

The crowd comes out to capture Jesus armed with swords and clubs, acting as if he is some kind of criminal, as if this is going to be difficult. It would be kind of like in our day if the police were preparing for a shootout. They expect trouble. But then they capture Jesus. He hasn't put up any fight at all. He just lets it happen. And that might lead us to ask: "Well, why, Jesus? Why are you being passive? Why aren't you doing something? Why aren't you fighting back? Why are you being a pushover? Why won't you do something to fix this situation?"

And even Peter, for his part, struggled with this question too. He wanted to take matters into his own hands. If Jesus wasn't going to do something about it, he would! And so John in his Gospel tells us that Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest, whose name was Malchus. They would have to get to Jesus over his dead body! He was going to do something, even if Jesus wasn't. But then Jesus told him, "Put away your sword. Am I not going to drink the cup I'm supposed to drink?" It might lead us to ask, "Well, why, Jesus? Why won't you do anything? At least let Peter do something! Let him take care of it. Make them fight to take you! Why are you just letting this happen? Why won't you do something about this situation?"

And then the crowd takes him to the court of the high priest back in Jerusalem. And there they take him to a trial that should never have happened. Everything about this trial, Christians, was illegal. First of all, it was illegal because it was held at night. Remember, this is still the middle of the night when Jesus is taken to the court. If a trial like this happened in our day at night, we would say that that's wrong. A trial like this should be held during the day when it's public, when everybody can see it. That would be the just and the right thing to do. But they have held this trial in the wee hours of the morning. It's illegal for that reason alone.

But then notice what they also do here, Christians. They also are looking for witnesses. It's not like they gathered together some witnesses who had a case against Jesus and now they're going to try the case. No, they don't have a case. They're bringing together anybody that they can who is willing to say something against Jesus, so that they can condemn him for it. They don't have anything. The only thing they know they want to do is to put Jesus to death. And they're going to do it however they can figure out how to do it. Does that sound fair to you? Does that sound like a case which is just, which is good?

And this trial is also illegal, Christians, because these witnesses, Mark tells us, can't agree with each other. No two of them have the same story. And for that reason alone, the whole thing should be dismissed. Even the two that kind of agree with each other, who say that Jesus said, "I will destroy this temple in three days, I will build it again," Mark says that even they don't agree. So this whole thing should not happen. This whole thing should be thrown out. And there is no nation in all the history of the world that would ever consider this trial to be good or right.

And so all Jesus has to do in this case is to say something. Speak up! One word and the whole thing would come crashing down. Say one thing against this joke of a trial, and we would see it for what it was. That's all he has to do. One single word. But he says nothing. He just lets it happen. Why, Jesus? Why won't you speak up? Why won't you say something and bring this to an end? It would be so easy to do. Why won't you do something to stop this?

And then the high priest asks him directly: "Are you the Christ, the son of the Blessed?" And Jesus answers! He says, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." Maybe he's going to do something! Maybe he's finally standing up for himself. He's finally going to speak and bring this all to an end. We're getting a little excited, because something's going to happen! But then the high priest condemns him. And they begin to beat him and to spit on him and to strike him in face. And Jesus does nothing. He does nothing to stop it. He doesn't fight back. He doesn't run away. Why? Why, Jesus? Why won't you do anything about this?

And Christians, I think a lot of our confusion with what Jesus is doing comes from how we try to deal with things. Because if something is happening in our lives, we want to take care of it. We want to stand up and do something. We don't want to be a pushover. We want to do something so that we can deal with this situation. It doesn't matter what it is. Anything to take control. And even if it's something totally out of our control, something totally beyond our ability to do something about, we still look for that one little thing that we can control, because then we feel like we're in control of the situation. We want to do something, and for that reason Jesus confuses us. It's not how we would handle this situation. It's not what I would do in this situation.

And I think this is especially true, Christians, when it comes to suffering, especially suffering as a Christian. If someone says something evil to you because you are a Christian, what do you want to do? You want to say something back, right? Show that you can give as good as you can get. I'm not going to stand here and let you say that about me! Anything to show that I'm in control of this situation. Or if someone calls us names, what do we want to do? Call them names back, right? You're the real bigot! You're the real racist! Whatever it may be to show that I am not what you say that I am. And if we're struggling with some terrible situation, what do we want to do? Maybe we lash out at others, so they can feel the same thing that we do. Or maybe we just do whatever we can to make sure that we can bring it back under our control. That's how we deal with this. To do something, anything, rather than just stand by and let it happen. And so we don't understand why Jesus does what he does.

And the reason for this, Christians, is because I think we often have a very difficult time trusting God. God puts us into the situations that we are in. We are here today because of God. But he doesn't always tell us why. He doesn't always tell us why we are where we are, and we really struggle with that. And because we're not sure what's going to happen, because we're not sure why we are where we are, we do whatever we can to feel like we're in control, to feel like we have the situation in hand. Because it's so hard for us, Christians, to trust God when we don't understand why. Just like Peter attacking the crowd with a sword when they came to capture Jesus, we've got to do something, we say! It's hard to trust God when our lives get difficult.

But Jesus isn't being a pushover, Christians. Jesus isn't doing nothing in this situation. Jesus is entrusting himself to his Father. As Peter himself would later go on to say, 1 Peter, chapter 2: "When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly." Jesus knew that the Father was going to take care of him, no matter what. Jesus knew that no matter what he was going through right then and there, the Father would make it all turn out right in the end. And Jesus knew, even as the Father turned away from him, that he could still trust him to do what was right and to take care

of him in the hour of his need. And Jesus knew that this would turn out for good. Jesus knew that this was all part of the Father's plan. And even when one word could've ended all of it, he entrusts himself to the Father, knowing that he would not fail him. For that reason, Christians, Jesus won our salvation. As Peter again says, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed."

So trust God, Christians. Trust him even when things are difficult. Trust him even when you are suffering. Because Jesus suffered all of these things in order to save you. He suffered all of these things so that you would die to sin. And if he's done that, do you think he's somehow going to forget about you now? He's done the hardest thing of all. He will take care of you now. So put yourself into God's hands. Trust him, and he will take care of you, because he will never let righteous fall.

Let us pray. Lord God, heavenly Father, you have given us your Son, Jesus Christ, to forgive us our sins. We pray that you would help us always to trust in you, knowing that you work all things for our good. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.