

Day 38

Scriptural Background: Mt 26

"Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came to do." Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him." Mt 26:50

In modern cinematography, when a filmmaker wants to highlight a certain event in the story, one of the tools at his disposal is slow-motion technology. Time slows down, as it were, and by giving the viewer a chance to see every detail, the importance or magnitude of what is being displayed is conveyed. Ancient storytellers did not have this exact capability, of course, but they very much employed the same principle. In the Gospels, all 4 Gospel writers devote *considerably* more time and space—more words per event—to the last week of Jesus' life (prior to His death and resurrection) than they do to anything else. The effect is most pronounced in John, who gives nearly a half of his entire book to Jesus' passion. But in the Synoptics as well, Jesus' three-year public ministry, not to mention the early years of his life, are presented in broad swaths, and then up to a quarter or so of each book is on just 1 week. In Matthew 26 we are given in great detail the events surrounding Jesus' last supper; His betrayal by a friend, denial by another, and desertion by the rest; His prayer and subsequent arrest in the Garden; and the phony trial which He underwent. Why all the attention? The answer, transparently, is that this is what it has all been building toward. Humanity's rejection of God on a cosmic scale and God's humble self-giving love are both being played out in vivid color for all to see. So look, and behold Your God—His humility, His love, His service. Behold your sin—this is what living for yourself looks like when that desire is fully grown. And behold His grace—He went through this willingly to bring about His new covenant within you even when you were dead in rejecting Him (Mt 26:28, Eph 2:1–10). "Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen." (Acts 4:27–28, NIV84)

Prayer:

Almighty God, thank You that the events of that Holy Week were not a surprise to You. Far from it, they were Your perfect plan! Thank You, Father, for being sovereign over all things, using even our sin to show us Your glory. Thank You, Jesus, for joyfully bearing my rejection to restore me. Thank You, Holy Spirit, for showing me here in Your Word the cost of my sin. Give me the grace to hate it and its outcomes, that I might turn from it this day, living for You instead. In Jesus' Name, Amen.