

Mosaic Rockford

**Introduction:**

- A. Illus.: Years ago Bill Hybels told about seeing a newscast of a big Vietnam veterans parade in Chicago. Part of the commemoration was a mobile Vietnam wall like the one in Washington, DC, bearing the names of all the soldiers who had died there. *“One newscaster asked a vet why he had come all the way to Chicago to visit this memorial and to participate in this parade. The soldier looked straight into the face of the reporter and with tears flowing down his face he said, ‘Because of this man right here.’ As he talked he was pointing to the name of a friend whose name is etched in the wall. And as he pointed to the name, he traced the letters of his friend’s name in the wall. And he continued to answer the reporter by saying, ‘This man right here gave his life for me. He gave his life for me.’... As the news clip ended, that sobbing soldier simply let the tears flow without shame as he stood there continuing to trace the name of his friend with his finger.”* [#2602; PT#43]
- B. There is, of course, someone who gave his life for us. I don’t want to grow dull to Jesus’ death for me, but I’m afraid I do. So Mark comes to meet us and remind us of what Jesus has done. **Turn to Mark 14.**
- C. Mark began tracing how Jesus gave his life for us at the beginning of ch. 14. Last Sunday Pastor Dave took us to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus surrendered to the will of his Father. We also saw his disappointment with his disciples who could not stay awake and pray with him. And then Jesus was betrayed by Judas and arrested. Today we pick up the story in **Mark 14:53-54...**

*They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, the elders and the teachers of the law came together. Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire.*

- D. So there are two stories before us, two scenes. One is this courtroom scene where all the leaders of the Jews gather to hear the case against Jesus—71 of them. The other is what Peter does while he waits outside.
- E. Before we look at those stories I want to take you back to Isaiah 53 because what Isaiah prophesied is what we’re going to witness. **Is. 53:7-8** is like a frame for what Mark tells us.

*<sup>7</sup> He was oppressed and afflicted,  
yet he did not open his mouth;  
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,  
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,  
so he did not open his mouth.*

*<sup>8</sup> By oppression and judgment he was taken away.*

*Yet who of his generation protested?  
For he was cut off from the land of the living;  
for the transgression of my people he was punished.*

- F. Now, back to our story in Mark 14:55-65... **Trace your finger across that story.** Jesus began giving his life for us when he bowed to the Father’s will in Gethsemane, and again here in these stories.

**I. JESUS WAS OPPRESSED AND CONVICTED BY THE VERY NATION HE CAME TO SAVE (14:55-65)**

- A. Jesus faced two trials that night, one in a Jewish court and the other in a Roman court before Pilate. This Jewish trial was a farce. This one before the High Priest, Caiaphas, breaks so many Jewish laws that some Jewish leaders today say it could have never happened. Mark doesn’t dwell on the illegal hour

(who calls a court to order in the middle of the night?!), or the improper venue, or the unlawful rush to judgment, but he does highlight the false witnesses. **Why did they focus their lies on what Jesus said about the temple?** In that culture, to threaten the temple was to defame God himself, and was a crime punishable by death. Jesus had said that the temple of his body would be destroyed and raised in three days. Jesus did say that the temple building would be destroyed, torn stone from stone, which happened in 70 AD at the hands of the Romans. But he *didn't* say what they accused him of. [John 2:19-21]

B. The obvious question is, *why didn't Jesus set the record straight?* Remember what Isaiah had said: **“yet he did not open his mouth.”** Jesus remained silent before the false witnesses because he was no longer concerned about earthly justice but rather being a silent and willing sacrifice to satisfy God's justice against our sin. The court of Caiaphas meant nothing. That verdict was empty. Jesus endured the lies and, later, the mocking and accusations because he was God's willing and perfect sacrifice for our sin. **He had no intention of defending himself because he had come to die as a sacrifice for sin.** **Trace that truth with your finger lest you forget what it means that Jesus gave his life for you.**

C. The climax of this hearing crackles with courtroom drama. Caiaphas was a wily, snarky politician. He held power for 19 years when the official term of office was only supposed to be four. I imagine his frustration growing as all these false witnesses fizzle like cheap firecrackers. When even the most corrupt judge can't rule the way he wants, you know things are bad! He wanted to trap Jesus and it wasn't working. **Kent Hughes** writes, *“Jesus had not uttered a word and he was winning.”* [Mark]

So Caiaphas takes a bold courtroom gamble and asks the big question, the one not even the false witnesses had been able to pin on Jesus. **V.61: “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One.”** Oh, that question was a ticking bomb.

Do you remember how often Jesus had told others—including demons—not to tell who he was? It hadn't been the right time. But now the time had come, even though to answer it would condemn him. In our court today, a person facing such a booby-trapped question would plead the 5<sup>th</sup>, *“I refuse to answer on the grounds it may incriminate me.”* He replied as plain as day: **“I am,” said Jesus. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”**

**V.63-64:** *The high priest tore his clothes. “Why do we need any more witnesses?” he asked. “You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?” They all condemned him as worthy of death.*

Blasphemy. There's a crime you don't hear about any more! It's the sin of demeaning God, his name or his honor. There's no stigma on that at all in our society but in Jewish society, with their high view of God, it was a sin punishable by death. Jesus' statement was his death sentence. **Trace that truth with your finger lest you forget what it means that Jesus gave his life for you.**

D. At the heart of this exchange is what Jesus said when he broke his silence: *“I am, and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”* Jesus was drawing on two OT passages: **Dan. 7:13-14:**

*“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*

Caiaphas knew that passage and he knew just what Jesus was claiming but he paid no attention. **Kent Hughes** observed, *“Souls were tumbling in darkness. There was damnation and Hell in that room.”*

E. Somewhere deep in the dungeons of death, at this very moment, the men who sat in that room wait in deep darkness for that day when all things are ready. Jesus Christ will appear in the clouds of glory, and

their darkness will be pierced by that holy light, and they will *see* Jesus once again with their own eyes, the Messiah of God whom they despised and rejected, oppressed and judged. And on that day when “every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord,” they will be on their knees, trembling under the holy hand of Almighty God, and confess that this Jesus whom they condemned is indeed, the Lord of all.

Meanwhile, outside, unaware of this terrible drama, a fire burned in the courtyard. It was the wee hours—1 or 2 a.m. or later. Peter hadn’t been to stay awake some hours before in the Garden of Gethsemane so he was dog-tired now. The others waiting there were probably the servants of the men inside. Perhaps some were Jewish guards. All waiting outside in the cold night.

Hours before in the garden Peter had been ready to defend Jesus to the death. It may well have been him who pulled a sword and sliced off the soldier’s ear. He was in that courtyard because he was determined to defend Jesus, to never deny him. But he was unprepared. Remember earlier that night when Jesus had told him and the others to “*watch and pray lest you fall into temptation*”? Instead, they’d fallen asleep, so despite his love for Jesus, despite the blood-smeared sword in his belt, despite his intention to stand guard there for Christ, he was caught off-guard not by some hostile accusation or violent attack, but by a curious servant girl. Here’s what happened: **vv.66-72... Trace your finger across this:**

## **II. JESUS WAS ABANDONED BY HIS DEAREST DISCIPLES (14:66-72)**

A. I’ve never forgotten learning in seminary that in the Gospel of Mark Jesus’ disciples *always fail*. It’s a theme of the book. In the other Gospels the disciples are sometimes portrayed in a good light, but never in Mark. And remember, Mark is really writing Peter’s story. Mark relates how Jesus would criticize the disciples for being spiritually dull to what he taught them, for being faithless and hardhearted, for their pride and selfishness, and for their fear when they should have trusted him. *Then* came this last night when his disciple Judas *betrayed* him and Peter *denied* him. **Discipleship failure.**

Oh, and remember that odd little detail that Pastor Dave pointed out last week in **vv.51-52**, “*A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.*” Most scholars think that the young man was Mark, the author of this book, who autographs his account with his own failure, fleeing rather than standing by Jesus.

Even the very end of the book—a strange, seemingly incomplete ending—portrays failure: **16:8**, “*Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.*” Even that is a kind of failure, isn’t

B. There is a warning in Peter’s denial for us, isn’t there? It isn’t just that we shouldn’t deny Jesus Christ. Peter *didn’t* deny Jesus in the garden. Jesus had told Peter back in Gethsemane, “**Pray that you will not fall into temptation.**” But Peter had fallen asleep instead. Jesus taught us to pray, “*Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.*” Peter was so *sure* of his love for Christ, so *sure* of his strength and loyalty, and so *careless* about praying when Jesus warned him of his impending failure, that God *led him into temptation, into testing*, in order to humble and teach him. **This story puts every follower of Jesus on notice.** No one is immune to failing Jesus. So pray humbly ahead of time for God’s deliverance.

C. But there is a larger point to this story. Instead of focusing on Peter, focus on Jesus. In all that happened that night, Jesus was not impassive, stoic, unfeeling. **These were tremendous blows**—the betrayal by **Judas** with whom he’d spent countless hours, then the trial before the **Sanhedrin** when his own people—the nation of Israel, the people of God—officially rejected him and condemned him.

Remember how Jesus *wept* over Jerusalem. He loved this nation and their rejection was heartbreaking. And then **Peter**, whom he had chosen and loved. “*You are Rock, and upon this rock I will build my church.*” Looked like that rock crumbled to sand! I’m sure that night Jesus owned **Psalm 55**:

*My heart is in anguish within me;  
the terrors of death have fallen on me.  
Fear and trembling have beset me;  
horror has overwhelmed me. ...  
If an enemy were insulting me,  
I could endure it;  
if a foe were rising against me,  
I could hide.  
But it is you, a man like myself,  
my companion, my close friend,  
with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship  
at the house of God,  
as we walked about  
among the worshipers.*

**Trace that truth with your finger lest you forget what it means that Jesus gave his life for you.**

### **Conclusion**

Both Judas and the Sanhedrin passed a point of no return that night. Peter didn’t. You can tell because **v.72** says, “***And he broke down and wept.***” Right at the end of Mark, on the morning of Jesus’ resurrection, the angel at the tomb told the women, “*Go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’*” Disciples always fail and for those who repent, Jesus is always waiting to welcome them back.

You need to hear that today. Don’t fixate on your failures. Focus on Jesus. “*This man right here gave his life for me. He gave his **life for me!***” **Trace your finger over his name and never forget that Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, who will come again in glory, whose kingdom will never be destroyed--he gave his life for us!**