

Matthew 26:47-68 - Victims, Villains, and The Hero

we are going to cover the first 10 verses then move on later

set the stage

Matthew 26:47-56

47 While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. 48 Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; seize him." 49 And he came up to Jesus at once and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" And he kissed him. 50 Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came to do." Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. 51 And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. 52 Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. 53 Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? 54 But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" 55 At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. 56 But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left him and fled.

Embedded in every human being, there is a deep desire to solve what philosophers call "The Problem of Evil."

The Problem of Evil is a philosophical dilemma - That if a benevolent Creator exists or if humanity serves a higher spiritual purpose, then what do we do with this looming evil that clearly exists? How can human beings rise above evil?

This is the question that most major religions (besides cults) try to solve. Think of every major world religion as almost an equation trying to solve the Problem of Evil.

Even the stories we tell as people are attempts to explain and solve the problem of evil in our own way. Every narrative we tell has a similar plot, does it not?

- The princess is captured by a fire-breathing dragon, and the shimmering brave knight fearlessly sacrifices his own safety to save her.
- Aragorn, Frodo, and Gandalf bravely relinquish their comforts to save Middle Earth from Saron and his evil armies.
- The Avengers overcome physical, political, and mental barriers to save the world like every two years or so.

It was CS Lewis and JRR Tolkien who famously mentioned that stories are fractured reflections of the gospel. **And that in the heart of every human, we see ourselves as the victims, evil as the villain, and are in desperate need for the hero (Jesus).**

Every movie, every piece of literature, and every story we tell has the hero at the center of the story... The story of Batman doesn't follow Alfred... He's not the focus.

Out of every religion or worldview, there is no greater solution to the problem of evil than the Cross. And this is the beginning of that solution. Evil is about to be conquered by the hero of the story - Jesus.

47 While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. 48 Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; seize him." 49 And he came up to Jesus at once and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" And he kissed him. 50 Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came to do." Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him.

Here is something that I believe is extremely crucial to the story - and it is that Jesus is not surprised at all to see Judas. He isn't taken off guard by the armed guards. In fact, in John 18 we get a better picture of what actually happens...

John 18:1-6

When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. 2 Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples. 3 So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons. 4 Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" 5 They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. 6 When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

There are two things I want us to notice here:

1. Jesus was at the brook Kidron. This brook during the passover would typically be red because the blood from the temple was spilt into this brook. Jesus is literally standing beside a river flowing of blood spilled from sacrifice hours before he makes the final sacrifice on the cross... Gangsta. **It was also the brook that David crossed when he was running away from his pursuers.**

- **David was running away from evil - Jesus was running towards it.** Jesus actually was there so it was easier for them to take...
 - This is also where the final victorious battle will be won by Jesus riding on a white horse triumphant.
2. Jesus went forward to them... He wasn't hiding. **Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward.**
- It says in **Hebrews 12** **"For the joy set before him he endured the cross."** **He was not dragged there against his will.** Make no mistake, he was not seized by anyone. **He willingly laid his life down.** In fact, when he says, "I am he." every soldier falls on their backs... That is powerful.
 - **Can we stand in awe for a moment in Jesus' sovereignty over this whole situation?**

Why is this so important?

It is profoundly important for us to know that Jesus is not a victim of evil, but the victor over it.

God provides a solution for the problem of evil on the cross through Jesus... He takes the eternal sting that evil causes humanity, and nails it into Christ's hands and feet on the cross. Christ bore the weight of evil... He endured it and conquered it.

Evil was but a tool for redemption in Christ's hands. Totally sovereign.

Jesus was not a victim to sin and its evils... He is the hero that prevails over it... And he can, because he is God. He alone holds the power and authority to address evil and do away with it.

And when we fail to recognize Christ as the hero of the story... And begin to look at ourselves as the heroes of the story, we react in one of two ways (or both):

Our typical response to sin and evil is usually in one of these postures:

1. **Hedonism** - Ignoring good and evil to pursue your personal pleasures and bliss. (Judas)
2. **Moralism** - Taking it upon yourself to eradicate all evil and be the hero of the story (Peter) - **51 And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.**

Peter, in a moment of indignation, aimed to kill this soldier. He aimed for the head, but cut off the ear...

I wonder how many ears Jesus has had to put back on on my behalf... I wonder how many people I have cut off from hearing the truth of the gospel because of my self-righteousness and arrogance. I cringe thinking about this sometimes...

In moments of jealousy, anger, and self-righteousness, I have cut people thinking that I was combatting evil. All the while just making a mess for Jesus to clean up afterwards.

All of us at some point have been victims of this behavior... But look at what Jesus does...

"When Peter moved in the power of the world, he only cut off ears. But when he was filled with the Spirit, using the Word of God, Peter pierced hearts for God's glory." (David Guzik)

I think I can relate to Peter because he was 100% convinced that he was the hero in this scenario... And that is where evil consumes me the most. When the hero of the story is me and not Jesus. When people are the enemy and not satan and evil. That's when I can get dangerous.

This has the potential to ruin marriages, relationships, and churches. When we treat ourselves as the heroes and others as the villains.

Ephesians 6:12 - Your enemy isn't flesh and blood at all. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"

So Jesus is met in the garden, confronts his enemies, and allows them to escort him to go on trial.

Matthew 26:57-68

57 Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered. 58 And Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end. 59 Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony

against Jesus that they might put him to death, 60 but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward 61 and said, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.'" 62 And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" 63 But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." 64 Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." 65 Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. 66 What is your judgment?" They answered, "He deserves death." 67 Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, 68 saying, "Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?"

So Jesus goes willingly to be prosecuted. This is a part of his plan. Here, he is put on trial for claiming to be God.

59 Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, 60 but they found none

Jesus is blameless here... They have to lie in order to put him to death... They falsely accuse him, spit in his face, yell blasphemies against him. All the while he remains silent.

I wonder about that, because Jesus spent so much of his time on earth proving the religious leaders wrong by using his words. He would really bring the heat. Yet here, standing before all of them, he says nothing.

But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." 64 Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Jesus could have mounted a magnificent defense here, calling forth all the various witnesses to His deity, power and character. The people He taught, the people He healed, the dead risen, the blind who see, even the demons themselves testified to His deity. But Jesus opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth (Isaiah 53:7).

Jesus was in pursuit of the cross... He would not shy away from it. Remember, he is the hero of the story.

Christ is 100% and completely in control... Aslan the Lion coming into the scene. He doesn't need to see anything. He has authority. He's sitting there as a lamb but we know he's a lion.

He alone has the ability to see the battle over evil in its entirety. And he knows that the people here spitting in his face are not the enemy.

Jesus is the lion and the lamb - His first battle over evil is as the sacrificial lamb. So he stands there and takes the scorn... But the second battle is as the conquering lion
"You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

The irony of this whole trial is that these people are the ones that deserve death, and Jesus endures all of these accusations because he has a deep desire to see every person, including his accusers, experience everlasting life.

Jesus endured the pain and suffering of death on the cross and rose again so we may have a life that is risen above the consequences of evil.

So many religious stories are told of a deity that is far above the evil of the world and forces its followers to rise up to it. Not Jesus. He came down to it. He lived amongst the evil and eventually took it head-on with joy and passion.

Let this be an encouragement to those of you who find yourself suffering this morning. Jesus invites us to live in his victory. That way we no longer need to be victims to it.

Will trials, tribulation, and sin still persist in and around our lives? Yes.

Many look at evil and conclude that life must be meaningless if it persists. They fall into despair... Jesus offers another way. A way to experience a life above evil, amidst evil yet not overcome by it. This is the image of Shadrack, Meeshack and Abendigo. In the fire, yet not consumed. Victory over evil that produces a testimony for others...

This is why Jesus calls us the light of the world. A city set upon a hill. We shine for those that sit in the darkness and problem of evil, seeing no solutions. Jesus is the

solution... **With every moment of darkness, Jesus is able to enter into it and bring hope, joy, and victory...**

Close with a story of Corrie Ten Boom & the Nazi Guard

This is what triumph over evil looks like... To be face-to-face with evil, yet be so secure in Christ that it does not have to define you.

So here are our final thoughts:

1. **Jesus is victorious over sin and has removed the eternal sting of death as our ultimate hero.**
2. **You do not have to be the hero of your own story.**
 - **Or anyone else's for that matter. Let that sink in...**
3. **Resistance to evil is found immersed in the identity of Christ.**
 - **This has powerful application to our daily lives...**
 - **There is no hero but Jesus... There is no enemy in others.**

CALL TO RESPOND:

- **WORSHIP** - A war cry. A declaration of victory.
- **COMMUNION**
- **CARPETS**
- **PRAYER**