

ARRESTED BY JESUS **(Matthew 26:47-56)**

Let me ask you two questions: Questions #1: Has God ever gotten your attention. Question #2: If so, how did God get your attention?

As I search the Scripture and review my own life, it occurs to me that God has a limitless number of ways of getting us to focus on Him.

- God got Moses' attention with a burning bush.
- God got Pharaoh's attention with ten plagues and definitely the last plague—the death angel.
- God got the attention of Jacob, Joseph, the Pharaoh over Joseph, Nebuchadnezzar, and others with strange dreams.
- God got Balaam's attention with a talking donkey.

Jesus was particularly good at getting people's attention. John referred to the miracles He performed as signs. They should have been as visible as neon, flashing signs.

- He got the attention of a multitude when He fed them with five loaves of bread and just two fish.
- He got the attention of the disciples when He stilled a raging storm by speaking to it, and when He defied a tossing sea by walking on it.
- He got the attention of an entire community when He commanded a man four-days dead to come forth from his grave, and he did.
- And Jesus got the attention of an entire world when He came forth from His own borrowed tomb.

Preacher-types, like myself, are fond of telling those to whom we preach to pay attention to God, to listen for His voice. I have come to believe that is a needless thing to say because when God wants your attention, He will get it.

Sometimes He uses **soft means**—He colors the sky with beautiful hues as the sun sets; He boggles your mind when you look up on a clear night and see that He has bedazzled the heavens with stars and planets; He allows you to look into the eyes and hold the body of a newborn baby, and you are awed by His power and love.

God uses **the Bible** to get your attention. Haven't you had the experience of reading the Bible, and a verse figuratively jumps of the page, stares you in the face, and you feel convicted? Or another truth emerges, and you feel comforted, or strengthened, or enlightened. God has spoken, and He has your attention.

God can use **harsher means**—the death of a loved one, a health scare, a financial burden, a family crisis. I am not saying such things are caused by God, but He can and will most certainly use such things to get our attention.

As Ken Davis said in a sermon, "When God gets your attention, pay attention."

We come today to an odd passage. A group of rough men holding torches and lanterns are on the lookout for the Light of the World. Men bearing clubs and swords are seeking to arrest the Prince of Peace.

I am going to read our text from Matthew and then read a couple of parallel passages to get a fuller view of what really happened when Jesus was arrested. I want you to notice:

- Before Jesus was falsely charged with any wrong-doing, He was the One who was actually in charge.
- Before Jesus was taken captive, He had captivated the mind of all and the hearts of some who were present.
- Before Jesus was arrested, He had arrested the attention of the mob who came for Him and the disciples who were already with Him.

Here, Jesus appears large and in charge.

We look first at Matthew 26:47-56. Now, notice Luke 22:47-54. Finally, let's look at John 18:1-11. John adds some details the other gospel writers left out. Only John tells us that Peter is the one who drew his sword and tried to use it. Why does John finger Peter while Matthew, Mark, and Luke don't? Maybe, by the time John wrote his gospel, Peter had already died, and it didn't matter if he was guilty of resisting arrest and attempted murder.

Only John tells us the name of the High Priest's servant whose ear had been severed and re-attached by Jesus because John was the only one who had a close acquaintance with the High Priest and his family.

From our text, I want to highlight three ways that Jesus can arrest you. The word *arrest* means "to catch and hold," "to attract" or "to captivate." We live in a world that is always seeking to arrest us, to catch and hold us with what it has to offer, but what Jesus has to offer is so much more and so much better.

I have heard it said that we should never hold in our heart what we can hold in our hand. If you can hold something in your hand, it is temporal. It will not last. Jesus doesn't offer us stuff. He offers things that money can't buy—peace, hope, purpose, meaning, and abundant life.

Jesus Arrests Us with His Commanding Presence

When Jesus first entered the Garden, His disciples might have thought He was losing it. They had never before seen Him like this. He was overcome with emotion. He threw Himself on the ground. He was so ridden with anxiety that He was literally sweating drops of blood. That is an actual, medical condition. Due to overwhelming stress, the capillaries burst. Blood seeps into the sweat glands, and the person literally sweats blood. This is what happened to Jesus, but in the garden something else happened. Instead of being overcome, Jesus overcame. He prayed. An angel, sent from God, ministered to Him. Jesus aligned Himself with His Father's will, and by the time the mob reached Him, He was ready—not to fight, not to flee, but to endure.

Prayer, by the way, is not a means by which we get God to do our will. Prayer is meant to conform us to His will. When we know we are praying His will, we are supremely confident that God is going to answer our prayer because we are praying what we know God desires.

According to Matthew, Jesus doesn't passively wait for the mob to get to Him. He goes out to meet them. He is walking toward them while they are approaching Him.

I don't mean to be irreverent, but I envision Jesus walking toward the mob a bit like John Wayne. He stops and asks, "Whom do you seek Pilgrim?"

You Bible students are saying, "*Pilgrim* is not in my Bible. Is that in yours? Maybe that's in *The Message* paraphrase cause it's kind of out there.

When Jesus says, "I am He," the soldier and temple police back up. They back into those behind them, and they all fall down. They are acting like the Keystone Cops. What's going on? Bible translators commonly add the word "He" but that is not what Jesus actually said. The Greek NT records that Jesus spoke two words: *ego eimi*, which means, "I am." If you will remember, when God told Moses what His personal name was, He said, "I am that I am." When Jesus looked at the mob, and said, "I am," He was employing divine language to identify Himself thus knocking the mob on their backsides.

Jesus was not quaking in His sandals. He was standing strong and tall and exhibiting a commanding presence. When one of His own (Peter) tried to defend Him, Jesus rebuked him and made him stand down. He told him and the others what was what. He said, "Hey, if I want to defend Myself, I'll just breathe a prayer to My Father, and He will instantly put at My disposal 12 legions of angels." A legion equals 6,000 soldiers. That means 12 legions numbers 72,000 sword-bearing messengers from God. If you know your OT well, you know that a single angel of the LORD struck down 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night to protect God's people in Jerusalem. If one angel can eliminate 185,000 in one night, you do that math as to what 72,000 angels can do.

As well as rebuking one of His own disciples, Jesus called out the very ones who were intent on arresting Him. Jesus basically said to them, "Why are you treating Me like a common criminal? You had every opportunity to arrest Me in the light of day in full view of others, but here you are under the cover of darkness to do your dirty deed."

We need to right-size our view of Jesus. Many of us, in the words of Phillip Yancy, grew up with a Sunday School Jesus. This is the kind of Jesus who would carry lambs in His arms. He had no sharp corners and was not threatening in the least. Such a Jesus is comfortable and safe.

I am here to say, that is not the real, NT Jesus. Let me give you a post-resurrection portrait of Jesus. It is found in the first chapter of Revelation. Let me read to you vv. 10-18.

The Bible teaches that we were born into a world at war. Let me ask you, who would you rather go into battle with—the Sunday School Jesus or the Jesus of Revelation 1?

Knowing that Jesus is strong, however, does not negate the truth that He is loving. That brings us to the next truth.

Jesus Arrests Us with His Strong Display of Love

Look at how Jesus greeted Judas when Judas betrayed Him with a kiss. Jesus did not call Judas a "dirty, rotten, scoundrel" or worse. He didn't threaten him. He didn't say, "Well, you deserve what's coming your way!" He did none of that. Instead, He called Him, "Friend." Judas did not act as a friend toward Jesus, but that didn't change Jesus' affection for Judas.

Are you able to do that? Do you have the strength to love those who have hurt you, who have betrayed your trust, who have conspired to destroy you? Are able to love your enemy?

In addition to showing such concern for Judas, Jesus chose to heal a man who had been injured in an attempt to arrest Him. Peter had sliced off the ear of Malchus with his sword. Peter was better at throwing a fishing net than he was at wielding a sword. He tried to open the man's skull but missed.

Immediately, Jesus put a stop to the sword play. He bent down, picked up that bloody ear, pressed it against the side of Malchus' head, and instantly, it was reattached and was fully functioning. He healed a man who was trying to capture Him.

Jesus didn't laugh at Him. He didn't say, "Serves you right!" He healed Him lovingly and powerfully.

What did that do to Malchus? Did Malchus ever leave Caiaphas' employ? Did he ever make his way into the church at Jerusalem? Was he among the crowd that heard Peter preach in the temple precinct on Pentecost? Was he among the 3000 souls that were saved and baptized that day?

Not only Malchus, but what did that do to his master, Caiaphas? Caiaphas presided over the kangaroo court that condemned Jesus. At what point did Caiaphas learn that Jesus had healed his servant? Every morning that Malchus showed up to serve his master, his perfectly restored ear was there to serve as a silent witness to the truth of who Jesus is.

How has Jesus showed His love to you? How has He protected you, blessed you, enriched you, and guided you? Here we are in the month of Thanksgiving. During this season we should especially be sensitive to what God has done on our behalf. How can we not be arrested and captivated by our Lord's goodness and grace towards us?

Henry Ward Beecher was a well-known preacher and lecturer during the last half of the 19th century. He once said:

If one should give me a dish of sand and tell me there were particles of iron in it, I might look for them with my eyes and search for them with my clumsy fingers and be unable to detect them; but let me take a magnet and sweep through it and now would it draw to itself the almost invisible particles by the mere power of attraction. The unthankful heart, like my finger in the sand, discovers no mercies; but let the thankful heart sweep through the day and as the magnet finds the iron, so it will find, in every hour, some heavenly blessings, only the iron in God's sand is gold!

When Jesus attracts us to Himself, He develops within us an attractional heart of thankfulness that recognizes His acts of tender mercy towards us.

Jesus Arrests Us by His Submission to Scripture

After informing Peter of His Father's willingness to place 12 legions of angels at His disposal, look at what Jesus said next in v. 54. Then, after rebuking the armed mob for their hypocrisy in waiting until dark to arrest Him, look at what He said in v. 56. Throughout His life, Jesus was intent on making sure that the prophecies about Him were

fulfilled. Notice also vv. 24 and 31.

While Jesus was pouring out His life to God as an offering, He still had the presence of mind to make sure all the prophecies about Him were fulfilled. We read in John 19:28, “After this, knowing that all was now finished said (to fulfill the Scriptures), ‘I thirst.’” Having said that, one of the soldiers took a sponge soaked in sour wine, put it on a branch and held it up to his mouth so he could moisten his mouth with it. This act fulfilled Psalm 69:21 which reads, “. . . and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.”

Jesus knew that Scripture, and He knew that it had not yet been fulfilled; so, He cried out, “I thirst.” Once He had tasted of the sour wine, He proclaimed, “It is finished.” All the prophecies that needed to be fulfilled were fulfilled. Everything that needed to be done to secure salvation for those who would trust in Him had been accomplished.

Don’t you think that is amazing? Despite His pain, Jesus knew there was one more thing to do, and He made sure it got done. He had submitted His life to be ruled by Scripture. He quoted it when He was tempted. He taught it. He prayed it, He lived it, and He even died with it on His lips.

You may never have to do something in order to fulfill the prophecies of Scripture, but there are a multitude of things for you and I to do so as to fulfill the principles and teachings of Scripture.

The Bible says, “Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together.” Are you here today to fulfill that Scripture, or are you here because you had nothing better to do?

The Bible teaches, “Be ye being filled with the Holy Spirit.” Are you seeking to be with the Holy Spirit or have you contented yourself to being filled with the substitute nourishment of what the world has to offer?

Over and over the Bible says, “Fear not.” It is the most oft repeated command in Scripture. Are you fearing not, or are you letting the evening news and the morning headlines rob you of the security God wants to give you?

There are 1001 other Scriptural teachings having to do with family life, money management, spiritual gifting, and on and on that God wants you to live out.

During his heyday, Billy Graham was ridiculed because whenever he preached, he would say, “The Bible says,” and then he would quote the word of God.

Make it a daily practice to learn what the Bible says, and then submit your life to living out God’s word.

The late Eugene Peterson was a gifted communicator and a caring pastor for many years. In one of the many books he wrote, he tells of the story of what happened when he was five-years old. He would often walk to the fence that separated his family’s land from that of his neighbor, Leonard Storm. He would watch Brother Storm plow his field with his enormous tractor. Eugene Peterson had a deep desire to get a ride on that John Deere tractor.

One day, Brother Storm was about a hundred yards away when he spotted little Eugene. He stopped his tractor, stood up from his seat, and made waving motions with his arms and hands. He, of course, was summoning little Eugene Peterson, who he called, “Little Pete,” to come over to him. But Eugene didn’t understand. To him, Brother storm looked mean and angry. He was so large and imposing in his bib overalls and straw hat. He was yelling to Eugene, but Eugene couldn’t hear him because the wind was blowing against him. Eugene thought he was probably where he should not be. That is

often the experience of five-year old boys. So, he turned and went home feeling rejected and rebuked.

The next Sunday, Brother Storm approached him after worship and said, “Little Pete, why didn’t you come out in the field Thursday and ride the tractor with me?” Brother Storm said, “I called you to come. I waved for you to come. Why did you leave?”

Eugene told him that he didn’t know that’s what he was doing.

Brother Storm said, “What do you do when you want to get somebody to come to you?”

Peterson showed him, extending his index finger and curling it back and forth a few times.

“Hahh!” huffed Brother Storm, “That’s *piddling*, Little Pete. On the farm we do things *big!*”

Peterson wrote:

A few days after my disappointment at the edge of [Brother Storm’s] field and his reprimand in church, I was back at the fence, watching, hoping I might get a second chance. The giant Norwegian saw me, stopped the tractor and did it again, made that sweeping motion of invitation. I was through the barbed wire in a flash, running across the furrowed field and then up on the big, green John Deere. He let me stand in front of him, holding the steering wheel, pulling the plow down that long stretch of field, my smallness now absorbed into his largeness.

Friend, don’t settle for a piddling life. In God’s Kingdom, we do things big, and there is nothing bigger than an obedient life lived out for the glory of God. Let Jesus arrest you. Come to Him. Let your smallness be absorbed into His largeness.

For some of you, the times seem dark. You have a choice to make. Like the disciples did in the last verse of our text, you can flee thinking you are doing so for your own safety. Or you can place your hand in the hand of Jesus, and go with Him wherever He leads. That my friend, is the safest and the best thing you could do. Do it today. Do it now.