

Control Issue

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: 14 April 2019

Preacher: James Barnett

[0 : 00] Good morning. Have you ever been called a control freak? Or do you know someone that is?

You know, that person who has to be in control of every situation, whether it's at work, on the sporting field, or in a group assignment. You know, the person that says, if I want it done properly, I will just do it myself. Steve and I got back from the US just over a week ago, and I've always prided myself on the self-control I have over my body, particularly when it comes to sleep. Through having kids, I've taught myself how to sleep anywhere, and I can survive without too much sleep. But coming back from the US, jet lag hit me hard.

My whole body clock was shifted a couple of hours. So I would, you know, put Micah, our two-year-old, to sleep at about 7pm, and Alyssa would find me asleep on his floor. And then I'd wake up in the lounge, Alyssa would be standing over me. I thought I was in control. I thought I had control of my body, but my body had different ideas. And the consequence was that I was wide awake from 3am each morning. Don't worry, I'm over it now. Thank you for your concern. But feeling like we are in control can give us the false impression that we are safe, and we are secure, and everything is taken care of. We can think we are in control of our lives, and the decisions we make until reality hits.

It might be the fragility of our bodies. It might be how dependent we are upon other people. It might be how much we depend on the current job we have to have the life that we want.

And for Christians, we might say that we trust in God, and that He is the one who is in control of all things. He is the one who has saved us. But practically, we can hold on to control.

[2 : 11] It makes us think that we are safe and secure, because we all have trust issues. We don't trust that God has everything in control. So we stress and we get anxious about the future.

We don't trust that He'll keep being generous, and so we hoard, and we hold on to our things, our time and our money, instead of being radically generous. How do we go from hogging control to handing over control to God? Today, as we see Jesus in His last moments before He is crucified, Jesus will model handing over control to God. Let me pray, and we'll have a look at John 18 together.

Heavenly Father, we come before You, all of us having different control issues. Father, You have done so much for us. You have loved us incredibly through Jesus. And we ask that today we would be reminded about how amazing You are, and that You are a sovereign God in control of all things. Help us to place all of our trust in You. Amen. Over the last couple of weeks, Jesus has been speaking His last conversation before His crucifixion.

Last week in chapter 17, Jesus spent an extended period of time praying for Himself, for His disciples, and for us. And now Jesus is here in the Garden of Gethsemane. Have a look with me. Please have your Bibles open. John chapter 18. We'll start in verse 2.

[4 : 04] Now Judas, who betrayed Him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with His disciples. So Judas came to the Garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns, and weapons. John sets the scene for us. He doesn't specify that it's the Garden of Gethsemane, but that's where it is. The author, John, tells the story of Jesus' arrest slightly differently to the other Gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all focus on Jesus in the Garden, praying to God in anguish before His crucifixion. John doesn't focus on that. Matthew, Mark, and Luke also have the conversation between Judas and Jesus. Again, John doesn't focus on that. John focuses on the interaction between Jesus and those who've come to arrest Him, those who think they are in control. This group that has come out is a massive group. First, we have a detachment of soldiers. A detachment of Roman soldiers is a cohort, and this usually consisted of a thousand men.

Practically, they would usually only send out 600. So we have 600 men, soldiers armed, ready for battle, coming out to 12 men sitting in a garden in the middle of the night. The Romans would often use overwhelming force to ensure that if a mob formed, they could just crush it. So we've got hundreds of Roman soldiers ready to crush any opposition. Then there's the officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees.

This group would have included the temple police, the ones who would actually arrest Jesus, and they would ensure that the temple was protected overnight. And they come with torches and lanterns and weapons. They've come to arrest Jesus in the middle of the night, when Jesus has the least amount of followers to reduce the size of the mob that He's going to form. They've come expecting that Jesus would flee. And so they've come with torches and lanterns to hunt Him down. In their eyes, Jesus was a dangerous religious rebel who needed to be quashed. It's pretty clear who they think is in control.

They've got the army. They've got overwhelming force to crush any resistance. They've got the tools to hunt down Jesus. And so the temple police, the soldiers, the religious leaders, they've come full of swagger. They're going to hunt Jesus. They're going to suppress this rebellion. But Jesus, He knows what is going to happen. And John records a fascinating interaction between this giant army and this lone man. They've come to arrest Him in full force. But it's Jesus who leads the investigation and the arrest. He is the one that asks the questions. Have a look at verse 4.

Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to Him, went out and asked them, Who is it you want? Jesus of Nazareth, they replied. I am He, Jesus said. And Judas, the traitor, was standing there with them. When Jesus said, I am He, they drew back and fell to the ground.

Jesus responds to their question with the divine I am. It's the words that God used to Moses to identify Himself. He's not just saying, I'm the guy you're looking for. He is identifying with God.

[7 : 59] He's saying, I am God. And this giant army that they've brought, who thought they were in control of the situation, is flawed. They literally fall to the floor before Jesus. Now, we don't know exactly what's going on here. We don't know why they've fallen to the floor. We don't know whether they've seen a glimpse of Jesus' true glory. Are they just responding to Jesus calling Himself God?

It could have been a moment of realization about what they have come to do. These people who have heard the rumors that Jesus healed the sick, He raised the dead, He cast out demons, He preached with authority unlike anyone else, and they are here to arrest Him?

It stops them in their tracks. Those who have come with power and might and control are humbled before the Lord of the universe.

This delegation representing the world comes forward to arrest Jesus, and Jesus offers Himself. And for one brief moment, it is like the world recognizes who He is and what they are about to do. But it is only for a moment. Jesus continues to lead this investigation. Again, He asks them, Who is it you want? Oh, Jesus of Nazareth, they said.

[9 : 29] Jesus answered, I told you that I am He. If you were looking for me, let these men go. This happens so that the words He had spoken would be fulfilled.

I have not lost one of those you gave me. Jesus focuses all the attention on Himself. Who are you here to arrest? It's me. Well, come on then.

Come and get me. Arrest me. Leave these disciples here. Just take me. But Peter, one of the eleven disciples remaining, couldn't let them take Jesus so easily, so he pulls out a sword, cuts off the ear of the high priest's servant, and verse 11, Jesus commanded Peter, Put your sword away. Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me? Jesus' response is, it's not about fighting for control. Jesus knows what is happening.

It seems that in this arrest, Jesus is the one who is in control. He is the one that is asking all the questions. The army is just there. He is leading the investigation.

[10 : 33] But Jesus reveals, He is not even the one who is in control. God the Father is the one who is in control. Jesus is in obedience to Him.

Jesus is the one who will drink the cup the Father has given Him. And so Jesus is arrested. There is a sham of a trial that happens, and Jesus is crucified.

It seemed like Jesus was in control, but He showed that He does not have control issues. He handed over control to God, and followed Him in full obedience, knowing what was going to happen.

And so from this arrest, we see three things about Jesus and control. So first of all, Jesus lets God be in control. Jesus knew what was going to happen.

And the cross that He was going to, and He lets God be in control. Obeying God, and letting Him be in control, gives Jesus the confidence, and ability to lead this investigation and arrest.

[11:43] He goes out into the garden on His own, and faces down this daunting army. When faced with a situation like this, when it seems like the enemy is in control, the fight or flight response could have set in.

You know the response that He could have fought like Peter? Not with a single sword, but Jesus could have called down an army to crush this 600 strong army in opposition.

If He felt the need to control the situation, He could have done that. He could have fled. He could have responded through fear. And the army came ready for Him to do that.

But He just does something that is so different. Knowing God is in control, knowing God is sovereign, and knowing that what God plans happens, Jesus acts with full confidence in God, and walks out and says, here I am.

Arrest me. He is willing to be arrested so that He can drink the cup of wrath that God has for Him. The wrath that all of us deserve.

[12:53] The second thing we're reminded about, about Jesus here, is that Jesus sacrifices for those He loves. Even here, as He is being arrested, Jesus loves His followers.

I imagine this scene, you've got the army on one side, you've got the garden, and you've got Jesus coming out of the garden. And He's shooing the disciples behind Him.

You know, I've got this, like someone with little children who are trying to escape out the front door and run on the road. Jesus is defending His sheep. Get back, get back.

Take me. Take me. Let them live. And really, it's a microcosm of what He offers us. We are loved by Jesus. And He puts Himself in our place.

And He willingly suffers and dies for us to have life. It's a simple act of care for His disciples, but it shows His sacrificial love, even in His arrest.

[13:57] He is soon to go to the cross and suffer and sacrifice for all the nations. But for these 11 men, He says, don't take them. I'm the one you want. The third thing we see about Jesus and control is that He obeys God in the garden.

Unlike Adam and Eve that John read for us, Jesus obeys God in the garden. One of my favorite parts of this book of John that we've been reading is that John has all of these references to the garden.

It's like they're Easter eggs in the story. It appears that John has deliberately written his book to remind us of Genesis. You only have to think of the very start of the book of John.

Both Genesis and John start with, in the beginning. And when John writes it, he just adds Jesus more clearly into the creation account.

This story here is reminiscent of the Garden of Eden. In one sense, you've got Adam and Eve. They were perfect. And they are tempted and they sin.

[15:12] And when they do, they run and they hide and they're fearful of God and God goes searching for them and He finds them. But Jesus totally flips this.

Here Jesus is and He is in a different garden. And there is temptation around Him. He has a choice. Will Jesus sin like Adam and Eve?

Will He flee after He sins like Adam and Eve? Or will He obey God and stand out in the open? Jesus isn't fearful.

He doesn't blame anyone else like Adam and Eve. He says, I am. I'm Jesus. I'm the one you're looking for. And here it's not God searching for the people.

It is God who comes out to the people who are searching for Him. Jesus is the one who comes out and says, here I am. There is no searching. Jesus comes out. He turns this garden scene all on its head.

[16:17] He is preparing to fix all the problems that began on the day when sin entered into the world in that garden. He is obeying God in the garden when Adam and Eve didn't.

He is making it so that God's garden can spread once again to not just be a garden but to be a city that we will all dwell in.

So when it comes to Jesus and the issue of control He hands His control over to God. He willingly self-sacrifices and He obeys in the garden so that we can come to the city.

We learn some things about us and control as well. It helps us to understand ourselves. The first thing that we learn about us and people generally is that it's possible to acknowledge Jesus without following Him.

It's possible to acknowledge Jesus without following Him. We saw the army's response to Jesus' declaration that He was God. They fell to their feet when He identified as God but it didn't last long. [17:34] It was long enough to stop the army in their tracks before going ahead and arresting Him. Is it possible that we can say Jesus is Lord without actually following Him as Lord?

Jesus warns against this in Matthew 7. Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven. But only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. There can be a moment of acknowledgement that Jesus is Lord but that does not equal faith. We are people that have stopped for one moment in our lives and said that Jesus is Lord instead of following Him with our whole lives.

The second thing we learn about ourselves is that we are like those eleven that Jesus sacrificed Himself for. Can you imagine what it would have been like in that moment, in that night, in the middle of prayer, in the garden, and a six, seven hundred strong army comes to arrest you and hunt you down.

But Jesus stands in the way and allows you to flee, to escape, to have life. Take me instead. In a very real way, that is who we are.

[19:00] We are the ones who, Jesus has said no to an army. It's not the army, but it's the wrath of God. God has said to the wrath of God, I have paid for these.

I was sacrificed for these little ones here at St. Paul's Chatswood. I sacrificed myself for you. I drank the cup of wrath that God asked me to drink to take your place.

Now you can call God Father. We are not in control, but we need our Jesus to sacrifice himself to take our place.

So we've seen how Jesus trusted God with sovereign, but the reality is we struggle and we fight for control. And yet, it was us that Jesus came and sacrificed himself for.

God is the one who is in control. Jesus showed we can trust him. So I want to encourage us to hand control over to God in three ways. First of all, by admitting that we are not in control.

[20:09] Second, being aware of what we try to control and being aware of why we try to control things. So first of all, we need to admit that we are not in control.

I think it's really easy for us in life to assume that we are in control and we have the place we are in because of us. I have this job because of our, I have worked hard and I've saved this money and I am in this position because of my hard work and my effort.

But the reality is we don't have as much control over these factors as we think. God is the one who has blessed us with health so that we can work.

He is the one who has uniquely gifted us. He is the one who is sovereign over whatever situation we are in. If we have a job, it's because of God's sovereign grace to us.

If we are able to study at school or TAFE or uni, it is because of God's sovereign grace. The first thing that we need to do is we need to admit that we are not in control and that it's only God who is in control of all things.

[21:27] The second is to be aware of what we try and control. All of us have different control issues. I'm not sure what you try and control particularly.

For some of us, it might be an issue with money. We really hoard our finances. We don't trust God that He will continue to provide and so we hoard. For some, it might be that we are really concerned about the image we present.

When Steve and I were in the US, we put up a number of Facebook photos showing what we were doing. I'm not sure if you saw any of those but I've had people say, it looks like you had a really great time over there and it was a wonderful time but we all have control issues and we do this with Facebook and the way we present ourselves.

Steve and I didn't post photos of the night we got into a particular city at 12am and it was minus 2 outside and there was bags under our eyes.

Maybe I'll post that photo next time. Fear and anxiety over the way people view us leads to a control issue.

[22:41] To present a fake image. Jesus had no issue being arrested by this giant mob and hung on a tree for us.

He wasn't worried about how it looked. Let me encourage all of us to embrace the value of humble authenticity. Not feeling the need to present a fake controlled image that everything is okay but with humility show our true face.

Trusting that God loves us and that you know what at church our brothers and sisters will love us for who we really are and God is working to change us as well.

So we need to be aware of what we try to control and what we want to control reveals something about us as people. The things we fight to hold on to shows something about our hearts.

I was talking to someone recently about an injury they had. She had fallen and injured her shoulder and she couldn't clean her house as well as she wanted and you know this might seem like a joy for those who were always cleaning well I can't clean that's alright but for her it brought up issues for when she was younger when her family situation wasn't ideal.

[24 : 11] She couldn't control a lot about life around her but she could control her room she could keep that clean and so it became immaculately clean and when she got a house it became immaculately clean I have never seen someone stoop down and pick up so much fluff off the ground but now because she was injured she couldn't clean as much and this was causing her grief the house was clean let me tell you this house was clean you wouldn't even realize there was an issue but she had an issue of control she felt at peace and in control of her life because her house looked a certain way but even if the house is clean that is that is not peace that is not security you can have a clean house and you can have relationships that are falling apart you can have no relationship with God but that injury that she got helped her to understand where her need for control over the house came from the cleanliness of the house had become an idol that would give a false sense of security what are the things that you are holding very tightly to maybe they don't reveal deep problems from your childhood like this friend maybe they point to how you are not trusting God that he is in control of all things none of us feel like we are out of control none of us like to feel like we don't have control over the situation and we fight and struggle even just to have that false sense of security

Jesus as we've seen in John 18 knew what was going to happen and he handed control over to God we are not safe when we feel we are in control we are safe because we have a God who is sovereign over all things and he loves to care for us let me pray for us dear heavenly father thank you that you have reminded us from your word today that you are the one that is in control that not even Jesus was in control of what was happening but that he handed control over to you Lord father we ask that we would trust you that we would trust you with every moment of our days God help us to consider our lives and consider the things that are very important to us and we must hold tightly to

Lord father help us to consider our hearts before you and the things that give us a false sense of security father help us to hand those over to you knowing that it is only you that are in control and that you love us and that you take care of us and that you will send Jesus back to bring us to be with you we ask all this in your son's name amen