

In his book *Fearless*, Max Lucado writes about the power fear possesses to turn us into beastly people:

[Fear] turns us into control freaks ... [for] ... fear, at its center, is a perceived loss of control. When life spins wildly, we grab for a component of life we can manage: our diet, the tidiness of our home, the armrest of a plane, or, in many cases, people. The more insecure we feel, the meaner we become. We growl and bare our fangs. Why? Because we are bad? In part. But also because we feel cornered.

Martin Niemöller documents an extreme example of this. He was a German pastor who took a heroic stand against Adolf Hitler. When he first met the dictator in 1933, Niemöller stood at the back of the room and listened. Later, when his wife asked him what he'd learned, he said, "I discovered that Herr Hitler is a terribly frightened man." Fear releases the tyrant within.

As we continue our study through Matthew's Gospel this morning... we come to the scene of Jesus' betrayal by Judas... and His subsequent arrest. I would like for us to contrast... the disciple's fear... with Jesus' lack of fear. Jesus has no loss of control... so He does not fear what is happening. The disciples... on the other hand... lose all sense of control and because of this... they show tremendous fear.

But not everyone looks at this scene in Matthew in this way... (that Jesus was in complete control.) I'm sure you have heard of Dr. Albert Schweitzer... the Physician, Concert organist, Humanist philosopher, and University professor... who became a missionary to Africa. ... As part of his life's work... Dr. Schweitzer famously wrote a book... titled: "Quest for the Historical Jesus." ... Relying mainly on his humanist philosophical reasoning... Schweitzer concluded that Jesus was an actual person of history... but Christian theology down through the centuries has added to who he really was... by wishful thinking. According to Schweitzer... Jesus was just a man... who like many other Jewish people thought the end of

the world was going to happen in his life-time. But... as this humanist philosopher reasoned... in the Garden of Gethsemane... things turned chaotic and got out of hand.Judas led a band of men to arrest Jesus and this disrupted everything... Jesus suddenly lost control of His movement to bring about the end of the world. His disciples recognized it had all flown apart... and even they abandoned Him.

(Other than Jesus being abandoned...) Schweitzer could not be any more wrong!

He simply ignores the fact that the Gospel records that we have about Jesus... were written very close to Christ's lifetime. (They were not added by wishful people down through the centuries.) Archeology has produced thousands of manuscripts... dating back to the time very close to the lifetime of Christ. Manuscripts are widespread around the entire Mediterranean region... from Rome... to North Africa... Persia... and Israel (the very place where these events were said to have happened.) And when they were written and circulated... many people were still alive... who could (and did) attest to the truth of these accounts. So Albert Schweitzer's claim... appears to be the product of *his own* wishful thinking – added centuries after the Historical Jesus lived.

We are about to see that Jesus was in full control when He was betrayed... and arrested in the garden. He was also - fearless.

Matthew 26:47

We will see that Matthew devoted considerable space to the arrest and arraignment of the Lord Jesus. Beginning with the arrival of the mob... he described them as "*a great multitude with swords and clubs... from the*

chief priests and elders of the people." ... Evidently the chief priests and elders were quite willing to let someone else do their dirty work. And evidently they were not sure whether this Messiah would put up a fight at the last minute. This noted Galilean had mysterious powers they did not understand, although they were willing enough to ascribe them to the devil. They feared what would happen if He turned those powers loose against them. The chief priests and elders decided it would be safest to send Judas and a mob of armed men on ahead.

Because of the large number of pilgrims who came to Jerusalem for Passover every year... the Romans would fortify their troops with more men... in order to keep the peace... especially against any anti-Roman uprisings.

The first century historian (Josephus)... writes... that when a great multitude of people came to observe the feast... lest there should be any disorder... a band of men was commanded to keep watch at the porches of the temple... to repress a tumult... if any should be excited. This *band*... (or guard)... was at the disposal of the chief priests. In addition to this... there were the Temple guards... (a regular police force... stationed around the temple... composed of Levites.)

The Roman soldiers were armed with *swords*. The other persons that went out carried probably whatever was accessible as a weapon. ... So... these were the persons sent by the priests... to apprehend Jesus. ... Perhaps other desperate men might have joined them.

The fact that this band of soldiers and temple guards carried weapons and lanterns shows that Judas did not really understand Jesus. Judas thought

they would have to search for Him in the Garden and fight off His disciples in order to arrest Him. But Jesus came to them and calmly surrendered. It would not even have been necessary for Judas to betray Jesus with a kiss... because Jesus told the soldiers Who He was.

Matthew 26:48

You might wonder why there needed to be a sign... to indicate who Jesus was. Jesus was well known throughout Jerusalem. The religious leaders had several direct confrontations with Him in Jerusalem... and other places. They knew who He was. They saw Him ride into town on a donkey among all the adulation and praise – as the Messiah. They told Him to tell the crowds to be quiet.

But Jesus did not have direct confrontations with Roman authorities. This band of Roman military personnel... who the high priests dispatched... would NOT have recognized Him.

Now I would like for us to turn to John's Gospel account of this very event – for just a moment... (although we'll come back, here, to Matthew.)

John 18:2-4

Jesus does not seem – at all – to be out of control when Judas and the militia arrive. He steps up and takes charge... and even more so... as we read on...

John 18:5-9

WHO was in full control, here? It certainly wasn't Judas and the mob (made up of well-trained Roman soldiers.) They all fell down on the rear-ends... when Jesus simply said "I am He."

In the middle of a very serious situation... here... God demonstrates a hilarious sense of humor. It is as though Jesus merely blows on them... and every one of these trained fighters topple-over backwards. How humiliating for them! ... Clearly... I believe this happened... in order for us to see... just exactly Who (really) was in charge. Jesus was in full control. ...And having all of His composure... Jesus makes sure that His disciples will be left alone... *"If you seek Me... let these men go..."* (He is taking care of THEM – while He is being arrested.)

Boy! Albert Schweitzer sure missed a lot... didn't he...?

Let's return now to Matthew's account... where Judas approached Jesus.

Matthew 26:49

It seems that Judas intended to skip out of the way as soon as He had given the terrible sign that now brands him... (as soon as his dark deed was done.) He would let others take the risk if this meek and lowly Messiah were suddenly to show some spark of fire.

The Greek word translated here as "Greetings!" (Greetings, Rabbi) ... means "be healthy and have joy." It was used to express the joy when a close friend is re-united with them... after an absence. ... So... it wasn't just the kiss from Judas... that was so despicable. His greeting dripped with hypocrisy.

Speaking of Judas' kiss... the word that is used here when Judas kissed him... is an intensified version of the word for kiss – kataphileo... which means "to kiss fervently." The traitor's shameful greeting and now kiss... implanted on the Savior's cheek... was more demonstrative than the usual

kiss of salutation. It was a showy ostentatious kiss — ten thousand times worse than a slap in the face. ... It is tragic to see how Judas cheapened everything that he touched.

Some theologians contend that Judas was predestined to betray Jesus and could do nothing else. And because this is true... Judas was nothing more than a robot. He should be commended for doing what he was destined to do.

This next weekend... many from the business community of Bend will be presenting this disgusting perspective... at Drake Park... in the form of Andrew Lloyd Webber's... resurrected 40-year old musical... Jesus Christ Superstar. ... Jesus Christ Superstar was written along the same understanding that Albert Schweitzer took... that Jesus let things get out of control and blew it. The musical treats Judas as the hero of the story.

I believe Judas made up his own mind to betray our Lord... but had every opportunity to change his plans. You may say, "*Yes, but it was prophesied that he would betray Jesus.*" ... I have to agree with you. It was prophesied... and our Lord marked him out as the man. ... However... after Judas had fulfilled the prophecy... (after Jesus was betrayed)... Judas could have repented.

We are about to see in the very next verse... that Jesus gave Judas one final opportunity to repent and accept Him. ... Even after he gave Jesus that hot kiss of betrayal... Jesus called him - "Friend."

And then... later... when Judas went to the temple and threw down the silver that was given to him to betray the Lord... he could have changed his

mind. As the priests were taking Jesus to Pilate... Judas could have fallen down before Him and said, "Forgive me, Lord, I did not know what I was doing." – YOU KNOW the Lord would have immediately forgiven him.

Matthew 26:50

"Friend," Jesus said to Judas... The comment was more of an exclamation than a polite (or civil) designation. It was the Lord's last appeal to whatever was left of conscience in Judas. Nothing could reverse the onward march of events as far as Jesus was concerned... (Scripture was being fulfilled)... but there might be mercy yet for Judas. ... The Lord knew what lay ahead for this man if he was not reclaimed - death by suicide and eternal torment in Hell's hottest flames.

But the moment was gone... as fast as it came. The mob surged in... and Judas was swept aside — his lips still sealed... (no asking the Lord for forgiveness)... and his soul now a prey to a flurry of second thoughts.

Jesus' use of the word friend for Judas was an act of love on Jesus' part... which shows that God's love never leaves - **even** an apostate like Judas! I don't know how you have sinned against Jesus... but you can be sure... He still has love and forgiveness... and wants to call you "His friend."

Jesus (still the One in charge) said to Judas "do what you came to do."
Jesus gave His permission for the event to take place.

Matthew 26:51-52

"One of those who were with Jesus..." John informs us that this was *Peter*. The other Gospel writers concealed the name. Why...? What are they trying to cover...? Matthew, Mark, and Luke all wrote their accopunts when

Peter was still alive. John didn't. (He wrote his Gospel later...) The three writers probably thought that it might have endangered Peter... to have it known. Vengeful retaliation might have occurred.

But now that we know it was Peter... fully awake now (from sleeping instead of praying)... and impetuous as ever... Peter hurled himself to Christ's defense. Sword in hand... he slashed out and sliced off the right ear of one of the servants of the high priest. Evidently the victim was one of those who had grabbed hold of Jesus and seized Him.

Fishermen may not have had the best skills as swordsmen. Peter missed... but somehow managed to lop off his ear. John informs us that Peter's victim had a name. It was Malchus. He was the High Priest's personal servant. His job required him to work in the Temple. But guess what... Now he was out of a job. For you see... Jewish Law forbid anyone with a lost appendage to serve in the Temple.

Malchus' life was spared because of Peter's poor skills with a sword... but his livelihood was now gone. So Jesus... the One who Schweitzer said lost control... took pity on him... and compassionately healed his hear... according to Luke 22:51. The mob's agenda was put on hold for a few minutes... as the One Who was really in charge... tenderly healed the man's ear.

We have seen Peter argue with the Word... deny the Word... and disobey the Word (when he went to sleep). ... Here... we see him run ahead of the Word. ... In his zeal to help Jesus... Peter cut off Malchus' ear. He did not wait for the Lord to tell him what to do... but Peter rushed ahead and

trusted his own ability (the arm of flesh.) ... Had Jesus not healed the ear of Malchus... there probably would have been four crosses on Calvary!

Peter underestimated Jesus' power... or at the very least he misunderstood the timing of that power. ... Second... Peter still(!) misunderstood the mission and thus the means of the mission... for our Lord said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword" ... The Lord was not to be defended... in his own power and strength... as Peter might have known if he had spent the past few hours watching and praying instead of sleeping.

This incident is not without several vital lessons for you and I.

In seeking to defend the Savior... many an overzealous disciple of Christ has cut off an unbeliever's ear... and made him even harder to reach. ... The unsaved person can only think of the un-Christian words and deeds of the one who has hurt him... or the crass way some truth has been forced down his throat. ... (There are many modern-day Malchus' walking around... because their over-zealous parents tried to force a Christian faith into them.) ... It takes a special miracle of grace for such an unbeliever to have his spiritual hearing restored... so that he will be willing to listen again to Jesus. ... How careful we all need to be – so that we don't misrepresent Him!

Jesus told Peter to put away his sword. The cause of Christ was not to be advanced by such means. "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Resorting to violence only results in a violent response.

If you want to know what Jesus thinks about Christians bombing abortion clinics... or crusading against the Muslims (either during the Crusades of the Middle Ages... or retaliating and anger responses to them today - ... wonder no more! Where Christians have used violence to promote (or protect?) Christianity... those regions of the world are somehow least receptive to the gospel. ... Having no ears... they cannot hear!

World hunger... racism... abortion... freedom to evangelize openly and a variety of other matters are literally life-and-death issues... and the very urgency of these issues sometimes tempts us to fight the battle with human passion or incendiary rhetoric. ... Protecting Jesus seemed the greatest of life-and-death issues... yet Jesus did not want His disciples to protect Him. He came to conquer by way of the cross... not by way of the sword.

Matthew 26:52-53

Does a passage like this mean that it would be wrong for the believer today to arm themselves... for self-protection... with a gun...? We all know believers today... who carry concealed weapons... wherever they go... as often as they can. Are they disobeying the principle we are seeing in these verses. Do they lack the faith that is called for here... that we ought to be able to trust God to send a legion of angels if we need them... and have enough faith?

First of all... I don't believe this is what our passage is teaching. Jesus came to die. He would obtain His world kingdom by way of the cross – not the sword. And to complete His redemptive mission – He could have easily called down a legion of angels to overpower the measly human mob.

The mission of Christ – (world redemption)... and our personal protection for our families and ourselves... against evil people... are two different things entirely. In fact... did you know Jesus told His disciples to arm themselves with swords for their protection – not for advancing His kingdom.

Luke 22:36-38

This is where Peter probably got the sword that he used in the garden. But he was not to use it – to keep Jesus from going to the cross. He wasn't to try to force God's kingdom by keeping Jesus alive. But for his and the other's protection... the disciples were to take only the amount of weaponry... that they would reasonably need.

Matthew 26:54

In other words... *“Back off Peter! ...The Scriptures all prophesied that I must die... It is proper for Me to submit to a cruel death... and you are to allow them to fulfill God's plan...”* Old Testament types—such as Isaac on mount Moriah, the Levitical offerings, the Passover, the ark of Noah Jonah—had to be fulfilled. Direct prophecies—such as Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, Psalm 69—had to be fulfilled. Divinely inspired, infallible Scripture had to be fulfilled. In His hour of agony... the Lord placed His known suffering on the authority of God's holy Word. This was said to show His disciples just how much He was in full control.

Matthew 26:55-56

This was *the manner* in which they would have sought to take the most despicable criminal of that day. ... It adds not a little to the depth of Jesus'

humiliation... that He consented to be *hunted down* thus by desperately wicked men... and to be treated as if **He** had been the worst of mankind.

The fact that the guards had not arrested Him in the temple indicates that there was a divine timetable controlling His life. These things were not happening by accident... but by appointment. It was all part of God's plan, yet evil men were responsible for the deed.

Acts 2:23 (ESV)

this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

When the disciples realized that Jesus would not mount a defense against his mortal enemies, they left him alone to face the consequences of his "decision." In fear for their own lives, they ran away. They did not want to share in their Master's fate. Alone, Jesus faced the legal authorities of the Sanhedrin and Rome. He had no friend to help him, no one to come to his defense. Although the disciples had brashly declared that they would not allow such a thing to happen, Jesus' words from earlier that night had come to pass:

Matthew 26:31 (ESV)

Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'

Just as Jesus said... overcome with fear when they saw their Master actually taken... and forgetting their promises **not** to forsake Him... they all left their Savior like scattered sheep.

Jesus would be subjected to a heavily biased trial. In the morning he would appear before Pilate and be handed over for crucifixion. By three in the

afternoon He would be dead. But even in the midst of all of this, one gets the unmistakable impression that Jesus, and His Father in Heaven, were fully in charge.

Why is this important for us to see...?

Because all of us face constant circumstances in our lives where things look wildly out of control. Some of you may be in a situation right now... that you can see no positive way out of... Your sense of losing control might be producing enormous fear in your life. ... You might be seconds away from wildly swing a sword and lopping off an ear. ... Maybe you already have... and the guilt is so strong that you wonder if Jesus could ever be your friend again.

Let me remind you that He sincerely called Judas "friend" as an olive branch for Judas to repent. If He was willing to forgive Judas... I think there is forgiveness for you.

And things are not so out of control that Christ is at a loss of what to do. He is just as much in control of your situation... as He was in control of His Own.

Reach out to Him. If you would like someone to pray with you... come talk to me... or one of the elders... after the service. This I know for certain: He is very much in control... and has a way for you.