**I Held The Hammer**

 Personally identifying our role in the death of Jesus is an extremely helpful exercise. It will make us uncomfortable, but it is imperative that we understand that Jesus died because of our sins, not just generally as mankind but also individually as people. For that reason, this morning’s lesson is a little different. I hope that as I speak, you can follow with me as we each identify our personal role in the death of Jesus.

**I. I Was There With Jesus At The Last Supper; His Blood Is On My Hands**

 A. I lay there with my Savior. I heard Him speak. I looked in His eyes. I acted like everything was okay, even though I knew this was the night I would break His heart and seal His fate.

 B. I let Him wash my feet. He told us we were not all clean. He was speaking of me. As He washed my feet, I looked at Him and smiled as the God of the universe washed my traitorous feet and I hid the dark deed in my heart.

 C. I sat there as He instituted the Lord’s Supper. Jesus spoke of His body being broken and His blood being shed for the forgiveness of sins. I knew that my betrayal would result in His body being broken and His blood being shed.

 D. I ate and drank with Him. We dipped our food in the same cup. He told me I would betray Him in front of all of our friends. They didn’t know what He was talking about, but I knew. He told me to leave and do what I had planned. I fully opened my heart to Satan & left my Lord, in more way than one.

**II. I Betrayed Jesus To The Religious Leaders; His Blood Is On My Hands**

 A. On the way to the den of those irreverent and malicious religious leaders, Jesus’ words rang in my head loud and clear. I knew what I was doing was wrong but I proceeded to do it anyway. I purposely silence God; my heart hardens.

 B. As I arrived, I thought one last time about what I was doing. I chose to abandon and forsake my Lord. The price? Thirty pieces of silver, the price of a wounded slave according to our Law. What a marvelous price I valued my Lord! Could I’ve gotten more? I wonder what I’ll do w/ it after they kill Jesus?

 C. I led the party of death to Jesus. We marched through the night out of the city and into the Garden. I wonder if Jesus sees our torches? He probably does. We usually do see people leave the city when we spend time in our special spot.

 D. I see Jesus. I could recognize Him anywhere, even in the darkness. I’ve spent years getting to know Him. I know His passions, hobbies, I even saw Him build a table in His hometown. He tells me to do what I came to do, so I kiss Him. I know that to worship God is to kiss toward Him. How ironic a way to gain my price of betrayal. His hand touches my face and my heart immediately drops. How low have I sunk? How heartless can I be? Did I really just do that?

**III. I Abandoned Jesus In The Garden Of Gethsemane; His Blood Is On My Hands**

 A. I now see myself in the Garden from a new perspective. We are all exhausted. Jesus says He is going to pray. He tells us the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. I’m so tired. I’ll just shut my eyes for a minute. He’ll never know and even if He does, he must understand that we’ve been running ragged. I need to sleep. He wakes me up a couple times but I keep falling asleep. He wakes me up a final time & soldiers draws near. I see Judas. Why is he here?

B. I cannot believe Judas has betrayed the Lord! I would never do that. In fact, I’ll cut off the head of one to prove it. His name is Malchus. Too bad, I missed and only got his ear. But wait a minute? Jesus told me to drop the sword and He healed his ear? What’s going on? I have to get out of here! Everybody run! But Jesus is in custody. Should I stop? No, I don’t want to get caught too...

 C. Right next to me another flees and they grab his garment and strip it off his body. He and I keep running. So much for always standing by Jesus’ side...

 D. Everybody is scattering in all directions. Maybe I can figure out where they are taking Jesus. I didn’t stand by my Lord, but at least I can figure out what they are going to do to Him. Maybe He was right in warning me a few hours ago about my confidence. But I will never deny Him 3x! That will never happen!

**IV. I Betrayed My Lord At His Trials; His Blood Is On My Hands**

 A. I get to where they are holding Jesus. It’s cold so I need to warm myself up. What’s done is done. At least I can stay warm. After all I escaped & He didn’t. He would probably want me to be warm anyways, right?

 B. John gets me in the house. He knows somebody who knows somebody. Glad he can help alleviate my curiosity. Oh wait? What did the servant girl say? No, no, no. I don’t know that man. I swear it. I’ve never seen Him before! Now another! Stop it man, I don’t know any Jesus of Nazareth. And another! I swear to God I don’t know the man! If I do, & am lying, may God strike me dead! I’ve got to get out of here!

 C. I am now a witness at this trial by night. I know Jesus is a good man. I know He has committed miracles, but the priests have bribed me & I don’t want to be kicked out of the Temple! He said He would destroy the Temple! He deserves to die. Too bad for him! At least I stay out of trouble & get a nice paycheck.

 D. I am now the judge. I am Pontius Pilate. I know Jesus is innocent. I try to recuse myself by the standard ways. My loved ones tell me this Nazarene is different. I try and send him to Herod but he won’t take care of it. I try and offer to release Him or Barabbas, but the crowds choose Barabbas. I know he’s a murderer, but Jesus I know to be innocent. The crowds are pressing. What if a rebellion ensues? I can’t have another one on my record. Who cares about one man? So what if he’s innocent? Better Him than me. I’ll just wash my hands of it. But can that really change what I am choosing to do?

 E. I now stand before the judgment seat. All the crowds worshipped Jesus just a few days ago. Now we are all screaming to crucify Him. Crucify Him! Won’t it be neat? Oh no, Pilate says he is innocent. He says he knows we handed him over for envy and through deception. We yell more. I yell louder than anyone. Crucify Him Pilate! Crucify Him!

**V. I Beat My Lord Senselessly And Mocked Him; His Blood Is On My Hands**

 A. Pilate sends Jesus my way. I am one of the four Roman soldiers tasked with teaching this guy and these Jews a lesson. I was trained for this moment. Inflict as much trauma and pain as possible without killing Him. I am glad for the years of training I received. I will do my duty and please the prefect.

 B. I strip his clothes off. I grab my favored instrument of torture, a leather strap with bones and metal shards. I draw it back and drive it into this Nazarene’s flesh. I rake it across His body. Skin and muscle tear free. How much more should I do? Let me make sure to teach this guy the might of Rome. I do it more and more and more, again, and again, and again. His bones are exposed. He can hardly even scream anymore. My duty is fulfilled.

 C. My friends and I put a purple robe on him. We give him a scepter and a crown fit for a king. A crown made with twisted thorns. We take the king’s scepter and smash it down on the crown. I’m surprised this guy has any more blood to bleed. I deliver him back to Pilate & he says to lead Him away to be crucified.

**VI. I Crucified My Lord; His Blood Is On My Hands**

 A. I take Jesus through the city bearing the weight of the crossbeam of the very cross that He will die upon. A king? I don’t think so. You there! Help Him with the cross. Let’s get this show on the road! Simon? From Cyrene? You’ll remember this Simon. Not much further to the hill of death. Golgotha, the place of the skull. The place where we kill Jesus.

 B. We ascend the hill and get to the spot. It stinks like death up here but I don’t care. I attach the crossbeam to the upright and throw His mangled body upon the wood. He moans and groans. God in the flesh? I don’t think so.

 C. I pick up the hammer. I take up the first nail. I line it up perfectly with His left wrist. He has carpenter’s hands. Rough and abrasive. How fitting that my hammer will now deconstruct this man! I draw the hammer back and slam it into the nail as hard as I can. He screams. I know I hit the right spot. I hit the nail ten more times and each time He screams more. I grab another nail and start on the right hand. The same thing. I’ve done this a thousand times but this seems different for some reason. I move to the man’s feet. I measure for the footrest that His weight will hardly be supported by. I twist his legs and drive a final nail between the bones of His ankles.

 D. The prisoner is secure. I now follow Pilate’s command and add the placard above His head – “Jesus, King of the Jews.” My fellow soldier and I lift His cross into the hole prepared. As the cross sinks, the weight of Jesus’ body heaves, His bones pop, & blood drops off Him. Right on time. Let’s get the thieves up.

 E. I see a few of his followers now. Something is definitely different about this guy. I offer Him a painkiller to make things easier. He refuses. He asks for a drink. I oblige. He says something. And then something else. Who is this guy? I’m a soldier. I have to follow orders. He needs to die and He will die.

 F. It’s dark now. This is weird. Why is it so dark? It’s been dark for three hours. He says a few more things and then expires. Maybe He really is the Son of God? No, no, no, get a hold of yourself. It’s about time this guy died. I’m surprised He lasted that long. Pilate will be happy. Oh? Pilate wants to make sure? Time to break their legs. Well, let’s do Him a little differently. I spear Him in the side. Blood and water run out. Yeah, He’s dead. It is finished.

 I was there with Jesus at the Last Supper and I left Him that night. I betrayed Jesus to the religious leaders. I abandoned Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. I betrayed my Lord at His trials. I beat my Lord senselessly and I mocked Him. I crucified my Lord.

Even though I did all of these things...Even though I have egregiously sinned and fallen short of the glory of God...Even though the penalty for my sins is eternal torment of which I am fully deserving, I know that He died for me and that Jesus desperately and passionately loves me. While I held the hammer, His flesh received the nails. While my hands sinned, His shoulders bore my sins. He died but He didn’t stay dead. He rose from the grave and is seated now at the right hand of God. And for that I am undyingly grateful.

 I am a child of God, created in His image, tarnished by sin, imperfect yet striving for perfection. I know that Jesus paid the penalty for my sins and I will never take that for granted. Today, I will sincerely reflect on what I have done and make the decision to be faithfully obedient to my Savior as we stand and sing.