

What sort of Leader is Jesus?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 April 2020

Preacher: Vijay Henderson

[0 : 00] Andrew asked this question just as he went to the break there. Are you a glass half full or a glass half empty sort of person? I wonder what you said. Are you cynical or hopeful?

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

People are predicting that there will be a spike in 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 on the next slide. They're dressing up in costumes when they put out the bins so they can wave to their neighbours, trying to have fun. Thanks.

Here at our church, a positive for us out of all this is we realise how much better we are meeting face-to-face and we look forward to that time again where we can gather physically in one room.

[1 : 03] There are some positives to what's going on, but not even the most optimistic person would ever say that this crisis is a good thing.

Health issues, businesses going under, job loss, physical isolation, none of these issues are ever good. But that's exactly how John describes the events in our passage.

Our key verse is 18 verse 14. In that verse it says, it would be good if one man died for the people. He shows us Jesus' arrest and trial, events that will lead to his death.

It isn't a global pandemic, but a deadly crisis in their lives. Yet John has the cheek to say, it will still be a good Friday. Our Christians are always sombre at the crucifixion.

Death is always sad. How much more when God himself dies? Yet John has the cheek to say, no, it is good for this one man to die.

[2 : 12] This is a very long passage, but the key to unlocking it is the letter P. John uses the letter P to show why Jesus' death, why this crisis is a good thing.

And so the first P comes from Jesus' arrest. Look at 18 verse 3. That's where we'll pick up the action. So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees.

A detachment here means a cohort. It's anything upwards of 200 soldiers. Verse 3 says, they were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons. They're coming out against one peaceful man.

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

One unarmed man has flattened more than 200 armed soldiers and a mob with three simple words. The first P is power. Look at verse 3.

[3 : 23] You see, in they came after him. But by verse 4, it's Jesus asking the questions. Who is it you want? Jesus of Nazareth, they replied, I am he.

He says it twice, actually, again in verse 8. I am he. Which to Gentile ears like ours means nothing, but to Jewish ears is the name of God in 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, just in time to see him fall flat to the ground.

Verse 6. This is a lesson about power. This Jesus is nothing like the wimpy one we grew up with, in the paintings with the smile and the little lamb in his arms.

[4 : 20] He's more frightening than he's ever been. But this is not power as the world knows it, but a power that makes a best friend betrayer, an army and their weapons, and Satan himself fall flat on the ground with three simple words.

Have you ever seen power like that? He could crush them like this. Except we know where this story goes, don't we? How can this much power, in verse 12, be arrested and then bound and dragged off to the authorities?

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

So look at 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.

Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me? The second gift is a cup. You see, God the Father has given God the Son a people and a cup.

[5 : 33] People here is not just 11 apostles, but in John, it's anyone who believes in Jesus. If you put your trust in him, then that night in the garden, our lives are in his hands.

And he's very protective over our lives. There's another P, protective. See, the soldiers come for them. In verse 8, he says, take them, take me and let them go.

In verse 9, he has not lost one of the people the Father gave him. Jesus is very protective. And it's because of the second gift, the cup. That cup, it was mentioned in our first Old Testament reading, which Jan gave us.

It's on your screen now from Isaiah. It says, The imagery of that Isaiah passage is that God has given Jerusalem a cup to drink.

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

[6 : 47] And the picture is God forcing them to drain it down to the dregs, to drink it all. The only hope for God's people is if someone else drinks the cup for them.

And that's what happens in verse 11 in our passage. That is Jesus deciding to do this for us. Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?

In that verse, our lives are in his hands. You see, the people and the cup are related. Jesus is so protective over the people. He says, I will drink the cup for you.

I imagine Jesus' cup wasn't your average wine goblet, but a cup the size of a planet, as he tastes God's opinion at every sin the world has committed.

Jesus tastes our sins. He drinks them down until he's totally full of God's wrath. The Christian word for this is another P. It's called propitiation.

[7 : 50] Propitiation, it means atonement or anger substitute. See, the way Jesus protects the people is by propitiating God's wrath for us.

In verse 12 and verse 13, they arrest 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. Because through his suffering, he will protect the people, gift one, by drinking God's wrath for us, gift two.

This makes sense of our key verse, verse 14. This makes sense how it could be good if one man dies for the people. You see, there is another global pandemic in the world, and it's been going since the beginning.

It's more isolating and life-threatening. It has a 100% mortality. We are all facing God's wrath. We need someone to propitiate our sins.

[8 : 59] And the reason we're all affected or infected is because of Peter. So look at verse 15, if you can. You can see verse 15 right through to verse 26.

It's like a sandwich. And in the middle is Jesus, surrounded by two slices of Peter, if you will. And in John's Gospel, we've seen Peter quite often.

Peter is such a mixed bag, actually. So sometimes he's really good. At one time he said, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. That's great. Sometimes he tries to protect Jesus.

You shall never wash my feet, he said way back a few chapters ago. He tried to protect Jesus' dignity. In 18 verse 10, he drew a sword and started swinging away to protect Jesus, but 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. Verse 17. You aren't one of the man's disciples too, are you?

[10 : 06] She asked Peter. He replied, I am not. And look down at verse 25 again. So 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. 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. Do you remember a few weeks ago in his bravery, back in chapter 13, it's on the slide now. In his bravery, Peter said, Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you. Jesus replied, very truly, I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.

See, this is not about denying or standing up for Jesus in front of certain people. It's about following him. Why can't I follow you now? Said Peter bravely.

[11:16] 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 or bold, all disciples fail to follow Jesus as we should.

We are all Peters. It's a P word for us. You notice at the bottom of your screen, it says, It is good if one man dies for the Peters. We're all Peters.

We need someone to propitiate God's wrath for us. Maybe verse 14 is true. Maybe it is good that one man dies for the people.

But which one man is it going to be? Are you willing and able? Who can do this for us? And the answer is in the middle of that Peter sandwich.

Look at verse 19. Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. Annas, he's the high priest here.

[12:26] His son-in-law is Caiaphas. That's the other one in verse 24. There are 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.

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 protested. Bring in your witnesses if you've got them. Verse 23.

If I said something wrong, Jesus replied. Testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why do you strike me? See, Jesus is basically saying, I preached openly to the world, but here you guys have got me hidden away in your kangaroo court at nighttime.

John's point is that Jesus is the real priest. A real high priest. There's a P for you. A priest. What he was supposed to do was ensure that verse 14 happened, that an animal died for the people.

[13:37] He would make sacrifices to God. He atoned for the sin of the people. That's the job of a priest. But John uses a nifty bit of narration to show the only high priest we hear from is Jesus.

And you'll notice the way that sandwich works, that in Jesus' test, 19 to 24, it's sandwiched in the middle of Peter's. The point is that Peter fails his test in front of two servants, whereas Jesus didn't flinch against two high priests.

Jesus propitiates God's wrath for all the Peters who fail to follow him as he should. He's the only one qualified to offer up a sacrifice to God because he's the better priest.

Or he's the priest. PPP all the way through. There's one last piece to this pie, if I can use the piece, and it's all about dirty hands.

Dirty hands is our last bit. Look at verse 28. By verse 28, it's pretty clear now that the Jews, they can't trap Jesus.

[14:53] 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.

Pilate said, OK, 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 the right to execute him.

And so they got Pilate to do their dirty work. They wanted to have clean hands. So verse 28. 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 spotless lamb. Listen out for this repetition here.

Verse 29. What charges are you bringing against this man? Verse 35. What is it you have done?

Verse 38. Look over at 19 verse 4.

[16:03] I find no basis for a charge against him. And then 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 is?

His innocence screams out everywhere in this passage. He is the spotless lamb, the Passover lamb. Letter P. He's the opposite of everyone else in this story.

Judas betrays. Peter denies. The Jews condemn. And Pilate crucifies. Dirty hands are everywhere. They're all guilty. Passover is such a simple concept.

One creature dies in place of another. Barabbas in verse 39. Barabbas is like a mini illustration of Passover. Have a look at verse 39.

But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release the king of the Jews? They shouted back, no, not him. Give us Barabbas.

[17:07] Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising. Barabbas was an enemy of the state. He was guilty too. But at this Passover, his place is swapped with Jesus.

And actually Christians call this another P word. It's called penal substitution. It's on the screen now. It's pretty simple as well. One person takes the penalty for another.

19 verse 7. If you look at that 19 verse 7, it tells us that 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 cannot blaspheme his name. The penalty? You must die. And while this passage is full of lawbreakers, full of guilty people, Jesus is the only one on trial.

And even for us, we are guilty too. At a very basic level, God's law says to love him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

[18:12] And to love your neighbor as yourself. But have any of us done that? We're all guilty. All with dirty hands. God's law calls for our death too.

Our only hope is if we find a lamb spotless enough for all of us. Do you know where we can find one? Do you know someone like that?

Arguably the most famous verse in the Bible. It's on your screen now. John 3.16. God so loved the world that he sent his one and only son, a spotless lamb.

An innocent Jesus that whoever believes in him would not perish but have eternal life. You see, God's judgment only passes over if you sacrifice a lamb spotless enough.

Penal substitution only works if you find someone more innocent to swap with yourself. And if we try and tie all those pieces together, we asked at the start, what is so good about Jesus' death?

[19:22] How is John able to look at this crisis in Jesus' life and say, yeah, that is a good thing? Well, if we put all these Ps together, we get the answer.

Jesus is all powerful, but he allows himself to die. Because his death propitiates God's wrath. It protects the people.

He's able to offer up this sacrifice because he is the better priest. His sacrifice works because he is the Passover lamb, the spotless one.

The penal substitute for all the Peters in the world, even for you and for me. It is good for one man to die for the people, but only if that one man is Jesus.

Actually, we do sell him short by calling him one man. In this passage, many times, John calls him the king. And we're going to finish looking at some responses to this king as we see him in action.

[20:27] We can be like, or the first response, we can be like the Romans and Pilate. 19 verse 2 and 3, they mock the idea of Jesus being king.

A crown of thorns, purple robe, hail king of the Jews. They mock him as the king right before they slap him in the face. We can treat Jesus and his rule like a big joke.

We can laugh at other Christians who still live their lives according to his word. We can slap him in the face rather than worship him.

That's one response. The other response is to be like the Jews. The Jews, they love their religious trappings more than God. In 19 verse 14, Pilate said, Here is your king.

But the Jews shouted, Take him away. Take him away. Crucify him. You see, maybe your moral and religious performance is offended by the need of a savior.

[21:30] Maybe you think God's opinion of your life is like a cup full of sweet wine. And so you want to crucify Jesus. Take him away. You have no need for him in your life.

You can go back to being your own king. There are two responses. Mocking Jesus or taking him away. Killing him from your life. Or the third response is to be the people John wants us to be.

The third response has been bubbling away the entire length of the book. And it's now on your screen. It's actually the title slide in that yellow box. John writes these things.

These things that we're seeing in our passage so that we will believe that Jesus is the Christ. That is the king. The right response is to believe in Jesus.

To worship him and follow his rule. To see his death as good for us. Because we're all Peters. And even though we've got good hearts and brave words.

[22 : 37] None of us follow Jesus as we should. And so we need to trust in this king. Who atones for our sin. Who's spotless enough to appease God.

And who swaps our life for his. As a good king should. Let me pray. Lord Jesus we praise you.

The very best of kings. We praise you that you would swap your life for ours. We praise you that you are the only spotless one. We all have dirty hands.

We're all guilty. Compared to your innocence. And so Lord Jesus even in your power. We praise you that you would give it all up. To die for Peters like us.

Please would we follow you. Would we follow you according to our own brave words about you.

Would we follow your word for our lives. Would we submit to your rule as king.

[23 : 38] Would we do this all as a response. For the great thing you have done for us. We praise you in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen.