

“Arrested”

by Pastor Steve Hammond on 1/19/2020
Text: Mark 14:43:52 at FBC of Newport, NH

//43 Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.

//44 Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.” 45 Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Rabbi!” and kissed him. 46 The men seized Jesus and arrested him.//

—Mark 14:43-52 (NIV)

What does it mean to be arrested? It is to be stopped and seized by a legal authority, such as the police, in order to control and incarcerate a person for trial. It’s not a mugging. At least it’s not supposed to be. It’s supposed to carry a legal power and right as well as its physical force to act against the person getting arrested in order to protect the public and even the individual in question.

Recently I watched a couple of arrests on TV. In one a guy had violated a restraining order against him and the sheriff sought to bring the guy to the station for questioning. The guy’s mother was there and tried to insist the sheriff had no right to be on her property and no right to take her son to the station as he “didn’t do anything wrong.” The sheriff stated he had every right to be there as he had a warrant and even an admission that the guy had violated the restraining order. But the sheriff was still trying to give him the chance to do thing the easy way rather than the hard way.

Eventually, though, it came down to sheer force as the guy tried to run away and had to be tazed, handcuffed and transported in the back of the police car. But it was interesting to listen to the verbal tug of war by the mother at the beginning. It was a reminder that this wasn’t supposed to be a mugging, or just a case of “might makes right.” An arrest is supposed to have all the proper authority supporting it, all the way to the top.

So it is no small thing for the scriptures to record the historical fact that men seized Jesus and arrested him. There is a shift right here, the crossing of a line between Almighty God and sinful man. It’s a line Jesus was well aware of, and the Gospel writer John pointed out, way back in the earliest days of he ministry. John puts it this way in chapter two:

23 Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name. 24 But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people. 25 He did not need any testimony about

mankind, for he knew what was in each person.

—John 2:23-25

Jesus understood mankind better than anybody. And this prevented him from being naïve about the course of his ministry and life. It could have been tempting, seeing many people believe in him, to think that these people will now follow him anywhere and will just automatically expand the kingdom and glory of God. What could go wrong? They believe in Jesus, the Messiah, don't they? Yes, but the human heart, even the heart of a believer, can still let you down. In fact, *will* let you down at some time or other.

This is why the Savior of sinners has to be spotless, not sinful. He has to be faithful, not duplicitous. In a sense he has to be everything they are not. They can and must believe and trust in him, but he does not necessarily have to believe and trust in them. He has to allow for the fact that they are sinners and can't be simplistically trusted—over and above the faithfulness he already knows within himself toward the Father at the Spirit of God.

Paul gives us a reflection of this in one of those “trustworthy sayings” given to Timothy.

11 Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; 12 if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; 13 if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

—II Timothy 2:11-13

This is not saying Jesus is going to abandon you at the drop of a hat. Not at all. He forgives seventy times seven. His love endures forever. But these verses are about the unpleasant fact that there are people who will abandon Jesus and the Faith. (Think Judas, Ananias & Sapphira, and Demos from 2 Timothy 4:10, etc.) And when that happens, such people may think that they are undermining the entire truth about Christ and the Gospel. “Well, I tried it and it didn't work. Therefore the whole thing is a crock.” So say numerous atheists with a sense of finality about their anti-christian conversion experience. But Paul is reminding Timothy and his readers that Jesus knows mankind. He knows there are people who will let him down. He knew Peter would. He also knows there are professing believers who will do more than that and will abandon him completely. So Jesus cannot give himself to us in the way that we can give ourselves to him. He must anchor his faithfulness ultimately upon himself and God.

I say all this to get back to the place where Jesus is arrested. If Jesus was reluctant to entrust himself to mankind, even believers, what is he doing letting himself fall under the power of the unbelieving Jewish and Roman authorities by getting himself arrested there in Gethsemane?! Surely Jesus would have been better off exposing Judas and his plan to betray him. Surely he should stay far away from the clutches of those hypocrites and whitewashed tombs if he wants to follow God's plan for saving the world. Surely.

Surely not, though.

This is where it becomes evident that Jesus is traveling along a completely unique path for the securing of our salvation. Every other idea about a savior has been that of a warring champion riding a white horse and leading an army in victory after victory after victory, destroying enemies and leading the righteous in a parade of glory and honor and praise. But Jesus alone has chosen to get himself arrested—not by artificial means—but by the natural course of human, sinful nature and at the same time by discerning the lead of God through the scriptures, prayer and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is going to enter into the very heart and capital of human wickedness, even the stronghold of demons and Satan himself, with no sword, no shield and with his hands bound together. His disciples will scatter. He will stand alone. And the only weapon he can depend upon will be himself—the only way, the only truth and the only life who can redeem lost sinners and save their souls from eternal destruction. Everything is riding on his shoulders and comes down to whether or not he will be faithful to who he is, as he stands before the world against its judgment.

The arrest of Jesus is the beginning of the world's official assertion of having authority over Jesus. Caiaphas, Herod, the Sanhedrin and Pilate will all act in their official capacities to declare who Jesus is and what to do about him. They will hear his claim to be the Messiah and King of Israel. They will have heard or maybe even seen his miracles, signs and wonders. They will go through the motion of investigations and trials, but with little respect for him and the truth. They have him arrested so they believe they have the advantage of power over him. They are free to pronounce any verdict they want. They can set him free or they can send him to his death.

But in truth they have no real power over him and their verdict will make no real difference to what the truth has been all along. What will make all the difference will be the utter faithfulness of Jesus every step of the way. To the very last breath he takes, he will be the one who is

obedient to the law of God. Jesus, even though under arrest, will have the law working for him, not against him. Justice will be broken by the High Priest and Procurator, but it will be upheld by Jesus, even when he dies.

You remember that mother's attempt to say the law was on her side as she tried to prevent the son from being arrested? One way she would do this would be to claim that the officer did something improper. But the sheriff had a modern tool to fall back on. Two video cameras were recording the whole thing. So he would simply offer the woman the chance to review the video in a legal setting for appeal and her claim could be supported or rejected.

In the case of Jesus the ultimate appeal would be with no video camera or human court. It would be with God. And the appeal would come well before the Judgment Day at the Great White Throne. It would come in three days. God would declare the arrest and human trial to be in the wrong. And he would declare Jesus to be exactly who he claimed to be all along—the Messiah, Son of God and Savior of the world. Then he released him from the prison of death, never more to die.

The arrest that started this official confrontation will have ended with a mistrial and release, not only for Jesus, but for all who would believe in who he claimed to be. Because it was that claim that was also arrested and tried. And it was that claim which God set free.

Our world is still filled with false arrests, corrupt courtrooms, broken laws and authority figures saying they have the only word of what really matters in our world. Personally, legally, politically it can seem hopeless. It's just a matter of who has the most power, not who's in the right.

* [ILLUS: article on Nigerian pastor captured by Boko Haram]

But Jesus has overcome the world. He has exposed it as having no power over him and no power over those who would believe in him and follow. Oh, the world still tries to assert its authority and power, but it does so by repeating the same defeated arguments and tactics that failed long ago.

So if you find yourself being arrested by someone claiming to have an authority that is higher and smarter and more powerful than you, don't feel you have to resist them at all costs and prove them wrong by way of your own stature, strength and intelligence. You don't have to do that. All you need to do is remember what Jesus has already done, with the approval of God. And there simply is no authority higher or smarter or more powerful than God.

Pastor Turns Terrorist Hostage Video into Testimony

Another Boko Haram captive in Nigeria is forced to plead for his life, yet is at peace with death because Jesus "is still alive."

JAYSON CASPER
JANUARY 13, 2020 11:09 AM

A hostage video released last week by Boko Haram did far more than issue another plea for rescue from a Nigerian Christian.

It revealed a modern-day Shadrach.

"By the grace of God, I will be together with my wife, my children, and my colleagues," said Lawan Andimi, a Church of the Brethren in Nigeria (EYN) pastor in the troubled northeastern state of Adamawa. "[But] if the opportunity has not been granted, maybe it is the will of God.

"Be patient, don't cry, don't worry. But thank God for everything."

It is testimony even to his Islamist captors, said Gideon Para-Mallam, the Jos-based Africa ambassador for the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students.

"This is completely different from most hostage videos," he told CT. "[Andimi] appeared as one who has already conquered death, saying to his abductors and the rest of us that he is ready to die for his faith in Christ."

Andimi's home area of Michika was attacked by armed terrorists the evening of January 2. Local residents fled into nearby bushes and hills.

"Our people had to run helter-skelter when they heard that the terrorists were approaching the town," Zakariah Nyampa, a member of Nigeria's parliament representing the Michika area, told Morning Star News, noting that the army killed several attackers.

"We thank God for their lives, but the only civilian casualty is the missing pastor whose whereabouts are still unknown."

Para-Mallam believes Andimi was deliberately targeted. Well-known in the area, the pastor was also the EYN district leader and the regional representative of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN).

"To annihilate the Christian faith, there is no better way than to eliminate its prime movers," said Para-Mallam. "It is also Boko Haram giving a signal that they are not degraded like the government says, and can still strike."

Less than a week earlier, 11 Nigerian Christians, seized in neighboring Borno state, were executed by a Boko Haram splinter group now affiliated with ISIS called the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP).

Andimi followed hostage video protocol and appealed to denominational leadership and the Adamawa governor to intervene for his release.

But showing none of the usual signs of desperation, the pastor made clear his hope lies elsewhere.

"I believe that he who made them to act in such a way is still alive, and will make all arrangements," Andimi said.

"I have never been discouraged, because all conditions that one finds himself is in the hands of God—God who made them to take care of me and to leave [me with] my life."

Samson Ayokunle, president of CAN, issued a statement four days after Andimi's abduction, urging the Nigerian government to take the necessary steps to rescue the EYN pastor and all other captives held by Islamist terrorists.

And prior to the ISWAP executions, CAN endorsed the US State Department placing Nigeria on a “Special Watch List” of governments that have engaged in or tolerated severe violations of religious freedom.

“If criminals are invading the Christian communities, killing and abducting unchallenged, what do we call it if it is not persecution?” stated CAN in reference to Andimi, noting the subsequent abduction of an additional 41 Christians from the north-central state of Kaduna.

And the next day, following criticism from the Nigerian government that the Christian umbrella group was politicizing religion, CAN reiterated its position.

“Let the government wake up to its responsibilities and see if we will not stop talking about its failure to protect our members,” CAN stated.

“We are praying for the government on a daily basis, but that does not mean where the government is failing we should keep quiet.”

Nigeria ranked No. 12 on Open Doors’s 2019 World Watch List of the 50 countries where Christians suffer the most persecution.

“This is not just a religious issue, it is social justice,” said Para-Mallam, referring also to the nearly two-year captivity of Leah Sharibu, a teenage girl whose perseverance despite persecution has also inspired many Nigerian Christians.

Last March, the Nigerian government negotiated the freedom of 104 Dapchi school girls, though ISWAP held back Sharibu because she refused to recant her Christianity.

“The government must do more to get her out,” said Para-Mallam, who with Ayokunle is critical that the teenager was left behind.

“We don’t want promises, we want her free.”

Para-Mallam noted also the ongoing ISWAP captivity of Alice Ngaddah, Grace Tuka, and Jennifer Ukumbong.

“Our God who delivered the people of Israel from the Egyptian bondage will surely deliver them,” said Ayokunle in his original statement for CAN. “They will not die in captivity, in Jesus’ name.”

There is hope for Andimi, said Para-Mallam, because Boko Haram has released Christians in the past. However, ISWAP has shown mercy only to Muslim captives.

But until then, the EYN pastor continues his witness.

“Andimi lives in the light of eternity, which is a sign of his courage,” said Para-Mallam.

“From the lion’s den, he said to death: ‘To hell with you, I’m not afraid.’”

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from CT Today article:

https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/january/nigeria-boko-haram-kidnapped-pastor-hostage-video-testimony.html?utm_source=ctweekly-html&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_term=25734149&utm_content=692553076&utm_campaign=email