# A Sermon Rev. Thomas V. Abbott 3/4/18

**"Arrested by the Religious"**

**Scripture Passages: 1) Luke 22:47-53**

 **2) Luke 22:54-62**

 **3) Luke 22:63-71**

**The Closest to Us:** When have you been hurt by those closest to you? When have you been hurt by your family? When have you been hurt by a close friend? When have you been hurt by the church? (Pause)

 I am guessing that as I ask those questions, most of us can recall those moments rather quickly. Even when we have worked hard to forgive, to move on, we can take ourselves back to those painful moments in a split second. Are you back in one of those moments?

 One of the great joys of the last ten years in my life has been watching a significant transformation take place in my dad. His transformation has truly been an answer to prayer. Growing up, my dad was extremely critical and angry. His words were often damaging to those of us sharing a house with him. One of my most painful memories was during the months preceding the start of college. I had received a full-ride scholarship offer, if I joined the ROTC program. I had no interest in joining the military, simply not how I am wired. My dad and I had incredible fights about my turning down that scholarship. The language and words thrown at me by my dad during that time are seared in my soul. I truly felt, like my dad was throwing me under a bus.

 I have talked before about the three couples that became close friends during seminary. Those six people were and are great gifts to us from God. They know us like, no other people know us. They have walked with us through life’s ups and downs. A phone call, a text, an e-mail and any of them would be on a plane to be with us. Three of those dear friends chose to have affairs. Obviously, the pain of those choices, were most damaging to their spouses and children, but those choices also forever changed our group, and the nature of our friendships. I still grieve.

 After eight years of pouring myself into the congregation and the community of Leadville, because of the actions of a few people in the congregation, it became apparent we could no longer serve that congregation, and live in that community. We felt like a banished family. My pastoral spirit was broken.

**The Kiss:** “Jesus said to him, ‘Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying me?’”

 Immediately after choosing to bend his will, to the will of his Father through an act of sacrificial love, Judas arrived to betray Jesus to the religious leaders of his church. Judas betrayed Jesus with the intimate jester of a kiss, the only time in the Gospel Jesus was greeted in such an intimate manner.

 Then next, after three years of being students of this servant Messiah, his disciples struck out in violence. Jesus had to quickly fix their violent actions, then reprimanded them, “No more of this!”

 Next, Jesus turned to the leaders of his church and said, “Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!”

 The church leaders were so thoroughly threatened by Jesus that they were convinced their only course of action was to find a path to kill Jesus, to remove his voice from the landscape. They were so afraid of losing their status, of losing their power, of losing their traditions. They were so afraid of giving themselves to transformation that they chose the path of darkness, the path of deceit, of lies, of violence. The religious leaders completely lost their way. It wouldn’t be the last time, would it?

**Peter:** The religious officials took Jesus into custody, taking him to the high priest’s house where Jesus found himself abandoned by all his disciples except Peter. Peter followed from a distance, sneaking into the courtyard under darkness. But Peter, as Jesus’ disciple had become a well-known figure, people recognized him, first a servant-girl, then a man, then another man. Each time Peter vehemently denied knowing Jesus, or being connected with him anyway. While Peter was proclaiming that third denial the cocked crowd. Then in a moment, only recorded by Luke we read, “The Lord turned and looked at Peter.”

 Luke uses this word “turned” seven times through his Gospel. Each time the subject of the verb is Jesus. And every time the word denotes a decisive action. This is a profound moment, “Jesus, the Lord, turned and looked at Peter.” Can you place yourself in that moment, when their eyes met? When have you been in that moment? When have you been Jesus? When have you been Peter?

 Jesus, the Lord, turned and looked at Peter. Can you feel Jesus’ piercing and transformative gaze?

 Jesus didn’t have to say a word, just his gaze, caused Peter to remember. That moment defines Christian discipleship. Christian discipleship is remembering who we are, whose we are, and who we are called to be.

 Jim Edwards writes, “The look of Jesus is thus one of judgment and grace, of condemnation and forgiveness. Peter’s bitter sorrow signifies repentance that leads to transformation.”

 When we remember, we are called to action, which leads to our transformation. As Peter bitterly wept he would forever be transformed. In that moment he began his healing journey to becoming the servant leader he was created to be. Peter would soon be the “Rock” of Christ’s church. Peter’s healing began with remembering. But at that moment, Jesus was utterly alone. His disciples and his church had totally and completely abandoned him. Listen to the final betrayal by the church. **Read Luke 22:63-71.**

**Mockery:** Have you experienced being mocked? The leaders of Jesus’ church mocked him, mocked him for living as a servant leader, as a healer, as one who cared for the least of these, for one who loved sacrificially. Jesus’ church mocked him for living as we are all called to live.

 When we take action, standing up for the marginalized, for the outsider, for the sick, for the downtrodden, for the one without a voice, often we will find ourselves mocked. When we stand up for kids, for the elderly, for the poor, for the sick, for the one defined as different, for the refugee, for the immigrant we often find that the community, even our church mocks us. In the wisdom literature of Scripture, the person following the path God calls us to follow often experiences mockery. Jesus’ church mocked him.

 Then the assembly of elders or in Greek, the assembly of Presbyterians gathered to decide on what basis they would present Jesus to their government leaders as one deserving death. They had already made up their mind. Jesus was too great an offense. He had to be gotten rid of. Jesus’ church decided it was time to dispose of him. They no longer had room for his way of being, his way of serving, his way of loving, his way of leading. Jesus had to go!

**Conclusion:** How do we betray Jesus? How do we deny Jesus? How do we mock Jesus? How do we choose to reject the Jesus’ way because it simply calls us toward, to great a transformation?

 In our own lives we have experienced betrayal, denial, mockery. In our own lives we have been abandoned. Each of us in our own ways, to our own degrees have experienced some aspect of what Jesus experienced at the hands of his friends and his church.

 Jesus did not respond with vengeance. Jesus did not speak ill. Jesus served and loved to the end. Jesus will serve us and love us to the end. Along the way, like Peter, we may experience the gaze of Christ causing us to remember and we too may then choose to give ourselves to the road of transformation and new life?

 This is one of the great Lenten calls upon our lives. I pray we will consider it. Amen.