

**St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Muskego, Wisconsin  
March 14, 2018**

## **Spiritual Danger Needs a Battle Plan**

- 1. Never Alone**
- 2. Always Aware**

**Mark 14: 32-42**

I love God's design and plan for the safety of his creatures! Consider the cottontail rabbit, perfectly camouflaged for brushy terrain except for the counterintuitive cotton tail! Unless you are chasing that cottontail and your eyes can't help but fixate on the tail END and your jaws snap down on nothing! The rat snake! Not poisonous like the rattlesnake but rattles its tail so that we jump back not quite too sure of who this fellow is! Brilliant, God!

For some of God's creatures, there is strength and safety in numbers. Consider the "baitfish"—just the name gives away their issue, "bait-fish". Small fish designed to be food for larger fish! How to cope? How to survive?

Well, kids, the answer is in something you do every day. School! As for you, so for them, school is not so much a place but an activity. "Strength in numbers" = better foraging and more efficient swimming. "Safety in numbers" = better protection from predators who have a hard time zeroing in on one flash of silver in the midst of 1000's.

Earthly dangers needed a battle plan so the Creator provided one! So it is with spiritual dangers from our betraying heart to the father of lies to his tempting lures and to the evils of this world! A battle plan is needed—and this evening the Savior models one! Spiritual Danger Needs a Battle Plan! Never Alone and Always Aware!

**TRANSITION** Most of us were probably taught the guiding principle for life "Choose Your Friends Wisely" because "you are what you eat". Surround yourself with good people and you will become them! There is good truth there that Jesus models for us in something called "Christian Community".

## **1. NEVER ALONE**

### **A. Jesus Modeled Christian Community**

“It is not good for the man to be alone,” said the LORD God in the first garden, so he made woman. You see, God’s intent for us has always been “community”, “relationships”. So we find Jesus as an influencer in the Kingdom of God gathering 12 to be his disciples and to share his journey to the cross and beyond. Then, being truly human, Jesus had closer ties with three--Peter, James and John—best buds perhaps due to personality or to earthly bloodlines.

Being the leader of the 12, Jesus began to teach them and to sharpen their relationship with their best friend, God the Father in heaven. He schooled them in love for God and for each other. He taught them the Words of God as THE most important relationship to have in this world. Without the heart and voice of God in our ears and hearts, we are wired to think that we were created for the here and the NOW rather than for an eternal relationship with God. Ah, the importance of Christian Community!

And in that Christian community, Jesus modeled responsibility FOR each other. Calling each other out when we sin, warning each other when we are believing the devil’s lies, and being there for each other and praying for each other in the struggles of this life!

### **B. Jesus Modeled the Plan In Action**

In the second garden, we see Jesus modeling the plan for Christian Community in Action—Never Alone.

If one of your pastors is ever hospitalized, would one of you feel comfortable calling his wife and saying, “Would it be OK if I paid your husband a visit in the hospital and brought him the comfort of God’s Word?” And would you be able to actually DO it? THAT my friends would be SO AWESOME! Jesus models the plan of action in Christian Community that even the perfect teacher needed the blessing of this community! He modeled that Christian Community is a mutual endeavor—back and forth from me to you and you to me and him to us! Whether it is calling out, warning, encouraging, comforting or praying!

As true man facing the reality of our curse with its horrific suffering, Jesus planned to draw sympathy and support especially from the 3. He took Peter, James and John... “My soul is overwhelmed to the point of death...Stay here...keep watch.” Personally in need of love and support, the weight and ugliness of the world’s sins on his shoulders, Jesus exercised his battle plan.

**APPLICATION** Do you have a spiritual battle plan? Are you a list maker? Do you have a shopping list in your phone or purse right now waiting for the next foray into Walmart? Do you have a financial To-Do List—write our will, open a Roth IRA...? Some of us have a packing list saved on the computer for regular vacations like camping! But how many of us have a list in preparation for the spiritual battles we KNOW are coming?

- Be rich in the Word of God for strength and nourishment.
- Bring Jesus along daily for the journey.
- Seek his voice as naturally as checking my phone. (“What do you think, Jesus? Should I have a third beer or not?” Say THAT out loud in front of the bartender and you would create quite a witnessing opportunity!).
- Surround myself with godly people who KNOW ME AND MY WEAKNESSES, who will call me out, warn me, encourage me, carry me if needed. And,
- Be diligent in being there for others when I am part of THEIR spiritual battle plan.

## **2. ALWAYS AWARE**

### **A. That Others Might Let Us Down**

It is important to be diligent when one is a key player in a fellow Christian’s plan to face spiritual dangers and life’s challenges.

Our first daughter was born on her due date in October, 1986. She arrived ON TIME after a heroic effort to come very premature. Now guys, childbirth is and always will be a daunting thing for our wives. It is a physical, emotional and spiritual hurdle for which SHE needs us to be present, God willing. And what is OUR job during that time? Doing for her exactly what she

needs of us as the nurses are in and out of the room and the rest of the world just keeps doing its thing.

MY job was to help with breathing—which I did quite well—and to be ready with mint lifesavers when her mouth got dry. Well, October, a Saturday, college football, the Badgers on TV vs. Iowa, afternoon labor. I was watching the game, breathing and eating lifesavers...and muffed the moment of truth! In the middle of labor, “Honey, can I have a lifesaver?” No lie; I had eaten them all in thoughtless, self-focus. It can still be a topic of conversation in our house today!

“Simon, are you asleep? Couldn’t you have kept watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Jesus had called, gathered, trained. He had preached, quoted the prophets, taught with memory hooks known as parables. He had sent them out in pairs to be aware of supporting each other. He had warned them that they would fall away that night. And now, he hadn’t asked them to supply lifesavers in his struggle, but he had asked them to support him in life: Stay here and keep watch with me.”

Whether due to fatigue alone, or to complacency, or to just plain spiritual dullness, when he needed them most, they muffed it! But in his model for us of a spiritual battle plan, Jesus reminds of a most important principle—Always Be Aware that our Father in heaven is Aware—of us, of our needs and of our hearts!

## **B. But the Father Never Will**

Three times he went in prayer to his Father. Three times he returned to find them asleep. Three times he asked his Father to take the cup of suffering from him. Three times he prayed for the strength to accept and to seize his Father’s will!

“You have not, because you ask not,” says the Spirit of God. Jesus asked three times and he received! There was no other way to atone for our self-centeredness, for our neglect of our duty to love God and each other more than ourselves. There was no other way for our “free” ticket home to heaven than through the blood of Jesus! So Jesus received strength for the struggle, strength for the temptations of the adversary yet to come. The Father sent an angel, Luke tells us,

to strengthen him. The Father reminded him from the prophets that he “would not abandon him to the grave nor let his holy one see decay,” and that he would allow Jesus to “see his offspring (his spiritual children)” and that the Father would “prolong his days and that the will of God would prosper in his hands.”

Jesus models for us the all-important principle for life and its spiritual battles: Always Be Aware that our Father in heaven is Aware—of us, of our needs, and of our hearts!

And God proved his awareness by sending his Son to die for our sins! When our spiritual battle plan flags, when people let us down, when the world isolates us, when WE let our God down, when we sin, all is not lost! For our best friend in this community is the One reigns above with his heart of love. The One who sent his Son. The One who always forgives! The One who IS always there and who always answers our prayers!

**APPROPRIATION** Was Jesus there for his brothers in 1918 in the fox holes of France when night after night and day after day the shelling never stopped and home was like a distant memory? Was Jesus there at the Hanoi Hilton, the prisoner of war camp in Vietnam, when days turned into years and home was SO far away? Will Jesus be there in the dark of night in your hospital room when family is home asleep and you are awake and afraid? Will Jesus be there in the thick of any temptation when we have sinned against our God and feel estranged from our God?

The Father was there for his Son in a struggle beyond our comprehension! Look how Jesus came out of the struggle. “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!” Resilient he was, and resilient he IS for you and for me!

**CONCLUSION** Let us ponder God’s design and plan for the safety of his creatures. Our God is better than a cotton tail, more powerful than a rattling tail. His people are a “school” for safety in numbers. And his forgiveness and his Presence are the reality that will bring us safely home!  
Amen.

Prepared by Pastor Nate Strobel  
414-422-0320, ext. 293  
nstrobel@stpaulmuskego.org