

Swords (The Fire in the Wound)

Matthew 26:47-56

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[The trailer from the movie Kingdom of Heaven is shown. Various scenes of battle are shown as the following dialogue is heard.]

“A new world. A better world than has ever been seen. There, you are not what you were born, but what you have it in yourself to be. A kingdom of conscience and peace instead war. Love instead of hate. That is what lies at the end of the crusade.”

That’s the movie trailer for “Kingdom of Heaven.” It’s about the time when the church went to war with the Arabs to capture the city of peace—Jerusalem. “A new world. A kingdom of conscience, of peace instead of war, of love instead of hate. That is what lies at the end of a crusade.”

Crusade comes from the Latin word for cross. Well, the kingdom is something worth fighting for and Jesus did say, “Do not think I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace but a sword.”

And so I was thinking I probably need one of these. [Peter picks up a rifle.] Now don’t worry, it’s not loaded, and the bolt has been taken out. But you see I think I need one of these. I need one of these... to preach the Gospel. So listen up! “God so loved the world. God is love. For you He died. He forgives you. So believe!”

Well, it’s just hard to hear while I’m waving this around isn’t it? I’m just gonna put this down ‘cause I’ve

found that when I pick one of these up in a crowded room, the atmosphere just... changes.

This is a sword. [Peter picks up a sword.] They no longer scare us like guns. In fact, they're rather mythical and romantic. However, in Jesus' day, if someone drew a sword it was just as if they had drawn a gun. You drew a sword to kill someone or wound someone or sacrifice something. I'll put it away, too.

Matthew chapter 26, Jesus breaks bread and gives it to His disciples saying, "This is my body—broken, wounded." Then He gives them a cup saying, "This is my blood of the covenant."

He then tells them they will all be offended at Him that night, and they all disagree.

He then takes them to a garden across the Kidron Valley and a stream of lamb's blood flowing from the Passover sacrifices in the temple. He takes them to that garden that reminds us of Eden.

He is the last Adam. You'll remember Adam was exiled from the garden and the Tree of Life, and at the entrance God placed a flaming sword, a flaming sword that turns every which way to guard the way to the tree of life.

In the Garden Jesus prays, "Let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not as I will but as you will."

Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand." While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the

chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; seize him." And he came up to Jesus at once and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" And he kissed him ["Affectionately kissed him" is a more accurate translation of the Greek]. Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came to do." Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.

"Let him who has ears to hear, hear," said Jesus (Matthew 13:9).

Several years ago, Mad TV did a sketch titled, "The Greatest Action Story Ever Told." It was the ultimate American movie—a cross between The Gospel and Terminator 2. I didn't see it but was told about it.

The Terminator goes back in time to become a disciple and protect Jesus. Every time a Scribe or Pharisee shows up, our action hero pulls out his gun, mows them down while he yells, "Yah, Jesus, these men are your enemies. I will protect you."

And each time Jesus stops him and raises the dead and says, "I know they're my enemies, now cut that out. You see, I'm supposed to suffer and die." But the Terminator disciple just can't get the picture.

Judas shows up and the Terminator yells, "Jesus you cannot trust this man. He is a traitor. Take cover." then mows him down.

Jesus stops him, raises Judas from the dead, saying, “I know he’s a traitor. He’s supposed to betray me. Now cut it out.”

Finally Jesus picks up his cross, and the Terminator disciple turns to the camera and says, “He’ll be back.”

Well, He will be back, but will He come back transformed into the Terminator standing on His glorious throne or as something else standing on His glorious throne?

See, I’m not sure we really get the joke or the picture. I’m not sure we have an ear to hear.

A disciple seized a sword and cut off the High Priest’s servant’s ear. Maybe anytime we pick up a sword we cut off someone’s ear.

You know, the High Priest was to, like, have an ear for the Jewish people—an ear to hear the Word of God. Jesus is the Word of God.

In the past 2000 years, millions of Jews have been slaughtered. Who knows how many hundreds of thousands, how many millions have been tortured, killed and abused in the name of Jesus? In 1290 they were banished from England, in 1306 from France, massacred in Spain in 1391 and all Jews expelled in 1492... many, maybe most, in the name of Jesus. The Inquisition, the Crusades, the Holocaust—that can cut off your ear and make it kind of hard to hear, “Jesus loves you.” Maybe anytime we pick up a sword, we cut off someone’s ear.

How do we do it today?



This is a picture of an Arab standing on a box with electrical wires attached to his body in the Abu Gharib prison. I suspect this picture cut off an awful lot of ears. This is the mild one. Go online and you'll see pictures of wounded Arabs stripped naked and humiliated in shame. Beaten and tortured at the hands of American troops, under the command of a president who publicly proclaimed on the anniversary of 9-11, "This ideal of America is the hope of all mankind. That hope still lights our way. And the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it."

That's the Gospel of John chapter 1, verse 5, but I think John is referring to a different Light. In his state of the union address (2003) the President said, "The need is great. Yet there's power, wonder-working power in the goodness and idealism and faith of the American people."

Well, there is power, power, wonder-working power in something.

Now listen very closely. I voted for George Bush twice. I know it's highly debatable as to his responsibility for pictures like this. I know that war itself is torture. I know this very same man may have been torturing others in the very same way in the very same prison just a few

months before this. I know thousands of Americans have died. I know that many make convincing arguments as to why this war is just.

I'm just saying that if you were a teenage Arab boy roaming the streets of Baghdad or Jerusalem, this picture might just cut off your ear and make it really hard to hear, "Jesus loves you and the Light shines in the darkness and there is power, power, wonder working power."

You might say, "What light? What power? The management at Abu Gharib has changed hands, but the sword of Allah and the sword of Jesus look just the same. Power, but hardly wonderful, hardly beautiful," you might say.

Verse 52. Jesus says, "Put your sword back into its place." It's place. So some would argue the sword has "its place." Some like Paul in Romans 13. He writes:

[The Government] does not bear the sword in vain. For [The Government] is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

But just before that Paul writes, "Be a living sacrifice..."

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."

What a strange thing to say, as if mercy is a weapon, and love poured out is fire.

“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Well, these verses have led theologians like Augustine, Luther, and Calvin to argue that a Christian can serve in the military if he bears the sword on behalf of a legitimate government in a just war. However, a Christian must never bear the sword on his own behalf. And certainly the Gospel of mercy is not preached with the point of a sword.

Well, pray for our President. He has an impossible job. You may agree that certain wars are justified but please think twice before you swing a sword in Jesus’ name. You may find yourself just cutting off ears so none can hear the Word which “pierces to the division of soul and spirit, joint and marrow” in order to set us all free.

If ever there was a just war, WWII would seem to qualify. We ended it with two atom bombs, for which I’m extremely grateful. For when they dropped them upon Japan my father was crossing the Pacific in a military transport vessel, preparing for war.

You know Japan was utterly defeated by the United States—militarily, culturally, economically, governmentally. I mean Japan became like a disciple of the U.S. But Japan did not become a disciple of Jesus. In missionary schools, Japan’s resistance to the Gospel is legendary. It’s like their ears have been cut off. I’m not saying I know all the reasons, but it’s like ears have been cut off.

Across the channel in China, the government and culture has been thoroughly closed to the U.S. yet the church is growing at an utterly unprecedented rate. It was

sparked largely by Americans... missionaries, but not carrying a sword, not a steel sword. Growing like crazy...

But not in Japan and not in what missiologists call the 10-40 window. It's an area defined by latitude lines that basically comprises the Arab world—the Islamic world. They're the descendants of the victims of crusades when the church declared war for the sake of capturing real estate in the Holy Land. They think we're still trying to capture real estate, and it doesn't help that we sometimes call it a crusade. It's like their ears have been cut off, for they actually think "crusader" means "crucifier" not "crucified."

John tells us that the name of the disciple who cut off the ear was Peter (leader of the church), and the name of the slave who lost his ear was Malchus. Malchus means king and Malchus was an Arab name.

Malchus was likely an Arab slave in the High Priest's house, and in the name of Jesus, Peter cut off his ear. So, the last recorded healing performed by Jesus, according to Luke, is healing an Arab's ear so he could hear. Soon he could hear Peter on Pentecost preaching the Gospel, swinging a very different kind of sword.

Now, I'm just saying it's hard to swing a sword of steel and preach the gospel of mercy at the same time.

Well, it's easy to talk about ancestors and their sins or Government and her sins, but what about you? When wounded, do you pick up a sword, a steel sword? Or, do you turn the other cheek? If someone steals your tunic do you give them your cloak as well? If someone enslaves you for one mile do you go two? Do you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you? If you don't like "that kind of stuff" try Islam for it wasn't Mohammed that said "that stuff" but Jesus.

When you're wounded or threatened, are you quick to call a lawyer? You know Judas didn't swing a sword. He had politicians, legislators, the military, and police do it for him, and all the while he hid his violent heart with sweet words and affectionate kisses.

1 Corinthians 6:7, "The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?" asks Paul. Why not rather be wounded? Now let me ask, are you offended? Because this is where the disciples get offended. When Jesus tells Peter to put away the sword.

If you're offended let me assure you I'm offended, too. I mean I read this stuff, and it's like a knife or a sword pierces my chest, cutting to the division of soul and spirit, joint and marrow. And I think to myself, "God, I wish you had called me to preach 'Chicken Soup for the Soul' and not the Gospel of the kingdom."

Perhaps you're thinking, "Preacher boy, you don't get it. Live like that in the real world, and you'll be wounded. You'll be a living sacrifice—you'll get crucified. You don't get it." Yep, you're right. I probably don't get it. But Jesus does, Paul did, the disciples finally did. They all got martyred or exiled. Paul wrote, "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice." Jesus gets crucified in the next chapter.

Some may think, "Well what about the old testament? The wars, the blood—didn't God command it?" Yes, yes he did. But Jesus has revealed it was all about Him. Preparation for the "revelation of Jesus" and practice for the battle in which His body is now engaged.

We no longer battle for an earthly Jerusalem or real estate in the Middle East. We will "cross the Jordan," and we will "inherit the land." But under a new Heaven in a

new Earth. The Messiah has conquered it and bequeathed it to us. Yet, make no mistake, we are now at war. It's just that we "battle not against flesh and blood but principalities and powers, the world rulers of this present darkness, the spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places."

Before Christ we were not equipped for this war, but now we are. You know a soldier may learn some valuable lessons in a worldly war. Lessons like courage, endurance, and teamwork. But it's not the *real* war, engaging the *real* enemy. All the wars of Israel were like preparation and practice. The principalities and powers could inhabit Egyptians, Arabs, and even Jews but Egyptian, Arabs and Jews were not the real enemy. They were prisoners of war—captives, not the enemy.

Now we are the Israel of God. We are the church. Satan himself is our enemy, and we have a sword of unspeakable power. We've been given a sword that can set the captives free—forever. We've been given a calling to take it and run the evil one through.

Well, it's just very hard to swing both swords at the same time for one sword is steel, and the other is God's mercy.

Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?"

"Twelve legions of angels... You think I need twelve guys with pocket knives?" Twelve legions is around 100,000 troops. Remember what the shepherds saw in the

field the first Christmas night? A multitude of the heavenly army, the Heavenly Host—Jesus is the Lord of Hosts, commander of God’s army. The shepherds see the army of God—the warring angels disappear, and then they find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

Well, maybe the angels are still there. Jesus says, “Do you not think I could call twelve legions of angels?”

When they flew planes into the towers did you not think He could call twelve legions of angels? When they “revile you, persecute you, and utter all manner of evil against you” do you not think He could call twelve legions of angels?”

We say, “If not us, who?” Well, how about the twelve legions of angels? We say, “God has no hands but ours.” Actually, he has twelve legions of angels.

That’s a bit offensive and perhaps the knowledge doesn’t change our response. But I think it’s a good bet that much of our violence and maybe all of our vengeance is really atheism or at least the belief that God would never ask us to suffer like Jesus—our Lord and maker.

Twelve legions of angels...

But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so? At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples left him and fled.

They left him scandalized, offended for He said, “Put away your sword.” Your sword... and yet, Jesus is a sword. I believe He’s the flaming sword that guards the way to the Tree of Life. He’s there to cut your chest open, take out your heart of stone and give you a new one. You can’t preach the gospel at the point of a sword, but the gospel is a sword. I believe Jesus is the flaming sword, and I know “He’s living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, joint and marrow discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

He is the Word of God, and we are to take the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God—Jesus.¹

We conquer by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony. He is the word of our testimony—the sword of our testimony.

Recently, praying with a friend, I prayed, “Jesus, would you reveal yourself,” and suddenly she saw a sword appear in her hand.

Footnote 1: In the Revelation, the son of Man has eyes like fire and a sharp two edged sword comes from His mouth. In Chapter 19, the Word of God rides a war horse. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. “From his mouth issues a sharp two-edged sword with which to smite the Nations.”

People think that’s only a vision of the future, but the rider is riding now. He’s the Word of God and when we speak the Word, the Gospel of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, we unleash a power greater than we can comprehend, and we conquer.

Jesus is the sword, and He tells Peter, “Put away your sword.” You see Peter will swing a much greater sword, “The sword of the Spirit” which is the “Word of God.” When we swing that sword we proclaim the Word—Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

John records Jesus as saying, “Peter, put your sword in its sheath. Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?”

And what is that cup?

It’s Passover wine, and it’s blood.

It’s lamb’s blood.

It’s covenant blood.

On the cross, His blood fulfills the old covenant of law and ratifies the new eternal covenant of grace. It cancels out our certificate of debt, disarming the principalities and powers.

The cup is the Lord’s blood.

The cup is fire.

It’s the judgment of God

(that cuts us like a flaming sword).

The cup is Life.

The life of God.

God is love,

and God is a consuming fire,

and God is one.

He doesn’t change like you and me.

He is all love and all fire.

The cup is the revelation of His nature.

The revelation of hesed, mercy.

Covenant love.

The cup is the blood of the Lamb.

“There is power, power, wonder working power in
the blood of the Lamb.”

Jesus is the Lamb, and He’s preparing to bleed.
But you can’t bleed unless you are cut.
He will be cut by whips, nails, and a spear
(by the swords of men).

We’re called to His table to eat His body and drink
His blood that we could *be* His body and *bleed* His blood.
When Jesus bleeds, He bleeds fire. When we bleed, in His
name, we bleed fire, too.

The most powerful weapons in this world are the
wounds on the body of Christ for they bleed fire, and the
fire is mercy. For who is it that conquers this world?

Caesar?

Napoleon?

Some king or president?

Or a baby in a manger,
a peasant on a cross,
and then a fisherman crucified upside down
named Peter,
an old Pharisee writing letters in prison
named Paul,
a monk named Francis
or perhaps Martin,
a nun named Teresa
or a Chinese believer, beaten and in stocks.

They conquer!

They conquer “by the blood of the Lamb
and the word of their testimony.”

The flaming sword.

Did you know Satan's not in the least bit intimidated by steel swords, guns, tanks, armies, governments, and all the legislation in the world? He's not intimidated by the swords of men. But he's utterly terrified of the Blood of the Lamb.

Last week we went with Jesus to the garden and surrendered our wounds. When we do that we commune with God and receive mercy. Our wounds become vessels of mercy. Our wounds also become weapons of mercy for we bleed mercy, that is fire.

Peter couldn't bleed mercy until he allowed himself to be wounded for the sake of love.

Satan wants us to fear wounds, be ashamed of wounds, and hide our wounds. For then we'll never bleed mercy—like Jesus.

Jesus wants us to surrender our wounds
for He turns them into weapons.

They bleed fire.

They bleed mercy.

When we receive mercy,
we bleed mercy.

Mercy that heals the hearts of men
and defeats the work of the evil one.

But we can't bleed mercy unless we allow ourselves to be wounded in the service of love.

During the Depression, Thornton Wilder wrote a play about a doctor who went for healing at the miraculous pool of Bethsaida. An angel stopped him saying, "No, the healing is not intended for you."

The doctor starts to sob uncontrollably, “Please let me! I can’t live this way. The melancholy, the depression, it’s overwhelming.”

Finally the angel says, “Without your wounds, where would your power be? Tell me, doctor, without your wounds, where would your power be? It is your melancholy that makes your low voice tremble into the hearts of men and women. The very angels themselves cannot persuade the wretched and blundering children of this earth as can one human being, broken on the wheels of living. In love’s service, only wounded soldiers can serve.”

Wounded soldiers heal wounded ears and help them hear. Angels can swing swords, but I suspect that only flesh and blood can preach Gospel. Twelve legions of angels can’t sing “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me” and mean it. Only wounded soldiers can serve.

When Jesus rose from the dead He showed them His wounds. At the table Jesus shows you His wounds and helps you hear. His wounds heal you, and His wounds defeat the evil one. His wounds bleed mercy—which is fire. “I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses that the power of Christ may rest on me,” writes Paul. “I bear on my body the marks (stigmata) of Jesus.”

I’ve been telling you about my friend raised in a coven, and so horribly wounded. When she surrenders her wounds, she forgives. And when she forgives, she bleeds mercy... mercy over those who cut her and over herself. She bleeds mercy and Satan is defeated.

Recently, she served communion here at church on Halloween night, and she served me. Afterward, she really struggled with shame.

Over the next few days, Jesus helped her remember how the coven had taken her from the box I told you about and put her through a ceremony to shame her with horrific wounds. At one point as she lay on this table under a blanket all the members of this coven reached under the blanket, put blood on her hands, feet, and head and spoke curses. She felt it burn as if evil were entering her body through wounds.

Well, the night she remembered this a few weeks ago, she dreamt of it, and she then awoke to Satan and demons around her bed, trying to touch her as the members of the coven did so long ago. She came over to our house terrified. She had called on Jesus, and the demons disappeared. But she said, “I felt the burning again, and it felt so real—more real.”

We prayed and asked Jesus for help. He gave her a vision. She saw Him. He showed her the wounds (the stigmata) in His hands and feet. I said, “Look at your hands and feet,” and she saw the same wounds. Jesus then showed her that table long ago. She watched as He lay down over her and with her. Her wounds were His wounds and the wounds of His cross (when two different substances meet, they burn). She saw that as they’d cursed her, He took the curses. She felt the evil burn, but said, “ He’s taking it. He’s protecting me.”

Then Jesus showed her that very morning in her bed she had been terrified because she felt that same burning and so real. But now she watched herself in this vision of that very morning. She now saw why those old wounds burned for when she called on Jesus, fire came out of the wounds and devoured the evil one and his demons. As soon as Jesus showed her that, He then showed her a vision of herself serving communion on Halloween night. She

looked at the cup in her hand. It was on fire. The same fire that consumed the Evil one. The same fire that came from her wounds. I said “Don’t be ashamed of those wounds.”

When we surrender our wounds to Jesus we bleed mercy. That blood testifies to the Word of God, and the Word is a sword. The Word of God is Jesus—the love of God poured out for you and through you. So you see, we are in a battle, and we do have a kingdom to claim, and an enemy to conquer, and a sword to swing.

You’re called to a crusade. But not as the crucifier, as the crucified... the body of Christ. And don’t worry, the One standing at the end of time on His glorious throne is a Lamb standing “as if He’d been slain.” He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Twelve legions of angels, Satan himself, none of it is a problem for Him, and yet He died (once and for all) to give *you* His heart... His heart of mercy.

And so on that night He took bread, and He broke it saying, “This is my body given to You, take and eat.” And in the same manner after supper and having given thanks He took the cup, and He said, “This is my blood of the covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it all of you. I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

And so we invite you, if you want Him, to come to the table, tear off a piece of the bread. Dip the bread in the cup. The black cups are wine; the purple cups are juice. They’re both fire, and they’re both love.

[Peter sings...] “Love is a burning thing, and it makes a fiery ring. Bound by a wild desire. I fell into a ring of fire.”

Come to the table and fall into the fiery love of your Lord. In Jesus' name, believe and live. Amen.

And so let's go to war. You've been cut, haven't you? You've been cut by someone, something, maybe even yourself. Well, let's go back to that garden. Take with you the person that cut you. Do see your wounds? Do you see how they hurt you because it really did hurt, didn't it?

Did you know Jesus bears the same wound? He'll show you? Your wounds are His wounds. You've given yourself to Him, right? Look at your wounds, look at Jesus, and now look at the person that wounded you. Could be yourself. Could be me, I don't know.

I think if you see them clearly, you'll begin to see that they're not really your enemy. Somebody else is. You might even say, "Father, forgive them for I don't think they knew what they were doing."

Look at them. They've cut you. They've wounded you, and now it's time to respond. At your feet there are two swords. One is made of steel. It can cut flesh. And one is made of fire. It can cut to the division of soul and spirit, joint and marrow, discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart and destroy the works of the evil one.

The sword of fire is mercy. Pick up that sword and say, "In the name of Jesus, I forgive. In the name of Jesus, I give mercy, I give Jesus."

Now I don't know exactly what that means in terms of lawsuits and police, but it does mean this, whatever you do, it won't be out of vengeance for you have entrusted that to the Father. You will be constrained by love.

And so Lord God, we offer to you our wounds on this mountain. And we pray Lord God that You will use these wounds in Your body, the wounds in the body of Christ, we pray that You would use our wounds to do some serious damage to the kingdom of evil. In Jesus' name, we say it.

So Lord Jesus, be born in our hearts today. Be born in the wound that is our heart. You are born into the wound. You are born into the wound of this world like You were born into a manger. Be born into our wounds. May this be Christmas, and may it be holy for You.

[The worship band plays...]

O Holy Night

by the French composer Adolphe Adam,
CCLI# 26700

O holy night!

The stars are brightly shining,
It is the night of the dear Savior's birth!
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!

Chorus:

Fall on your knees!
O hear the angel voices!
O night divine,
O night when Christ was born.
O night divine,
O night, O night divine!

Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is love and His gospel is peace.
Chains shall He break,
for the slave is our brother
And in His name all oppression shall cease.
Sweet hymns of joy
in grateful chorus raise we,
Let all within us praise His holy name!

Christ is the Lord,
O praise His name forever
His power and glory evermore proclaim
His power and glory evermore proclaim

So do you hear what He's saying? He's saying, "I love you so much it hurts, and I love that person sitting next to you, and I love that person that cut you. And I love the man in that picture, and I love George Bush, and I love Bill Clinton. I love you! Believe my love, and you'll live my love."

You came to His table. He gave you His body and His blood. And now you are His body, and you can bleed His blood. In Jesus' name, amen.

If you'd like prayer, we have a prayer ministry team. They'll be down front here. They'd love to pray with you.

Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

Genesis 3:24 (ESV)

And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

Luke 2:34-35 (ESV)

Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

Matthew 10:34 (ESV)

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. . . . Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go over there and pray.” . . . While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; seize him.” And he came up to Jesus at once and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” And he kissed him. Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you came to do.” Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.

Matthew 26:30, 26:36, 26:47-51 (ESV)

He who has ears, let him hear.

Matthew 13:9 (ESV)

You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would

borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 5:38-45a (ESV)

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer.

Romans 12:19-13:4 (ESV)

So clear was the opposition of the early Christians to bearing arms that Celsus, in his famous attack on them, declared that if all were to do as did the Christians the Empire would fall victim to the wildest and most lawless barbarians. In replying, Origen did not deny that Christians were pacifists. Indeed, he said that Christians do not fight under the Emperor "although he require it." Instead he argued that if all were to become Christians, the barbarians would also be Christian, and that even now, when Christians were in the minority, their love, labour, and prayers were doing more than Roman arms to preserve the realm.

For the early Christians, pacifism was largely theoretical, for they were chiefly from groups other than those from which the legions were recruited and they did not have the responsibility for formulating state policy. In spite of the general trend among Christians towards pacifism, in the third century the numbers of Christians serving in the legions seem to have increase. This was especially the case on the frontiers, menaced as they were by invasion, and in the West.

Moreover, after the Emperors had espoused Christianity and they and Christian officials were charged with the responsibility for the body politic and for making decisions for the government, the attitude of the majority of Christians towards war changed. Christians now began to believe that some wars are just. That was the position taken by Ambrose. Augustine elaborated the theoretical basis for a just war. He held that wickedness must be restrained, by force if necessary, and that the sword of the magistrate is divinely commissioned. Not all wars are just. To be just, so Augustine said, a war must be waged under the authority of the prince, it must have as its object the punishment of injustice and the restoration of peace, and it must be fought without vindictiveness and without unnecessary violence. It must also be carried on with inward love. Yet without the authority of the prince, Augustine taught, the civilian must not use force to defend even his own life. The clergy and the monks were to be entirely exempt from military service. It was the principle of a righteous or just war which was held by a large proportion of Christians in subsequent centuries.

Kenneth Latourette, A History of Christianity

Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword.

Matthew 26:52 (ESV)

But as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left. . . . For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

2 Corinthians 6:4-7, 10:3-4 (ESV)

. . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Ephesians 6:17b (ESV)

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12 (ESV)

In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. . . . Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great." And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

Revelation 1:16, 19:11-21 (ESV)

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have

come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”

John 18:36-37 (ESV)

Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant/and cut off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Malchus.) So Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?”

John 18:10-11 (ESV)

The name Malchus is the Grecized form derived from the Semitic root for king (*mlk*). It also appears in Greek as *Malichos* and *Malchaios*. The name was particularly common among the Nabatean Arabs (two Nabatean kings bore the name, Malchus I, 50-28 B.C., and Malchus II, A.D. 40-71). It is also prominent among the Palmyrene inscriptions. It has been suggested from this that Malchus was an Arab slave (cf. Josephus *Ant.* xiii.5.1[131]; 1 Macc. 11:39).

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?” And one of them struck the servant/of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him.

Luke 22:49-51 (ESV)

Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?

Matthew 26:53 (ESV)

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host [army] praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.

Luke 2:13-16 (ESV)

Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left him and fled.

Matthew 26:53-56 (ESV)

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

Revelation 12:10-11 (ESV)

The slain lamb, not the British lion, the Indian tiger or the American eagle, is the symbol of power when history ends. In the Kingdom of God, what we believe to be the natural order of things is reversed. The kingdom of the broken and humiliated Christ is the only kingdom standing at the end of time.

Bryant L. Myers

One reason why the Lord allows bad things to happen to His people is so they can receive compassion for others, by which the power of healing operates. That is why the apostle Paul told of his beatings and stonings when his authority was questioned. Every wound and other bad thing that happens to us can be turned into the authority to do good. Every beating that the great apostle took resulted in salvation for others. Every wound that a warrior receives will result in others being saved, healed, or restored.

Rick Joyner, The Final Quest

When we become aware that we do not have to escape our pains, but that we can mobilize them into a common search for life, those very pains are transformed from expressions of despair into signs of hope. . . . A Christian community is therefore a healing community not because wounds are cured and pains are alleviated, but because wounds and pains become openings or occasions for a new vision. Mutual confession then becomes a mutual deepening of hope and sharing

weakness becomes a reminder to one and all of the coming strength. . .
 . Thus, ministry can indeed be a witness to the living truth that the
 wound, which causes us to suffer now, will be revealed to us later as
 the place where God intimated his new creation.

Henri Nouwen, The Wounded Healer

The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been
 completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not
 rather be cheated?

1 Corinthians 6:7 (NIV)

So to keep me from being too elated by the surpassing greatness of the
 revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to
 harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I pleaded
 with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me,
 “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in
 weakness [sickness].” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my
 weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake
 of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships,
 persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (ESV)

From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the
 marks [stigmata] of Jesus.

Galatians 6:17 (ESV)

The love of Jesus is not a mild benevolence; it is a consuming fire.

Bede Griffiths

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