

John 18.1-27 Sermon / COB / 03.29.15

Introduction

- † **[Slide 1: City View]** When I was a young child, I had a perfect life. Both my parents loved me. We lived in a big house on a quiet street with friendly neighbors, we had a woods to explore and even belonged to a country club. Then one day, Dad was gone; in the following months, we lost our pets, our country club, and our place in that neighborhood. My best friend moved to the other side of the country, and we moved to the inner city. Looking back, I can see that I went into emotional shock.
- In my late twenties, I got disillusioned with my studies, so I dropped out of the economics PhD program at Georgetown even though I had invested three years into it. I gave up my career path and my lifestyle as a graduate student and teacher. I was surprised that my school friends then gave me up, my girlfriend married someone else, and I found myself working two retail jobs just to eat and pay the rent; again, I experienced something like shock, as the foundation on which I had been building crumbled beneath me.
 - The thing to remember in such moments is that God can work just as swiftly to build us back up. As a young man, I was not prepared for the challenges of life, so I got mired in depression and apathy. But when I turned back to God – and really dedicated myself to live for him and by his ways – I was amazed at how swiftly he gave me a sense of new life inside and how swiftly he gave me a whole new life in the world. And as God was building me back up, he also healed the remaining issues from my childhood shock, which I had not even realized I still carried with me!
 - God is amazing and good. And that's why I have emphasized so strongly over the past couple of months that he has revealed how we can be protected by him and defend ourselves in his strength; and it is just as true that we can be healed by him and empowered to help others... but we have to learn to follow his instructions. Like me in my twenties, many of us today make ourselves vulnerable to attack and suffering because we cling to the ways we know, ways of the world, instead of committing to the strange new ways of God we learn in scripture.
 - I wish I had been prepared better for life before I went to college. I wish I could relive my twenties walking with God – how different it would have been! – but I am glad that eventually God brought me back to him, and is teaching me how to live successfully, how to grow strong and mature so that I can be protected and help others. Today, we will see another fellow who experiences the shock of tragedy and falls to attack because he was not ready. Let's pray...
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- † **[Slide 2: 18.1]** For over two months, we have been thinking through what Jesus said and prayed on his last night of life. Today, as we enter John 18, we get back to narrative action!
- Recall, Jesus and his closest followers celebrated the Passover supper together. After Judas Iscariot left to betray Jesus to the Jewish religious leaders, Jesus taught the other apostles, and then prayed for himself, for them, and for us. Now, in John 18, the action resumes.
 - Last week, we discussed application with each passage. Today, we will read the narrative and then talk about what to do with it. So relax and enjoy the story!

John 18.1 NIV: When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it.

- † **[Slide 3: map]** Let's look at a map of Jerusalem in Jesus' day. This eastern hill of the city, marked A, is the original City of David. It slopes up as you go north, to the Temple Mount, B, at the top. By Jesus' day, 1000 years after David, the city had spread across the Central Valley, C, and up the western hill, D, going even beyond the expanded walls, marked E. F marks the Kidron Valley, between Mount Zion, with the Temple and City of David, and the Mount of Olives, G, to the east.
- Kidron is a wadi, which is like a monstrous drainage ditch: it is dry most of the time, but when it rains, this is where the water runs off, and eventually it flows through a system of ravines all the way to the Dead Sea. We have similar drainage systems out west in this country.
 - **[Slide 4: temple view]** Let's look at a couple of pictures. This first one shows the steepness of the valley. This is taken from the Temple Mount, looking southeast; the City of David is out of view behind the hill toward the upper right; in the center is the Kidron Valley; the hill on the left is part of the Mt. of Olives. The valley is deep, with steep slopes.
 - **[Slide 5: model]** Here is a picture that shows a model of Jerusalem in Jesus' day. A is the City of David, sloping up to B, the Temple Mount. Looking to the left is the Central Valley, C, sloping back up to the upper city, D, and then beyond, E. The Kidron Valley is F, with just the start of the Mount of Olives, G, on the right.
 - None of this is terribly important, but it is fun to get a visual sense of what is going on. Jesus and his disciples had supper in the upper city, then went across town, left the city, crossed the Kidron Valley, and came to the Mount of Olives. Jews were required to stay within certain extended boundaries of Jerusalem on the evening they celebrated Passover, which included this western face of the Mount of Olives.
- † **[Slide 6: olive]** On the west side of the Mount of Olives, facing toward Jerusalem, there was an olive grove called Gethsemane [Γεθσημανι], which is from the Hebrew [גֵּת שֶׁמֶן] for "olive press." We are not sure exactly where this grove was – there are two proposed locations today – but here is a picture of some olive trees at one site opposite the Temple Mount, which are about 1000 years old.

[Slide 7: 18.2-3] John 18.2-3: Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.

- † It is interesting that Judas guided both Roman soldiers and Jewish officials.
- The Greek word for these Jewish officials is the same as was used for the assistants the religious leaders sent out to arrest Jesus before, so it might be the same men. Last time, they were too in awe of Jesus to arrest him; this time they were forced to do their duty by having soldiers along.
 - Troop numbers in Jerusalem always increased for religious festivals, to help police the crowds and to prevent the religious fervor from resulting in riots.
 - I expect the Jewish religious leaders who wanted to arrest Jesus had no trouble securing some troop support from the local Roman government. They portrayed Jesus as a revolutionary, and they could truthfully say that just four days earlier crowds of people had declared Jesus to be their king as he rode into the city on a donkey, on what we now call Palm Sunday.

[Slide 8: 18.4-6] John 18.4-6: Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?" "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the

traitor was standing there with them.) When Jesus said, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground.

- † John reminds us here that Jesus, as the divine Son of God, knew this was his moment for arrest. So he boldly went out and faced those who had come for him. “Whom do you seek?” he asked. “Jesus the Nazarene” they replied.
- † We talked before about how Jesus identifies himself here. In Greek, he said, ἐγώ εἰμι. This could mean, “I am he,” “I am the one you seek.” But literally, it means, “I AM,” which in Hebrew was Yahweh, the name God had given himself in the Jewish scriptures of the Old Testament.
 - So we might ask, how did those who came to arrest Jesus interpret his words? Well, they drew back and fell to the ground! So I think they understood he was declaring his divine identity, and it sounds to me like they were momentarily struck with awe by the sound of the name, perhaps as a work of the Holy Spirit.
 - Even Judas Iscariot fell to the ground at the mention of the name, an ironic reaction, since he was there to betray Son of God to the religious leaders.

[Slide 9: 18.7-9] John 18.7-9: Again he asked them, “Who is it you want?” “Jesus of Nazareth,” they said. Jesus answered, “I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go.” This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: [which were] “I have not lost one of those you [God the Father] gave me.”

- † Twice Jesus got those in charge to say they were seeking only him, and thus he made the case that they should let his followers go.
 - The word “men” is not in the Greek, it says “allow these to depart.” We are not sure whether Jesus had only his apostles with him, as at the last supper, or whether other disciples had joined them before they left the city to go to the Mount of Olives. Mark 14.50-52 seems to indicate there were others present, and it is possible women were among them. We don’t know.
- † In John 6.39, Jesus promised that he would not lose anyone given to him by God the Father, and in his prayer in 17.12, he prophesied the promise was coming true for the original disciples. In both the promise and the prayer, Jesus was talking about spiritual salvation, so how does preventing the arrest and slaughter of his followers fulfill these words? That’s an interesting question!
 - Here is what I think. Jesus gave himself up in such a way that his disciples went free, so the arrest of Jesus secured the physical lives of his disciples, which is symbolic in that the arrest of Jesus culminating in his crucifixion secured the spiritual lives of his disciples. Thus John says that the promise and prayerful prophecy of Jesus were fulfilled by his voluntary surrender.

[Slide 10: 18.10-11] John 18.10-11: Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant [slave], cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) Jesus commanded Peter, “Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?”

- † You have to love Peter, always the impulsive one. Here he is, surrounded by armed soldiers and officials of the religious leaders, and he pulls his sword to fight. And then he attacks not a soldier or religious official, but a poor slave; and what damage does this mighty warrior do? he cuts off an ear. You can rest easy: we learn in Luke 22.51 that Jesus miraculously healed Malchus’ ear.

- Sometime earlier, when Jesus first started to teach about how he would suffer and die at the hands of the religious leaders, Peter had tried to talk him out of it. Now the time has come for these events to happen and Peter is trying to stop them, because he still does not understand.
- † After telling Peter to re-sheath his sword, Jesus said, **“The cup which the Father has given to me, should I not drink it?”** By saying it this way, Jesus either was emphasizing the cup or the emotion of the moment or both.
- “The cup” in the Old Testament was an expression of destiny, good or bad; sometimes it represented a destiny of suffering or death. The other gospels tell us that, while in the garden, Jesus had prayed about “this cup” of suffering and death he had to accept.
 - Jesus knew what his destiny was, after all that was why he as the Son of God had come to earth in the first place! He would have to drink this cup of suffering to fulfill God the Father’s plan of defeating evil and offering salvation.
- † **[Slide 11: 18.12-14]** Before we go on, can I tell you something that amuses me about myself? In vv.12-14, you see the names Annas and Caiaphas. I like to pronounce biblical names as they appeared in Greek or Hebrew, so I say Καϊάφας instead of Caiaphas and I was surprised to notice this week that Annas is really Ἄννας, like a male version of Hannah.
- Well, LeeAnn was teasing me this week about how I say Judas Iscariot, so I looked up his name in Greek to see whether I was correct, and it turns out I am very English in my pronunciation: his name in Greek is Ἰούδας Ἰσκαριώθ or Ἰούδας Ἰσκαριώτης. Be that as it may, I still am going to say Ἄννας and Καϊάφας as I read the next passage. I hope you find that endearing!

John 18.12-14: Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him and brought him first to Annas [Ἄννας], who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas [Καϊάφας], the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people.

- † According to the other gospels, the disciples all fled when the arrest was made. Probably the Romans stepped in because of Peter’s violence. Since Jesus ends up in front of Annas, it seems the soldiers let the Jewish religious leaders take charge of Jesus once they got back into the city.
- † Annas had been the High Priest, which was supposed to be a lifetime religious position, but the Romans had other ideas, so they ousted Annas back in the year AD15, and – in the roughly eighteen years since – they had put in and taken out of office five of Annas’ sons, and now they had appointed his son-in-law, Caiaphas.
- So why did the religious officials bring Jesus to Annas? Well, many Jews still considered Annas to be the rightful High Priest; in fact, we will see in a moment that John sometimes gives the High Priest title to Annas. So even though Annas had no legal power now, he still had great influence, and as a sign of respect the religious officials brought Jesus to face Annas first.

[Slide 12: 18.15-18] John 18.15-18: Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in. “You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?” she asked Peter. He replied, “I am not.” It was cold, and the servants and

officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.

† Who is this other disciple? Nobody knows for sure. Since John names all his main characters except “the disciple Jesus loved,” whom we think was John himself, most commentators think this unnamed disciple is John also.

- It is not important; as Professor Baylis once told me, if God wanted us to know, he would have made it plain in the scriptures! But we might ask, if this was John, how could he have known the high priest? If you do the devotion this week, you can find out more about how this could be.
- Anyway, this disciple and Peter followed behind Jesus and his guards, and this other disciple got Peter into the courtyard. There Peter made his first denial of knowing Jesus.
- From the other gospel accounts, it sounds like Annas and Caiaphas were in the same building, and that it was Caiaphas’ house.

[Slide 13: 18.19-21] John 18.19-21: Meanwhile, the high priest [Annas] questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. “I have spoken openly to the world,” Jesus replied. “I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said.”

† Jesus apparently deflected questions about his followers and focused on the questions about his teachings. He pointed out that none of his teachings were secret. He had been publically proclaiming his teachings in synagogues and the Temple courts for a few years now.

- When he told Annas to ask those who had heard him teach, Jesus might have been hinting at the impropriety of these proceedings. Annas had no legal status anymore and the custom at trials was to question witnesses, not the accused.

[Slide 14: 18.22-24] John 18.22-24: When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby slapped him in the face. “Is this the way you answer the high priest?” he demanded. “If I said something wrong,” Jesus replied, “testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?” Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

† I have committed a lot of sins, and I know they all were ugly, evil, and reasons Jesus had to go to the cross. Even so, I am glad I can stand before you and assert with all honesty that I was not the one who slapped Jesus in the face.

- Jesus’ response again hints at the impropriety of these proceedings. If he is lying, they should give evidence against what he says, not strike him, and if he is not lying then there was no reason to strike him.
- Jesus did not fight back. He allowed himself to be falsely accused, unfairly beaten, and unjustly killed for the sake of the gospel mission; just like he taught his disciples, he turned the other cheek, to pursue the mission of all people in this time period and the unique part in that mission which only he could play.
- But Jesus also did not back down: he would bear witness for truth and righteousness; he would show moral resolve and courage, not weak cowardice. I ask you to see the difference. When we ask men to be like Christ, we are not asking them to be cowards, we are asking them to have moral resolve and courage, even when that dictates that they back down and suffer.

- Apparently Annas gave up or got bored, so he sent Jesus, still bound, to Caiaphas.

[Slide 15: 18.25-27] John 18.25-27: Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they asked him, "You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?" He denied it, saying, "I am not." One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the garden?" Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

† Have you ever done something and then realized, "Wow, I just sinned!"?

- A few weeks ago, LeeAnn and I had an energy audit of our home. Part of the program was this guy installed some energy saving LED and CFL light bulbs where we had the old fashioned incandescent ones.
- At the end of a few hours, this guy asked me to sign a receipt for what he had done, and on the receipt there was a statement about receiving these light bulbs, which said that I used those light fixtures at least three hours a day. After he left, I thought, I don't use any of my light fixtures three hours a day! So by signing that form, I lied!
- Upon realizing this, I confessed to God and let it go, but it was a troubling and startling realization that I so easily fell into sin!

† You might remember way back in the beginning of January, when we were in John 13 and Jesus was just finishing his last supper with the apostles, that he shocked Peter by asserting that Peter would deny knowing him three times before the next morning.

- As the evening wore on, Peter suffered more intellectual and emotional shocks, first as Jesus taught about being crucified and leaving them, and then as Jesus actually got arrested. So Peter himself is in shock, intellectually and emotionally reeling from events.
- Now as morning approaches, Jesus' prediction comes true. Imagine Peter's shame and heartbreak when he realized what he had done, when he realized how thoroughly he had failed to follow Jesus. While Jesus was showing courage and moral resolve, Peter was lying and denying Jesus because of fear.

† **[Slide 16: garden]** We have talked a lot recently about spiritual attack by demons, persecution from the unbelieving world, and the hard times that come in every life. We have talked about these things, because they were in Jesus' last supper discourse. And he talked about them on his last night of life, because he wanted to prepare his disciples for just this type of situation.

- When we are beaten down and under attack is when we are most vulnerable to sin. That might be because we are confused and off balance; it might be because we are running scared; it might be because we seek comfort in worldly ways instead of seeking empowerment from God; it might be that our defenses get so battered we give in to temptation or that we are unprepared and so we fall to deception or that we get angry at God because we did not accept that following Christ would mean suffering.
- If I get stressed at work, I am more likely to snap at my wife or to ignore her needs to focus on work. If tragedy strikes my family, I will be overwhelmed with grief and anger, and I can only hope that I will be theologically prepared to sort through my emotions and thoughts successfully so that I remain in intimacy with God throughout.

- Jesus knew his arrest and crucifixion would stress the disciples to the breaking point. That is why he prayed for God the Father to protect them and preserve their faith. Peter fell into sin, no doubt the others did too one way or another, especially with doubts and fears that went unchecked, but somehow their faith endured and, when Jesus rose from the dead, that faith ignited in them a burning passion for the gospel mission and a lasting joy and sense of peace.
- † I have stressed over and over, but I could not have stressed it enough, that you need to prepare yourself before the crisis hits.
- Something is going to come upon you: a tempting sin, a deception about God, a deceitful accusation in your mind, or a worldly hardship that causes you grief and pain; these things happen to everybody
 - And if you are not ready, if you are not spiritually healthy and growing, if you are not intimately connected to the vine of Christ, if you have not put on the armor of God before the crisis hits, then you are likely to fall, to fall into sin, to fall away from your relationship with God and to fall away from your ministry for God.
 - Some of you already have, so let me assure you that God does want you back and the way back is simply to confess and repent of your sins and then get back on the top line, living in faith and obedience to God's revelation instead of pursuing the things and ways of the world.
 - If you need healing, don't isolate yourself, that is a demonic trick. Rather, immerse yourself in loving Christian fellowship, so you get encouragement, accountability, teaching, and affirmation that will bring you healing. And while you are healing, start to focus outward on helping others, instead of dwelling on your own pain. Please let me know if I can help.
 - No matter who you are, do what you have to do, what the Bible instructs you to do, to become healthy and growing spiritually, so that you can act with moral resolve and courage even when under attack, instead of being intimidated or tricked into sin.

Conclusion

- † There are some other application reflection questions in the devotion for this week; I hope you will give them a look. Let's pray...