

Text: Mark 14:53-72

Title: "I Am"

Introduction: Today we continue our series, "24" as we look at the last 24 hours of Jesus life here on earth in human form. As followers of Christ or those who are researching Christianity or seeking to know more about the faith; I believe that we have to know the "hows", "whens" and "whys" of those last hours ... hours that changed the world!

Let's Pray!

Before we go any further I invite you to take the insert out of your program. On one side you will see our Scripture for today ... taken from the Book of Mark (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), and on the other side you will see an outline with fill-in-the-blanks. Please take time to fill these in as the answers go up on the screen in front of you. Also, write down whatever else you think will help you in your faith journey or maybe help someone else in their faith journey. Then, we challenge you to take this home with you and put it somewhere where you will read it at least one time this week to remember what we learned about and why it's important to our faith. For those of you listening online or IPODing, you can also download the outline off of our website and follow along as well. We are glad you are with us out there in cyberworld!

After Midnight: Friday morning = In the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, Jesus has just received a kiss of betrayal from his long-time friend and disciple, Judas, Peter pulled out a sword to defend Jesus (took a scolding!), Jesus has been arrested, his disciples have scattered and Jesus is headed back down the Kidron Valley toward the City of David; this time in the custody of the Jewish Temple guards. From the City of David, Jesus would have walked up Mt. Zion to Caiaphas' (the High Priest) House.

I. The Courthouse and The Courtyard (14:53-54)

- A. These are the steps up to the House of Caiaphas (pic). Caiaphas house would have been big enough to use as a meeting place for the Sanhedrin (High Council). Their main meeting place would have been in the Temple. As it was excavated, the diggers found a few very large rooms, like conference rooms where the 71 member Sanhedrin could certainly meet if they needed to. Also found were holding pits for prisoners (pic), where offenders of the religious leaders of Jerusalem / Israel would have been held before, after or during trials by the Sanhedrin. They would not have a place to hold prisoners in the Temple.
- B. Meanwhile, we know that John and Peter followed Jesus back into Jerusalem from a distance. Apparently, John was acquainted with the High Priest and gained access to the courtyard. Peter would have / could have come in with John. If Peter just would have listened to Jesus quoting Scripture ... scripture = this is what has to happen ... this scenario would not have had to play out!

- C. Let's keep in mind that the Sanhedrin was not supposed to meet at night and most often met in the Temple, not in Caiaphas' house. It was not according to their Law that they convict anyone at night. That's why they met again at daybreak (15:1) to decide their next step... (next week).

II. **No Evidence and False Witnesses** (14:55-59)

- A. Now, we know that the priests, teachers of the Law and other religious leaders had previously decided that Jesus had to die. They've captured Jesus, now they have to have a reason to crucify him. They really have no evidence against Jesus, but somehow they have to have at least two witnesses that have testimonies against the arrested person that agree or they cannot keep Jesus. (Deuteronomy 17 & 19 and Numbers 35). That was their Law!
- B. They had probably already started pulling together members of the Sanhedrin to testify falsely against Jesus (lying on a Jewish holiday?). What would drive them to do this?
- C. They finally got two witnesses to agree that Jesus had said that he would tear down the Temple and rebuild it in three days, which would have been an offense to damage the holy building. Jesus (according to John) was, of course, talking about his body being a temple in which the Spirit of God lived.

III. **You Will See...** (vs. 60-61)

- A. Finally, the High Priest (Caiaphas) stood up and started interrogating Jesus. First question = "Aren't you going to answer these charges?" He was talking about the charges that Jesus said that he would tear down the Temple. "What do you have to say for yourself?" No answer.
- B. Then, he asks Jesus point blank, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?"
 - 1. It's at this point that we need to remember that none of this was happening against Jesus' will. Remember Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Not my will, but Yours be done". Jesus knew what had to happen.
 - 2. Besides, Jesus would not, in front of these men, back down from Who He was, so he answers (v. 62), "I Am. And you will see the Son of Man seated in the place of power at God's right hand and coming on the clouds of heaven."
- C. Now, the Jewish religious leaders know a couple of things about what Jesus is saying.
 - 1. "I Am." They know that this is how God identified God's self to Moses and told Moses to identify God to the Hebrew people. Jesus, with that two word statement, just revealed that He is God.

2. “Son of Man”. They know that this is Jesus again addressing himself as God in human form! “Son of Man” was used in their Scriptures in the Book of Daniel.
 3. “...seated in the place of power at God’s right hand...” Jesus just turned the tables. He claimed that though the religious leaders judged him now, Jesus would be Judge with God at the Ultimate Judgment!
- D. (v. 63-64) So, here’s the deal: in front of Jewish religious leaders, you cannot claim to be the Son of God! That’s blasphemy! Two Responses:
1. #1 = Caiaphas tears his garments (under). This is an appropriate response to someone who just claimed to have the same powers and holiness as God. Traditional Jews won’t even write out the name of “God”, but instead write it as “G-D”.
 2. #2 = “He deserves to die!” Also appropriate response for someone who just claimed they would sit with God and judge all people ... this man had to be a lunatic—didn’t he?!

IV. **Hit and Spit** (v. 65)

- A. First, spitting on someone else is about the meanest gesture one human could make toward another. It is a gross personal insult. But, there is actually Scriptural backing for the other part of the event!
- B. It says that they blindfolded him and beat him with their fists ... “Prophecy to us!” This is based on an interpretation of Isaiah 11. The verses talk about how the Messiah (Who Jesus claimed to be) would be filled with the Holy Spirit and thus, wisdom and understanding. Their argument was that if Jesus was the Messiah, he should be able to tell, without seeing, who hit Him.
- C. I wonder if we’ve thought about why all this happened ... besides Jesus knowing that it had to happen in order to make come true what He and God had predicted through the Old Testament prophets (at least 400 years before)...
- D. Think about it ... why did they do this? The Sanhedrin (Jewish Religious Council) met at night during a religious festival, which was very unorthodox! It points to the secrecy and urgency in which they felt they had to do deal with Jesus.
 1. Secrecy = They knew there was a potential of a riot if the general population knew what was going on ... people taking sides on if Jesus was the Messiah or not.
 2. Urgency = The religious leaders knew that if they wanted Jesus to be crucified before the Sabbath, the Roman Governor still had to approve it ... first thing on Friday morning!
- E. Let’s not forget this ... these were the most highly educated and personally holy religious people in the world.

1. If anyone should have been able to recognize God in human form, it should have been them!
 2. The God that they had studied for years was walking among them and they couldn't see Him.
 3. Their love for their power and status so blinded them that they missed God... They missed God—He was right there!
- F. So, how could this happen? How could 71 (or whatever percentage was present that night) of the most religious and God-fearing men in the world do what they did? Why did they condemn an innocent man to death? If they didn't believe he was the Messiah and claimed falsely, why would those Godly, upstanding men, spit on Jesus? Why would they feel a need to blindfold him, mock him and punch him?
- G. Answer: FEAR! Jesus threatened their lifestyle ... their social status, their power, their popularity and the very social order of their culture.

V. The Poison of Fear

- A. It was an easy sell for Caiaphas ... "If this man lives and the people keep thinking he is something special, it will change the whole of our society, which will affect everyone; especially us! If we don't get rid of him, it will probably hurt our relationship with the Roman Government and in turn, all of the people of Israel. It would be better for one man to die than for the whole society to suffer!"
- B. SOLD! Do you all know how fast fear spreads?!? It's like wildfire! It didn't take long for the majority of that Council to catch on to the FEAR that Caiaphas was selling...
- C. You know what? Here is my guess ... my guess is that of that 71 man Council of very Godly men, there were at least a few there that disagreed with what they were doing...
1. Somebody had to be asking, "Are we sure this *isn't* the Son of God?"
 2. Somebody had to be asking, "Is this really a fair trial?"
 3. Somebody had to be asking, "Why don't we just meet at the Temple in the morning?"
 4. Somebody had to be asking, "Why is it okay to spit on this man?"
 5. Somebody had to be asking, "Why is it okay to be beating on this man?"
- D. Do you know why they didn't speak up? The same reason you and I probably would not have spoken up ... FEAR.
1. How many times have you wanted to speak up, but chose not to because you were AFRAID that you would sound foolish?
 2. How many times have we kept our mouths shut when we know what was going on wasn't Right?!?
- E. I believe that it is just as much a sin to do nothing when something is a sin as it is to live out a sin. British politician, Edmund Burke wrote, "The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing."

- F. I Confess = I'm guilty of this. I allow FEAR to drive me far too often.
1. There are times that I don't say something about something that is wrong because I'm afraid that I might look foolish or hurt someone's feelings or step on someone's toes...
 2. I sometimes act out of fear as the Shepherd of these churches ... I have times when I'm afraid of the unknown ... I'm afraid of what long-time members here will say ... I'm afraid of what my colleagues (other pastors) will say about me!
 3. So, here's the deal ... I'm going to strive hard not to lead out of fear any more!
 4. There are some very hard decisions that have to be made around here over the next few months. Pray for me not to lead out of FEAR, but out of LOVE! Love for Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God...
 5. In 1st John it says that "perfect love casts out all fear" and that's how I have to lead if I'm going to be who God wants ME to be and US to be!
- G. Do you know what I know? I KNOW that God wants BMZ to continue to grow in numbers. Do you know why? Because each number that we count in worship, discipleship classes, small groups, Sunday School, FUEL Youth, Man Group, etc. represents an ETERNAL SOUL!
1. That's what HAS TO DRIVE US!
 2. That's why we exist as a Church. We don't exist to make everyone who is here HAPPY. We exist to make everyone here a Follower of Jesus Christ!
 3. If people's ETERNAL JOY is what REALLY DRIVES US, our decision making will change.

VI. Three "No"s and Two Crows (vs. 66-72)

- A. Do you know what I think? I think Peter could have talked his friends into not writing this part of the story down ... BUT, they did. Peter denying that he knew Jesus is in all four (4) Gospels.
- B. Do you know what I think happened? I think from the time that Peter started preaching after Jesus left the earth; he included this story in about every sermon!
- C. Do you know why? Because Peter knew that every one of us would DENY JESUS at some point or another in our lives...
- D. Don't forget that we have this great story at the end of the Book of John where Jesus meets the disciples back up on the shores of the Sea of Galilee after His resurrection...
 1. The Disciples listen to some guy on shore (Jesus) and suddenly catch a ton of fish.
 2. They have breakfast on the shore together.
 3. Jesus pulls Peter aside for a little talk ... asks Peter three times if he loves Jesus. Three times Peter gets to say, "I Love You, Jesus."

4. Peter is redeemed and reconciled to Jesus and goes on to serve Jesus for the rest of his life and dies because of his faith in Jesus.
 5. Jesus gives 2nd chances ... anyone need to hear that today?
- E. So, which one are you today?
1. Are you like Caiaphas the High Priest whose fear and self-centeredness drove him to do something really wrong?
 2. Are you like some members of the Council whose fear drove them to silence even though they knew it was wrong?
 3. Are you like Peter, who, when the chips were down, denied that he even knew Jesus?

This morning, I hope we hear Jesus proclaim Who He is and the Future ... "I AM the Son of God and I will come again!"

Let's Pray!