

John 18:1–12

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[0:00] John 18, verses 1 through 12. Please stand for the reading of God's word. When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered.

Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples. So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons.

Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, Whom do you seek? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus said to them, I am he. Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, I am he, they drew back and fell to the ground.

So he asked them again, Whom do you seek? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I told you that I am he. So if you seek me, let these men go.

[1:16] This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken. Of those whom you gave me, I have lost, not one. 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? So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him.

First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year. It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people.

Simon Peter followed Jesus and so did another disciple. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest. But Peter stood outside at the door.

So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the servant girl, who kept watch at the door, and brought Peter in. The servant girl at the door said to Peter, you also are not one of this man's disciples, are you?

[2:30] He said, I am not. Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Thanks be to God. Thank you, Amy, for reading the text today.

And it is a real joy to see everybody. As you heard earlier from Bing, I'm standing in the auditorium with about 980 empty seats waiting for the day that we find renovation having taken place.

And your presence here with me. Looking forward to that so much. And I also want to thank Amy for reading the text. We leaned a little further into the reading that I'm actually going to cover in the preaching.

As I am going to really look at the arrest of Jesus today. And we'll move toward the direct denial of Peter on the coming week.

[3:37] Let me pray. Our Heavenly Father, as we look into your word, we pray that it would alter our lives, both for your glory and our good. And to that end, we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, I wonder, do you know what you're going to do with your life? Is there something you might want to give yourself to?

Anything where you would consider yourself to be all in on? It's a question. What are you going to do with your life? Not merely that is pointed toward the younger members in our congregation and

who are joining us today as though it was some journey yet out entirely before you. But even those who are near retirement are often asked, what are you going to do with the life you have left? I don't know what place you are in on the spectrum of life.

But this reevaluative question, what are you going to do with your life, is one worthy of consideration. We all want something large enough, something big enough, something noble enough to frame our pursuits.

[5 : 00] A banner, as it were, strong enough, wide enough, bold enough to be something that we could follow in and provide purpose for each step.

What are you going to do with your life? And as importantly this morning, how do these few short verses in John's gospel concerning the arrest of Jesus, how might that inform our thinking? Put differently, on this night, his life is nearly done. And yet, what can we learn from it in regard to what you are to do with your life?

On first glance, if you're looking at the text, and I encourage you to keep it open, John 18, verse 1, it appears that Jesus may have some inclination to be considering the longevity of life as a proper ends or pursuit in life.

We say that because he is fleeing the city of Jerusalem, where he is on the verge of being arrested and exiting it to an outer area.

[6 : 23] Let me read it for you. When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron, where there was a garden which he and his disciples entered.

Could it be that Jesus is evading arrest by fleeing the city? You know, there is an echo here in this phrase about the Lord's anointed going across the brook Kidron that had an initial sound with one of God's previous anointed, namely King David.

It says in 2 Samuel 15, that King David, in the hour that his son Absalom gave up on him, left the city of Jerusalem and went across the brook of Kidron, really to secure the longevity of life.

He was trying to outrun things rather than be overrun by things. That's what's going on with Jesus here.

Does he think that his life and the ultimate pursuits in life somehow ought to require him to secure a further longevity of his own life?

[7 : 45] Well, two things in the next verse would indicate something quite different. It isn't that he is avoiding his arrest.

It's going to move toward a sense that he's actually arranging a rest. He's not trying to outrun something so he can continue to get on with life.

He is voluntarily giving himself up to something that he can fulfill God's plans for his life. Let me show that to you in verse 2.

Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples.

Two important indicators that the writer is throwing upon you, the reader.

One, Jesus often went to this place with his disciples. He frequented it on a number of occasions.

[8 : 49] And secondly, it says that Judas knew it. So Jesus goes to a place that he often goes to. And it happens to be a place where Judas is well aware that that is his destination.

Far from fleeing Jerusalem to evade arrest so that he can secure a longevity of life, Jesus actually is willingly here preparing the groundwork for that very arrest.

He goes to the places he normally goes. And upon entering into that place, he's well aware that Judas was aware of it as well.

Not outrunning opposition, but orchestrating arrest. And look at that force that comes in the text, verse 3.

So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons.

[10 : 03] All this editorial detail that the reader might take in to understand that there is a religious and a civil show of force to enter into that place where Jesus is.

Evading arrest? No. Orchestrating arrest. Three things in the text, really, between verses 4 and verse 8, indicate that Jesus is arranging his arrest in regard to God's purpose for his life.

The first we've already looked at in one sense. He went out, verse 1, to the place where he knew he would be found.

He chose the place. But then beginning in verse 4, you begin to see immediately that he also controlled the process.

He chose the place and he controlled the process. Look at verse 4. Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, Whom do you seek?

[11 : 30] Those little phrases of Jesus' direction. He went out, verse 1, And he came forward, verse 4, in the context of where he knew he would be found.

And here now, actually voluntarily giving himself up. He controlled the process. You can see how that works in verse 5 and following.

They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth is the one we're looking for. And so Jesus says to them, almost as though he's come out of the darkness and into the light of their own torches, so that he could be seen by them, Judas with them, that he says, I am he.

Now, that's a stunning thing to have that great show of force ready to bring you to an impending trial and death and to come forward from the shadows into the light and pronounce that the one you're looking for is me who stands before you.

Their response is interesting. Their response is interesting. When Jesus said to them, verse 6, I am he, they drew back and fell to the ground. The reputation of our Lord was such that when he spoke truth to power, things changed.

[12 : 59] And they felt very clearly that he would come in resistance to them. But now that he is moving forward toward them, they wonder if he's feigning this idea of giving himself up.

And they draw back rather than forward toward him. So he says, again, interestingly, verse 7, who do you seek? And they say, Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus answered, I told you that I am he. Now, this is a really strong move on the part of Jesus to control the process.

Twice now in the text, he has brought himself forward. And he knows what's ahead. That opening line of verse 4 struck me this week where we read that Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward, knowing all that would happen to him.

I'm not sure I would face the final hours of my life in an effort to control the events that allowed its natural course to take place, at least in this respect.

[14 : 26] Jesus is very unlike us in that he is controlling everything that's moving toward God's purposes. I think of Abraham Lincoln.

In contrast to Jesus, by way of a story, there was a good friend of mine, Dick Lucas, in London, who accomplished many things in his life.

He's still living. He's in his 90s now. And what he did with his life was so consequential that I asked him once, how did you do it?

How did you get all the things done that in your early 20s or 30s you thought might be useful to give yourself to? And he rose from his chair in his living room and walked to his bookshelf and pulled off a biography of Lincoln and opened to a page in it and said, by way of reading, quoting from a letter that Abraham Lincoln had written on April 4th, 1964, quote, I confess plainly never to have controlled events.

Events have always controlled me. Jesus is very different. Jesus is in control of the events that fulfill the purposes of God's plans for his life.

[15 : 54] His control of the events is different than Lincoln, who just responded to things. It's also different than what some people might consider Jesus was really doing here.

You know, there's some thought that goes back all the way from a third or fourth century document on the gospel of Judas. And there's some notion also from 18th and 19th century Christian theologians who feel that Jesus went forward with arrest in order to pivot the moment in time that through that arrest, there would rise up a great following of people who would change the world or overthrow the Roman government.

It was made famous by this quotation from Albert Schweitzer, where he says that here comes Jesus in the knowledge that he is the coming son of man.

And he lays hold of the wheel of the world to set it moving on the last revolution, which is to bring all ordinary history to a close. In other words, he's willingly going forward to his rest because he's moving the wheel of history.

It refuses to turn, says Schweitzer, and Jesus throws himself upon it. Then it does turn and crushes him.

[17 : 25] Instead of bringing in eschatological conditions, Jesus destroyed them. The wheels roll onward and the mangled body of the one immeasurably great man, who was strong enough to think

of himself as the spiritual ruler of mankind, to bend history to his purpose, is hanging upon it still, says Schweitzer.

That is his victory and his reign. See, there's a sense that some people feel Jesus is controlling the events to, in a sense, raise up others who will fight on his behalf and bring a revolution of political significance to the world.

That's what he had given his life to, but that it didn't work. If you've ever seen Hamilton, you'll remember that moment where there's a song about the night, and he says something to the sense of, I may not be here to share your glory.

But then he goes on, in a sense, to say, but I want you to raise a glass to freedom, to the four of us, and in fact, tomorrow there will be more of us telling the story of tonight.

And in that sense, whether it be the French Revolution or the American Revolution, there are individuals who have tried to control events to secure a revolutionary political change.

[18:58] That's not what Jesus is doing. He's controlling his arrest, but for a mysterious purpose beyond political gain.

How do we know that? Well, we know that because not only in this text do we find that Jesus chose the place, or that Jesus controlled the process, but if you look at 10 and 11, you begin to see very clearly that he also declared the purpose for which he was being arrested.

Take a look. It's stated clearly in verse 11. So Jesus said to Peter, Put your sword in its sheath. Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given to me?

Something about the voluntary willingness of Jesus to give himself up to a rest. On the night when Judas had given up on him, and on the same night when Peter was still girded up, willing to fight for him, revolves around Jesus' self-understanding of this cup that the Father had given to him.

In fact, before we get to the significance of the cup, which I think is the declaration of the purpose of his arrest, let's look at how he corrects Peter.

[20:32] Notice it said in verse 10, 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 in its sheath.

See, this is an important correction. Whatever Jesus was doing with his life, he wanted Peter to know it moved beyond the militancy of a movement that was there to overthrow the Roman world. Now, Christians in our day need to be active on all fronts to secure justice and to message the ministry of Jesus in ways that are rightfully employed for the welfare of our country.

But from this verse, this qualifying word needs to be spoken. The politics of our present age, at least in the church, the politics of our present age need to be reminded that they have to forsake the militancies of any movement if at the end of the day they want the legitimacy of the lips of Jesus. Jesus says, Peter, put your sword away. So here's the text. Judas on the front end having given up on Jesus in regard to what he ought to do with his life and moved on for his own reasons.

[22:25] Peter on the back end mistaking the message of Jesus in regard to what he ought to do with his life and finding correction that would really move him forward more rightly down the road.

And between these two, between Judas having given up on Jesus and Peter having girded up for Jesus, we find the purpose declared through the lips of Jesus on why he willingly, voluntarily gave himself up.

There it is. Look at it again. Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given to me? What is it? What does this cup mean? Why does he choose this metaphor that in the other Gospels, remember, the other Gospels, Jesus will say in his prayer concerning his death, Father, if possible, let this cup pass from me?

So the cup is something on the significance of his death, yet not his will, but the Father's is what he ultimately wants.

[23:39] You know, when you read the Scriptures, there is a clear interpretation of the cup that God, the Father, would give an individual or a people or a nation to drink.

Psalms 78, the psalmist Asaph will write, at a set time, I will judge with equity, says the Lord. For in the hand of the Lord, there is a cup with foaming wine well mixed, and he pours out from it, and on all the wicked of the earth, they shall drain it down to the dregs.

The psalmist is using the metaphor of a cup as significantly emblem, messaging, the wrath of God on those who live in rebellion to him.

And it's not just for God's enemies. What's fascinating is in Isaiah 51, in relationship to Israel, God's own people, the prophet writes, wake yourself, wake yourself, stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the Lord, the cup of his wrath.

Behold, I will take from your hand the wrath the cup of staggering, the bowl of my wrath, and you shall drink from it no more. So the enemies of God would have the wrath of God for the rebellion against God, but God's people also are promised that they too are under his wrath, but one day he would remove that cup from them and do his justice in bringing mercy to them.

[25 : 29] In fact, in Isaiah 51, it's followed with Isaiah 52 and 53, isn't it? That famous suffering servant passage where the suffering servant comes and says that he will make his soul an offering for guilt and that he poured out his soul unto death.

You can go in other places in scripture. You can go to Jeremiah 25 to see the same imagery of the cup in association with someone who is partaking of God's wrath for guilt.

You can see it in Ezekiel 23. You can see at the end of time at the final consummation, Revelation 14 and 16, that all of humanity will either drink from the cup of God's blessing and forgiveness and mercy or the cup of his wrath.

So come back to our text, this most significant thing. Jesus has chosen the place of his arrest.

Jesus has controlled the process of his arrest.

Jesus in this verse to which this whole passage has been moving declares the purpose of his arrest, namely, that in his death, he willingly, graciously, voluntarily, is partaking of the just judgment of God on behalf of a rebellious people, that God might himself be justified and yet now able through his suffering servant demonstrate mercy to all who would call on his name.

[27 : 13] This is why the cup of the Lord is a cup of blessing. To partake of the cup of his covenant, his blood, is to partake of a cup of thanksgiving.

But the cup of thanksgiving is only possible because of the cup Jesus drank at his life outgoing.

Well, let me come full circle then as I bring that first question back to us. what are you going to do with your life?

Or what's the starting point for you with the life you have left? Well, this passage is clear that in a passage where we see Jesus choosing the place of his arrest, controlling the process of his arrest, declaring the purpose of his arrest, there becomes clarity now to the pursuits of your life.

You ought to this day give your life to him. That's the starting point. It doesn't make any sense to get on with all the other things in life without beginning with Jesus.

[28 : 39] Jesus is not someone to be forsaken as Judas did to get on with something else. Jesus is not someone who we merely fight through in a misapplied understanding of his message as Peter needed to learn.

Jesus is someone that we have faith in that his death was the adequate substitution for my guilt that would give me faith in his life and a right standing before God so that whatever you get on with in your life you do so in the name of Christ.

You become a follower of Christ. John will put it differently at the end of his letter that if you believe these things you will have life eternal life in his name. Let me boil it down for you today no matter where you're sitting or listening to me from.

What are you going to do with your life? First grab hold of what you're to make of Jesus' death.

And in doing so you get life through having faith in his name. and that life begins to transform all of your pursuits so that if you go into law or medicine or a vocation of construction if you go into teaching or home making or driving if you go into any vocation you do so to proclaim the goodness of God in the name of Jesus and to walk out your life under the authority of his word as best as it can be made known to you in the scriptures.

[30 : 46] what do you want to do with your life? First this grab hold of what to make of his death and his death was for you his love is for you the pouring out of his blood was for you that he would bring you from rebellion in a relationship toward your heavenly father into one of righteousness and perfection and joy and thanksgiving oh on this day wouldn't it be wonderful as you hear a voice of a preacher in an empty auditorium awaiting the filling of the next generation that on this day you discover life let me pray our heavenly father this this moment in the text this night of betrayal this time where

Judas had given up and Peter was yet girded up and we find our Lord willingly voluntarily giving himself up may we understand that it was for us may we give our life to him and therefore our

pursuits to his call in Christ's name we pray amen crow Thank you.