

Intro - Open to John 18:1-11

A well written story or a well written play or a well written symphony will make early mentions of its themes that build and come back to our delight to connect the pieces as they fall into place.

God in his divine drama of redemption has done this in so many ways. He puts the highest curse on the one hung from a tree, but sends his son to hang on a tree. He calls Adam to obey, but in his disobedience God plans the day when his Son, the seed of the woman, would be born as a man and truly obey.

As we read our passage this morning, pay attention to the images that John highlights here. There is a brook and a garden, torches and weapons, a sword and a cup. Each provide us insight into Christ's resolve to be arrested and to die as the Passover lamb. Jesus is the willing sacrifice. A sacrifice for us.

In his arrest, we see a display of His divine power, protection and purpose in willingly being arrested.

Pray

The Setting

Read John 18:1-3

If you remember during the last few chapters, Jesus ate the Passover meal with the disciples and instituted his Lord's Supper for the disciples to remember his sacrifice. Then he stood up and the disciples left the upper room and began walking east through the city and he was teaching them in his farewell discourse and he prayed his high priestly prayer over them. So now he was finished teaching and they went out of the city across the brook Kidron (our first image).

Now this place, the valley or brook of the Kidron, has been important to the biblical story at a few points. It is the brook that ran with blood from sacrifices at Passover as I mentioned on Good Friday. It is also the brook that David fled over when he was betrayed by Absalom his son. David was fleeing for his life and now Jesus walks over the same ground but with resolve that he is not intended to escape. He intends to be found.

He goes to a garden on the western slope of the Mount of Olives close to the city. The name revealed in the synoptic gospels is Gethsemane, which was a place they had come many times before. Since Judas knows this was their meeting place, we can suppose that many of the nights that week they had come to this garden to pray and escape the crowds before resting in Bethany for the night. This garden was most likely walled with an entrance. Which is why John mentioned them enter and in the next passage Jesus comes forward or more literally "out" of the garden.

Now what John does not mention, because it has been mentioned by Matthew and Luke, is that this is the place where Jesus prays to The Father, and resolves to not let the cup of God's wrath pass from him. Instead he is to do the will of God and drink the cup to the bottom. The garden, Gethsemane, means the oil press. It was an olive grove and it most likely had a press to make olive oil. For Jesus the pressure he was under was the weight of what was coming. This intense moment is punctuated with him sweating blood and ends with his rebuke of the disciples as they sleep through the ordeal.

Then as Judas arrives guiding the band of soldiers, officers or temple police from the priests and the Pharisees. Among this group they are carrying lanterns and torches along with swords for the soldiers and clubs for police.

Now based on what we know from accounts from this period and John's word choice we know it was a considerable force. During festival weeks, a large legion was sent from Caesarea on the coast to be stationed at the fort by the temple to deter any rioting or uprising. So, of the 600 soldiers that would have made up the legion, we would expect a subset, maybe a few hundred to be escorting the temple guard for the arrest. Now this may seem like overkill, but remember that Jesus had been praised by the crowds upon his entry into Jerusalem and had been teaching in the Temple each day. The show of force was to assure that there would be no response. Yet, the roman cohort was only there as backup. The arresting officers were the temple police which is why a temple servant is the one who gets close enough to Jesus during the arrest to have his ear cut off.

With the setting in front of us. Notice just a few things. They brought weapons to arrest the prince of peace. They brought torches to find the light of the world. Judas was once with them and now guides the forces of darkness. So, Jesus' actions and words in this arrest sequence will show his divine power, protection and purpose to willingly be arrested.

One – Jesus’ Divine Power

Read John 18:4-6

John begins Jesus’ encounter with the arresting mob by stating the most important factor. Jesus’ divine knowledge of what would happen to him. He is a willing participant in the events to come. I hope we can appreciate his calm demeanor. His complete confidence in His Father. His prayer in the garden ended with resolve that no matter the horror to come, he would do His Father’s will. Now His will meant to proactively approach the arrest, step out of the garden before the mob, lean into the betraying kiss of Judas and ask “**Whom do you seek?**”.

Their response is clear and sounds like the instructions they would have been given from the chief priests and the roman officials back at the fort. Go arrest **Jesus of Nazareth**.

So, Jesus’ response goes back to the reason he has offended so many. He responds with the divine name of God. “I AM”. Some of our translations add “he” to show that it is clearly referencing himself, but the original phrase is just as God spoke to Moses. “I AM who I AM”.

John interestingly inserts this next phrase that Judas is standing with the betrayers. He is included in those who react in verse 6 which says, “**When Jesus said to them, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground.**” This response is one well known when the unholy encounter God. The disciples who deserted Jesus at the end of John 6, drew back from him. In 1 John 2:19, he uses the word to refer to those who “went out” from the Christian community and broke their association with them. **They went out from us, but they were never of us**. Psalm 27:2 speaks to falling down, David speaks as one protected by God, and notice what happens to his adversaries:

**When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh,
my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall.**

The power of Jesus is the power of God. In his words spoken in creation, his unholy creatures shrink back and fall.

When the light of the world shines into darkness, the darkness shrinks. It has no authority there. But Jesus persists and allows them to continue so he can accomplish the will of God and protect his disciples physically now. As he will spiritually protect them through the cross.

Two – Jesus’ Divine Protection

Read John 18:7-9

After his first I Am statement, they fell back in response to the power and authority in his response. So again, Jesus initiates the arrest. “**Whom do you seek?**” and again they say, “**Jesus of Nazareth**”. Now Jesus takes the time to declare, again, **I am he**. Adding now, “**if you seek me, let these men go.**” John interjects that this was to fulfill what he said in the previous chapter in his prayer for the disciples he is now protecting, verse 12 of chapter 17.

Jesus is again establishing his divine authority and knowledge over the events. He makes it clear, by asking twice who they are arresting, that they have the authority only to arrest him, not the disciples. Jesus knows this because he knows their orders which they just told him.

The disciple’s protection was needed for at least two reasons. One, the disciples were uniquely vulnerable at this moment. They had not seen the resurrection, nor had they received the Holy Spirit. Had they been arrested and been subject to similar interrogation or abuse as Jesus, they may have recanted. Two, regardless of what might have happened, in his prayer to the Father, he prayed for their protect. He will now fulfill their protection. By praying to the Father, he knows the Father will come through. Their protection is certain.

Divine providence is the term we would use to refer to God’s arranging of all circumstances. It is what God provides as the divine actor to preserve his creation and direction of all things according to His will and plans. He intended to send his son to the cross for the sins of the world. So it was certain to be. He wills to save and protect Jesus’s disciples so it is certain to be. Similarly in our lives, we can have confidence that what God wills, he brings about. What he brings about, he has planned. What he has planned is certain to occur. How that functions with free human creatures, or how that functions with the seemingly infinite variables is unknown. God does not say how it works when he intervenes other than he makes it clear that he does. Our infinite God in power, wisdom and authority can take a seemingly infinite amount of variables and bring it under his actually infinite control.

In all of these events, we see Jesus' divine willingness to be arrested and die according to the will of God. But Jesus' final words reveal his divine purpose.

Three – Jesus' Divine Purpose

Read John 18:10-11

This moment where Jesus is taken away is in our text week in verse 12. But here we have a confrontation where a servant of the high priest, whose name is revealed as Malchus, was close enough to Jesus and Peter that when Peter lashes out with his sword, Malchus moves and his right ear is cut off. John mentions these names when no other gospel does because John writes late in the 1st century when Peter has died and some there is no fear of arrest for Peter. John knew Malchus as he knew his master the high priest. (We find this out in the next section)

Now to understand Peter's reaction we have to go back to **Matthew 16:16-25**. Peter makes one of the clearest professions of faith in Jesus in the Gospels. When Jesus asks who his disciples say that he is, Peter replies, **"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.** This prompts Jesus to praise this response. Then in a seemingly contradictory fashion, Peter responds to Jesus' next set of teaching in **verse 21**, where Jesus lays out his messianic work. His substitutionary death is why he must go to Jerusalem and be killed and raised on the third day. Peter's response: takes Jesus aside and tells him, "This shall never happen to you." Peter does not just mean, "Say it ain't so". No, he says, He will not let this happen to Jesus. He is in a protective mode. He sees his following of Jesus to be one not just of learning, but of protection of his messiah. Jesus rightly rebukes him for setting his mind on the things of man.

The things of man are swords and power here on earth. The things of God, for Jesus in particular, is sacrifice and surrender to the will of God to the point of death.

So this misunderstanding and interchange earlier in their life together, comes back with Peter persisting as the protective guard dog. Not understanding that Jesus knew this would happen. Not understanding that Jesus was willingly going to be arrested. Not understanding more foundationally that the sword was of no use.

The cup was the instrument that Jesus needed. In verse 11, Jesus tells Peter to put his sword into its sheath, it is not needed anymore and then he asks him an incredible question?

"Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

Now the cup is what he had referenced in his prayer to the Father. Let me read Matthew 26:39: **And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."** Again, he says in verse 42: **Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."**

The image of the cup of wrath is mentioned throughout scripture

Jeremiah 25:15 (As Jeremiah begins to declare disaster on all the nations) **Thus the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: "Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath**

Isaiah 51:17 (Israel's punishment for idolatry and rebellion of the Lord is to drink his cup of wrath to the bottom.)

**you who have drunk from the hand of the LORD
the cup of his wrath,
who have drunk to the dregs
the bowl, the cup of staggering.**

Jesus came for the purpose of drinking the cup of wrath for his people. The nations in rebellion deserve the cup of wrath. Israel in idolatry deserve the cup of wrath. Every sinner deserves the cup of wrath of God. Jesus however is the only one who does not deserve to drink. But like the rest of this story here this morning. He is the only one in control and the only one underserving of the treatment he is receiving.

Jesus compares Peter's sword to Jesus' cup. If Peter could accomplish with the sword, Jesus would not need to drink the cup. As Jesus reveals in Matthew 26, Jesus could have commanded legions of angels to bring their swords to the fight. But Jesus did not come with a sword. He came as a shepherd.

John 10 as we read earlier is a great companion text for us this morning.

Jesus is the good shepherd. He is not one like the hired hand who sees the wolf coming and flees. Jesus stares into the teeth of Roman and Jewish power with a superior power, protects his own disciples with the confidence of divine providence, and now purposes to pick the cup, not the sword.

Conclusion

I started by pointing to some images. We looked at the brook, let's look at a garden. It is a fitting place for Jesus' final free act of obedience. From here he will be in bondage. In a garden at the very beginning, the first man and woman were confronted with obedience. Would they eat and drink what God gave them or would they take and eat what looked pleasing to the eyes? Adam failed. He rebelled and his life, as payment for rebellion was taken from him. In this Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was hard pressed with the weight of what was to come. But he did not relent. He resisted the devil's lies at the beginning of his ministry. He obeyed and set his face to come to Jerusalem at the height of Roman power to be unjustly condemned to death. Yet he took the cup the Father has given him. For the disciples. For you and me. He took up the cup for all the sins of the world.

There is another cup that scripture makes mention of. It is the cup of consolation. Psalm 16:5, **The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup.** Unlike the ones who run after other Gods, the Psalmist finds his portion in the cup of provision from God. Psalm 23:5, **You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.** This cup overflows with God's blessings amidst trials.

Every one of us gets handed a life by God. We are handed a cup. Jesus's cup was full of wrath. For all of us our life cup is filled with wrath as well. When we give our life to Christ we see that Christ can take our cup, pour it in his and hand us a new cup of consolation. Our cup will not be without trouble. We are to take up our cross and follow him. We are to give up our lives as living sacrifices. We are to die to our old life with Christ, to be raised to new life as we are born again.

Friends, because of Jesus' conviction to be arrested. Because of his power, protection and purpose to drink the cup of God's wrath. There is no wrath in our cup anymore. It now comes full of joy in Christ.

We must see that our cup can overflow with goodness when we deserve none of it. because Christ's cup overflowed with wrath. And he drank it to the very, last, drop.