

That You May Believe in the Cross, Part 1

John 18:1-11

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, November 4, 2018

We're back in the Gospel of John this morning, which we've been in for the past several months now, since the month of June. And we're going to finish it up in December. We're going to finish it up by the end of the year, which means we're moving pretty quickly. That doesn't sound very fast, but John has 21 chapters in it. It's one of the longest books in the New Testament and we're going to finish it in about six months. So, that's moving pretty quick. And we're doing this so you can see the big picture of the books, so you can get the big idea and see how the pieces fit. And I'll say more about that in a minute.

But for now, to get us started this morning, it's been said that Jesus' life was unique in history because it was synonymous with His death. And what I mean by that is when you think of Jesus, you think of His death. You think of how He died. No one else has that distinction. At least, not in the same way. There's been other famous people who have died in a violent way. For instance, John F. Kennedy was assassinated and Marie Antoinette was beheaded. Cleopatra was poisoned. Julius Caesar was stabbed to death. But we don't refer to Caesar's death as the Stabbing. We don't speak of it that way. And we don't refer to Cleopatra's death as the Poisoning, but we refer to Jesus' death as what? The Cross, not a cross – the Cross, as if there were no other cross in history. Thousands of people died on crosses in the first couple of centuries. It was a very common way to die. But Jesus' death is the only one that is called the Cross.

You guys think of how unusual it is to sing about a Man's death? You just sang about a Man's death. And after this sermon, you're going to celebrate it with the Lord's Supper and you're going to sing again about His death. How strange is that? Jesus' death is the only one in human history that has that impact. And it's even more significant when you consider how painful crucifixion was.

In His book “The Life of Christ”, the scholar Frederick Farrar said that,

A death by crucifixion was horrible beyond belief - dizziness, cramps, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, fever, shame, and prolonged agony were all experienced without the relief of unconsciousness ...

The unnatural position of the cross made it impossible to pass out. The victim experienced everything. He missed nothing ...

One thing is clear, the First Century executions were not like modern ones, for they did not see a quick and painless death as the goal. On the contrary, they wanted you to die as slowly and gradually and horribly as possible and to be humiliated in the process.

It is important to understand this, for it helps us realize what Jesus went through as He suffered and died on the cross.

You know, you would think with a life like Jesus' life, you would remember Him for something else, right? You would remember Him for His miracles. You would remember Him for His teaching. We remember Him for the way that He died.

I mean, if you read through the New Testament, you see over and over and over again, the authors tell us to remember the cross. "Don't forget the cross." They put it at the forefront of everything. So, for instance, in the first Christian sermon in Acts 2:36, the first recorded Christian sermon, the Apostle Peter tells the crowd at Pentecost, he says, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ - this Jesus whom you crucified." Peter says, "Jesus was crucified. Don't forget that. Make no mistake about that." As a matter of fact, he says it to a crowd in Jerusalem, something like 40 or 50 days after it happened. Peter could have said, "If you don't believe me, I'll take you to the spot where He did it. It's right up the street from here."

Later in Acts 4:10 (this is interesting), he tells the high priest who actually was responsible, who actually did crucify Jesus, he said, "Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazarene, whom you crucified... (he could've pointed at the high priest when he said that) ... that this man stands before you in good health." Peter says, "I healed this man by the power of the crucified Jesus." And you see that over and over and over again in the New Testament.

As a matter of fact, by the time you get to the end of it, in the book of Revelation 5:9, they're actually singing about it. I just told you that we were singing about the cross, how unusual that is. But we do that because they're doing it now in heaven. Revelation 5:9 says, "Worthy are You, Jesus, to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain." Even in heaven, they're singing about the death of Jesus Christ. And they're doing that because it's the only thing that can save us from our sins. It's the only thing that can bring us into heaven.

You're not going to get in by your good works, you're not going to get in by your good deeds, you're not going to get in by your race, your education, your standing in society - you're going to get in through the cross. And that's it.

During the Middle Ages, there was a popular story about Martin of Tours - the man Martin Luther was named after. And it went like this. It said Satan once appeared to Martin dressed up like Jesus to trick him and lead him astray. But when he saw him, Martin noticed something was missing. And he said, "Lord, where are the nail prints in your hands because those are the only thing that saves us?" At which point, the devil went away. He's right. That's the only thing that saves us.

We can say it this way, if someone ask you, "When were you saved?" You know what you should say? You should say, "2,000 years ago at the Cross." I've counselled people who doubt their salvation because they say they're too sinful and they're too wicked and too evil to go to heaven. And I have to remind them that their salvation is not based on what they do in this life, salvation is based on what someone else did 2,000 years ago, and they weren't there. So, you don't need to doubt your salvation. It is secure, it is settled. It was taken care of at the cross.

That brings us to John chapter 18. Because John 18 tells us what happens right before the cross. It tells us what happened 2,000 years ago to build up to that. And just to set the stage for this, for this chapter, if you're joining us for the first time this morning, we're in a series on the Gospel of John called the "That You May Believe" series. Because John says that he wrote this book so that you may believe. In John 20:30-31, he says, "Therefore many other signs Jesus performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ." "That's why I wrote this book," John says. "That's why it's in the Bible. I want you to believe and be saved."

As matter of fact, that word "believe" occurs 96 times in this book. It's more than four times per chapter. And it's the word *pisteuo*, which means "to be convinced of something". We often use the word "believe" for motivational purposes and we say, "I believe I can do this. I believe I can get the job or make the team or make an A on the test." John doesn't use it that way. John uses it to mean, "I believe this is true." When I first moved to British Columbia, everybody told me how beautiful Vancouver was. But all I had seen was the drive to the airport. So, I said, "I don't believe you. This is a dump." I thought they were pulling my leg until my wife and I went to Stanley Park and I saw all the stuff around the waterfront. Right? And then we went downtown and saw the beautiful buildings and I said, "Okay, I believe you now because I'm convinced." That's the meaning of this word. John wants you to be convinced that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. He wants you to believe that the cross and the cross alone saved you.

He does this by walking you through several events in the life of Christ. And we've been going through this for the past several months, like His turning water into wine and feeding the 5,000. Those are some events that he talks about. If you want to go online and look up some of those sermons, if you missed them, you can do that. He mentioned some amazing statements Jesus makes in this Gospel, like, "I am the bread of life" and "I am the light of the world." That's how the book starts off in chapters 1 through 12, which we've looked at before.

Then the rest of the book from chapters 13 onwards talks about one event, one thing - the cross. Everything builds up to that from 13 onwards. As a matter of fact, the first half of John covers 33 years of Jesus' life, the last half covers one day. One 24-hour period of time. In which the disciples and Jesus had the Lord's Supper. They had their final meal together, and then He goes off to be crucified. That's the breakdown of the Gospel of John.

You would think if you're writing the story of Jesus' life (you guys have been curious about this), what was He like as a teenager? Right? I want to know what a sinless teenager looks like in detail. Spell it out for me, right? Tell me please. What did a sinless son look like? Like son, lowercase "S", right? What would that even be like? John doesn't get into that. He spends the majority of His time talking about the cross.

Chapter 13:1 says that they had this meal in the upper room, in a large anonymous house in Jerusalem. Then in chapter 14:31 (this is just all by way of building up to our chapter), Jesus says, "Get up, let us go from here," implying that they left the upper room. As He said this, they went out into the streets of Jerusalem toward the Mount of Olives, heading east, toward the rising sun. The sun rises in the east, sets in the west. Which would have been an interesting journey for Jesus. It would have been very symbolic.

If you look in chapter 18:1, it tells us about this journey that Jesus made. It says, “When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, in which He entered with His disciples.” That's one of those things you read in the Bible and you may not give it much attention. But the ravine of the Kidron is a steep valley with a brook at the bottom that separates the city of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. You had to walk across the brook to get to the mountain. It's separated two things. The brook began north of Jerusalem. It passed the Temple Mount, passed the Mount of Olives, and then it made its way into the Dead Sea. It was about 20 miles long. And because it passed the temple, on this night, on the night of the Passover, it would literally be red with the blood of all the lambs that were slain. It would be a red river that Jesus was walking across.

It's been estimated that something like 256,000 lambs could be slain at a single Passover Feast. 256,000, and I have to tell you that's a lot of blood. And their bodies would be thrown into the Valley of Gehenna in front of the temple and burned. And their blood would flow into the Kidron brook out the back. The altar actually had several channels in it, several rivets down the side, so the blood could go out of the temple, down the hill and wash away into the Kidron brook. Some have said at this time of year, this would look more like a sewer than a brook. It would look like a cesspool of death. But the point is that Jesus, as He's going to the cross, as He's getting ready to die, He crosses over that brook and He's reminded of what He's about to do. He's about to die as the ultimate Passover Lamb. He's about to die for the sins of the world, and He sees the results of that on His way there.

Verse 1 also says, “He went forth ...” I'll give another point on that I was learning this week. You remember the story of Mary and Martha and Lazarus with Jesus and the friendship that they had, the comradery they had with Him? The Mount of Olives was on the way to their house. Bethany was two miles from Jerusalem. You go through the Mount of Olives (or that area) and you go to their house. Jesus also might've thought about the friendship He had with them and about His upcoming death as well. It's a very symbolic trip.

Verse 1 also says, “He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden”. The other Gospels call that the “Garden of Gethsemane”. The word *gethsemane* means “oil press” in Greek. So, it was a place where they made olive oil. When you're in Jerusalem, it's a very interesting place to eat, because they eat the same thing for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. If you go have breakfast, you're going to have salad and you're going to have olives. I don't recommend that for breakfast personally, but they are delicious olives because they're grown right there. They pick them off the trees and bring them right in. And many of the Jews in Jerusalem had their own personal gardens up on the mountain with a gate and a key for privacy. And in this one, Jesus apparently knew the owner. And on this night, He went there to pray and to encourage the disciples.

And if you remember the story, they fell asleep on Him, right? He goes away, He prays, He sweats drops of blood out of His stress and agony over what He was about to experience. And while He was going through all of that, the disciples pass out. One commentator said they dozed off during the prayer meeting. I'm sure none of you have ever done that - falling asleep in the prayer meeting. That's what they did. And when they woke up, Judas came to betray Him, which is what we're going to talk about this morning.

We're going to do things a little bit differently in the last couple of chapters of the Gospel of John because there's so much in here. I don't want us to miss anything. I don't want us to get lost in the details. We've been moving at a fast pace, but I want to slow down here at the end. And what I want to do is talk about the events that happen piece by piece. And so, this morning, we're going to talk about the Lord's arrest; the capture and betrayal of Jesus Christ.

So, if you're taking notes in John 18 and the first 11 verses, we're going to look at three stages to the arrest of Jesus. It's a simple outline; pretty easy to walk through. Three stages in the arrest of Jesus. This whole thing comes to us in stages. It kind of builds on itself like a volcano. Because Jesus saw it coming and the disciples didn't. You can imagine waking up in the middle of the night and seeing your Lord being betrayed by one of His closest followers. What would you do, right? They were completely caught off guard here, and their response, by the time you get to the end of this, is volcanic. I mean, they just explode. And we'll talk about that here in a second.

But for now, let's look at three stages to this arrest. The first stage is the arrival of Judas. The story begins with the arrival of Judas, the arrival of the traitor. I've told you before that none of you name your dogs or your fish or your cats, Judas. Because the name is synonymous with treachery, right? It's synonymous with betrayal. And that's what you see here. Judas apparently knew where they were staying. He knew where to find them in the garden. Other Gospels say, it was Jesus' habit to go there regularly. So, he expected to find Him there. He may have even had a key, although we don't know that he did.

But if you look in verses 1 through 3, here's what Judas does. It says,

1 When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, in which He entered with His disciples. 2 Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples. 3 Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.

Judas is a character we've seen a couple of times in the Gospel of John. As a matter of fact, it might interest you to know that he was not the only disciple named Judas. There were two Judases. This one is Judas Iscariot, named after his father. He first appears in John 12 where Mary anoints Jesus' head with perfume and she wipes His feet with her hair. And Judas rebukes her for that. Do you guys remember that story?

I told you how awkward it would be to watch that. It probably was very quiet in the room after that. And the first thing that breaks the silence is Judas' scornful remark. He says, "Why was this perfume not sold for 300 Denarii and given to the poor?" Imagine if you're Mary and that's the first thing anybody says after you do this. But that's the kind of guy Judas was. John says, he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief. And as he had the moneybox, he used to pilfer what was put into it. So, that's our first introduction to Judas in this Gospel. He's a thief, and he pilfered the moneybox. He stole the disciples' money and he makes fun of Mary's gift. He's a pretty rotten apple already in the Gospel of John.

We see him again in chapter 13 at the last supper. And there it gets even worse, for Jesus says, “The one I share bread with is the one who will betray Me. So, when Judas had shared bread with Jesus and dipped it in the cup, Satan entered into him.” So, now, he's a traitor and he's possessed by the devil. Now he's a liar and Satan is in him. I told you before, the devil is not an omnipresent being, which means he can't be everywhere at once. God can do that, but the devil can't. Which means that you had to be a pretty bad person to have this honour. I didn't do a study on this, but this may be the only person in Scripture that the devil entered into like this.

John doesn't talk about this, but the other Gospels talk about it: he had sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. That's the price of a slave in the Old Testament. It's not a lot of money. And he sold Him to His enemies. And as a result of that ... oh, by the way, when Jesus washed the disciples' feet, He washed Judas' feet as well. And none of that softened this guy's heart. Therefore, the devil entered into him. After that encounter, John says, Judas leaves the upper room. He goes to Jesus' enemies at an undisclosed location and he brings them to the Garden of Gethsemane.

And this is interesting. Verse 3 says, “When he received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees.” And just a quick note on that. A Roman cohort, some of your translations say “a band of soldiers” or “a company”, something like that. It's the word *speira* in Greek, which refers to a detachment of 600 men; 600 armed men in the middle of the night. Now, we don't know if Judas brought all of them, but verse 12 says that they had their commander with them. And there would be no reason to bring a commander in the middle of the night if he didn't bring all of them, or at least a large, large number of them.

Verse 3 also, mentions the officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees. That's a reference to the temple guards that took care of the temple during the Passover. They were kind of like the security detail. With hundreds of thousands of people coming to Jerusalem for the Passover, going through the temple, money being exchanged, all that kind of stuff, religious emotions flaring up, these guys were responsible for keeping peace. And John doesn't say how many of them there were either, but if there were 600 Romans there, the chief priests and Pharisees would have at least sent a couple of hundred officers to balance that. So, this crowd could have been close to a thousand men on the night of Jesus' arrest.

Again, some sources say the city of Jerusalem would double or triple in size during a feast day. So, getting an extra thousand soldiers is not that impressive, really - not that unusual. A thousand armed soldiers against one unarmed carpenter and His fishermen - this is unbelievable betrayal here. This is as nasty as it gets. And it says that they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. In other words, they came armed to the teeth. They came loaded for bear. In their defence, they had seen Jesus clean out the temple the week before with nothing but a whip. Hundreds of thousands of people giving worship, He cleaned the whole thing out. So, they knew what He was capable of. They had a right to be afraid, but this was still despicable. He brings an army of soldiers against Jesus.

Which leads me to say this, you can be religious for all sorts of reasons, amen? You can follow Jesus for all kinds of reasons, good, bad, all in between. That's what Judas did here. If you remember, he followed Jesus for three years. He went with Him everywhere. He did everything the disciples did. As a matter of fact, they trusted him so much, they gave him the moneybox.

While all along he was in league with the devil. Another way to say that, is you can't always judge a book by its cover. You can't always tell what's going on in the inside of someone. You have to go deeper than just what's on the surface.

To highlight this, Charles Swindoll said,

If you want to mess up your children, here's what you need to do. You need to rear them in a legalistic system of religion where appearance is more important than sincerity. Fake your faith, sneak around and pretend you're something you're not. Give them a list of do's and don'ts, but don't practice them yourself, and never own up to it. Apologize for nothing. Repent for nothing, act one way, but live in other. Do that and you will mess up your children for life. Do that and you will ruin them.

And we might add, you'll ruin yourself as well. Judas was a perfect example of this. He was doing something right on the outside because nobody suspected him. And it destroyed him in the end. You don't want to be that way this morning. You know, John Wesley had an interesting testimony in this because he said that he entered the ministry as an unconverted man. And after several years doing ministry in Georgia, he came out of it and he said, "I'm here to save the lost, but who will save me?" If Judas had an ounce of humility, he would have said that, but he didn't.

It leads me to ask you this question, why did you come to church today? Why are you here? Do you come because you love God and because you believe in Him, like we talked about? Or do you do it to keep up a list of do's and don'ts? You know, "I got to get here for church. I can't be late. I got to check this and check that off my good works chart." Do you come here because your sins are forgiven in Christ or do you come for something else? I say that to remind you, this is the perspective of Judas. He was just faking it. And I want to encourage you not to do that this morning. And I'd like to say more about that, but let's just move onto the next stage in the arrest of Jesus.

That is, the answer of Jesus. We see the arrival of Judas in verses 1 through 3 and how ridiculous it was to bring a thousand armed guards to arrest one single man. Now, let's look at the answer of Jesus to this. You would think this would have shocked Him, right? I mean, a thousand men showing up in the middle of the night to a private garden to arrest you, a thousand armed men - I'm sure they looked very intimidating. It would have been a surprise. But that's not what you see. If you look in verse 4, it's a very different reaction than what you would expect. It says, "So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him (in other words, He walked into it on purpose), went forth and said to them, 'Whom do you seek?'"

You know, that's an interesting verse there because it tells us a couple things. For one thing, it tells us that Jesus was ready for this. Acts 2:23 says, "Jesus was delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God." That's what this says. This was predetermined and foreknown. Jesus saw it coming. And this also means (and this is important) that He wasn't running away. If you look in verse 3 again, just above this, it says the crowd was carrying lanterns and torches.

It's actually pretty insightful because the Passover occurred at full moon. It occurred at the brightest time of the year. So, there's no need for lanterns and torches. There's no need for extra light unless you think the guy's going to run for it. If you think he's going to escape through the gardens and trees up on the Mount of Olives and you're going to have to chase Him, that's why you brought all this. And Jesus shows them right here that they're wrong. As a matter of fact, in John's account, Jesus is the first one to say anything. He's not running, He's not hiding. It says in verse 4, "So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, 'Whom do you seek?' And they answered Him, 'Jesus the Nazarene.' So He said to them, 'I am He.' And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them."

We'll stop there for just a moment. If you notice that in verse 5, it says, "Judas was standing there." That's kind of interesting. That means he didn't leave after he brought the crowd. He didn't disappear into the shadows. The guy had no shame whatsoever. You think if you did something despicable like this, you might do it and then kind of run off a little bit, hide behind some big dudes or whatever with clubs or something.

Mark 14:45 says that he kissed Jesus and called Him "Rabbi". We don't do this today. I'm kind of grateful for this. But in the first century ... the last time I said that, someone came up and smacked me on the cheek - one of the dear brothers in the church. But in the first century, you'd kiss someone as a token of respect and affection. It's kind of like a handshake back then. And you would call them "Rabbi" as a sign of deep respect. Rabbi is a term for teacher. Another way of saying professor or a doctor or something like that, Rabbi. Judas comes to Him and he calls Him "Rabbi", kisses Him on the cheek and then just stands there like a devil, waiting to see what Jesus is going to do. You guys ever been in a fight before and someone gets in your face and they won't back off? That's what this would look like. If you notice verse 6, this is my favourite part of the whole story. It says, "When Jesus said to them, 'I am He,' they drew back and fell to the ground."

If you remember your Bible history, when Moses asked God, "What is Your name?", the Lord said, "I am He," or "I am who I say I am." There're different ways to translate that. That's actually called the *tetragrammaton* in Greek, which means "the four letters". It's the four letters of God's name. It's hard to pronounce. Some pronounce it Yahweh, some pronounce it Jehovah. But in English it is "I am He." It's this expression - *ego eimi* in Greek. So what Jesus says here is, "I am God, I am Yahweh, I'm the Lord of heaven and earth." And then He shows it by doing what? He throws them on the ground, all 1,000 of them. Judas is there in His face, instigating Him, and the next second, he's on the ground. No punches are thrown. (I would personally prefer to punch him, probably.) No violence is used. They just fall flat on the ground. They come armed to the teeth, they come ready for war and the fight's over before it's even begun. You don't arrest God on your feet, you do it on your knees. You do it with your face to the ground. You do it grovelling.

I say this to remind you, and this is important of who our Saviour is, our Saviour is the Lord of heaven and earth, amen? Our Saviour is the God of all creation. He is fully capable of this. He's fully capable of throwing the devil on the ground. He is capable of putting Satan in the dust. From a human perspective, you look at this and you think it's over, right? I mean, Satan's gotten

the best of Him. He snuck up on Him, He's caught Him unawares, and then Jesus does this. He flattens them like a pancake.

I meet people all the time, I meet Christians who are scared of all the evil they see in the world around them. They're paranoid. I've counselled some brothers and sisters, "Stop watching the news until you can handle it in a less anxious manner. It's driving you crazy." But they see Judases everywhere. They see deceit and hypocrisy on every corner and they freak out about it and they become afraid because they forget that Jesus is sovereign over it. They forget that He's in control. Or you meet other Christians who are angry about it. I mean, they're ready to pick up arms and fight. They yell at the TV, they holler at it because they forget this. Listen, this was the most devilish thing ever done. It was the most evil act in human history. This was the first time in history that a completely pure, true, innocent Man was arrested. And in fact, the devil himself was there, literally. He was standing in front of Jesus. Remember, he possessed Judas. And what happens to the devil? He gets knocked over before anything is even done. Because Jesus is stronger than that. He's sovereign. Listen friends, if the Lord can defeat the devil then, He can do it now, amen? If He could defeat the devil in the first century in circumstances like this, He could do it now. So, you don't need to be afraid. You need to holler and shout at the TV. Give the TV a rest, it's okay.

Charles Spurgeon said, "The preaching of Christ is the whip that flogs the devil." Don't you like that? "It's a thunderbolt from heaven which makes all of hell shake and fall to the ground." This is the flogging of the devil here. Look, Jesus is going to the cross, He's going to be flogged and beaten and bruised and all those things. But it starts off like this, to remind you of who's in control. This was a willing death. This was a willing sacrifice. Nobody made Him do anything He didn't want to do. As a matter of fact, even when He died, He said, "Father into Your hands, I commit My Spirit." In other words, He said when He was going to die.

It's been said that all the darkness in the world can't blow out one single candle. It can't take away the light. And all the darkness in hell can't stop our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

That leads us to one more stage to the arrest of Jesus. You know, just to go over this, the story begins with the arrival of Judas. He shows up with a Roman cohort and 1,000 soldiers in the middle of the night. I've never stood in front of 1,000 soldiers. I don't know about you guys. I got to perform a military funeral at one time and there was about 20 or 30 there, and they did the gun salute and that scared me, seven of them - a thousand here. Then we see the Lord's reaction to this. That's the second stage to the arrest. Jesus says, "I am He" and they, they fall to the ground. They topple over like bowling pins. And you read that, it's interesting, you kind of wonder who's arresting who here. Who's putting who on trial?

But it leads to a final stage to this arrest and a final step and that is this: it's the disciples' abandonment. We see Judas' arrival, Jesus' answer, and finally we see the disciples' abandonment. They all abandoned Jesus here. That's how the story ends. They tuck tail and run. You would think they're kind of in the shadows in this story. You would think that after what they just saw, they would stay with Him to the end, right? I mean, a Man who could do this, what are you afraid of? Afraid of dying? Well, He raised Lazarus from the dead. What's to worry about? You're afraid of the soldiers? Jesus just knocked them over. What's the problem?

You would also think in a story like this, that after what just happened, the soldiers would say, "I'm done, right? Leave it alone. I'll go arrest somebody else. Leave this guy alone, He's creepy," right? "He's fearsome." But you don't see that. The soldiers stay with Jesus and the disciples leave. And if you look in verses 7 through 9 it says

Therefore He again asked them, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene." Jesus answered, "I told you I am He; so if you seek Me, let these go their way," and He said this to fulfill the word which He spoke, "Of those whom you have given Me I lost not one."

Jesus repeats this question, "Whom do you seek?" twice; once before they fall down, and once after they've gotten up to remind them that the soldiers are not there for the disciples, they're there for Him. This was their getaway plan. He was letting them get away. Verse 8 says, "Let them go their way." This Man's about to be crucified. He's about to be murdered and He's worried about His own.

Which is really important because if the disciples, if you think about this, if the disciples would have been arrested here, that would be the end of them. If they would have gone with Him to trial and they would have been beaten and flogged and crucified, they would've left the faith and never come back. They weren't strong enough for this, and He knew that. So, He lets them go. Verse 9 says, "This was done to fulfill the word which He spoke, 'Of those whom you have given Me I lost not one.'" There're several passages that talk about that. One important one is John 6:39. Where Jesus had said about six months prior to this, after feeding the 5,000, He said, "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but will raise it up on the last day." This is Jesus putting that into action. He's going to lose none of His disciples.

You know, it's an interesting story the more you get into it. I'm interested in this. But you put yourself in the disciples' shoes and okay ... if you were them, you'd probably say, "Okay, then. Right. I'm good. I'm going to go, I'll come back later maybe." Right? Look what Peter does. Peter's the big fisherman. It's been said he has the foot-shaped mouth. He's always saying things he shouldn't. Doing things ... He's a very impulsive guy. It's not good to get an impulsive guy in front of a thousand soldiers in the middle of the night. It's dangerous. And verse 10 says, "Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave's name was Malchus."

There's only two people named in this account; Judas and Malchus. And we don't know why Malchus is named. But it could be that he became a disciple of Jesus later on. Or it could be just to tie him into the high priest. But there's something like a thousand swords there that evening, a thousand weapons. Peter has one, and he pulls it off and starts swinging. And if you notice, he cuts off the slave's ear. Now, I don't know if you know about ancient warfare, but nobody tried to cut off anybody's ear. It doesn't happen. You try to cut off their head and if they duck, you get their ear. That's what happened. Peter is not an idiot. He knows how to fight. "I got a weapon, I'm going for his throat." He probably attacked the slave because the slave might've been the only unarmed person in the bunch. Or it could have been the slave was just standing beside him. He's like, "Alright, you want to fight?" Okay, here we go.

Jesus says in verse 11, it says, "So Jesus said to Peter, 'Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it.'" In other words, "Don't try to stop this, Peter. I'm going to go through with it. Don't fight back. There's too many for you. I just knocked them over anyway, Peter. I mean, come on."

And He says, "The cup which the Father has given Me." That means, "The cup of God's wrath, the cup of God's fury, the cup of our sin, and God's indignation at our sin, I'm going to drink it."

At that point, the other Gospels say that Jesus healed the slave's ear. I would look at him and say, "Bleed for what you're about to do." Right? He heals the slave's ear, and the disciples run away. At this point, they saw that He was serious. They saw there was no talking Him out of it. He wasn't going to put up a fight. They knew He could do something. You would think He knocked them all over, then you get away, right? It's the middle of the night. But He doesn't do that. He stays and they run away. And you can actually ... in my mind's eye anyway, I see Peter running through the Garden of Gethsemane with a sword in his hand dripping with blood on it.

Which leads me to point out here, did you notice how kind Jesus was with these men? Did you notice how kind and merciful He was to His disciples. He knew they were going to abandon Him. He knew they were going to run away, and He still looked after Him because that's the kind of Saviour He is. That's the kind of Lord. He loves His own and He cares for them with an undying love. I saw a Peanuts cartoon this week where someone asked Charlie Brown if he knew what love was. And Charlie Brown said, "Yes, I do. It's a man named Jesus." He loved His own all the way to the cross. He even made sure that He wouldn't give them what they couldn't handle.

1 Corinthians 10:13 says, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able to bear, but with the temptation will provide a way of escape, so that you can stand up under it." This is Jesus providing a way of escape to His disciples. This is Him helping them to endure it.

They should have been arrested along with Him. They were just as guilty as He was. They had been propagating His teaching. They had been doing miracles in His name. They should have gone to a cross too. And not only does He spare them, but He also, as the story goes on, He dies for their sins. In just a few hours, not only will He let them escape, but He will go to the cross and die for their cowardice and die for their fear and die for their rage.

That leads me back to where we started all this, this morning. Do you believe this today? Do you believe that Jesus saved you 2,000 years ago at the cross? Are you convinced of it? Is it changing you? Do you believe He's looking out for you, that He loves you? You don't need to be angry. You don't need to be afraid, because you have a Saviour who won't let you be tempted beyond what you're able to bear. Is that why you're here today, because you believe those things?

In the fall of 1999, an anonymous pastor traveled to Cambodia where he found that the people were very hard to the Gospel, because they were Buddhists and that they didn't want to leave their faith. Until he came to one village where an old woman came to Him and said, "We've been waiting for you for 20 years." And the pastor said, "What are you talking about you've been

waiting for me for 20 years?" So, the old woman told the story about the time the communists had taken over the country during the Khmer Rouge. And they had lined all the villagers up to shoot them and bury them in a ditch. And as they did that, the people called out to their gods, they called out to Buddha. And they kept doing that until one villager told the village about a picture she had seen about a God dying on a cross. And the villager said, "That's who we need to call to. We need to pray to a God who has suffered like we have." And so, they did. And in the story, the communists left. They don't know why, they just left without shooting anybody. And the old woman said, "That was 20 years ago, and now you're here. Can you tell us what that was all about? Can you tell us about the God who died on a cross?"

Friends, I want to tell you this morning, you don't need anyone to tell you about that God because you know who He is. You've already been told. But the question is, what are you going to do with it? Are you going to trust in Him? Are you going to give your life to Him? Are you going to let this message change you? What are you going to do with the God on the cross? I want to tell you what you need to do. You need to give your life to Him this morning and hold nothing back. You need to thank Him and praise Him and worship Him for the sacrifice He has made for you. You need to be grateful beyond belief, as I know you are. You need to sing out to your heart to Him in a moment. And I can think of no better way to end this than to celebrate the Lord's Supper together. And to remember in this ordinance what our Lord has done for us. Let me pray for us, and then we'll take that together.

Father, we do thank you, Lord, this morning, humbly and prayerfully for what You have done for us on the cross. As a matter of fact, we haven't even gotten to the cross yet, and the story before we even get there is amazing beyond belief; the fact that You would love sinners like this. Not one of us who was there in the Garden would have responded any differently than these men did. And You forgave them and You looked out for them and You loved them until the end. Father, we rejoice and thank you for being a God like this. And Lord, we thank you that someone has told us about the God on the cross. And we pray for those in places like Cambodia who have never heard of Him, that the Gospel would spread to those unreached places.

Father, as we take the Lord's Supper this morning, we pray that You would be pleased and honoured and glorified. May Christ be presented in His splendour and majesty as we humbly partake together. Thank you for this time and we pray this in Jesus' name, amen.