

John: The Word Became Flesh - John 18:1-11

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Preacher: Kamesh Sankaran

[0 : 00] Thank you Scott.

Perhaps you're a sports fan and I don't know what your favorite sport is or what your favorite team is, but it's a pretty good guess that you want your favorite athlete to be a clutch performer. Maybe you like movies, I don't know what your favorite movie is, who your favorite actor is and what your favorite character is, but it's a pretty good guess that you want your favorite character to come through when it counts.

That's because we all want to be like them, our favorite action heroes, our favorite athletes who come through in the clutch, because we know that a crisis reveals who we really are.

In the same way, when it comes to obeying God, crisis reveals our convictions and our character.

[1 : 09] In John's account of the life of Jesus, we are transitioning from the final conversations with the disciples that happened from chapters 13 through 17, those five chapters.

We are transitioning from that to the arrest and trial in chapter 18 to the crucifixion and death in chapter 19 to the resurrection accounts in chapter 20 and 21.

We are in this transitional point in the life of Jesus. The arrest account here in chapter 18 follows the prayer that we heard about in John 17 in Gethsemane.

That prayer in John 17 is rightly described as a crescendo of this gospel account. It's a theological high water mark that describes the perfect unity between the Father and the Son as well as the prayer of the Lord for us to be a part of that union.

That was 17. That's the high point. What happens here in chapter 18 describes how far we are from that. As we study this passage in 18:1 through 11, it is my prayer that we will grow in our appreciation of Christ's love for us and be transformed by it.

[2 : 26] These 11 verses that Pastor Scott just read in 18:1 through 11, we get a complete picture of what happens during this key moment by reading these 11 verses alongside the corresponding passages in the three synoptic gospels.

Matthew 26 has an account of this. Mark 14 has an account of this. Luke 22 has an account of this. When we read those accounts in conjunction with John 18:1 through 11, we get a better picture of what actually happened at this time.

I will be referring to those passages as we go along and put together, they reveal our spiritual condition and also compares and contrasts our condition with that of the Lord.

With that, let's dive straight into the text and we'll begin looking at the first few verses. We see in verse 11 of the opening line, the ESV and the NASB translated as when Jesus had spoken these words.

That is referring to the prayer that we just read last week in the 17th. The NIV interprets those as when you had finished praying. It is in the aftermath of this prayer, we see all of these things that happened.

[3 : 43] John's record of the garden and the brook and the children, all of those things are hinting at the familiarity of this place to the characters in the story.

This familiarity will actually help us understand this account a little bit better. As we go through these 11 verses, we can obtain some valuable insight by examining three characters that are very prominent in the story.

The first character is Judas and the second character is Peter. Of course, the third and the most important character is Lord Jesus Christ himself.

As we go through these 11 verses, we will examine the three characters and see what we can learn from them. Let's begin with Judas. Judas is there in the first four or five verses of this passage and let's see what we can learn from Judas in this.

Interestingly, though this passage, in this passage, Judas speaks no words, his behavior speaks volumes.

[4 : 53] Isn't that interesting? Without saying a thing, we can say a lot, Judas' behavior speaks volumes even though there are no words of Judas recorded here.

The reason why I want to begin by paying attention to Judas is that there are subtle ways in which we can also betray, we can be tempted to betray Jesus by allowing Satan to work in and through us.

John, earlier in chapter 12 in the Anointing at Bethany, he had already revealed that Judas was characterized by a love of money, which God's word reveals that it's a root of all kinds of evil.

When we fall into love of a false God like money, that gives root for all kinds of evil to work in our hearts and we give a comfortable dwelling place for sin.

Why Judas, when we give a comfortable dwelling place for sin, what happens is that weeds start to take root in our lives and those weeds choke out the seeds of the word of God planted in our lives.

[6 : 09] What we see in Mark 14 and Luke 22 is that we see a sequence of events. The Anointing at Bethany happens in chapter 12 in John and what we see when we put the four gospel accounts together is that after the Anointing at Bethany, Judas had made up his mind, okay, I'm going to go betray Jesus.

Then we see that he goes to the chief priest in the Pharisees, strikes a deal, comes back for the last supper, that is in John 13. When we see in John 13.30, he leaves the supper to go back to the chief priest in the Pharisees to concoct a plan, okay, this is the time.

In those few hours between John 13, the last supper, and this, he had gone back to the chief priest and with their help has rounded up hundreds of soldiers and now has come to betray the Lord.

He went back to the chief priest in the Pharisees and he used their influence around these soldiers. How did this happen? Remember, the temple is a key center.

This is, think about like a big concert venue in our day, we would expect to see the big concert lots of security. This is a Roman occupied province and the Romans, they're highly authoritarian.

[7 : 31] They don't like the servants' law and order. If the Romans were going to station security, not surprisingly, they would station security right next to the temple.

This is Passover week. This is the high point of the year. This is where people from all over the region are coming to the temple. So it's not surprising that the Romans would have had a garrison station right next to the temple.

And in addition to that, the chief priests and the Sanhedrin, they would have had their own security team. So Judas goes to the chief priest in the Pharisees and he rounds up both their muscle as well as the Roman garrison there and he brings them to the scene.

We don't have an exact count of the reading party. The ESV translates as a band of soldiers. The NIV translates as a detachment of soldiers.

The New American Standard translates it as a Roman cohort. We don't exactly know, but it was likely several hundreds of soldiers. And then in addition to that, this is this muscle sent by the Sanhedrin.

[8 : 43] By any estimate, this is a large group of professional soldiers who were expecting to do an extensive search and hunt. That's why they came at lanterns and torches. Oh, is this guy hiding somewhere?

We got to go look after him. And they were expecting to fight because they came in with weapons. The sheer size of this reading party should elicit a chuckle.

This was ridiculous. The utterly unwarranted show of force actually reveals an underlying insecurity. For Judas, no amount of worldly protection was going to be enough to shield him from his guilty conscience.

That is the nature of sin. It never satisfies. When we lose our trust in God, no amount of money, no amount of power will ever be enough to give us a security that only God can give.

[9 : 49] So this insecurity of Judas and knowing how he will be destroyed ought to be a warning for us. Let us learn from how sin destroyed Judas.

So that's something to learn from the first character in this account, Judas. Let's move to Peter. Peter's words come in actions come in the end of the passage in verses 10-11.

And by the way, I'm not trying to pick on Peter. Peter is in many ways representative of the other apostles who were just like us. So in contrast to the love of money and betrayal that characterized

Judas, Peter may actually come across looking pretty good.

In fact, even comparison with the other disciples, when we read the other accounts, especially in Mark, what we learn is that the other disciples ran away. In fact, one of them ran away losing his clothes.

So in comparison with the other disciples, Peter kind of looks across pretty good over here. He's actually standing with Jesus over here. Peter actually made an effort to demonstrate faithfulness to Christ.

[10:59] But here's the problem with Peter. He wanted to do it his way. See, Peter was characterized by clinging to his plans for how things should go, not God's plans.

Earlier in John chapter 16, a couple of weeks ago in Pastor Scott preaching the passage, he pointed out that Jesus chides the disciples for being so preoccupied with their loss than what God is about to do.

We're all prone to that. And even before that, if you go back in Matthew chapter 16, slightly earlier in the ministry, Jesus sternly rebuked Peter.

Peter at that point made it clear that the well before that he's not going to let Jesus go to the cross.

And Jesus rebukes Peter with these words, Get behind me Satan, you are a hindrance to me.

This is speaking to Peter. For you are not sitting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. The sad part is we all have that propensity to cling to our views and our plans and how God should act instead of letting God be God.

[12:26] You see, Peter had his mind set on what kind of a Savior he thought Jesus should be, which is another way of saying Peter had his mind on what kind of a God he wanted instead of a God who is.

And so we're all guilty of these things and Peter's failure here should be a lesson for us. When you look at this passage in Luke 22, it notes that the disciples brought two swords with them.

And the Luke 22 passage actually says, Lord shall we strike. So it's not just Peter who's guilty here. There's at least one other party who's complicit in this crime.

So it wasn't just Peter who wanted to do this. Now remember that all of this happening, all of these disciples were living in a Roman occupied province and I say, I've already said Romans are authoritarian.

They do not tolerate resistance. They don't look kindly upon resistance. So when we see this passage in Matthew 26, it looks like it was likely Peter, James, and John who were with Jesus at this moment.

[13:41] And what we know is that they were all fishermen, Peter, James, and John were fishermen. So we have three fishermen with two swords and one of them attacks a band of professional soldiers.

This is not going to end well and they know it. Why was Peter doing this? This is Peter simply trying to back up his bragging earlier that he was willing to die for Jesus.

Oswald Chambers, who's devotional is something that I've appreciated a lot over the years and in my at most for as high as he makes a subtle point, he says, never choose the scene of your own martyrdom.

Let me repeat, never choose the scene of your own martyrdom. What are you saying is that we ought to follow God in the way God chooses for us, not in the way that we wish to demonstrate our faithfulness to God.

Jesus wanted his disciples to have courage, but Jesus is not impressed by Peter's bravado and he's not impressed by our bravado either.

[14:52] Jesus already knows and had foretold that Peter will repeatedly deny him in just a few hours. The behavior of Peter that night leaves us with a cognitive dissonance.

Here's what's happening. On one hand, here is this untrained fisherman who is attacking hundreds of professional soldiers to defend Jesus.

But in just a couple of hours, the same guy is going to deny Christ to a simple servant girl. And if you go fast forward to verse 26, we see that the third denial of Peter of Christ is to the relative of the man whose ear he cut off.

So here's his disconnect. Here he's demonstrating incredible courage to defend Jesus in really unlikely circumstances against all odds.

He's putting his life on the line to defend Jesus and just a couple of hours later, he's being a coward. And all this happens in just a couple of hours.

[15:59] How do we reconcile this disconnect? This is what happens when we have our hopes set on our plans instead of God's plans.

You see, the truth is, if like Peter, if we put our trust in our plans and our expectations and how God should behave, our plans will fail.

We will learn a hard lesson about the sovereignty of God. And in that disappointment, like Peter, we will also dishonor the Lord far more than we ever imagined ourselves doing.

So the failure of Peter here should be a lesson for us to let God be God. Now as I'm saying all of this, I recognize that some of you may still be impressed with Peter's action here.

You shouldn't be. Some of us may even aspire to act this way, thinking that we are defending God and showing our faithfulness in doing so by acting like Peter.

[17:05] Remember, God is the ultimate arbiter of right and wrong. What we learn here is that Jesus rebukes Peter.

Peter did not represent Jesus well. Peter even interfered with God's plans in doing so. Like Peter, we should examine the subtle ways in which we deny Jesus by misrepresenting God or by not trusting God.

Like the apostles, our thoughts, motivations, and actions are often self-centered even when they appear to be outwardly about honoring and serving the Lord.

When we do so, we may inadvertently act to hinder God's work by being an instrument of Satan without our explicitly wanting to do so.

We should develop a habit of prayer to seek the Holy Spirit to transform our desires so that even when we think we are serving the Lord, we should imitate our Lord by saying, not as I will, but as you will, and that leads us to the third and the most important character in this account, how the Lord Jesus Christ acts in this case.

[18:26] Unlike Judas, unlike Peter, and unlike any other human being who has ever lived, Jesus was characterized by completely entrusting himself to the Father.

The deepest desire of Jesus was to obey the Father at all costs. But obedience looks differently depending upon God's timing and God's plans.

There were occasions, especially early in the ministry of Jesus, when the apostles were still in the process of learning from and learning about Jesus, that Jesus chose to remain in obscurity and ministered away from the limelight.

But now that His hour has come, that's a phrase we have seen over and over again in John, His hour has come, Jesus knows that this is God's plan, this is God's will, that He go to the cross.

Jesus makes no effort to avoid the authorities. Despite the long-standing and well-known opposition from them, Jesus goes to a location where He knows that the betrayer can find Him.

[19:43] Throughout this passage, we see that Jesus willingly marched towards His death. Like our Lord, we must follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit to discern when to avoid unnecessary confrontations and when to courageously and confidently prepare for persecution.

Prayer is necessary for that discernment, and of course, that's precisely what the Lord just did. We just read that long passage in John 17 for Jesus to discern the will of the Father, that it was the Father's will for Him to drink the cup.

We're earnestly wrestling with the enormity of the task ahead of Him, which is to bear the full wrath of the one with whom He had enjoyed perfect love for all eternity, and discerning that it was the will of the Father for Him to do so, Jesus was resolved to drink the cup and drink it to the last drop.

Coming out of the prayer in 17, Jesus knew the Father's will, and that was the only thing He wanted to do. So with the erasing party coming to Him, when Jesus declared, I am He, I'm the one you're looking for, the text says that they drew back and fell to the ground.

Remember, these are professional soldiers. This was not a natural response of well-trained professional soldiers that when a supposed criminal comes in and says, oh yeah, I'm me, they don't withdraw and fall back to the ground.

[21:23] That's not what professional soldiers do. That's because this is not a natural response of an accused. Jesus was resolved to face whatever was coming to Him and was empowered by the Holy Spirit in His intentional walk towards what awaited Him.

It's perhaps because He radiated a supernatural conviction that these soldiers were thrown on a back. Here's the thing, the evil that sinful people would inflict on Him in the next few hours and days was nothing, was not nearly as serious as Jesus willing to bear the cumulative weight of all sin that He willingly chose out of obedience to the Father.

So in this middle passage from 4 to 9, what we see here is that God is not surprised by human schemes. God has a habit of confounding human expectations.

Jesus knew exactly what was going to happen and why it was going to happen. It was the Father's will. Out of His complete confidence in the sovereignty of the Father, Jesus' response in a way that was utterly startling to the soldiers, noticed that it was Jesus who took the initiative in this interaction.

He is the one who says He came forward and said to them, whom do you seek? They thought they were going hunting for, suppose, a criminal and here is Jesus coming forward and offering Himself up to them.

[23 : 05] You see, Jesus had complete confidence that every one of these things is happening in the sovereign plan of the Father. So He steps forward at the time of His arrest and during His mock trial in which all these illegitimate authorities were falsely trying to pin Him down, He says that you have no authority over me at all unless it had been given to you from above.

But even as He's going through the mock trial, He knows that, yep, these flawed characters who are doing this mockery of justice, oh, this is happening because God is in control over them.

And until His final breath in which He says, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit, every step of the way, our arrest trial did, every step of the way, Jesus said, this complete confidence that the Father was in complete control.

What we believe about the sovereignty of God has enormous practical implications. Sovereignty of God is not a mere abstract theological concept, but it has enormous practical implications for how we face crises that come into our lives.

One of the ways to understand the implications of confidence in the sovereignty of God, look at the care that Jesus shows to His disciples.

[24 : 41] When this raiding party is coming to arrest Him, Jesus was not concerned about protecting Himself, He was thinking about protecting His disciples.

That type of a response happens only because you have complete confidence that God is in control. It is only when God's sovereignty is so deep in our thinking that we can act to protect others instead of protecting ourselves.

Verse 9 is something that John understands this to be a fulfillment of an earlier teaching. We see this in John 6:39 in the conversation and in the prayer.

Jesus says that He has not lost anyone. This is repeated again in John 17 that we saw last week, that Jesus prays to the Father, that He has not lost anyone that God has given Him.

Jesus says His repeated emphasis on not losing any of His disciples. In fact, Jesus had warned Peter and the disciples earlier, if you read this account on Luke 22, during the prayer that Jesus had warned the disciples that Satan was waiting to attack them, but He has prayed for their protection.

[26 : 01] What we see here is that Jesus Himself is the answer to His prayer by acting to protect His disciples. To understand Jesus' care for the protection of His disciples, you have to have a fuller picture.

What we see in Luke 15 is that Jesus reveals that there is a great rejoicing in heaven, even when one sinner repents and turns to Jesus.

Because each believer is precious and treasured by God, Jesus acts to protect each believer.

The same Jesus who protected His disciples while He was alive is the Jesus who now sits at the right hand of the Father and interceding for us.

We have to have confidence that Jesus is protecting us even now as He protected His disciples then.

[27 : 05] The ways in which we trust God's character, God's sovereignty, shows up in one important way. Trust in God shows up in our confidence in God's Word.

We see from His prayer in chapter 17 that Jesus saw the betrayal by Judas as a fulfillment of Scripture. In fact, in Acts chapter 1, after the ascension, as the disciples are gathered in the upper room, they also start to see what Jesus saw.

All of this that happened was because Scripture had to be fulfilled. We have to have that confidence in God's Word.

God's Word never fails because God never fails. This is an outgrowth of confidence in the character of God that leads to confidence in God's Word.

Therefore, our thinking about the mundane and the profound things have to be consistently saturated with and shaped by the Word of God.

[28 : 15] We won't know when a crisis will hit us, but when it does, that crisis will reveal our convictions and our character.

Let us use the time that we have to be saturated with and shaped by the Word of God as a sign of our confidence in the character of God. As the followers of Jesus, He told us that in this world, we will have tribulation to the believers in Rome who endured immense persecution under Claudius, which was then followed by an even worse persecution under Nero, and wrestled with the weakness of their own faith, God gave them this Word through Apostle Paul.

This is from Romans 8 verses 38 and 39, says this, For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

As I said, this is because Jesus who interceded for His disciples while He was alive now intercedes for us from the right hand of God. Jesus is the good shepherd who lays down his life to protect his sheep.

Now, Church history tells us that John, this writer, was in fact arrested and probably spent decades in prison, and all the other apostles, they were actually martyred for their faith.

[30 : 01] Does that mean that they lost the protection of Jesus? No, no, not far from it. As we said, Jesus had already told them that in this world, you will have trials, tribulations.

No, Jesus, at this point, Jesus knew that the apostles were still incomplete in their knowledge of Christ. They hadn't yet seen his sacrificial death, his victorious resurrection, and his ascension. They had not yet received the Holy Spirit, and they were too weak in their faith to live out the good life that God had ordained for them.

God has a deep desire for His children to participate in His work of redemption so that we may know Him more and have the joy of a child working alongside the Father.

Jesus desires that for us, and it is out of that deep desire for us to experience the joy of working alongside Him. He protects us for that purpose.

[31 : 05] These are all the ways in which Jesus demonstrated his confidence in the Father's plan. There was one more way Jesus demonstrated his confidence in the sovereignty of God.

Jesus gives yet another example of what it looks like to entrust ourselves into the care of the Father by doing this, loving our enemies.

Jesus practiced what He preached. Jesus didn't merely tell us to love our enemies. He demonstrated it to the very end.

You see, when John introduces Jesus to us in John chapter 1, he tells us repeatedly that he was full of truth and grace.

We see that even here. For example, when it comes to Judas, Jesus had in fact declared Judas to be a devil.

[32 : 03] If you look at John chapter 6, verse 70, Jesus flatly calls out Judas as a devil. And then in the last chapter in the prayer, in the prayer to the Father, Jesus explicitly talks about Judas.

He's a son of destruction. That is the truth. But remember, Jesus was full of truth and grace. That was not the only thing that Jesus said about and to Judas.

We saw just a few hours earlier that Jesus had washed the feet of Judas and shared a meal with him. When we look at the other three Gospel accounts of the arrest of Jesus, Luke records that Jesus had given Judas one more chance to consider what he was doing.

That is grace. Judas, are you really doing this? That is grace to give this man one more chance to think about what he is doing.

Matthew records Jesus calling Judas a friend even in the midst of the betrayal. Jesus loved his enemies to the very end.

[33 : 19] But it wasn't just Judas. This is the case of the... But wait, there's more. It's not just Judas that Jesus loved to the very end.

All four Gospel accounts record that one member of the reading party had his ear chopped off. John gives us more detail.

He tells us the name of the victim, Malachus, and the perpetrator, Peter. Luke also records that it was his right ear that was cut off.

Luke also records that Jesus healed him. Jesus practiced what he taught.

He loved his enemies, even the one who was coming to arrest him. According to the oral history of the church, Jesus appeared once again after his resurrection to Malachus.

[34 : 18] We don't know if Malachus committed his life to Christ or not, but what we do see here is that consistently Jesus loves even his enemies.

We don't know what happened to Malachus. What we do know is that there is a stark difference in how Jesus treated him versus how Peter treated him.

That's the difference between trusting God and trusting in our own plans. As we come to the end of this passage, I want to remind us of Hebrews 4, chapter 4, verses 12 through 13.

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit of joints and merrows, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

No creature is hidden from his side, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account. As we study this account of the arrest of Jesus, invite the Holy Spirit to examine our hearts if we are like Judas, where we are driven by love of money or other false God and in a way that we are giving room for Satan in our lives.

[35 : 34] Invite the Holy Spirit to reveal if we are like Peter, holding on to our own plans and thereby misrepresent Christ or even interfere with Christ, or if we are mimicking Christ by trusting the Father completely and desiring nothing other than to obey the Lord.

I began the sermon by referring to athletes and action heroes who come through in the clutch. As believers, will we rise to the moment during a crisis? Will our characters and convictions reflect that of our Savior?

I pray that the Holy Spirit will continue the work of transforming us into the image of Christ so that our lives will imitate His when crisis hits our lives.