hand and they had all these enemies and these disciples were going to go out as missionaries on the road to Jericho, they better have some protection. That's one thing, but now is not the time. Not the time for us to be doing this.

As he says in John, Jesus is recorded as saying, "Put your sword back in your sheath for shall I not drink this cup that the Father has given me to drink?" My job is to redeem the world. It is not time for us to prevent this. I could call all these legions of angels down but I'm not going to do it because I know the right thing for me is to go to the cross. Now the wrong thing is betrayal. The wrong thing is all these people opposing me. So let's fight. And Peter spends the rest of his life trying to fight the betrayal of the people starting with those in Jerusalem. He's concerned that the Jews don't recognize their Christ and he's fighting this. He's trying to "take every thought and make it captive to Christ" who is the fulfillment of all the prophetic word of the Old Testament. And that's a fight that we should engage in.

Well, let's start with ourselves though. You want to think about fighting and you want to talk about motifs in the Bible, I hope your mind goes to Ephesians 6, when it says that we are in a battle, a battle not for flesh and blood, but a spiritual battle, cosmic forces and all that. And then he starts talking about equipment. He talks about a helmet, talks about a sword, talks about a breastplate, talks about shoes that cover my feet. All of that defensive kind of weaponry, including a sword that is an offensive weapon, is all about me making sure, here it comes, that you've done everything to withstand the evil day. The evil day isn't some apocalyptic thing down on some chart at the end of time. It's every time Satan comes to try to lure you away to some kind of lesser than a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. And that battle comes every day, doesn't it?

I mean, we feel that, we sense that. Fight it. Fight it. There's so much we're going to talk about this weekend at the Men's Conference in fighting that, not just in our lives, but having that sincere and biblical love for our friend to put our arm around our friend and go, "Hey, I want you not to be a betrayer." I'll bet Peter thought that. I know John did when he looked back at Judas, he saw that, because it didn't all add up with the books, he says, "You know what, he was pilfering. Judas was trying to steal the money and he was successfully doing it. We didn't even realize it till after the fact." And I'll bet Peter and John said, "Man, I wished we would have worked with Judas more." And I bet they saw signs and they were like, "Ah man, he really wasn't in it for the right reasons."

"Taking every thought captive," that's the problem, their thought level issues. And when you start caring about, as the Bible would have us do, what we call these third person imperatives in the Greek language in the book of Hebrews, we have a ton of them, where I'm called to care about the people around me. He says, "Make sure that no root of bitterness grows up among you. See to it that no one is immoral like Esau. See to it that no one is sexually immoral among you." I need to be able to say, I care about the betrayal that might be happening in my small group. Now that isn't going to



win friends and influence people in our day. Everyone wants to be autonomous, don't mess with my life, don't be the Holy Spirit for me, mind your own business. You're going to hear a lot of that in our culture. But real Christians love their brothers and sisters enough to say, "I don't want any betrayal. I don't want that in your life and I certainly don't want it in mine. That's really what the Men's Conference is about this week. This weekend we're going to be talking all about that. That's the goal. That's the concern that we should have, loving our brothers enough to have that sense of admonishment when it's called for.

You need to sense the injustice of betrayal. But then you need to try to fight it in your own life and the lives of your brothers and sisters in Christ, by going to war. A war that's not with a sword, a war that's not just browbeating people with words, but the kind of love that cares about what's going on in the family of God.

Jesus had told Peter earlier in our passage that "Satan demanded to have you," in Greek, all, y'all, all of you guys, "that he might sift you like wheat. But I prayed for you," Peter I prayed for you, "so that your faith may not fail, so that when you've turned again," we know you're going to stumble, "you can go back and strengthen your brothers." Even that: "care about those around you." See Compass Bible Church can be the kind of church God wants us to be if we don't just retreat to our own little sacred cave and try and get godly, but we recognize that when we come out of that time alone, we had those private times with God, we care enough about our brothers and sisters in Christ to say, let's walk this path together. Let's try to encourage and strengthen one another. Because we do not want us to be without breastplates, shoes, shield, helmets, sword. We've got to be geared up to fight this battle. Why? Well, because this is the hour of darkness. Not just then in the Garden.

He turns in verse 52, look at it, and he says, all these chief priests and officers, "What in the world are you doing? You're coming out against me like I'm some kind of robber. You got swords and clubs. Do you really think that's necessary?" Look at the folly of this violent overreaction to Christ. I mean, this is just absurd and he says that. And he says, "I was with you day after day. You didn't lay hands on me. But this is your hour." And that hour, by the way, is still going on. We are now in the hour of darkness and the Bible says it's going to get darker and darker and darker before the dawn. The dawn is coming. Christ is coming back. But right now we live in a hostile culture.

Number three on your outline, that's worth noting. "We Need to Understand Our Hostile Culture." We have a culture that does not like Christianity, have you notice that? I could go and announce to my friends in my neighborhood, "Hey, I've become a Buddhist," and then they all go, "Yeah!" They'd love that. I could be a Hindu. I could be in New Age thought. I could be in anything that's weird and spiritual and crystals and I can do all kinds of crazy things and most people go, "That's great for you."

But I come home and say, "I'm a Bible-believing Christian. I believe that God has spoken. I believe that Jesus is the Lord." I'm going to get pushback. I'm going to get pushback not just from the mob and the crowd, I'm going to get pushback from Judas, you understand. Do you understand that the most effective pressure we have to fold on the understanding of God's Word and the clarity of what God taught, is people who are quoting Bible verses, selling bestselling Christian books? It's really, really hard for us because people say, "You don't have the right loving God." Let me give you an example. Here's a quote. Let me quote for you. "We deny that salvation is only found through Christianity." Did you catch that? "We deny that salvation is only found through Christianity, and we deny that God salvific Grace is exclusive to any single faith or religion. We deny the Bible is inerrant or infallible." Who in the world is the "we" there? What did this come from, you know, the



liberal media? No, no, no. You know who said this? This is a recent statement from Union Theological Seminary in New York City, an historic Christian seminary. It's been producing pastors from its founding as a Presbyterian seminary for hundreds of years. Union Theological Seminary.

Let me read it again. "We deny that salvation is only found through Christianity. We deny that God salvific Grace is exclusive to any single faith or religion. We deny the Bible as inerrant or infallible." Why in the world would they come out recently and say that on their website? Why would they say that? Well you know why. You know why they don't like you and they don't like me talking about what the Bible says. All you got to do is add this to it, "It's an infallible, inerrant word." We heard it during announcements, infallible and inerrant word. As soon as you are talking about it's infallible and inerrant, it's not to be changed, it's clearly teaching something cogent. The purpose of Scripture, it's clear. you can read it, you can understand it, and God has spoken in this book. As soon as you say that, they're going to say, "Well, that's going to cramp my style here then." It's going to be like Psalm 2. "I want to burst off the bonds, all the strictures of your book. Can't I pick and choose what I want?"

Well, of course that's what they want. Because today it's the Christians who are looking at Bible-believing Christians and saying, "We don't like that." The pressure to deny Christ is ultimately going to come, in its most vicious form and really its most persuasive form, from people who sat at the feet of Christ and know a lot more about the Bible or church history or the biblical languages than you and I do. Absolutely. Let me read the rest of that statement by the way. They said, "Relinquishing infallibility is the only means by which you can square Scripture with a loving God." Now, are you getting it now? See, your god is not loving if you're going to take the Bible seriously. Why? Because it's got a bunch of rules and you know that's where that's going. Next line. A god who would condemn LGBTQ people is not a god worth worshipping. That was from one of the most historic premier seminaries in our country, still calling themselves a Christian training grounds of higher education for pastors.

And what's the point? "We don't want to say that a loving God would ever say that sexual desire, that sexual appetite, that sexual life is wrong. And if you say that, you're not loving. And, therefore, let's talk about Christianity, let's talk about God, let's talk about love and let's shape it to our own proclivities, our interests, our concerns, our appetites, our desires. Now, can't we all be friends. Let's just believe that. Oh, you Bible teacher people out there, you people who are quoting Bible verses, we're done with all that. We don't believe any of that. Not only do we not believe the Bible is inerrant or infallible, we don't believe that Christianity is the only way. You don't even have that anymore."

I mean the reason even the Pope, talked about the Catholics, even the Pope was willing to say that on record. When you start having that take place, you recognize that the real concern that we should have about the pressure that you and I are going to feel from a hostile culture is not just the hostile secular non-Christian or anti-Christian culture, it's the culture of Christianity, the subculture of Christianity, even within Western society. That's going to be a lot for you and I to stand up against. And to say, "No, God has spoken. We believe that." You are going to be called a narrow-minded bigot, you may be called a bible thumper, but that's the hostile culture we have, and what does the Bible say? We have that culture.

John 3 makes it very clear. Jesus is talking to Nicodemus and he says this. He says, "People love darkness rather than light because their deeds are wicked," they're sinful. And he says. "We don't want to step into the light lest our deeds be exposed." I understand that, don't you? What if I said I



got all your sins this week, all your thoughts that were going through your mind, I'm going to put them up on the screen. I use this all the time as an example. All your sins, we're just going to watch for the next 30 minutes all your sins this week. Are you going to like that? Hate it. No one becomes a Christian though without that feeling of exposure. Every testimony we heard this morning, you can't become a Christian without saying, "I am a sinner. I recognize it, it's all open before me, my hands are open. I'm a sinner." People don't like that. They certainly don't like the fact that there's a God who's an authority, there is a God who is a rule maker, there is a God who is going to evaluate my life when it ends. They don't like that. And you and I, in our flesh, we don't like that either.

So I can sympathetically understand that, this moral aversion to biblical Christianity. I get that. I understand our hostile culture. But I've got to recognize that God says we need to all step into the light, so that we can see that our works are wrought in God, or worked out in God, that God is changing me from the inside out. It's a great testimonial passage. Nicodemus needed to learn it. And the good news is, in our hostile culture, we can make inroads. The gates of hell are being breached.

It can seem like a very discouraging sermon and so far you're saying, "It doesn't seem like it, it really is Pastor Mike." But I going to tell you this, don't leave all stressed out or defeatist, don't say it's terrible, it's gloomy. I've told you so many times before, the biblical forecast is not to scare us. The biblical forecast is to prepare us and to prepare us for what? For the fact, in one sense, that everything's right on schedule. It's going to be darkest before the dawn, but the dawn is coming. I'll quote for you Romans Chapter 13 verse 12, "The day is at hand." The night, we're well into the night, but "the day is at hand." So then let us cast off the works of darkness. Let's put on the armor of light. Let's gear up. Let's recognize, we're going to take hits from people who are wearing a Christian T-shirt. We're going to take hits from them, but we're gonna stand strong. We're going to hold out the word of truth. We're going to lovingly, hopefully, get them to step into the light just like we've been called to step into the light and say, "We understand we're sinners." We had to change a lot of our desires and proclivities and things that we gave approval to. We had to change on all those things, we did. And you do too.

Jesus, I know you know the verse, he said, "I've said these things to you that I may bring you peace," and I leave you peace. Peace, not like the world gives, I'm going to give you peace. And this peace I want you to have, knowing that "in this world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." You know that verse, but maybe you don't know this: the demonstrative pronoun at the beginning of that verse, in verse 33 of John 16, is pointing back to the previous verses, and the previous verses say, it's going to get really bad. It's the same context that we've just come through in Luke 22 and that is this, the Shepard is going to be struck down, you guys are going to scatter, and it's going to get really dark. And he says, "I've told you these things so you don't get discouraged." It's going to get dark before the dawn. People wearing Christian t-shirts, in that case, Judas is going to come and betray you. People are going to put you out of the synagogue and some will kill you. They think they're doing service to God, just like the Apostle Paul when he was Saul, killing Christians thinking he was doing God's work. And there are people who are telling us that our God is wrong, that our thoughts on the Bible are wrong, the Bible is just a book of men, salvation isn't even exclusive to Christianity. They're saying all that thinking that they are on God's side.

And he says, "Take heart though. In this world I forecasted it all. I want to have peace. I've overcome the world." In our passages it says there's an hour of darkness and I like that. I said it's still going on, it's a long hour but a good thing about an hour, it eventually ends and one day the dawn will come. I want you to be hopeful that our job is to pushback against this gate of darkness



and breach it with light, and the Bible says there's is great opportunity for that. I want you to think of how dark it seemed poetically, spiritually when all of these priests, temple officials, elders of Israel who should be embracing Christ, were there to arrest and kill Christ. How dark must that be? Terribly dark.

And yet run the clock forward. A guy who runs away scared that we're going to read about next week who denies Christ in front of Caiaphas' servants, is going to be filled with the Spirit, he's going to preach in Acts Chapter 2, he's going to build up the church as a preacher seeing thousands baptized, think about this, people being saved. And then here's the summary statement from Dr. Luke in Acts Chapter 6. You want to be encouraged from a discouraging sermon? Here it comes. Verse 7. "And the Word of God continued to increase, the number of disciples multiplied greatly," two words that should encourage you, "in Jerusalem." That's where they killed him. "And," it gets more encouraging, "a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith." Whoa!

All the priests were coming to kill him. I wonder how many, even in that mob right there, that walked across the Kidron valley into Gethsemane, I wonder if there were any of those priests, that at one time Peter ran scared from, that at the head of it was Judas, a Christian guy, who was there leading this mob. And yet, slowly but surely, the infiltration of the truth and the light in a dark culture, one by one, God started picking them off. Bam! Bam! Bam! Another convert. Another priest who hated Christ. Bam! Saved. I love it too, it doesn't just say..., they became obedient to the faith.

There are people right now who hate what they would call fundamentalist Christianity, Bible-believing Christians. There are people in your neighborhood you drove past to get to church, that right now think that you are a nut and think all of this is crazy and narrow-minded and bigoted, who, I just want to have this hope, are going to be in this baptism tank right here giving testimony to their conversion to Christ. It just is going to take a matter of time. The only reason Christ hasn't come back yet is because there are more people yet to say, "I'm a Christian now. I was lost, now I'm found. I was in darkness and now I see in light. I have this the light of life." I know it's hard for us to step into the light. It exposes our sin. But there are people right now who hate God, who will one day be singing worship songs with us with an open Bible and they'll be studying the Word of God with us. You've got to have that hope.

Have peace. The forecast is going to get harder. But among those who oppose us there will be, one here, one there, one over here, one over there, whose hearts are going to be brought to faith in Christ. And at one point the last one is going to be saved and we're all going to get out of here and go home. And then the kingdom is going to come and Christ is going to establish his kingdom on this earth. That's what this is all about. So don't be a shy person, don't be quiet. Speak up, lovingly, respectfully, but speak up. As we represent Christ in this dark world, in the hour of darkness in which we live. I know it's going to be tough. But may God give us victory and courage this week.

Pray with me. God, thank you so much that the night is far gone but the day is at hand. May we cast off the deeds of darkness and put on this Armor of Light, to live with a militant mindset. Not the kind of militant mindset that makes for angry, yelling Christians. But a militant mindset that is just vigilant, so that the crafty tempter won't come to us and somehow pull us away from a pure and sincere devotion to Christ. Let us be faithful to Christ this week. We'll have temptations. Man, we'll have it before the day is over, we'll have temptations tomorrow, keep us faithful, keep us walking close with you. I know we can't do that on our own. We need the family of God to be by our side. So give us more of the kinds of relationships we need as the body of Christ, put our arm around



each other, to walk in faithfulness to you in this world where people need to hear the good news, the message of a God who has provided forgiveness for us in Jesus Christ. God, let our church do that, not for our sake, for our reputation, but for the sake of the kingdom and for the reputation of Christ.

In whose name I pray. Amen.