

Betrayal and Denial

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[0 : 0 0] Father, we confess before you that too often when we read your word or hear your word, we think of how it applies to other people and not ourselves. We think, Father, of the specks in other people's eyes and not the logs in our own eyes.

And so we ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would do a wonderful work in our midst and that you would bring your word to our hearts, that you would bring your word to our hearts so that it would speak clearly to us and that as you speak to us at the depth of our heart, the command center of who we are, Father, please make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel and learning to live for your glory and not our own.

And all this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. Andrew and I have slightly different ideas about how we like to have the table set.

So I do it here for the sermon. Everything else is the way Andrew likes it. You know, there's things that happen in the world that you just can't make up. On the 13th of March, I think that was Wednesday, Iran, by a lot of...

One of the scales I saw that was rating how different countries treat women, out of 149 countries, Iran finished 146th out of 149.

[1 : 2 6] And you can't make some of this stuff up, but on March the 13th, Iran was put on the UN Council for Women. Not making that up. UN Council for Women.

So they are now part of the body that gets to judge how different nations are treating women. And in terms of not being able to make this stuff up, the same day that they got named to the UN Human Rights Commission that looks after the concerns of women, that same day they sentenced...

And I don't... If those of you know how to pronounce Iranian names, I ask your forgiveness if I get this wrong. Nazrin Sotute, a woman lawyer, the same day they got put on the UN Human Rights Committee for Women, they sentenced this lawyer, this woman lawyer, to an extra 10 years in jail.

And her crime was that she was protesting the laws in Iran that forced all women to wear the hijab. So the same day they get put on the Human Rights Council, they do that.

You can't make this stuff up, can you? I mean, it's just one of those things you just shake your head at what goes on. The fact of the matter is that as long as there's been human beings, and I could give Canadian examples, but the problem is, you know, we've already talked about Canadian examples a little bit over the last couple of weeks, and it could make it look like I was maybe trying to play political favorites, which I'm not.

[2 : 5 5] The fact of the matter is is that issues of religious violence and just the whole desire for power and how power can corrupt is a constant human problem and condition.

And the biblical passage that we're going to look at today is directly connected and speaks directly in to this problem of religious violence, the problem of the abuse of power.

So it'd be a great help to me if you turned your Bibles and opened them to John chapter 18. And we're going to look at that, not only the text I read, but the part that comes after it. When we do narrative things like this, I often have the text up on the screen, so you will be able to read it by looking on the screen.

But, you know, there's something special about having your own Bible and being able to make notes or comments or whatever in your own Bible as you go along. And so we're looking at John. It's John chapter 18, verse 1.

And John is one of the four ancient eyewitness biographies of Jesus. John mentions himself here in the story, but he'll refer to himself as the other disciple.

[4 : 02] He never names himself. And in the flow of the gospel, John spends more time with how Jesus speaks to his disciples on the night before he's betrayed.

That four, six, eight hours, John spends a long time talking about what Jesus says to his disciples. And when we begin here at verse 1, we're catching up with Jesus has left the upper room and the story continues on and it's verse 1 and it goes like this.

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. I just sort of want to pause here for a second.

The actual original word for brook is a, I don't know if I'm pronouncing this correctly, apologies, it's a wadi. A very Middle Eastern thing, a wadi. A wadi is a spring or a small river that only erupts into water occasionally throughout the year.

Usually in the rainy season, there'll be a stream or there'll be some water there. The rest of the year, there's nothing. And that's what Jesus is actually crossing. And the other thing, which is sort of is just, we're going to talk about this more in a couple of weeks.

[5 : 18] But out of all of the gospel writers, John is the one who emphasizes the most that this is all taking place in a garden. John is going to mention three times the significance of the garden. He's going to mention it here where Jesus is betrayed is in a garden.

He's going to describe that where Jesus is crucified is in a garden. And he's going to be the one who says that when Jesus is buried, it's in a garden. And of course, for Jewish and Christian readers, Genesis 3, human beings were put in a garden.

Adam and Eve fall in a garden. There's this very clear literary connection which John is making to Adam and Eve and the entrance of evil into the world.

So evil and sin and death and brokenness and betrayal and denial and abandonment and failure, all of these things enter into the human condition in a garden.

And it is in a garden that God will provide a remedy for the human condition. We continue in verse 2. Now Judas, who betrayed Jesus, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples.

[6 : 32] 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.

And just sort of pause for a second. It's not obvious in the English translation, but in the original language, John uses a technical word for band of soldiers.

It's actually, he's using the technical word for a group of 600 soldiers. It's called a cohort. And he's not saying that all 600 soldiers came. You know, if in Ottawa you said that the fire department put out the fire, it doesn't mean that every fireman went to put out the fire.

It just means the fire department put out the fire. And what John is using here is using the technical Roman term for a very large group of Roman soldiers. And he's signaling to the readers that this means that there's been prior collusion between Pilate and the group of people who control the temple.

They have conspired in secret because there's no way that the people who control the temple would be able to just, you know, the bishop of Ottawa couldn't go up to CFB Petawawa and say, could we borrow 100 soldiers because we want to go do something?

[7 : 50] No, they just say, they say, get out of here, right? They don't have the power authority. So John here at the original language, he's signaling a conspiracy collusion between the Roman authorities and those who control the Jewish high temple.

Verse 4, continue on. Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward, came forward, walked towards them and said to them, whom do you seek?

I just want to pause there again. It's very, very interesting here what John is doing. Sorry, it's very interesting in two ways. The first one is if you go back and read the Gospel of John from the beginning till now and it's made a bit easier if you have a Bible like mine where the words of Jesus are in red, it makes it easier to figure out certain things.

But if you go and look and see in John's Gospel what is the very first thing that Jesus ever says recorded in John's Gospel? It is, what do you seek? Very, very first words that Jesus says.

It isn't a declaration, it's a question. What are you seeking? And it's really a very, very interesting question to every human being, isn't it? Like, what are you seeking? You can ask that of, you could ask that of Trudeau, you could ask that of Andrew Scheer, you could ask of a street person, you could ask of everyone.

[9 : 08] Like, what are you seeking? What are your idols? What's driving you? It's the very, very first words that Jesus says. The same thing can also be translated as whom you are seeking. Sort of a bit better to translate it as what.

And so Jesus asks virtually the identical question of his enemies. Whom are you seeking? So just as the beginning of his ministry, his public ministry and his open teaching, it's going to be prefaced with this idea of, like, okay, as you're coming to deal with me, and you might think that you're in control, and you might just think that you can be acquiring information, or it's just all about power, Jesus asks a heart question in all of your interactions with me.

What are you really seeking? Because what we're seeking is going to have a profound effect and impact on how we deal with people. That's what's going to go in the story. As the story goes on, we'll see that the soldiers aren't seeking, the soldiers and the police aren't seeking justice.

We're going to see that Annas and Pilate aren't seeking justice, that they're seeking power, they're seeking other types of things, they're not seeking truth. If they were seeking truth, there'd be a whole pile of things that they would do very different, but what they really are seeking is power.

And because what they're really seeking is power, personal power, it blinds them to truth and blinds them to the value, it blinds them to a whole pile of other things. And so it's a really important thing for us to think about this.

[10 : 38] There are some of us here who have very, very little power. But all of us have some degree of power. Maybe it's a parent who has power over their child or you have power in your group of friends, some type of authority or influence.

And the question always is, how are you actually using that? There's another thing which is really important for us just to note here. It's not an important part of the story, but it's an important thing for us just to pause on.

It's very hard to be an out Christian today. I love that term from the gay lexicon of being out.

And it's very hard to be an out Christian today if we think about it. And one of the things which is so wonderful about this text is that Jesus, he knows that he's going to die.

He knows that these people are his enemies, but he walks towards them. He walks towards his enemies. And in some small way, but an important way, Jesus is modeling something here which should be very important to us, that we should be willing to be out Christians and that God doesn't want us to live in fear.

[11 : 47] He doesn't want us to live in our city in fear, in this world in fear. He wants us to be people who walks toward the other, who walks towards other people, who walks towards situations rather than hiding from them and walking away.

He wants us to have a type of just confidence in God and love for people and concern for people that we walk towards them but not live in fear.

Well, what happens next is very, very interesting. So Jesus, verse 4, Jesus asks them this question, whom do you speak, whom do you seek?

In verse 5, they answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. And Jesus said to them, I am he. Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with him.

And just pause here again for another second. So it's not obvious here to us maybe, some of you have heard me say this before, but it's an important part of this text, is that when they, so Jesus said, whom do you seek?

[12 : 51] And they don't say, Rabbi, we're coming to see Jesus the Rabbi or we're coming to see Jesus the Prophet. They say, we're coming to see, we're seeking Jesus of Nazareth and that's a put down.

Would be just the same as if one of us, if you went to Manhattan in New York City or you went to Washington or you went to Hollywood and somebody came and introduced you will use me as an example.

This is George from Brudenell. Okay, none of you know where Brudenell is. If you do come and speak to me afterwards because you're a bit weird or you must be from that region, Brudenell is a spot on a map between nowhere and nowhere.

Tremor is a spot on the map between nowhere and nowhere. Clontarf, spot on the, I used to have points there by the way as a minister. So what they're saying is this is Jesus of Nowheresville.

This is Jesus who is unimportant because he's from Nazareth and nothing good comes from Nazareth, nothing important. It's nowhere. It's Hicksville. It's a hillbilly.

[13 : 53] He's not properly educated, doesn't have the right connections. Who are we looking for? We are looking for Jesus, the nobody. That's what they're basically saying in response to who they're looking.

And Jesus, by the way, when all the, there's three times in this text where Jesus says, I am he, but literally he says, I am. Now it can mean I am he, but it can also mean the divine name.

That's how he answers, three times, I am. I am, I am, I am. And the text makes a big point of saying that Jesus, Judas, who betrayed them was standing with them.

So the disciples are behind Jesus in the garden. Judas, Jesus walks towards his enemies. He walks across the room, so to speak, and his enemies are all there, maybe gathered around and they say, Jesus says, whom do you seek?

They respond with Jesus, the nobody. Jesus says, I am he. Judas is with them. And then the next thing is very, very interesting. Verse six. When Jesus said to them, I am he, they drew back and fell to the ground.

[15 : 02] I don't know how many of you have experience in the charismatic world, but charismatics would say, they just all got slain in the spirit. That's what's happened. Jesus says, I am.

Boom. They all go down. All of them. The soldiers, the police officers, Judas, they all get knocked to the ground.

The swords, the lanterns, the armor, none of it matters. Boom. Boom. Just says who he is and down they go.

Every one of them. Now, I'm not saying that every time in a charismatic gathering somebody gets slain in the spirit that's an example of that. I'm not saying that.

I've only had one time when I prayed for somebody and they fell down. I have to confess, I had the feeling that they wanted to fall down, but I don't know.

[15 : 59] Like, in heaven, I'll find out whether they wanted to fall down because it would be more spiritual or whether they actually just did. I prayed for them and down they went. It's only happened to me once, but some people it happens to them a lot.

And I'm not saying that every time it happens it's human because we can see here that Jesus does it. And this is going to be very, very important to the rest of the story. You know, there's an old Christian saying that when Jesus is hanging on the cross dying for us, it's not the nails that hold them to the cross but his love for you and me.

And this is seen here very powerfully in this story. Jesus just knocks them all down. How could these people possibly capture Jesus and put him on the cross if he just by a mere act of his will can put them all on the ground?

It helps emphasize that whatever's going to happen is voluntary. Jesus is walking towards his suffering. he's not truly being captured. The story continues.

So what happened? By the way here, this is also a very, very one of the things which is so wonderful about the story that we don't think of often about but this is an opportunity for Judas to repent. This is an opportunity for the soldiers to repent.

[17 : 18] This is an opportunity for the police to question what they're doing which is the beginning of repentance. So how do they respond?

Verse 7 So he asked them again they all eventually get up he asked them again whom do you seek and they said Jesus of nowhere Jesus of nowhere Jesus answered I told you that I am he so if you seek me let these men go this was to fulfill what he had spoken of those whom you gave me I have lost not one and just sort of pause why do Christians believe that the New Testament is also part of the Bible because when Jesus quotes the Bible he says words he says he'll regularly say in the New Testament when he's quoting the Old Testament he'll say this was to fulfill the word that was spoken so it's a it's a formula thing that shows that God had said it that it has authority and now John is applying this same thing to the words of Jesus it's a very subtle literary thing that's showing that Jesus' words have that type of same divine authority that the Father has now remember

I said to you that this story speaks directly into the whole world of religious violence it speaks to the abuse of power that's going to become more and more clear as we go on Jesus obviously has a type of vast untapped spiritual authority which is just present by his mere act of his will that the soldiers and police officers with their weapons and their armor can just they just all collapse just by a mere act of his will but Peter is human and why have spiritual power if you got a sword it doesn't really matter in a sense what Jesus has said I got a sword and I'm going to fix this and that's what happens here in verse 10 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 and these next words are really important so Jesus said to Peter put your sword into its sheath shall I not drink the cup that the father has given me and we're going to talk about the cup again in a couple of minutes but we have here in this text in a very very pithy form from Jesus a clear rejection the sword never advances the gospel the sword never advances the gospel we Christians

I mean probably not the ones of us here in this room but you know the fact of the matter is is that if somebody says to us well what about this and what about that in Christian history we have to just say that was wrong but we learn that it's wrong not because we've taken Rogerian therapy or because we've learned from post-modern literary criticism or Nietzsche that everything's about power we can just say any Christian like we could actually just take them listen any Christian throughout history or any Christian today that uses the sword the power of the sword to advance the Christian faith to advance the gospel all you have to do is look here at verse 11 of John chapter 18 like if we were listening to that we would know that you don't do that that the power of the sword does not advance the gospel this by the way isn't an argument for pacifism amongst the nations it's just an argument for the fact that the sword doesn't advance the gospel and some of you might be wondering why doesn't it mention here that Jesus heals the man's ear and I'm just going to say this you just

I mean we can have some conversations about this over today and over the next couple of weeks there's no fundamental contradiction between the four different biographies of Jesus about how they picture what happens in that evening and over the next few hours John doesn't just he just chooses not to tell that particular detail of the story he has his own particular way that he's trying to tell the story and you can go back and you can put them all together there's lots of different scholars who've combined all the different things but what we're listening to is we're listening to John's account and one of the things that John wants to really emphasize is this whole problem of power and how power bends people out of shape because we're going to see in a moment that this very very same guy who's all emboldened to take his sword and attack somebody within a few moments when some young snippet of a woman says by the way aren't you a disciple of Jesus completely and utterly cowers before her because of all of the idols that we seek and power is a huge idol that we seek it always has feet of clay it always has feet of clay it almost always just makes us paranoid and it makes us worried and as we see time and time again throughout human history sometime people who have the greatest power just somehow or another make the dumbest mistakes and the weakness in the most unlikely of all places things and that's going to be communicated in the form of this story as we continue so verse 12 so the band of the soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him in the original language the word captain

[23 : 12] John has correctly identified the correct military term for a person who is in charge of a cohort in Roman military terminology for that time period he uses the right military technical term verse 13 so they capture him and first they lead him 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 Jewish leaders that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people see how there's this constant language of the problem of power what they really mean is we all know that what the people really need is people like us to lead them and as long as there's people like us who are in power and authority well that's how the people thrive we have this man this tiresome irksome itinerant nobody from nowhere is filled and wouldn't it be far better for the people if that irksome man was gone and it's really interesting because John when he records this first thing by Caiaphas he said that

Caiaphas unwittingly is actually speaking a profound truth in fact that it's going to be far better that Jesus dies for the people that Jesus comes to die for the people you see this is another thing here about this insight about the problem with power at the end of the day God is always only working on plan A God doesn't have plan B C D E F he doesn't say oh dang they captured Jesus I guess I better come up with another plan it's not like watching your typical thriller where in your typical thriller something goes I just started watching this Netflix film about retired army rangers wanting to steal a drug lord's money and of course halfway through the movie there's a problem with the helicopter that doesn't describe the gospels or God he never has that's no spoiler alert by the way that you expect that there's going to be some problem that goes on in the movie in a movie like that but God never is sort of working on dealing with curveballs that come his way and he has to have a different thing and so what we see here is that what that means is this there's two fundamentally different ways that God uses us he uses us as his friend or he uses us as his tool see he uses us as his friend when we submit to him when we say

Lord may you guide and direct my day today Lord could you give me a chance where I can bear witness to you today Lord can you show me in the office how I can pray for people Lord there's a situation in the office they want to do something which is wrong and I don't know how to deal with that I know I can't do it I just give it into your hands can you either give me the courage and the strength to not go along with it or could you just work it so that they realize either they shouldn't do it or you know and we pray into it and God uses you in that way and he's using you as his friend but other times he uses you but he's using you as his tool and as we see throughout the entire story Caiaphas who is the high priest ironically his relationship with God is like this it is like this but it doesn't mean that God never uses him but he doesn't use him the same way that he uses a man or a woman whose posture to God is like this who is now being used as his friend and what the text those who know a little bit about the history know that

Annas is technically not the high priest right then he was the high priest he was the patriarch this just comes right out of power and politics Annas was the high priest he was deposed by the Romans but he continued to be the power behind the throne five of his sons became high priest and Caiaphas is his son-in-law and so for an extended period of time they might be somebody technically who's the high priest but there's the power behind the throne the one who actually exercises the real power and that's Annas and he wants to see Jesus and so the authorities don't bring him first to the Sanhedrin they don't bring him to Caiaphas they don't bring them they don't bring Jesus to lawful authority they bring him to the power that is controlling the temple for their own ends the Bible is a constant critique of how religion is used to further your own power and interest it is a constant critique of those who like to advertise in their business listings that they're evangelicals so that people who are

Christians will go to their businesses and they can get away with charging more or on the other hand those of us who go looking for a Christian business so they will be we can try to force them to charge us less that's never happened to a single person in this room I'm sure but it is a constant critique of the use of religion in particular the use of Christianity to line your own pocket and make yourself powerful so Jesus sorry verse 14 verse 13 again 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 advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the another disciple it's John referring to himself since that disciple was known to the high priest he entered with

[29 : 42] Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest but Peter stood outside of 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 men's disciples are you complicated but see aren't you one of his disciples here's this big strong fisherman brandishing a sword half an hour 20 minutes earlier and between the lowly servant girl who stuck at the door in the middle of the night he says I am not I am not verse 18 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 and some of you might know this some of you might not there's only two places in the entire

New Testament where a coal fire is mentioned here and after Jesus' resurrection when he reinstates Peter you might remember we'll see the story in a couple of weeks that Jesus has died he's risen from the dead the disciples now know that Jesus is risen from the dead they've done some fishing they need to make a few bucks and as they're doing their fishing they see a man on the beach and he has a fire and Peter recognizes it's Jesus and they go there and it's a the same man who denies Jesus three times Peter will now be asked by Jesus three times do you love me and in John's gospel the link of the charcoal fire is specifically the link the denial of Jesus by Peter being reinstated so verse 19 the high priest then questioned

Jesus and the order is important remember I said to you what's going on in this story is a concern for power not for truth but for power and so Annas is questioning Jesus about his disciples before he questions him about his teaching how many disciples do you got what positions of authority are they in how can we root them out this is the language of every tyrant throughout history and every tyrant today they want to root out the people because they're concerned with their power Jesus in verse 20 answered him I have spoken openly to the world I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple where all the Jews come together I have said nothing in secret why do you ask me ask those who have heard me what

I said to them they know what I said when he had said these things one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand in the original language it's emphasized that he strikes Jesus on Jesus' face with his hand saying is that how you answer the high priest and Jesus answered him if what I said is wrong bear witness about the wrong but if Jesus and send him to Caiaphas the high priest and then we're going to have which John doesn't record all of the shenanigans of going around to the different Jewish people and the different courts and the show trial and all of that other type of stuff but what John is emphasizing here is that in the face of a concern for power and Annas acting in secret and not actually having any legal type of authority to do what he's done Jesus' response is to bear witness to the truth and say that in contrast to a concern to stay and work pull the strings behind the scene in contrast to that

I speak openly to the people the truth is something which I proclaim openly in public not in secret just before we wrap it up there's a few more verses now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself so they said to him this is verse 25 they said to him you also are not one of his disciples are you he denied it and said I am not one of the servants of the high priest a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off asked didn't I see you so it's a very powerful story just to wrap this all up a couple of points if you could put the first one up it's this spiritual power is real because the God revealed by Jesus is real spiritual power is real because the God revealed by

[35 : 02] Jesus is real you know if we think about it in our culture you know I don't generally watch horror movies and occasionally you know what when I watch some of these movies that supposedly talk about different spiritual realities it captures something very telling about our culture on one hand in our culture there's very many people who've given up on the idea that human being that just cause and effect and you know that there's no mystery that there's nothing like angels there's nothing like demons that human beings don't have any free will that there's nothing spiritual about the world or life they've rejected that whole thought of materialism and naturalism we read Deepak Chopra we read those types of spiritual writers there's a large number of people who will go and they'll call down the moon goddess they embrace Wiccan they understand and believe that there's paranormal things they seek out therapies and other types of things which purport to touch the different spiritual powers and energies within a human being and manipulate those spiritual powers and there are many people in our culture who've abandoned naturalism they've abandoned materialism they've turned their back on it and they've accepted the spiritual realities that exist in the world and however it is that they've conceived of it and they understand that there's some type of a spiritual longing that materialism and naturalism just can't account for but the problem is

I've talked to quite a few people who are that way but the problem is they don't know how to balance it with science it's as if they live it's as if without realizing it you know if you try to stand on a you know those balls that some offices have that people sit on I don't know what the name for them is but imagine you try to stand on that ball and there's a lot of people in our culture they're trying to stand not only in that ball but a second ball which is apart from it on a very very slippery floor and the fact of the matter is you can't put your feet on both balls on a very slippery floor you're just going to keep falling all the time and that's the problem talking about ghosts yet somehow or another they can put it in a box and they can't actually even think of how to conceive of these spiritual things without there being something material or scientific that's connected to it the fact of the matter is if they completely and utterly embraced the spiritual point of view of the world then you would have what was present in North

America before science and reason came it's what would happen in many places in Asia and in Africa where you believe that every bush and every tree and every stream is also a god or has some type of spiritual presence and the fact of the matter is is that science could never develop in such a world because science depends upon the ability to do an experiment and afterwards you measure the experiment and you trust that if you have a theory and you do the experiment you can come to conclusions you can sort of figure out how the natural world works but if you live in a world where every stream has a spiritual power and every tree and bush has a spiritual power you couldn't actually do an experiment that works because you wouldn't know if the tree just the spirit of the tree just decided to have a different result and so we have a world where on one hand there's this attempt to understand that there's something spiritual and they try to reach out and to understand it but at the same time they keep it's as if on one time they're on one ball with the spiritual thing and then they jump to the other ball which is all science there's this one fellow

I've talked to quite a few times and I just keep challenging him how is it that you can accept evolution and at the same time accept all these spiritual realities and he can't he jumps from one ball to the other back and forward only the gospel makes it clear only the bible makes it clear because the bible shows how there is a god that all things came to be not because of a what but because of a who that there is a god who does exist who's created all things and he created not only a physical world but he also created angels and we know that some angels have fallen and that they are demons and so there's a bad spiritual reality as well and we know that the god who created all things and made a world where science can understand things also made human beings to not just be a body but also to have a soul and also to have a mind that in fact that natural laws and science and all those things cannot account for everything that goes on in a human being that the idea that there is love there is truth there is beauty there is goodness there is these other things which are not physical

Christianity is the only system of thought that actually allows you to understand that there can be both a natural world and a spiritual world because there is the one god who's created both and has revealed the ways that you can understand both in the proper way and so when we see here with Jesus in the story that by the mere exercise of his will he knocks the soldiers he knocks the police officers down we understand that that is real because spiritual power is real because the god revealed by Jesus is real another thing which is really important if you could put up the second point have to deal with this very briefly god's grace and mercy are very real so failure betrayal denial and abandonment do not have to be final every single one of us have been victims of this some of us have been the perpetrators of it some of us have been the victims of somebody who's denied us or abandoned us or failed us and others of us have and most of us have been both by the way we've both failed others and we've been failed against and in our culture we just want to say well that's not the final word things can get better but the fact of the matter is in our culture the final word about all of us is death

[41 : 44] I don't know how much Al Gore's film and inconvenient truth documented inconvenient truths but in our culture the reality of death is the most profound inconvenient truth that our culture does not want to talk about or think about but what we see here in the gospel it's not obvious in this story but it's hinted at for the charcoal and those of us who know the story know the end is the fact of the matter is that Peter's failure his denial his abandonment his religious violence is not the final word about him because the final word about Jesus is not death but life he dies and tastes all there is to taste of death and on the third day he rises having defeated death and he does all of this out of love for you and me he does this knowing that we cannot make ourselves right with God that left to ourselves things like betrayal and abandonment are in fact the final words about us but be in

Jesus because we see the grace and mercy of God made flesh and made real that when we put our faith and trust in him we can begin to believe the promise in Romans 8 that all things work together for them that love them and that nothing can separate us from the love of God forever and that the final word about us is that you have been given by God the Father to Jesus because the Father loves you and Jesus loves you final takeaway from this whole thing because Jesus loves you your cup he drank because Jesus loves you his cup he prepared for you and the language in this story about Jesus saying yes I have the spiritual power that I can knock you all down just like that but I've come to drink the cup and it's a very very powerful Old

Testament image and those of you who love fantasy things if you just imagined that God in a sense was to take all of me and take me in his powerful hand and then sort of just to squeeze me but as he squeezed me the lies of my life come out and they come out it would look very black and foul everything that would come out of me in this sense in this image would be black and foul and underneath the Lord has a cup and as he squeezed me my lies come out my abusive power comes out my hatred comes out my envy comes out my lack of forgiveness comes out my greed comes out we could go on and on and on and all of them as he squeezes all of my life from the moment of my conception to what is me and my future my debt it's still in the future but the whole of me as he squeezed me and if you just imagine that everything that he squeezes which is bad and foul and wrong that I have done and all the good things that I should have done and could have done but didn't do and they're all squeezed and they're all black and they're all foul and they all stink and they all go into a cup and the image here is that that cup that if at the day of judgment

God gave to me to drink it would kill me it would be my damnation but Jesus takes that cup and drinks it for me he takes that cup and drinks it for me because he loves me that's what's happening on the cross on the cross Jesus is drinking that cup for you and for me and the wonderful thing which is powerful because we're going to celebrate it right now if you read Matthew Mark and Luke and you see and you read first Corinthians and you see the institution of the Lord's Supper and what happens in the Lord's Supper Jesus is giving the disciples a 10,000 feet in the air view of what's about to be happening with his betrayal and his death upon the cross and in that 10,000 view thing what Jesus is saying is that I am the one who is instituting a brand new covenant between human beings and God and a covenant means that God will be your God he will redeem you he will care for you he will love you he will provide for you he will never let you go he will never abandon you he will never deny you he is your God you are his child by adoption and grace if you put your faith and trust in

Jesus and Jesus says this is my body broken for you and this cup is the blood of the new covenant shed for you and so we see this very very powerful image because Jesus loves me my cup on the cross he drank and because Jesus loves me and you his cup the cup of the new covenant the cup of his broken body the cup of a brand new relationship with God by adoption and grace he prepares and offers for you please stand if there's any here who have not yet given their lives to Jesus all you have to do is you could even just use can you put that last point back up Andrew all you have to do is just say Jesus thank you for drinking the cup that was mine and for offering the cup that is yours

[47 : 17] I am yours just say something like that your own words it's a conversion prayer and and for all of us it's just a time to marvel at God's great love for us and Jesus is great love for us let's pray father we thank you for Jesus we thank you father that he set aside his power and divine prerogatives and his glory and out of love came and walked amongst us and lived amongst us to live the life that we could not live to die the death that we deserve but that if we died that death it would doom us forever eternal separation from you that he lived the life we could not live died the death that we cannot die he did it all for us so that by faith and trust in him we are given his life for us and he dies for us and we are given his life and his resurrection by faith and trust in him father make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel learning to live for your glory and we ask this in the name of

Jesus and all God's people say amen