

Jesus demonstrates his love and glory

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[0 : 0 0] Hey, good morning everyone. We've only looked this morning and think introduced by the idea of a perfect storm. Lots of journalists on the TV are talking about the perfect storm hitting Australia at the moment. The perfect storm actually is a meteorological event when several storm cells combine to make a supercell. The term was first used in 1991 to describe the worst storm that ever hit North America. That catastrophic event later became the movie called the perfect storm. So a perfect storm happens when several intense low pressure systems collide. Now normally when they collide they sort of neutralize each other or they bounce off each other but on rare occasions they merge and feed off each other and form that supercell which generally has absolutely catastrophic results and consequences as a weather system. Well in 1991 off the coast of Massachusetts in North America two intense low pressure systems collided. They collided with a third weak low pressure system. Now the problem was that the weak front couldn't neutralize the intense systems nor could it bounce them. And so what happened was they merged and the weak absorbed the intense pressure of the major storm cells. And there was catastrophic results. These days the term is used just as a sort of slang term to picture the intersection of severe consequences.

Consequences which combine and give devastating results. As we move into John 18 I think at first impressions you might think that Jesus was caught up in a perfect storm.

You might say the storm had been building for months. Dreadful circumstances combining. And you might then also say catastrophic consequences for Jesus' mission to deliver the light and life of God's salvation.

Jesus was disliked, ignored, even hated by his own people. And his own people are the Jewish nation in general and the Jewish religious and political leaders in particular.

[2 : 2 6] That was a major storm cell brewing. His own disciples then still did not really get Jesus. Even after three years of intense teaching and observation.

One of that close band of brothers now has committed treachery. The ultimate treachery of betraying Jesus. Second storm from brewing. But in the case of Jesus, first appearances could not be more misleading.

John is not recording defeat as though somehow or other the events had combined against Jesus and overpowered him.

On the contrary, John is recording total success in Jesus' salvation mission. As Jesus demonstrates what it means to love them to the end and that may are to be glorified.

And remember, those two themes, John's really emphasized in chapters 13 to 17 of his record of the life of Jesus. That chapter 13 to 17 was a record of one meal, the evening before Jesus died.

[3 : 3 4] And so those two themes are really emphasized in those four or five chapters. And chapters 18 and 19 that we move into this morning record incidents where those two things are demonstrated.

Jesus demonstrates his love and he demonstrates his glory in the last few hours before his crucifixion. The first incident in which he demonstrates his love and glory is in his arrest.

And Simon's now going to read the verses 1 to 11. Okay.

Okay. When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the book 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.

[4 : 47] Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, Whom do you see? 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 see? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I told you that I am he.

So if you seek me, let these men go. 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.

[5 : 54] Shall I not drink the cup that the father has given me? Amen. Amen. Okay. So they've just finished the meal.

And that meal, remember, was part of the Passover celebrations, which in turn celebrated and pictured the last act of God's people before God saved them out of Egypt and brought them to himself in new relationship.

So this is a really, really symbolic moment where having had the last meal, as it were, Jesus also goes out to Gethsemane and the final showdown, which will be the means of saving God's people, a new exodus.

Now, Jesus knew that Judas was already heading to the garden with the temple police. The temple police were the enforcers of the Jewish political and religious leaders.

They were backed by a contingent of Roman troops, probably a sizable contingent, because they would have been expecting violence, given that only a week earlier, Jesus had been welcomed into Jerusalem as a new king.

[7 : 07] But this was no ambush. Jesus knew this large, heavily armed force was coming for him. And look at verse four, because verse four just summarizes the whole incident and actually demonstrates the extent of his love.

Just listen to these words. Knowing all that was to happen. He went out or step forward.

Interestingly, that word step forward or went out is the same word used to describe Judas's actions only hours earlier, halfway through the meal.

And you can see that back in chapter 13, verse 30. Same word, same action. But how different the motivation. Judas went out into the darkness planning the murder of Jesus.

He went out into the darkness as darkness. Jesus goes out into the darkness as the light of the world to bring salvation to people like those who were about to kill him.

Jesus' love for his father and his love for his needy people made him step forward into danger, into pain, into humiliation, into shame, into death itself.

[8 : 29] And as always, Jesus, as we see here in verse eight, thinking about his disciples, thinking about protecting them, giving them security at expense to himself.

But in the same action of stepping forward, Jesus demonstrates his glory. His authority as God is unmistakable.

He is clearly in control. At one point, he confronts this large, heavily armed contingent that must have been a frightening force coming towards you.

Then he proceeds to interrogate them. Verses five and six. Simply declaring his name, which is also his character. I am the personal name of God.

Simply declaring that causes all of this heavily armed, threatening party to cower before him. And clearly, John wants us to understand that Jesus' arrest is down to his consent, not the combined force of arms that he's confronted with.

[9 : 36] Put in different words, Jesus is working to a script. The script was written by the Old Testament prophets. Jesus isn't trying to make the best out of a situation that's gone horribly wrong for him.

And when you look at verse 11, that idea of Jesus drinking the cup that was given to him. The cup is the cup of God's wrath, the cup of God's judgment that God handed to his enemies as a consequence of their sin and rebellion.

Well, Jesus willingly drinks this cup. Drinks in the judgment due his people from God so that they don't have to.

And so what we're seeing here, as this unfolds in the midst of the dark of night, we see the pathway of obedience, the pathway of submission to his Father.

We see the only way to deliver God's salvation playing out before our eyes. Jesus knows how bitter that cup would be.

[10:43] And he drinks it anyway. Here is love. Here is glory. In this one instant. The second way in which Jesus shows his love and glory is in his dealing with Peter.

So we'll throw back to Simon now to read the verses relevant to that. Okay, so let's skip around a little bit.

But here we go. Here we go. Verses 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. So Jesus said to Peter, put your sword into its sheath. Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me? Skipping to 15.

Simon Peter followed Jesus. 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.

[11:47] 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? 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.

Jumping up to verse 25. Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So 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, did I not see you in the garden with him?

[12:46] Peter denied it. And at once a rooster crowed. Peter denied it. Well, surely that's got to be one of the most tragic stories recorded for us in the Bible.

John, in his record, has made Peter a central figure in both the arrest and trial of Jesus. I think on the one hand, Peter represents all his disciples.

But mostly I think Peter's there as a huge contrast to Jesus. I think it's fair to say that Peter is caught up in his own perfect storm at that moment.

A perfect storm of wrong understanding of Jesus. A perfect storm of wrong confidence in himself. And then the awful reality of his own denial of Jesus.

If you look at verse 10 there, we see a parallel between Peter and Jesus. As Jesus took the initiative in confronting his enemies by the weapon of his word.

[13:56] So Peter takes the initiative to confront Jesus. How? By a sword. Now, it's obviously an incredible act of bravery given the size of that armed contingent before him.

But in reality, it showed how little Peter understood about Jesus' mission and about his own spiritual needs. So I think after three years, Peter still believed that King Jesus would establish a physical kingdom.

A kingdom that would liberate them from the power of the Romans. A kingdom that would restore economic prosperity. That, in familiar words these days of Mr. Trump, that would make Israel great again.

And so I think we see Peter wanting to help. Peter believed he could help establish this kingdom. He knew that blood would have to be established.

Blood would have to be spilled, sorry, to establish Jesus' kingdom. And he was willing for that blood to be his. As he stood alongside Jesus. But of course, he was totally wrong.

[15:10] Very brave, but totally wrong in his focus on external physical renewal. Rather than inner spiritual renewal. And in verse 11, Peter, Jesus I think is reminding Peter, very gently.

But reminding Peter, nevertheless, of the conversation they'd had only hours earlier. And again, go back and check that out in chapter 13, verses 36 to 38. Where Jesus said to Peter, called him out. In spite of all his bravado, Jesus called him out and said, Peter, you cannot walk the pathway of salvation. Only I can walk that pathway. And I think the harsh reality of that starts to dawn on Peter now.

As slowly, painfully, excruciatingly painfully as we listen in on the story. As he denies association with Jesus on three separate occasions.

Just as Jesus predicted he would. And again, you see, John contrasts Peter and Jesus. Jesus stepped out into the darkness to bring light and life to the world.

[16:23] Peter, for all his big words, finds himself trying to move away from the light of the fire to hide in the shadows. Jesus. So it might not be identified with the light of life.

What a contrast. Jesus is on the inside being interrogated by his enemies. But he's being light in the world, as we'll see in a moment.

He's standing up to his accusers. He's accepting their abuse, their injustice. He's denying nothing of himself. And he's denying nothing of God's mission and God's cause and God's glory.

He's sacrificing himself for others. Peter, he's on the outside. Denying everything. Protecting himself at the expense of Jesus.

And so in great sadness, Peter's just left as that rooster crows. Peter's just left with that noise of that rooster ringing in his ears for a long time to come.

[17:27] Left contemplating his own failure. Even as, again, Jesus continues to deliver God's salvation as planned. The contrast couldn't be any more clear.

Peter is part of the problem. He might be willing to help. He might have ideas of how he could help. But he can't help. Only Jesus can be the solution to this particular problem.

And friends, what love Jesus shows Peter at this particular time, in this moment. A broken man, no doubt. And yet Jesus doesn't condemn him outright.

Rather, I think Jesus here is gently but firmly pushing Peter to learn the truth about God's purpose in salvation.

And also to learn the truth about his own heart. And about his own need for forgiveness and restoration by Jesus. Rather than any thought that he could help Jesus and do his own bit towards salvation.

[18:30] And then we're thankful that in just a few days, Peter is restored by Jesus. Even with greater love. So Jesus shows Peter love here.

But what glory, again, Jesus shows in his dealing with Peter. And the glory is this, that he continues to act for Peter's salvation.

He continues to act for Peter's greatest need. Even when Peter continues acting so offensively against him. It's just remarkable, isn't it?

But it's just the character of Jesus and the character of Jesus' mission. Well, the third way in which Jesus shows his love and glory is in his so-called judicial trials.

And Simon's going to read the other verses then to that. So, from verse 12. So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him.

[19:38] First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was 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.

Skipping down to verse 19. The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. Jesus 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. They know what I said. When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, Is that how you answer the high priest? Jesus answered him, If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong.

But if what I said is right, why do you strike me? Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas, the high priest. And skipping down to 28.

[20:49] Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover.

So Pilate went outside to them and said, What accusation do you bring against this man? They answered him. If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you.

Pilate said to them, Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law. The Jews said to him, It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death.

This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die. So Jesus now has to endure two trials.

The first by the Jewish ecclesiastical authorities was really a kangaroo court. And it has a sense of being cobbled together on the run.

[22 : 01] I suspect trying to make the most of an unexpected gift that Judas had handed them in betraying Jesus. And there was a rush. Before Passover, they had to get Jesus killed and buried.

Otherwise, that would be the opportunity gone for at least another two weeks to the aftermath of the Passover feast. So it has that sense of they're just scrambling to get whatever they need to do to get a credible judgment and sentence passed on Jesus.

In other words, they're going through the motions of justice to legitimize their decision to kill Jesus. Now, under the Roman rule, the Jewish political and religious leaders had considerable authority. But they didn't have power to issue and authorize executions. So they needed the Roman governor to hear Jesus' case and to pass sentence on him as soon as possible.

And it's clear now that not just did they want Jesus dead, but they wanted him dead as a criminal, not as a hero.

[23 : 16] They wanted him killed as publicly and shamefully as they could manage. They wanted him crucified. And they wanted him to find out, and that was the first trial.

And the first trial begins, such is at ease. Jesus was dragged before Annas. Now, the interesting thing here is that Annas wasn't even the official high priest. He had no jurisdiction to be doing what he was doing.

But Annas was a bit like we would recognize today as a godfather figure. He was the power broker who called others to follow the path he set.

And especially his son-in-law Caiaphas. So Annas had the first go at Jesus. And I think his option was just to try and intimidate, to browbeat Jesus into some sort of admission, which could be used to condemn him.

Now, in response, Jesus very, very gently, but very, very firmly, exposes the illegality of the trial. Now, because it's a trial without witnesses, and that was one of the fundamental things of Jewish jurisprudence.

[24 : 26] There had to be witnesses, credible witnesses, to support a charge or an allegation against some person. In this case, no witnesses. And Jesus pushes back at the illegality and says to them, Well, look, you guys, you just need to go out there into the marketplace and see the evidence for yourself.

For three years of ministry, I've been out there in the public spotlight. Everything's been taught. Everything's been said in the plain sight of all. In other words, Jesus is saying, Listen, you guys, if I'm guilty, as you say I'm guilty, you should have no shortage of witnesses condemning me.

This room should be full of witnesses. In other words, Jesus is saying, You guys have no case legally against me. And for his efforts, Jesus is slapped.

Now, I suspect it might be much more than just one slap. I think it might have been the first of the beatings. But we're not actually told there. At least he was slapped, which was an action of great shame.

First, that it should happen in law court. Second, that it should happen against a defendant in the law court. First, things were spiraling out of control for these Jewish authorities.

[25 : 42] They had nothing on Jesus. Their frustration levels were rising because they couldn't build a credible case. And they're on the pathway now to ever increasing violence.

That's all they have left. That's all they have. Things are out of control for them. And all pretense of justice is now gone. Then we jump over to the last section.

And finally, as dawn broke, they pressured the Roman governor, Pilate, to pass sentence on Jesus. Now, again, it's almost a kangaroo court because really what they say to Pilate, just trust us, Pilate. This man deserves to be sentenced to death. We just want you to sign the document. Now, I think it's fair to Pilate to say that he seems to suspect their intentions and wants no part of their mock justice.

So he tries to hand Jesus back to them, saying, you do your own dirty work. But in turn, this forces the Jewish authorities to really come clean and reveal their intention.

[26 : 51] And again, it's very clear. We want this man sentenced to death. We want this man publicly shamed. We want this man crucified.

Now, again, what all in love Jesus demonstrates. It's just hard to grasp this, but this is the Lord of the universe.

This is the only truly just and righteous man. This is Jesus. I am. Yahweh. God. And here he is, accepting injustice, abuse, the shame of this mock trial by evil men who present to be righteous, by men who should have been on their knees pleading mercy from Jesus rather than accusing him.

And to make things worse, Jesus knew their hypocrisy. Here they were. They wouldn't come into the building where Pilate was because they're pretending concern for purity and concern for God's word in the eve of Passover.

[28 : 05] They were parading as shepherds of God's people while happily plotting the murder of God's Messiah. And in this darkest moment of history, and it is the darkest moment of history quite possibly, Jesus is glorified.

Everything was going according to plan. That's a plan that just blows our mind. But everything was going according to plan.

By contrast, the Jewish authorities had nothing. They were in panic. Their plans weren't going to plan at all. They were scratching and scrambling for any old thing to get the end they want. Jesus is under control. Jesus is in control. He would die the death of a cursed man to remove the curse of sin and death from his people.

The glory of Jesus. And his authority was undiminished. It's just so ironic that in the earlier verse, verse 11.

[29 : 24] I don't know, hang on a second. Verse one of the other verses anyway. What number is it? Verse 14. It's ironic, but not surprising. That Jesus caused Caiaphas in his moment of treachery and murder and evil to testify most clearly to the nature of Jesus' own death.

It was from the lips of Caiaphas that we have final confirmation that Jesus' death was no accident. No defeat.

Jesus' death was a substitutionary death voluntarily entered into for the sake of the salvation of his people. What an incredible situation we have that the one who hated him most unwittingly praised him most as a sacrificial Passover lamb who would die under God's wrath in order to set his people free and give them life.

Remarkable, remarkable three incidents. Remarkable, remarkable three incidents.

Remarkable, remarkable four incidents. We're in the midst of the potential for a perfect storm in each of our lives. You are in the midst of the potential for a perfect storm in your life.

[31 : 12] How is that storm brewing? How has it been brewing for you in this past week? Going back to the original introduction. we've already got two raging storms, two intense pressure systems coming together in COVID-19 health crisis and then the associated economic meltdown.

Each of them in their own right are showing how much havoc they're capable of bringing amongst us. The question then becomes will these two fronts merge with you this week to become a supercell, a perfect storm in your life?

The answer to the question will depend on how strong that third front is. Remember the one in Massachusetts was a relatively weak front and wasn't able to neutralize the intense systems, wasn't able to bounce them, but instead absorbed them and fed off them into a destructive supercell.

So this week, whether it's perfect storm develops or not in your life will depend on how strong your confidence and hope in Jesus is.

we know that we will collide with the existing mass of storms daily this week. The only question is, will we be able to neutralize them?

[32 : 47] Will we be able to bounce them off because our hope in Jesus' love and Jesus' glory and Jesus' kingship is unassailable? The only alternative, my friends, is to have that perfect storm sweep us up to destruction, consume us, overwhelm us and leave us in a state of fear and panic and perhaps even ultimate spiritual destruction.

Our hope, as we walk into uncertain times, is that Jesus has removed the sting of death and the fear of death and has given us every blessing in the heavenly realms.

His resilience, his resolute acceptance of his Father's purpose and salvation, we've just seen it playing out in John chapter 18, as the means to deal with our sin, which is the thing that causes fear and death.

Jesus has done that for us. Can we trust him in his glory and in his love? In loving us to the end, Jesus continues in 2020 in Newcastle to do everything we need him to do to keep us safe, to keep us secure, to bring us home.

The record before us this morning is not just the message of Christ's triumph. It's the basis for our triumph as well.

[34 : 32] Very simple conclusion to draw from that. No matter, given that Jesus has walked that pathway of suffering before us, no matter what befalls us as Christians, our hope, our security, our pathway to glory, and it will be through suffering.

The Lord has promised us that. That pathway, that hope, that security remains unshaken. It will be a stormy week, stormy month, stormy six months, but it doesn't need to be the perfect storm if we have strength in Jesus to bounce or neutralize those things that will threaten to sweep over and overwhelm us this week.

My friends, may the Lord bless you this week and keep you. Just join with me now in prayer. Lord, these are easy words to say, but very difficult words to really live out.

As an article that was posted this week said, we've not, many of us here, perhaps none of us here this morning listening, have been exposed to the coronavirus, but Lord, almost certainly every one of us has been exposed by the coronavirus.

I pray, Lord, now that we will not be that weak front, a weak front of faith, unable to neutralize or bounce off the storms that will collide with this week.

[36 : 10] Give us confidence, Lord, in you, unassailable confidence. that you will keep us and that you will help us thrive in the darkest of times.

Help us, I pray, Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen. Thanks very much, guys, for listening to me this morning. Have a good week.