

Series: Christmas and the Cross
Title: Lessons from a Holiday Conflict
Text: Mark 14:43-52
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Verse 43

Verse 43 continues the narrative from the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42). At the very moment in which Jesus was telling His disciples about the arrival of His betrayer (Mark 14:42), a crowd of people arrived in the dark of the night. Mark recorded: “While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, suddenly arrived. With him was a mob, with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders” (Mark 14:43). Our Lord was not surprised by the posse’s arrival. He had prophesied of it a few minutes earlier (Mark 14:42). Jesus was in complete control of the situation. The sovereign plan of God had sent Him to die for sins and He was ready to face His fate.

Mark described the crowd who came to arrest Jesus as a “mob.” The Greek word for the group of people is one that was oft-repeated in Mark’s gospel (Mark 2:4, 13; 3:9; 4:1, 36; 6:34 NS ; 7:14, 17; 8:1, 34; 10:1; 11:18; 12:12, 37).¹ Previously, Mark use the word to depict the excited masses of humanity who followed Jesus’ ministry. Now he depicted a hostile crowd coming with sinister intentions. In this context, the word refers to “a mob or rabble with no official status.”² Maybe Mark intended to provide a compare and contrast, demonstrating the vast difference between the common people’s love for Jesus and the ruling class’ disdain towards Jesus.

Within the mob were “the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders.” The three classes of religious and political leaders have been portrayed as antagonists of our Lord throughout Mark’s gospel (Mark 11:27). Jesus had prophesied that they would be the main players in bringing about His death (Mark 8:31). His words came to fruition. Later in the text, we will learn that the chief priests, scribes, and elders weren’t the only ones who came for Jesus’ arrest. Mark will tell us that household servants of the religious and political leaders came as well (Mark 14:47). In His gospel account, John said some Pharisees were also in the number (John 18:3).³

The most ostentatious of the party was “Judas.” He led the way, taking the mob to Jesus. Mark previously told of Judas’ arrangements to betray Jesus (Mark 14:10-11). John’s gospel indicates the man was present at the Last Supper in the Upper Room (John 13:26), an event that happened just a few hours earlier. Mark spoke of it just a few verses earlier in his gospel account (Mark 14:22-26). Because Judas was aware of Jesus’ plans for the evening (Mark 14:26), he knew the Lord would retreat to the garden of Gethsemane for prayer (Mark 14:32-42). As a result, the betrayer had a the perfect window of opportunity to earn his money (Mark 14:11) and betray his rabbi.

Notice Mark refers to Judas as “one of the Twelve.” There was an undertone of rebuke in the title affixed to the betrayer. It was intended to emphasize the heinous nature of the man’s actions.⁴ Though the Lord had welcomed the man into His group of closest followers, Judas handed Jesus over to death.

The title applied to Judas also stands as a witness to the trustworthiness of the gospel accounts. If the New Testament was the fabrication of human invention, it is unlikely that the apostles and other authors would have included embarrassing details about Jesus’ most

¹ Brooks, 236.

² Brooks, 236.

³ Robertson, 385.

⁴ Schnabel, 368.

intimate followers. It is true that the gospels contain many less-than-flattering details about the early Christian movement. Even Peter's denial of Jesus would probably had been whitewashed by ones who sought to concoct a new religion. The disciples' willingness to divulge embarrassing details seems to indicate that Christianity was not an invention of men.

It is interesting to observe the way in which the mob came to Jesus heavily equipped with weapons. Mark said they were outfitted "with swords and clubs." The word translated "sword" could have referred to either the customary shorter sword used by Roman soldiers, or it could have referred to a handheld knife.⁵ Most likely, there were individuals with both types of blades in the crowd. The Greek word translated "club" referred to a stout stick or a piece of wood that had been shaped into a weapon used for self defense.⁶ One has commented on the way in which the mob was "armed to the teeth."⁷ What need did Jesus' captors have for such a display of strength? We know that Jesus was "meek and lowly of heart" (Matthew 11:29). Jesus' disciples were apparently armed (Mark 6:8 and 14:47), but they weren't known for using displays of force. Why did the mob have to apprehend Jesus in such away? What were they afraid of?

If we look at things from heaven's perspective, it seems there was something about Jesus that convicted the conscience of His adversaries. Something about our Lord instilled a healthy sense of fear and reverence within even the most depraved of men. We are reminded from their actions that the person of Jesus demands our respect. All should stand in holy reverence and awe before Him. This is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7). Jesus indeed has a name that is above every name, and one day every knee will bow to Him (Philippians 2:9-11). He is indeed King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15).

Verse 44

Verse 44 let the reader in on the mob's strategy for apprehending Jesus. It said, "His betrayer had given them a signal. 'The one I kiss,' he said, 'he's the one; arrest him and take him away under guard'" (Mark 14:44). The Greek term translated "signal" was a technical word that referred to "a sign which has been previously agreed upon as having a particular meaning or significance."⁸ Judas had premeditated his crime. He thought matters through and created a tip-off sign to make sure his newfound friends would safely snag Jesus. Such a sign was needed, considering how dark it likely was in the garden.

A kiss was the method he chose to reveal Jesus' identity. In the first-century ancient Near East, the gesture was a common, everyday form of greeting. It was, as one has said "an act of endearment between any two persons."⁹ It could be likened unto our modern day handshake or hug. Several cultures throughout the world still use this mode of greeting. One could travel to France and experience this form of greeting. In the first-century world, the gesture was a sign of hospitality and goodwill. The book of Acts speaks of the way in which it was used amongst the early church (Acts 20:37). Paul commended the practice of greeting in some of his letters to first-century churches (Romans 16:16 and 2 Corinthians 13:12).

Judas likely chose this as a signal out of convenience and caution. He and the mob of men probably expected some form of resistance from Jesus and His followers. A kiss seemed like a clever way to reveal Jesus' identity. It would allow Judas to get close to the Lord without

⁵ Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 100.

⁶ Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 100.

⁷ Ferguson, 243.

⁸ Rogers, 100.

⁹ Rogers, 100.

a contest.¹⁰ Once he embraced Jesus, the others could step in and snatch Him. The plot would prevent both an escape by Jesus or a resistance from His followers.

The word translated “kiss“ is one that referred to a “fervent” kiss in the first century. The word actually involved two terms, making a compound word. It depicted a prolonged and passionate kiss.¹¹ Judas likely kissed Jesus in such a way in order to make the identity of Jesus abundantly clear. Perhaps he gave a standard, customary greeting to the other disciples present and reserved the longer, more prolonged kiss for Jesus. Whatever the case, the fact that he would embrace Jesus with such a gesture underscores the depths of his depravity. Ultimately, the man’s heinous act was a fulfillment of Scripture. Proverbs 27:6 said, “The wounds of a friend are trustworthy, but the kisses of an enemy are excessive.”

By using such a token for betrayal, Judas demonstrated the depravity of his heart. One has commented that Judas’ actions involved “a contemptible desecration of a friendly salutation.”¹² Judas was sold over to Satan and sin. He was willing to mock our Lord with what could be regarded as one of the cruelest forms of betrayal. The man stands as a perennial reminder that sin can take any man, even the most seemingly religious, and make him into a moral monster. In Judas’ backhanded, insincere greeting, we see the climax of the slippery slope of sin. If one merely entertains the ways of the world and the stratagems of Satan, he or she will go down a path that can lead to the most depraved and blasphemous acts. Consider Psalm 1:1 and James 1:22.

Verse 45

Judas’ approach toward Jesus is described in verse 45. We read, “So when he came, immediately he went up to Jesus and said, ‘Rabbi!’ and kissed him” (Mark 14:45). The title “Rabbi“ was famously used for a respected “teacher.”¹³ In using this term of address, Judas demonstrate his low view of Jesus. Instead of regarding our Lord as the son of God, he minimized Him as being nothing more than a mere religious instructor. In Mark’s gospel, the disciples had previously used the same moniker, displaying their ignorance of Jesus’ real credentials (Mark 9:5 and 11:21).

Judas’ low estimation of Jesus provides a lesson for men and women of all generations. An insufficient view of Jesus will lead one to spiritual ruin. If one regards Him as a mere teacher, leader, or moral example, he or she will never obtain deliverance from sin, death, and hell. It is only when Jesus is esteemed as being the Son of God that one can experience His life-changing power. If one does not see Him as being Divine, one will not run to Him for help, neither will one repent of sin. A little Jesus calls for little devotion. May we stand on guard against the error of Judas. May we decide that Jesus is Lord of all, and may we make Him Lord of our lives.

Verse 46

Verse 46 contains the moment in which the mob actually apprehended Jesus. It says, “They took hold of him and arrested him” (Mark 14:46). The language depicts the men “grabbing him physically to prevent resistance.” The picture is of the men grabbing Jesus by His arms, perhaps one on His right and one on His left. They likely grasped our Lord and manhandled Him in a rough way. His captors were accustomed to dealing with criminals. They knew how to keep a man from wiggling away or fighting back. Little did they realize they didn’t need to handle Jesus in such a way. He was not the victim of human blackmail. Judas hadn’t handed Him over. God the Father had ordained His path before time began.

¹⁰ Schnabel, 368.

¹¹ Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 100.

¹² Robertson, 385.

¹³ Brooks, 237.

Verse 47

Once the mob had Jesus in hand, one of the disciples lashed out. He moved to action, seeking to free His Lord. Verse 47 says, “One of those who stood by drew his sword, struck the high priest’s servant, and cut off his ear” (Mark 14:47). John tells us Peter was the assailant, and a man named Malchus was the victim (John 18:10). In first-century Judea, members of the upper echelon of society often possessed a number of slaves or bond servants. Some servants worked to provide security and protection for their masters. Local rulers would often dispatch their servants to handle an arrest. The man named Malchus in our text was likely one such slave. He probably accompanied his master — one of the chief priests, scribes, or elders — to the Garden of Gethsemane. He was tasked with grabbing Jesus when he saw the prearranged signal.

The fact that Peter struck Malchus’ “ear” is telling. It reveals the apostle was likely aiming for the man’s head or neck.¹⁴ Maybe he went for the jugular, aiming to deal a death blow to one of Jesus’ captors. Peter was ready for Messianic fallout. He had prepared Himself for war. Fortunately for Malchus, Peter wasn’t a trained soldier. He was a fisherman. As a result, He wasn’t really good with a sword in the heat of the moment. His aim was off. Instead of striking the man’s head or neck, he merely grazed an ear.

Mark used a diminutive form of the word that was often used for the ear. Quite possibly, he intended to show that the man did not have his entire ear cut off, only a portion of it.¹⁵ Luke’s Gospel tells us that Jesus replaced the mutilated ear and healed it (Luke 22:51). Matthew, Luke, and John tell us of the way in which Jesus rebuked Peter for his active aggression (Matthew 26:52; Luke 22:51; and John 18:11).¹⁶

It is important to recognize that Mark used a defined article when referring to Malchus. He called him “the high priest’s servant.” Such a way of referring to a person was used in Koine Greek when the person was well known.¹⁷ As used in our text, the language seems to convey that the early church was aware of who Malchus was. Some propose the man nursed a grudge against Peter long after the incident had occurred.¹⁸ Perhaps he uttered threats at Peter in the garden. Maybe that is what prompted Peter and the others to run for their lives (Mark 14:50). All of this is speculation to a degree, but perhaps Peter’s denial of Jesus after the garden incident (Mark 14:66-72) was grounded in a fear of reprisal on the part of “the high priest’s servant.”

Ultimately, Peter’s actions revealed that he still didn’t grasp the meaning of Jesus’ kingdom. He was ignorant of the real purpose of his Master’s ministry and mission. He didn’t comprehend the gospel message (Mark 1:15). As in Mark 8:32, He was still oblivious to the realities associated with Christ’s death and resurrection.

Peter was one of the first followers of Jesus who had a hard time keeping his focus on gospel realities. Throughout the church age, many have followed suit. Don’t we often forget the cross? Aren’t the things of Calvary sometimes the last things on our mind? It is easy to fall prey to a form of religion that forgets the way of the cross. Self-effort and self-glory often override the call to die to self (Mark 8:34). Learn a lesson from Peter. Keep your mind and heart grounded in gospel truth. Such a perspective will keep you from lashing out or responding in ways that would bring embarrassment to Christ and His body.

¹⁴ Robertson, 386.

¹⁵ Brooks, 237.

¹⁶ Brooks, 237.

¹⁷ Schnabel, 369.

¹⁸ Schnabel, 369.

Verse 48

Jesus confronted His captors in verse 48, saying, “Have you come out with swords and clubs?” (Mark 14:48). Notice that Jesus adopted a posture of non-aggression. His response stood in stark contrast to Peter’s hostile response. Maybe Mark intended to uphold our Lord as an example for his original readers. Many Gentile Christians were facing persecution at the hands of Nero. Maybe the gospel writer wanted to show that Christian virtue, not man-centered vengeance, is the fitting Christian response to hostility from the world. Did not Jesus teach the value of such a response in the beatitudes (Matthew 5:10-12)?

Through directing a question toward His opponents, Jesus appealed to their conscience. His interrogative was designed to startle them to their senses and show the absurdity of their actions. There was no need for them to enlist an armed horde to arrest Him.¹⁹ He had been around them throughout the week during the Passover. They had seen His mode of conduct and listened to His teaching. Sure, He had turned over tables in the Temple (Mark 11:15-19), but they should have perceived He was not a militant prepping for a Messianic takeover. They knew good and well that He was a humble Galilean. He obviously was not a man out for power, prestige, and prominence.

Jesus questioned His adversaries to open their eyes to their sin. He sought to bring conviction. Our Lord always gives promptings from the conscience to those who are in bondage to deception and depravity. Perhaps Jesus’ words eventually bore fruit. Maybe some of His captors were among the crowd who repented on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:37-41). Our Lord’s question to those who apprehended Him remind us of the way in which His Spirit often provides soft appeals to our conscience. Concerning the role of the Third Person of the Trinity, Jesus once said, “When he comes, he will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment” (John 16:8). May we learn to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. The Lord is prone to speak through what we could call a “soft whisper” (1 Kings 19:12). God’s children should be on guard that they know how to detect that voice and respond to its instruction.

There is another special meaning for us in Jesus’ interrogative. The Greek word translated “criminal” referred to one who was a revolutionary or insurrectionist, one who engaged in guerrilla warfare to overthrow government structures.²⁰ It was one that was used in John’s gospel of Barabbas (John 18:40), the robber who was released in place of Jesus. Mark will speak of that fateful exchange in the next chapter of his gospel (Mark 15:7-15). The term rendered “criminal” was also used in the gospels to speak of the two thieves who were put to death with Jesus at Golgotha (Matthew 27:38 and Mark 15:27).

Mark’s inclusion of the term in our current verse seems to make a clear gesture to the substitutionary work of Christ on our behalf. He literally died as a criminal along with (the thieves on the cross) and in the place of (Barabbas) criminals. In addition, He died in the place of sinners like you and me. Philip Bliss’ hymn “Hallelujah! What A Savior” popularly proclaims, “Bearing shame and scoffing rude, In my place condemned He stood; Sealed my pardon with His blood. Hallelujah! What a Savior!” Such glorious gospel truth is conveyed by the passage before us. It is also found throughout Scripture. Peter said, “For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring you to God” (1 Peter 3:18).

Verse 49

In verse 49, Jesus challenged His captors’ actions, saying, “Every day I was among you, teaching in the temple, and you didn’t arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled” (Mark 14:49). Jesus’ words were accurate. He had ministered, taught, and even openly debated His

¹⁹ Ferguson, 243.

²⁰ Schnabel, 370.

adversaries in broad daylight throughout the Holy Week. He had arrived in Jerusalem earlier in the week (Mark 11:1-11). Since His arrival He had maintained public visibility. He hadn't tried to hide. He was open in the way in which He challenged the corrupt religiosity at the Temple complex (Mark 11:15-19), He hadn't shied away from exposing the error of His religious opponents (Mark 12:24), and He had openly answered those who tried to ensnare Him through debates (Mark 11:27-33, 12:13-17, and 12:18-27). He had even held lengthy teaching sessions and preached public sermons for all to hear (Mark 12:1-12 and 13:1-37).

His adversaries had witnessed His works in broad daylight (Mark 11:18). Why didn't they openly confront Him while they had a chance? Their behavior revealed their hearts. They worked at night because their motives were sinister. The fact they didn't have the boldness to arrest Jesus out in the open demonstrated that they knew their actions were corrupt.

Our Lord called them out for their hypocrisy. He revealed the depravity of their actions. By speaking truth, He demonstrated the Lord's faithfulness to always provide a witness to those who kick against God's truth. On the day of judgment, the mob would be without excuse. They had heard the truth. Jesus had called them out for the deceitful way in which they arrested Him in the Garden.

In the end, the men's sinister schemes were in keeping with prophecy. Jesus revealed such to be true by saying, "But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." Divine sovereignty and human culpability melded together to perform Jesus' arrest. By referencing the "Scriptures," Jesus once again showed His trust in God's truth. Earlier in Mark's gospel, He showed a pattern of appealing to the authority of Scripture when dealing with His opponents. He often used the rabbinical phrase "it is written" to speak of the way in which His ministry was a fulfillment of prophecy (Mark 7:6; 9:12; 9:13; 14:21; and 14:27).

Mark did not specifically list which Old Testament references Jesus had in mind on this particular occasion. Some believe He was referencing Isaiah 53:7-9 and Zechariah 13:7.²¹ Others point to Psalm 22:2, 11-12, and 19-20.²² Jesus did reference the Zechariah passage earlier in Mark 14:27. Maybe He meant to refer to that prophecy once again in our current text.²³ Whatever the case, the point remains — Jesus' work was a fulfillment of Scripture. As He faced the cross, He clung to Scriptural realities. His trust was in the truth of God.

Our Lord stands as a model for us. Victory in the Christian life comes when we rest our souls upon "thus saith the Lord." Without the book we call the Bible, we have no basis for pursuing holy lives (John 17:17), receiving godly instruction and wisdom for life (2 Timothy 3:16-17), or developing a strong faith (Romans 10:17). If we want to stand against the rising tide of a corrupt culture, we must cling to God's truth. It is our only offensive weapon against the ways of unrighteousness (Ephesians 6:17).

Verse 50

The last few verses of our narrative describe the way in which Jesus' closest followers fled at His arrest. They contain some of the saddest words in all of Scripture. Verse 50 says, "Then they all deserted him and ran away" (Mark 14:50). The word translated "all" means "all" — every last disciple forsook Jesus. Each left Jesus with the mob by Himself. Each of the 11 remaining disciples — Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Matthew, Bartholomew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot (Mark 3:16-18) — fled and ran for their lives. Those outside of Jesus' inner-circle who had followed Him throughout the Holy Week and into the Garden of Gethsemane, left Jesus as well. John would later stand near Jesus at the cross (John 19:25-29), but he forsook the Lord on this occasion like the others. With the departure of the disciples from Jesus' side in verse 50, we see the last occasion of Jesus with the Twelve prior to the Resurrection.

²¹ Brooks, 237.

²² Ryle, 254.

²³ Schnabel, 371.

The scene is striking and startling. How could those who were so zealous for Christ's kingdom (Mark 10:37) flee in an instant? How could they let their hopes be disappointed so easily? Peter put up a bit of a fight (Mark 14:47), but couldn't the disciples have done more? Maybe they were disillusioned by Jesus' rebuke of Peter's actions (Matthew 26:52). They still didn't grasp the meaning of the kingdom (Mark 8:33). As a result, when Jesus commanded them not to fight, they saw no other option but to flee.

To depict the disciples' desertion of Jesus, Mark uses strong language translated "they all deserted him." The word rendered "deserted" is one that meant "to leave" or "to forsake."²⁴ Some believe the disciples were hoping for a Messianic miracle. Up until the last minute, Peter and the others were anticipating that Jesus would vanquish His foes in a final show of force.²⁵ When such a scenario didn't pan out, the Twelve did the only other thing they knew to do — they ran!

The disciples' hasty departure was a fulfillment of prophecy. Years prior to the events in our text, the prophets had foretold of the way in which men would run for their lives when Messiah appeared.²⁶ Amos said, "Even the most courageous of the warriors will flee naked on that day — this is the Lord's declaration" (Amos 2:16). Some also see an allusion to Genesis 39:12 in our passage.²⁷ If the events described in that text are indeed a precursor to what we see in the fourteenth Mark's gospel, Joseph's role as a type of Christ has another layer of meaning. In addition to Hebrew prophecy and Christological typology in the Old Testament, Jesus' own teaching foretold of His abandonment. Just a few verses earlier in Mark's gospel, he had spoke of the way in which the Twelve would all turn their back on him (Mark 14:18 and 27-31). Remember from His time of prayer with them in the Garden of Gethsemane of the way in which He warned them to stand on guard so that they wouldn't fall to the temptation. His warnings were undoubtedly in reference to the pending temptation to deny and desert Him (Mark 14:38).

The events in our text should fill us with a spirit of caution. Let us be on guard about scoffing at the disciples for their failure. Placed in the same situation, wouldn't many of us do the same thing? May we be on guard against prideful attitudes. Mark's words should provoke us toward spiritual vigilance. Scripture warns us, "Whoever thinks he stands must be careful not to fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). Temptations to deny and forsake Jesus assault us all on a weekly basis. At times we will be allured to reject Him in favor of worldly attainments and accolades. Our own pride and thirst for prestige will sometimes beckon us to spurn God's Son. May the disciples' flight from the garden fill us with awestruck terror, making us more careful in how we walk, talk, and live. May we humble ourselves before the Lord so He can help us stay true to His name (James 4:10).

Verse 51

In Mark 14:51, Mark spoke of the unforgettable way in which one of Jesus' followers fled scene. He said, "Now a certain young man, wearing nothing but a linen cloth, was following him. They caught hold of him." Mark is the only one to mention the incident associated with the unidentified "young man."²⁸ There has been much debate throughout church history concerning his identity. Most recent tradition sees Mark in the narrative. In the early church, leaders like Ambrose and John Chrysostom believed the young man was John. Victor of Antioch, an early Christian who wrote the first commentary on Mark, reported that the young

²⁴ Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 100.

²⁵ Ryle, 255.

²⁶ Ferguson, 245.

²⁷ Brooks, 238.

²⁸ Ryle, 256.

man was one who lived in the house in which the disciples had eaten the first Lord's Supper (Mark 14:22-26).²⁹ Others in church history saw James, the half brother of Jesus, in the text.³⁰ This latter view seems unlikely, because it seems James was not converted until after the Resurrection (Mark 3:21; Acts 1:14; 1 Corinthians 15:7). Many have believed the "young man" was like a follower of the Lord who was not a part of the original band of disciples. He was a convert who followed Jesus around during the Holy Week.³¹

Verse 52

Mark depicted the hasty and embarrassing nature in which the young man fled from Jesus' captors in verse 52, saying, "but he left the linen cloth behind and ran away naked." The Greek language used to describe the garment depicted an expensive piece of clothing. It referred to a fine piece of linen cloth or garment.³² Whoever wore this garment was likely of a wealthy household.³³ It is for this reason that many believe Mark was the man in our text. The book of Acts tells us that Mark had a wealthy mother (Acts 12:12). It seems Mark was one of those disciples who, though outside the circle of the Twelve, travelled with Jesus during the week of the Passover.

If Mark was present in the garden of Gethsemane, it seems that a larger group than just the Twelve went into the garden to pray with Jesus on the faithful evening. There was a great throng that accompanied our Lord on that fateful evening, but He only took three of his disciples — Peter, James, and John — into the depths of the garden for more prayer (Mark 14:33). Out of either a sense of humility or embarrassment, Mark did not expose his identity as the "young man."³⁴ Maybe the other gospel writers didn't share the details of our current verse in order to keep from sounding critical of their fellow disciple.

To accurately envision the scene in our current passage, it is important to understand the meaning of the Greek word translated "naked." It did not always refer to one who was completely nude. Instead, it spoke of one who was "lightly clad."³⁵ It could have referred to one who was wearing nothing but undergarments, the common loincloth of the day.³⁶ Or, the intent could have been to portray the young man as garbed in nothing but the shirt some wore under their outer robe.³⁷

Most likely, one of the armed guards attempted to seize the young man, but the man jolted away, leaving his outer robe in the guard's hand. This detail in the story was intended to depict just speediness in which all abruptly left and forsook our Lord. The author intended to emphasize the fact that Jesus was deserted and left completely alone. One commentator has remarked that the disciple "would rather escape naked than be taken as one of the followers of Christ."³⁸ Jesus was despised and forsaken by all. Even His closest followers fled during His

²⁹ Schnabel, 371.

³⁰ Brooks 238.

³¹ Ryle, 256.

³² Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 100.

³³ Ferguson, 245.

³⁴ Brooks, 239.

³⁵ Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 200.

³⁶ Brooks, 239.

³⁷ Schnabel, 371.

³⁸ Ryle, 256.

hour of greatest need. Mark will later attempt to depict Jesus in such a helpless and abandon state at his trial and on the cross (Mark 15:29-33).

As for himself, Mark likely added the detail of the way in which he abandoned Jesus as a sort of confessional. While the other gospel writers didn't want to come off as if they were ratting him out, he knew there was good reason to tell his story. His nakedness in the text stirred up imagery of the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:11). It pointed to the shame and isolation brought on by sin. Undoubtedly Mark felt great remorse for his actions. We know the other disciples did (John 20:15-19). Let us always remember that sin, and faithfulness to Jesus, and denial of his word will always lead us to be empty, naked, vulnerable, ashamed, and guilty.

However, the betrayal of Jesus in our text demonstrates the remedy for such sin. Jesus became "a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13). Our Lord was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy: "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of suffering who knew what sickness was. He was like someone people turned away from; he was despised, and we didn't value him" (Isaiah 53:3). Though our sin brings guilt and shame, Jesus has secured our redemption. Because He was isolated from God and others on our behalf (Mark 14:50 and 15:33), we can be restored to God and others (Matthew 22:37-40). We no longer have to live in the embarrassment, insecurity, and guilt that sin creates. We can be clean and we can be free. Jesus' work on our behalf has secured our liberty.