

**St. John's Episcopal Church
Southampton, New York
"Sealed with a Kiss"**

Luke 22:47 – 65

Community Good Friday Service

April 3, 2015

And so, the Messianic mission of Jesus enters it's final... and most difficult chapter.

With His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, things moved from moderately contentious... to utterly antagonistic; from mere theological disputation... to first degree legal accusation. No longer would Jesus be exchanging barbs with the scribes and Pharisees; from now on He'd be getting punched by the local authorities. Gone was all rabbinic pretense of trying to outwit Him... replaced by the steadfast determination to just get rid of Him.

Up to now, Jesus had been a thorn in the Pharisaic hide, a burr under the Sadducean saddle blanket, a vexing irritation to the priestly powers-that-be who were trying to maintain the status quo with Rome. But now Jesus was a captive, a prisoner, a defendant against whom a capital case could be, and would be, made. As Jesus Himself noted in our text, He was now in the hands of the power of darkness... and you can be sure that that power had no intention whatsoever of letting Him out of it's grasp.

No, at this moment the scribes, and the Pharisees, and the temple priests, and all the Jerusalem movers and shakers... had Jesus right where they wanted Him. And it's a measure of just how deeply everyone had misunderstood what Jesus was really up to... when we realize that Jesus was right where *He* wanted to be, too.

Not that He had some masochistic craving to be placed under arrest, not at all; He wasn't looking forward to being betrayed, and lied about, and disrespected, and boxed around like a common criminal. We know from His impassioned plea to His Father, while praying in the garden, that Jesus was dreading the whip; fearing the crown of thorns; anxious to avoid, if there was any way possible, the agonizing death that awaited Him on the cross. Being placed under arrest was no doubt the most embarrassing, humiliating, heartbreaking thing that Jesus had ever had to endure. So, when I say that, when they slapped the cuffs on Him, Jesus was "right where He wanted to be..." I don't mean that He was happy about it. Of course not.

No, He was devastated by it. But as He'd been telling His disciples for many months now, the whole trajectory of His ministry was leading Him to just that time... in just that place. And it was in order to face just that moment... that Jesus had been born into this troubled, sin-sick world in the first place. It was a horrible day; but it was the day of Jesus' crowning achievement. So... how come the only ones cheering, were the people who hated Jesus' guts? Why was it just the Pharisees and chief priests who were back-slapping and high-fiving each other?

Where were the happy crowds from Palm Sunday... you know, the people waving palm fronds and throwing their cloaks on the road? Where were the celebratory shouts of "*Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!*" Where was the borrowed donkey that had carried

Jesus in so much triumph, just a week before? If today was the day that Jesus' whole mission was pointing to... how come no one was shouting "*Hosanna!*" when they placed Him under arrest?

Well, for one thing, that Palm Sunday bunch was long gone by now... at least the happy faces in the crowd. When Jesus didn't immediately strike dead every Roman in Judea, most of the people turned in their membership cards to the Jesus Booster Club... and then started shopping around for a more politically proactive messiah. And, at this point, the disciples were gone, too... at least most of them were. They'd been having trouble grasping the full meaning of Jesus' work since the first day they'd been recruited... and now, faced with a club-wielding, threat-making, vitriol-spewing mob of seriously ticked-off Jerusalemites, they started disappearing into the woodwork as well.

I mean, they'd stood by Jesus through three years of thick and thin... and, at various times, they'd demonstrated a fair amount of courage. But, like the Palm Sunday enthusiasts, the disciples, too, were expecting more in the way of messianic fireworks. And when Jesus failed to deliver, and instead offered Himself meekly to the very enemies who were trying to do Him in... they'd finally had enough. And they were now falling over each other in their mad rush to catch the next train back to Galilee. So, there would be no "rah-rahing" from them, either.

Of course, Judas Iscariot was still around... but, uh, he wasn't exactly leading a round of "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow" on Jesus' behalf. He was, for now at least, working with the dark side... the people who wanted to have Jesus whacked. So, no matter his motivation for selling Jesus out... he wasn't treating this day as the high-water mark of Jesus' work.

And then there was Peter... he was still around, too. Barely. He was standing in the shadows, hanging around the edges of the anti-Jesus gang, doing his best to blend in and not be noticed. Peter was hardly in a position to celebrate anything... and, when he was finally outed by some anonymous serving girl, he took a walk on the dark side himself, and denied that he even knew who Jesus was.

So, there Jesus is, being taken into custody on what was, up till then, the most important day of His entire life and ministry. And not a single other person, besides Himself, had even the faintest clue as to why it was all happening... or what it all meant. But Jesus knew. And even though He was dreading the pain, and the bloodshed, and the abandonment, and the suffering... He understood that, unless He submitted to the terminal indignity of His unjust arrest, He wouldn't be able to give to *us* the eternal joy of His glorious resurrection.

He knew, what nobody else had ever even imagined; that the gift of salvation, would make a home in this world not through force of arms, or political coercion, or the endless machinations of the bureaucrats... but through Almighty God Himself, willingly submitting to all the grief, frustration, heartache, and muck that's crippled our human condition.

Jesus knew that He would lead the way to the Kingdom of God, not by avoiding the awful aspects of life... but by embracing them, and submitting to them, and making them His own; just as we must make them *our* own. And it was in bearing, in His own body and soul, the very worst of what this broken world has to offer... that He would, in three days' time, make available to you, and to me, the very best of what our Heavenly Father has to offer. Peace... hope... joy... a meaningful life... citizenship in God's eternal kingdom.

It was with His eyes on *that* prize, that Jesus held out His wrists and said to His captors, “Take me in.” And so they did; and so God’s great plan of salvation moved one step closer to completion.

Sealed with a kiss, from Judas.

Fueled by the love of Christ.

To whom be glory, honor, and praise forevermore... amen.