

What sort of Leader is Jesus?

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[0 : 00] I'm going to start with a question. Are you a glass half full or glass half empty person? Are you cynical or hopeful for the future?

How good are you at seeing a silver lining? The current crisis in the world is testing how good we are at making the best out of a situation. So some people think that this isolation would strengthen marriages and help family bonds.

Some people think that there's going to be a spike in the birth rates in about nine months' time.

Clearly Rachel and I peaked too early. Some people are trying to have fun in this situation.

They're dressing up in costumes when they go out to put the bins out on the curb just so they can see their neighbours. I think there's a slide of that now on your screen. Here at Holy Trinity we're trying to make the best of the situation as well.

One positive for us is that all this online stuff has showed us how much we really value meeting together physically rather than like this online.

[1 : 08] There are some positives. But not even the most optimistic person would ever say that this is a good thing. Health crisis, physical isolation, job loss, businesses going under, and anxiety.

None of these issues are ever good. But that's exactly how John describes the events in our passage. He shows us Jesus' arrest and trial.

Events that lead up to his death on Friday. And his verdict, 18 verse 14, it's our key verse. It's on your screen. It says it would be good if one man died for the people.

And while these events are not a global pandemic, it is still a crisis for Jesus and his disciples. Yet John has the cheek to say that it would still be a good Friday.

Christians are always sombre at the crucifixion. Death is always sad. How much more when God himself dies? But John says, no, it is good for this one man to die.

[2 : 18] This is a very long passage today. We can't go through all the verses. But the key to unlocking the passage is the letter P. John uses the letter P to show why Jesus' death is a good thing.

And so the first P, it comes in from verse 3. So let me pick up the action from Jesus' arrest. Verse 3. Judas came out to the garden, guarding a detachment of soldiers. And some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. A detachment here means anything upwards of 200 soldiers.

Verse 3 says they were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons. How do you rate their chances?

Judas, a mob of Jewish leaders and hundreds of armed soldiers against one peaceful man.

If this looks one-sided, then you're right. Only not the side you think. Look at verse 6. When Jesus said, I am he, they drew back and fell to the ground.

[3 : 22] One unarmed man has flattened more than 200 armed soldiers with three simple words. The first P is power. And it's on your screen.

In verse 3, they came after him. But by verse 4, Jesus is asking the questions, who is it you want? Jesus of Nazareth, they replied. I am he.

He says it again in verse 6 and verse 8. I am he. Which to Gentile ears like ours means nothing. But to Jewish ears is the name of God from the Old Testament.

Who are you, Jesus? Yahweh. And they all fall to the ground. You see, tonight, Judas seems like the big man. Satan has entered into him.

There's an army behind him. But John narrows in on Judas in verse 5, in the brackets there, just in time to see him, verse 6, fall to the ground.

[4 : 19] And this Jesus is nothing like the wimpy one that we grew up with. You know, in the paintings with the smile and the little lamb in his arms.

He's more frightening than he's ever been. This is a lesson in power. Only it's not power as the world knows it. But power that can make a best friend betrayer, an army and their weapons and Satan himself fall flat on the ground with three simple words.

He could crush them like that. Except we know where this story goes. How can this much power, verse 12, be arrested and then bound and then dragged off to the authorities?

Has something gone wrong? Surely this is not good. But Jesus is right where he wants to be. And it's because of two gifts the Father has given the Son.

So look in verse 9. I have not lost one of those you gave me. The first gift is a people. Verse 11. Jesus commanded Peter, put your sword away.

[5 : 32] Shall I not drink the cup? The Father has given me. The second gift is a cup. God the Father has given God the Son a people and a cup.

People here aren't just the 11 apostles. But in John, it's anyone who believes in Jesus. If you put your trust in Jesus, then that night in the garden, our lives are in his hands.

And he's very protective over us. There is another P. Protective. The soldiers come for them. In verse 8, he says, take me. Let them go.

In verse 9, he has not lost one of the people the Father has given him. Jesus is very protective. And the reason why is because of the second gift, the cup.

The cup, it's from our Isaiah passage. You can see it on your screen. This is the passage that Jan read to us. Awake, awake. Rise up, Jerusalem. You who have drunk from the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath.

[6 : 34] You who have drained to its dregs the goblet that makes people stagger. The imagery here is that God forces Jerusalem to drink from a cup.

Only it's not full of well-aged wine, but full of his attitude at their sin. Isaiah says it's the cup of his wrath.

And he forces them to drain it down to their dregs. The only hope for God's people is if someone takes that cup and drinks it for themselves.

And in our passage in verse 11, 18 verse 11, that is Jesus deciding to do that for us. Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?

In that verse, our lives are in Jesus' hands. You see, the people and the cup are related. Jesus is so protective over his people.

[7 : 34] He says, I will drink the cup for you. I imagine that Jesus' cup isn't your regular wine glass, but one the size of a planet.

As he tastes God's opinion of every sin that we have ever committed. Jesus tastes our sins. He drinks them all down until he is totally full of God's wrath.

The Christian word for this is another P. It's called propitiation. Propitiation means atonement or anger substitute. That is how Jesus protects the people.

He propitiates God's wrath for us. This is what he plans to do. In verse 12 and verse 13, they arrested Jesus.

They bound him up. They drag him off to the high priests. But powerful Jesus is right where he wants to be. This is all going according to his plan.

[8 : 39] Because through his suffering, he will protect the people. Verse 1. Sorry, gift 1. By drinking God's wrath for us. Gift 2.

This makes sense of our key verse. Why it would be good if one man died for the people. You see, there is another global pandemic in the world.

It's been going since the beginning. And it's more isolating and life-threatening. It has a 100% mortality rate. We are all facing God's wrath.

His opinion of our lives. We need a propitiation for our sin. And the reason we're all affected or infected is because of Peter.

In verse 15 to 26, look down in your Bibles. 18 verse 15 right through to 26. They're like a sandwich. It's Jesus in the middle.

[9 : 43] And he has surrounded by two slices of Peter on the outside. In John's gospel, Peter is such a mixed bag. So sometimes he's really good. Once he said to Jesus, Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life. Sometimes he tries to protect Jesus. Lord, you will never wash my feet. Tries to protect his dignity. In our passage in verse 10, Peter drew a sword to protect him.

But started swinging away and only managed to get an ear. Peter has such a good heart. So let's see how he goes in front of a servant girl. Daniel 18 verse 17.

She said, you aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you? She asked Peter. He replied, I am not. Down in verse 25. They asked him, you aren't one of his disciples too, are you?

He denied it, saying, I am not. In Jesus' test, twice he said, I am he. Whereas Peter, twice he said, I am not.

[10:50] Look at verse 26. One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him. Didn't I see you with him in the garden? Again, Peter denied it.

And at that moment, a rooster began to crow. Remember Peter, in his bravery, in chapter 13 on your screen, he said this to Jesus. He said, Lord, why can't I follow you now?

I will lay down my life for you. And then Jesus answered, very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.

You see, this is not about denying Jesus in front of certain people, but about following him. Lord, why can't I follow you now? Peter said.

But when push came to shove, Mr. lay down my life lost his nerve. You see, John uses the number one apostle to show that no matter how brave and bold, all disciples fail to follow Jesus as we should.

[11:57] We are all Peters. It's a P word for us. We're all Peters. We need someone to propitiate God's anger for us.

See, maybe verse 14 is correct that it is good for one man to die for all the Peters in the world.

But here's the thing. Which one man is it going to be? Are you willing and able? Who can do this for us? Do you know anyone? And the answer is in the middle of the Peter sandwich.

Look at verse 19. Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. Annas, he's the high priest there. His son-in-law Caiaphas is the other one in verse 24.

There's two high priests in our passage, but we never hear from either of them. And that's because we're too busy listening to the real high priest in the middle.

[13:01] Verse 20. I have spoken openly to the world, Jesus replied. I always taught in synagogues or at the temple where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me?

Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said. Where is your evidence, Jesus says. Bring in your witnesses. Verse 23. If I said something wrong, Jesus replied.

Testify as to what it is. But if I spoke the truth, why do you strike me? See, Jesus protests. I preached openly to the world.

But you have hidden me away in your kangaroo court at nighttime. John's point is that Jesus is the real high priest, the real P, priest.

See, the priest was supposed to ensure that verse 14 happens, that an animal would die for the people. He made sacrifices to God. He atoned for their sin.

[14:02] But John uses a nifty bit of narration so that the only high priest we hear from is Jesus. And you'll notice that Jesus' test, as we said, is sandwiched in the middle of Peter's.

The idea is that Peter fails his test in front of two servants, whereas Jesus doesn't flinch in his against the high priests. Jesus propitiates God's wrath for all the Peters who fail the test of following him.

He's the only man qualified to offer up this sacrifice because he is the priest. P, P, P.

There is one last piece to this puzzle, and it's all about dirty hands. Verse 28. See, by verse 28, it is clear that the Jews cannot trap Jesus.

And so they push their problem onto the Romans. Verse 29. Pilate came out to meet them. What charges are you bringing against this man? If he were not a criminal, they replied, we would not have handed him over to you.

[15:15] Do you think that we're wasting your time, Pilate? Jesus is a major sinner. Verse 31. Pilate said, okay then, take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.

But we have no right to execute anyone, they objected. You see, the Jews wanted Jesus gone, but they didn't have a death penalty of their own. And so they got Pilate to do their dirty work so they could keep their hands clean.

In fact, verse 28 says, they wanted to be clean enough to eat the Passover. You'll remember Passover. It's that Jewish festival where a spotless lamb dies in your place.

But at this Passover, there's only one lamb who is spotless. Listen to this repetition. Verse 29. What charges are you bringing against this man?

Verse 35. What is it you have done? Look at verse 38. I find no basis for a charge against him. Over the page 19, verse 4.

[16:19] I find no basis for a charge against him. 19, verse 6. You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him.

Did you hear how spotless Jesus was? We sang just a moment ago, there was no one good enough. And that is true. His innocence is everywhere in this passage.

He is the Passover lamb. P, letter P. He's the opposite of everyone else in the story. Judas betrays. Peter denies.

The Jews condemn. Pilate crucifies. They have dirty hands. And they're everywhere. They're all guilty. Passover is such a simple concept, actually.

One creature dies in place of another. Barabbas, in our passage, he is like a mini illustration of Passover. Verse 39. But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover.

[17:23] Do you want me to release the king of the Jews? They shouted back, no, not him. Give us Barabbas. Now, Barabbas had taken part in an uprising. Barabbas is an enemy of the state.

Guilty like the rest. But at this Passover, Jesus takes his place. Actually, Christians call this another P word.

It's called penal substitution. The idea is that one person takes the penalty of another. In 19 verse 7, it tells us we have a law.

And according to that law, he must die because he claimed to be the son of God. God's law, it says you can't blaspheme his name. The penalty? You must die.

And while this passage is full of lawbreakers at every turn, it is only Jesus who is arrested and tried. And even for us, even at a basic level, God's law says to love him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

[18:33] But none of us have done that. We're all guilty lawbreakers as well. God's law calls for our death too.

Our only hope is a lamb spotless enough for us. Do you know where we can find one like that? Do you know anyone that innocent?

John 3.16, arguably the most famous passage in the Bible. It should be on your screens. God so loved the world that he sent his one and only son, a spotless, innocent lamb.

Why? That whoever believes in him would not perish but have eternal life. You see, God's judgment only passes over if you sacrifice a spotless lamb instead.

Penal substitution only works if you find someone more innocent than yourself to swap with you.

And if we try and put all these pieces together, we asked at the start, what is so good about Jesus' death?

[19:45] How is John able to look at this crisis that's going on and say it is a good thing? And if we put those Ps together, we get the answer. Jesus is all powerful, but he allows himself to die.

Why? Because his death propitiates God's wrath. It protects the people. He is able to offer up a sacrifice to God because he is the priest.

His sacrifice works because he's the spotless Passover lamb. The penal substitute for all the Peters in the world, even for you and for me.

It is good that this one man dies for the people, but only if that one man is Jesus. Actually, we sell him short, don't we?

Calling him one man. In this passage, many times, John calls him the king. And John shows us, just as we finish, a few different responses to Jesus' kingship.

[20:50] So we can be like Pilate and the Romans. They mock the idea of Jesus being king. At 19, verse 2 and 3, they dress him up, crown of thorns, the purple robe.

And they say, hail, king of the Jews, right before they slap him in the face. You can treat Jesus' kingship like a big joke. You can mock the idea of his rule.

You can laugh at Christians who still live their lives in worship of him. You can choose to slap Jesus in the face rather than listen to his word.

Another response is to be like the Jews. They love their religious trappings more than God. In 1914, Pilate said, here is your king, Pilate said to the Jews.

But they shouted, take him away, take him away, crucify him. You see, maybe your moral and religious performance is offended by the idea that you need a savior.

[21 : 51] Maybe you think God's opinion of your life is like a cup of sweet wine. And so you can crucify Jesus and his word from your life.

You can take his rule away and go back to being your own king. There are a couple of responses. We can mock Jesus or try and kill him from our lives.

Or the final one, we can be the people John wants us to be. The third response actually has been bubbling away the entire book. It's actually our title slide on the next screen.

John writes these things so that we will believe that Jesus is the Christ. That is, the king. The right response is to believe that Jesus is the all-powerful king.

The Christ, whose death is good for us. Because we are all Peters. And even though we've got good hearts and brave words, we don't follow Jesus as we should.

[22 : 54] And so we must trust in this king, whose death propitiates God's wrath. Who's able to atone for our sin.

And spotless enough to swap our life for his. And thus protect the people. As a good king should. So let me pray as we finish.