

## Sermon for March 14, 2018

### Hope, Wake Forest, NC

#### **“Your Redeemer’s Conflict”**

##### **Luke 22:49-51**

22:49 When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, "Lord, should we strike with the sword?" 22:50 Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. 22:51 But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him.

##### **Matthew 26:52-54**

26:51 Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. 26:52 Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. 26:53 Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? 26:54 But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?"

#### **“Defending Jesus”**

I’m not a sports fan, but on the rare occasion that I spectate I like to support the underdog – well, unless the team that is winning happens to be the one that my wife is cheering on. I won’t mention any particular college team. Probably many of us are like that – we have our favorites, but we like to defend the weak and cheer on those who are oppressed. We generally don’t like bullies; we prefer to defend the weak. Bullying, whether it is done physically, through social media, or by some other means upsets us. We come to the defense of those who are weak and oppressed. It is what we do out of concern for others.

While we believe in defending others, as Christians, we believe we are called to make a defense of our faith – that is what apologetics is about. There are books about apologetics and even courses in Bible college and seminary about Christian apologetics. We learn not how to argue, but how to give the reasons for what we believe. Peter tells us that we are to be ready at all times to give a reason for the hope that we have. However, we are also told to give our defense in a spirit of humility and gentleness.

As citizens of this country we also have a loyalty to our nation and we feel a compulsion to defend our country, sometimes even when things are not being done exactly as we would like them to be. We get upset when someone attacks or badmouths our country. In light of this, I guess we can understand when one of the disciples tried to defend Jesus against the servants of the high priests. Even though there had been many times when they did not understand what Jesus was doing and even disagreed with Him and even though Peter, James and John had repeatedly fallen asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane, they were motivated to defend Jesus.

Here is the situation. At The last supper Jesus had met with His disciples. When there was no one to do the customary foot washing before the meal (apparently the disciples in charge of arranging the dinner had forgotten this important detail) Jesus took upon Himself the menial task of the servant and washed their feet. We all remember Peter’s indignation at this, at first refusing to have Jesus wash his feet. We

note that Peter did not offer to take Jesus' place and do the foot washing. Jesus made His point of our need to serve others as He had served His disciples.

Jesus then announces that one of the disciples will betray Him. Their response is one of indignation – certainly not me. But they are also curious as to which one it might be and Jesus gives them the clue – the one who dips in the dish with Him – a clue which apparently they missed. Jesus then sends Judas away, telling him to hurry and do what he must do, for Jesus knew what was to take place.

Jesus furthermore tells the disciples that they will all forsake him. Peter staunchly affirms his loyalty to Jesus and vehemently denies that he will fall away. All the disciples likewise affirm their commitment to Jesus. Then comes Jesus' cryptic instruction to "Sell your cloak – buy a sword". They respond, "We have two swords". Jesus says, "That is enough". This sets the stage for what is to come later in the Garden of Gethsemane.

We are familiar with what takes place in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus takes Peter, James and John and asks them to pray while He goes off to pray. They fall asleep. This takes place three times. Jesus reprimands them. It causes me to question how Jesus views my prayer life and the many times I fall asleep while praying. This probably never happens to you.

While Jesus and His disciples are still in the Garden the betrayal takes place. Judas arrives with the temple guard – soldiers with clubs and swords. Jesus willingly submits to them and asks them to let His disciples go. It is during this time that Peter cuts off Malchus' ear, one of the High Priests' servants – according to legend Malchus was the ears of the high priest who spied on Jesus. Jesus' response is to heal the servant's ear. He also uses this as a teaching moment. Saying, "All who take the sword will perish with the sword". He furthermore challenges those arresting him – they had opportunity to arrest him in public; they did not; now in secret they come in force – are they afraid? It is at this time that the disciples, despite their early affirmation, run away. How many times have we acted differently than we earlier affirmed or acted contrary to our best intentions?

What is the application of this event? Jesus did not need a physical defense by Peter or any of the other disciples – He could have called on legions of angels. He needed to fulfill His mission which took place through His life in which He fulfilled God's righteous Law on our behalf. His mission was to go through His suffering and death to take the punishment for our sins, which is everlasting death. His mission culminated in His glorious resurrection from the grave so we would have eternal life and live forever with Him in glory.

What Jesus wanted from his disciples was their prayer support – in that they failed Him. What does Jesus want from us? In one sense Jesus does not need us – He has done everything that He came to do – everything necessary for our salvation. In another sense we are critical to His mission. He calls on us to be His prayer warriors – there is yet much work to be done to overcome the forces of evil in the world. He calls us to be His hands and feet to serve the needs of those who are weak, oppressed, hungry, thirsting, naked, imprisoned, sick, lonely and suffering any number of other maladies. He needs us to be His voice to let people know His love, grace, mercy, forgiveness and the gift of eternal life.

We do have a sword – it is the sword of the Spirit. Let us use it with prayer, in faith, hope, love and trust.