

*The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 11 January 2026. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.*

## The Hour of Darkness

### Matthew 26:47-56

Years ago, a missionary named Roy Rosedale told a chilling story of an event that had happened to his wife Eleanor while they were serving the Lord in Indonesia. One morning, Eleanor looked out her window, and saw a woman walking onto their property. The woman walked around the back of the property, and then walked back out again. Eleanor knew this woman, because she and her husband had once paid her to do small jobs around the property; however, they had stopped employing her a little while before, because they had repeatedly caught her stealing from them. Eleanor was used to seeing this woman walking uninvited onto the property (usually for the purpose of stealing); and so, she simply shrugged it off. However, later that day, she saw something ugly lying on the ground on the edge of her property; and she knew that this object had been placed there by a local witch, as part of a ritual curse. At the time, she didn't know what, exactly, was going on; but she knew that spiritual forces must be at work.<sup>1</sup>

Later that day, as Eleanor was walking into their sitting room, she suddenly had the horrible, chilling sensation that she was surrounded by evil spirits, who were closing in on her. She couldn't see them; but she could feel their presence very acutely. Having never experienced this kind of spiritual attack before, she whispered the holy name of "Jesus"; but nothing happened.<sup>2</sup> She then spoke in a loud voice, and said, "In Jesus' name get out of here, whatever you are, in Jesus' name get out!"<sup>3</sup> Yet, the sense of the enemy's presence was still very much there. At this point, she was terrified. She pleaded with God to show her what to do; and almost as soon as she had made this request, God put into her mind what to do. She lay prostrate on the floor, put her hands over her head, and said, "The blood, Lord, the Blood...over me, over the children, over Roy wherever he is, over this house! Oh, I don't know what's happening, but the blood, Lord, the blood."<sup>4</sup> As she prayed, that horrible, heavy sense of demonic presence faded away; and she wept and thanked the Lord for protecting her family.<sup>5</sup>

Later on, the Rosedales found out that the woman whom they had dismissed had paid a witch to put a death curse on them. Apparently, people who have such curses put on them die from fear. Having no defence from demons, their hearts literally stop from terror. Yet, to the Rosedales' knowledge, no believer who had had this curse put on him ever died. (And they *did* know other believers who had experienced this.) Roy wrapped up his wife's story this way: "It is my belief that just as witches call on Satan and gain demonic assistance, when Christians call on Jesus, God's angels come to their aid."<sup>6</sup>

Every child of God knows that deliverance from the enemy is available through the blood of Jesus. God encamps around His children, and does not allow them to die from direct demonic attack. Yet, God does often allow His people to die at the hands of their flesh-and-blood enemies, who have been incited by Satan's angels. God *could* bring down angels from heaven to deliver them; but sometimes, God chooses to receive glory from their courageous death for His name. So it was with Christ. God the Father certainly had the power to remove the cup of judgment from His Son; but He didn't. God sent an angel to *strengthen* Christ for the horrible hours that lay ahead; and God the Father sustained Him through that dark hour in Gethsemane. Yet, the road to Calvary had to be walked by our Saviour. Satan's hour—the hour of darkness—had begun; but God the Father would be with His Son—and with His wavering disciples—all the way. The title of this message is ***The Hour of Darkness***.

**Read Matthew 26:47-56.**

### I. Jesus reproves His fake friend (vv. 47-50)

About 1,000 years before Christ's birth, King David was on the run from his own son, Absalom, who was trying to overthrow him. It was during that dark time in David's life that one of his most trusted counsellors, **Ahithophel**, went over to Absalom's side, and gave him counsel as to how he might murder his own dad, and usurp his throne. Now, Ahithophel certainly wasn't the only one who turned on David during this revolt; there were other friends of David who betrayed him, as well. However, apart from Absalom himself, Ahithophel was perhaps the one whose treachery hurt David more than any other.

For years, Ahithophel had seemed like a stalwart friend to David. When God was afflicting David with a grave illness on account of his sin with Bathsheba, Ahithophel had visited David at his sickbed, and had spoken comforting words to him. Yet, all the time, treachery was in Ahithophel's heart; and he was simply waiting for the right moment to get revenge. You see, Ahithophel happened to be the grandfather of Bathsheba; and he had never forgiven David for bringing disgrace on his granddaughter. Only days before Absalom came into Jerusalem with his forces, Ahithophel was still sitting at David's table, and eating bread with him; but in a moment, he became his enemy. It was during this time that David wrote a prayer to God, to pour out his grief concerning his "friend" who had betrayed him.

**Read Psalm 41:1-13.**

**Psalm 41** isn't the only psalm in which David poured out his grief about Ahithophel's treachery. In **Psalm 55**, David wrote, "***It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could***

*have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.*" Ahithophel hurt David deeply!

Now, what do **Psalm 41**, and the story of Ahithophel, have to do with what we've just read in **Matthew 26**? Plenty! You see, this was one of those times when an event in David's life was a picture of an event in Christ's life. **Psalm 41** and **55** are *prophecies* in type. David is a prophetic type of Christ; and Ahithophel is a prophetic type of Judas. At the Last Supper, Christ himself affirmed this. He said, "***But that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me... Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed!***" After Christ's ascension back to Heaven, Peter also affirmed that **Psalm 41** is a prophecy of Judas. As he was speaking to the believers in the Upper Room, he said, "***Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.***"

Now, Christ was not a sinner, as David was; nor was Christ surprised by Judas' betrayal, as David was surprised by Ahithophel's. Being God, Christ knew, from the beginning, that Judas would betray Him. Nonetheless, the similarities between Ahithophel and Judas are striking. For one thing, both betrayers were **special friends and confidants** of their master. Both betrayers **ate bread together** with their master. (In Judas' case, he betrayed his Master *immediately* after dipping the bread in the sop.) Both betrayers **used vain, flattering words**, by which they intended to kill their master. Both betrayers did their betrayal **while their master was emotionally distraught**, physically weak, and vulnerable. Lastly (and most tragically) both betrayers **committed suicide** by hanging after betraying their master. Rather than repent and truly turn to God, both Ahithophel and Judas ended their own lives.

Did Judas *always* intend to betray Jesus? Clearly not. For a good while, he really did view Jesus as "Messiah material"; and he wanted to be in on the "ground floor" when the Messiah set up the Kingdom. However, it is very telling that there is not one record in Scripture that Judas ever addressed Jesus as "Lord." Now, as we just read in **Matthew 26**, Judas did call Jesus "**Master.**" In fact, in the Gospel of **Mark**, we are told that Judas called Jesus "Master" twice in a row. As he approached Jesus, he called him "**Master, Master,**" and gave Him the customary kiss of greeting on the cheek. However, the word "**Master**" is by no means the same as the word "Lord." The word "Master" is the word *rabbi*, meaning "Teacher" (somewhat like the English title "Doctor," referring to someone of high learning). However, it appears that the word *Kurios* ("Lord") never passed from Judas' lips.

So, what does this mean? It means that Judas never actually regarded Jesus as God in human flesh. (Or, if he did consider Him to be God, he never truly submitted his *life* to Him.) You see, every part of Jesus' name *demands* that you submit your life to Him. “Jesus” is His human name; and it means “Saviour.” Why would ransomed, redeemed people *not* freely and joyfully serve the one who saved their souls? The title “Christ” (which means Messiah, or Anointed One) identifies Him as our High Priest and Redeemer, and the One whom the Father has appointed to rule the nations. Obviously, this name demands our submission, too. Then, there is the title “Lord”; and this title identifies Jesus as *God*. In Hebrew, the word for “Lord” is *Adonai*; but in Greek, the word is *Kurios*: and the two are used interchangeably. When an Old Testament verse with the God’s name, *Adonai*, is quoted in the New Testament, it is translated as *Kurios*; and it is usually applied to Jesus. Likewise, God’s Hebrew name *Jehovah* (which is usually translated as “LORD”) is translated in the New Testament as *Kurios* (“Lord”); and it, too, is repeatedly applied to Jesus. For example, in **Isaiah 45**, the LORD (Jehovah) is speaking, and says, “**Unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.**” Yet, in **Philippians 2**, Paul cites this very Scripture, and applies it to Jesus. He says, “***That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess*** [or “swear”] ***that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.***”

There is no getting around it: the name “Lord” declares the deity of Jesus Christ. This is precisely why Gnostics and New Agers in our modern day do not refer to Jesus as “Lord.” They often refer to a “Jesus” of their own deluded imagination (a “Jesus” who was an “ascended master,” or a “highly evolved soul,” or something of that sort). They may even refer to Jesus as “Christ” (or as a great man who possessed “the christ spirit”). However, what they mean by this is that Jesus is part of some kind of universal “Christ consciousness,” which *everyone* possesses. Jesus, they say, just happened to be more “highly evolved” in his “Christ consciousness” than most. **However, they will not call Jesus “Lord.”** They may address other professed gods, spirit beings, avatars, or “ascended masters” by the title “lord”; but they will not call Jesus by His full name, “**the Lord Jesus Christ.**” The evil spirits who deceive and control these people loathe to call Jesus “Lord,” because they know that Jesus is truly Lord of all, and that He will one day cast them into the Lake of Fire.

Now, it is entirely possible for religious, but unsaved people to call Jesus “Lord,” because they their religious tradition has taught them so. However, they cannot, in *truth*, call Jesus “Lord,” because they have never truly submitted their lives to him. Despite the fact that Judas was with Jesus for 3 ½ years, and despite the fact that he looked and talked like a believer in Jesus, he never truly submitted to Jesus. He looked like a Christian; but he was never saved. Instead of living for the Lord Jesus Christ, he always lived for himself.

I would ask the question, “Have *you* submitted your life to Jesus? Or is your profession of faith in Jesus fake?” Perhaps some of you really *think* of yourself as a Christian (just as Judas did, for a while); yet, if you were put in the right circumstances, you would betray Him, and take off the mask, and take your lot with those who reject Christ. If you have never truly repented of your sin and submitted your *life* to Christ, Jesus is still calling you “**friend**”—just as He did to Judas. He is calling you to repent and believe on Him. Don’t ignore Him!

Now, most of us in this room *have* submitted our souls to the Lord Jesus Christ; but the question remains, “Are you *continually* submitting to Him, every day, in every area of your life?” Christ died for you so that you might no longer live your life for yourself, but for Him. Your money and possessions are not your own. The Lord’s Day is not your own, to spend it as you please. (In fact, *no* day of the week is your own.) Your body is not your own. Your life is not your own. Your will is not your own. Your heart, mind, and will *must* be continually in submission to the Lord Jesus Christ, for *Him* to rule and command. Jesus isn’t merely “Teacher”: He is Lord. And by the way, Christian: Jesus had *His* Judas; and you may be sure that there will be “Judases” and “Ahithophels” in your life, too. Even those closest to you may fail and betray you; but when they do, don’t become bitter, and allow it to stop you from serving Christ. Man will fail you; but Jesus never will!

## II. Jesus reproves His fearful friend (vv. 51-54)

**(Read Matthew 26:51-54.)** Judas was a fake friend of Jesus; and in Gethsemane, his mask fell off. However, Jesus had eleven *true* (yet *fearful*) friends with Him that evening; and the one whose conduct stands out the most is **Peter**. Though Matthew doesn’t mention Peter by name, John does. John also tells us the name of the man whose ear was cut off (**Malchus**): and Luke tells us what became of Malchus. Let’s look at these accounts, and piece it together.

**Read Luke 22:47-51.**

**Read John 18:2-11.**

In a moment of bravado, Peter foolishly cut off Malchus’s ear; but Jesus reproved him for it. He reproved him *in word*, when He commanded him to put his sword back into its sheath; and He also reproved him in *deed*, by showing kindness to Malchus. By taking time to heal Malchus’s ear (even though Malchus was involved in His arrest), Christ was being what He had been throughout His entire life—**the Suffering Servant**. Once again, Jesus wasn’t thinking of Himself, but of others. Peter, on the other hand, was *not* following his Master’s

example. He was being anything but a suffering servant. He *did* think to ask Jesus whether he should smite with the sword; but he didn't wait around for Jesus' answer. He just started to swing his sword around wildly. Not only that, but he smote a poor servant of the high priest, who apparently wasn't even armed.

This incident shows us a couple things. First, it shows that our mandate, as New Testament Christians, is *not* to take up the sword. Jesus said, "**Put up thy sword into the sheath.**" If Christ wouldn't even permit Peter to take up the sword to defend his Master, how much less would He allow His people to take up the sword against unbelievers in order to set up some kind of Christian "theocracy"? Such an idea is utterly anathema to true followers of Jesus Christ. True churches of Jesus Christ throughout the last 2,000 years have *never* taken up the sword and forced people to submit to Jesus Christ. Instead, they have lovingly attempted to persuade them to believe the Gospel, by way of preaching and testifying—just as the Apostles did. In contrast, many false, apostate, pseudo—"Christian" religions, which have slaughtered countless millions of people, show, by their murderous actions, that Jesus Christ is *not* their Master, and that they do not know Him.

Now, we who have received Christ as Saviour know these things very well. Most of you are not hearing anything you don't know already. As born-again, Bible-believing Christians, we know that our mission is not to *destroy* men's lives, but to tell sinners about the One who can *save* their lives. But before we pat ourselves on the back for not being one of those apostate religions that kill people, let's look at this scenario a little closer, and see if there might not be a personal application for us. How many times do *we* "cut off lost people's ears," so to speak, by getting angry, and saying harsh and unkind things? Perhaps you are in a shop, or other place of business, and the employee who is dealing with you is not exactly being helpful to you. Do you respond in the flesh, and say things that Christ wouldn't have said? Perhaps someone even says blasphemous things against our Lord while you are trying to witness to him. Do you allow your fleshly anger to take over, and respond with rude, caustic words which give the impression that you *hate* that person—when you *should* be showing that you *love* him, and want him to be saved? How many times do we make it necessary for our Lord to heal the ears that we have "cut off" with our un-Christlike words and actions? Can you imagine how hard it would have been, after Christ's resurrection, for Peter to look up Malchus and try to tell him that Jesus Christ could save him, and make him into a new person? Peter was not being a suffering servant that evening; but Christ was. Jesus is the Servant of God and of man, *par excellence*. As Isaiah prophesied, Jesus is the LORD's Servant, whom He upholds, His elect, in whom His soul delights.

### III. Jesus reproves His foes (vv. 55-56)

**(Read Matthew 26:55-56 again.)** The soldiers that came to arrest Jesus were armed to the teeth. Apparently, they had the mistaken notion that Jesus might try to harm or resist them. Little did they know what Jesus' true mission was. Jesus hadn't come to destroy sinners, but to save them. They also had no idea of whom they were dealing with. As we saw in **John 18**, Jesus simply spoke the words "*Ego eimi*" ("I am"), and the soldiers fell back flat on the ground. (This was the *real* "slaying in the Spirit"!) Jesus is the great I AM who had spoken to Moses centuries earlier; and the mere mention of His name rendered them totally powerless.

Jesus wasn't disrespectful to these officers; but He did invite them to reason with Him. He challenged them with the question, "Why didn't you arrest me all those times when I was teaching openly in the Temple?" The fact is that what they were doing was *illegal*. By Jewish law, no one was to be put on trial between sunset and sunrise; yet, there they were, arresting a man, and taking Him straight to Caiphas's house for trial, in the middle of the night. Why did their superiors have to break their own laws in order to try a man who wasn't even resisting them? The fact is (as they had just heard Jesus say to Peter) that Jesus, being God, could have prayed to His Father, and have asked for twelve legions of angels (62,400 angels) to rescue Him—if that had been His Father's will. Yet, He didn't. Why? Because it was *Satan's* hour.

### **Read Luke 22:52-53.**

Jesus made it clear to these arresting officers that the only reason they were arresting Him was that His Father was *permitting* them to do so. They were acting as unwitting dupes of Satan; and it was now Satan's "hour." Why? Because God had given it to him. In this "hour," Satan would unleash a lot of power. Consider what Satan managed to do in less than 24 hours.

First, he entered into one of the men who had been with Jesus for 3 ½ years, and used him to betray the Son of God. Secondly, Satan successfully tempted a saved man, Peter, to deny that he even knew Jesus. Satan desired to "sift" Peter as wheat; and he succeeded. In fact, Satan put so much fear into the hearts of Jesus' eleven saved disciples, that they *all* forsook the Lord, and fled. Within a matter of hours, Satan caused the whole city of Jerusalem to turn on Jesus and cry, "**Crucify him!**" He also led wicked hands to rip Jesus' flesh apart, put a crown of thorns on His head, drive nails through His hands, and mock and blaspheme their Creator.

Satan has much power. However, he can exercise only what power God *allows* him to exercise, and *when* He allows him to exercise it. Later that evening Jesus told Pilate, "***Thou couldest have to power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.***" It is as though God were allowing Satan to play a "chess match" with Him; and in this match, He allowed Satan to make moves that *seemed* fatal to Himself. However, God owns the chess board, and all the pieces; and He allowed Satan to make only the moves that accomplished His own purpose. Peter put it this way: "***Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and***

*foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."*

Christ defeated Satan at the cross; and although He will allow Satan to have one final "hour of power" during the Tribulation, He will crush Satan in the end.

Now, what can we take away from this? First of all, we who know the Lord may take comfort in the fact that God allows Satan to do nothing to us except what He allows; and He has a purpose in it. We simply need to trust Him. On the other hand, we must also take caution, because whenever Satan is given an "hour" to fight against God's saints, he can cause a lot of spiritual ruin—if God's people be ill-prepared for that hour. Peter and the other disciples weren't ready for that hour; and they received great hurt. We must put on the whole armour of God every single day, so that we may "**be able to withstand in the “evil day”**"—that day when God allows Satan to fire all his darts at you. God will give you victory, *if* you will be instant in prayer, faith, and righteousness, and immersed in God's Word.

**Read Ephesians 6:10-18.**

In Jesus' prayer to His Father on the way to Gethsemane, He said, "**Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition.**" This is a wonderful promise! No matter what temptations Satan may hurl at us, and no matter how wounded we may be in the battle, Jesus never casts out His children, because He is the Keeper of our souls. Jesus promised, "**All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.**" Yet, Jesus doesn't merely keep our souls from *eternal condemnation*; He also keeps us from *physical dangers* in this world. That is exactly how John applied Jesus' words, "**Those that thou gavest me I have kept.**" Let's look at that parallel passage again.

**Read John 17:12 / 18:7-9.**

Think of this! Jesus commanded the men who had come to arrest Him to let the disciples go their way; and, amazingly, these hardened soldiers actually did as Jesus said, and allowed the disciples to flee! Now, there is no logical explanation for this. For one thing, the Sanhedrin hated Jesus' disciples almost as much as they hated Jesus. The fact that they had recently considered assassinating Lazarus shows how much they wanted to kill Jesus' followers. For another thing, Peter had just cut off the ear of one of the high priest's servants—an action which *should* have resulted in *all* the disciples' being violently arrested. To be sure, the soldiers feared Jesus (especially after they all fell down backward); yet, their fear didn't deter them from going forward with the arrest. In light of this, you'd think that the soldiers would have arrested the disciples as insurrectionists, and have hauled them all off to Caiaphas. In fact, they could have used Peter's assault as *evidence* that Jesus was an insurrectionist!

Yet, nothing happened to them. Why? Because God wouldn't allow it. God had work for them to do. Despite their cowardice and unfaithfulness that evening, Jesus kept them from arrest and martyrdom, so that they could go into all the world after His resurrection, and preach the Gospel. This shows that Jesus' "keeping" of our souls includes not only His keeping us from *eternal condemnation*, but also His keeping of us from *dangers in this life*, so that we can accomplish His will. The disciples all fled; but they didn't *need* to flee. If *God* didn't want them to die that night, then there was no power on earth that could have taken their lives. *Nothing* can happen to you that God doesn't allow, Christian. He will keep you both in this life, and throughout eternity. This is why Peter admonished suffering believers to "***commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.***"

**Conclusion:** As we close this morning, I would ask: "Are you saved? Have you repented of your sin, and truly believed on Christ?" You see, Jesus will not save anyone whom He cannot command. *Judas* made a profession of faith; but it wasn't real. He never surrendered his soul to Jesus; and at this very moment, he is screaming in hell. Jesus said it had been better for him if he had never been born. Don't let that be said of you! Heaven is real; but **hell** is also real: and it is forever. If you have never repented and believed on Jesus, please do so today! **Perhaps you are saved**, but you are very vulnerable to the enemy right now. Perhaps you spend very little time in prayer, and you are weak, just as the disciples were. If so, it's time to get serious! Let Christ have full control of your heart, and obey Him implicitly!

<sup>1</sup> Robert J. Morgan, *Preacher's Sourcebook of Creative Sermon Illustrations* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2007), p. 199.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*