

**"Jesus Under Arrest"
John 18:1-11**

**Mililani Community Church
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Introduction: Palm Sunday begins what we have traditionally called "Passion Week." The word "*passion*" means "*suffering*." We call it "Passion Week" because this is the week in which our Lord Jesus suffered and died on the cross in our place so that we might be saved. Romans 5:8 summarizes the significance of this week: "God demonstrated his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

The week began with Christ's dramatic entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey. We call it "Palm Sunday" because crowds took palm branches and went out to meet him shouting, "***Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the King of Israel!***" (12:13). At the end of that week, Jesus stood before Pilate, who said: "*Here is your king.*" But the Jews shouted back, "***Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!***" (19:14-15).

This morning I want to "fast forward" from Palm Sunday to Thursday evening of that week. Jesus and his disciples have just finished the Last Supper. Judas has already gone out into the night to betray Jesus. The Lord and the eleven disciples are now leaving Jerusalem, crossing the Kidron Valley and heading up the slope of the Mount of Olives to the Garden of Gethsemane. I've been in that Garden. They say some of the Olive trees there are so old, they could have been there in the time of Christ. John is the only one who calls it a garden. The fact that John calls it a garden suggests that he has in mind a deliberate comparison with the original Garden of Eden.

Think about some of the comparisons between this garden and the Garden of Eden:

In the Garden of Eden Adam sinned; in Gethsemane, Jesus overcame sin.

In Eden Adam fell; in Gethsemane Jesus conquered.

In Eden Adam hid himself from God; in Gethsemane Jesus boldly presented himself to his enemies.

In Eden Adam fell before Satan; in Gethsemane the soldiers fell before Christ.

In Eden Adam took the fruit from Eve's hand; in Gethsemane, Christ received the cup from his Father's hand.

This symbolism is not accidental or incidental to Jesus' death. John is showing us that Christ's purpose for coming into this world was to deal with the problem of sin that came into the world as a result of Adam's first sin in the Garden of Eden. In this other Garden Jesus now comes to submit himself to the Father's will to take our sin upon himself and die on the cross.

Note in this account that there is something John leaves out that the other gospels record. There is a gap between verse 1 and verse 2. Before Judas comes with the detachment of soldiers and the large crowd with swords and clubs, MATTHEW records that in the Garden *"...Jesus began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to his disciples, My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death"* (Matthew 26:37-38). LUKE says, *"and being in anguish, he prayed...earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground"* (Luke 22:44). Mark tells us that he prayed, *"Father...everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me, yet not my will but thine be done."* What was that cup? The cup was the cross, and Jesus sweated blood as he thought about the anguish of having all the sins of the world placed upon Him. But there in the Garden of Gethsemane, he submitted to the Father's will to take that cup of wrath for you and me.

John knew all about Christ's anguish and prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, because he was right there; but he does not even mention it. Instead he passes over it and goes immediately to the account of the arrest of Jesus.

Why does John do this? The answer has to do with JOHN'S PURPOSE in recording this event. The other gospels focus on the Lord's humanity. But John focuses upon his deity, and his lordship over all the circumstances surrounding his death. John wants us to understand that from beginning to end Jesus, and not His captors was in complete control of the situation. Jesus was not a helpless figure being carried along by events that were out of his control. He was totally in control of all the events surrounding his death.

BIG IDEA: We see the lordship and control of Jesus in the terrible events surrounding his death. We see this in three ways: (1) his POWER over the soldiers; (2) his PROTECTION of his disciples; (3) in his MERCY toward those who were his enemies.

FIRST, John shows us how Jesus was in control of the circumstances of his death, by telling us about an incident which none of the other gospels relates...

I. HIS POWER OVER THE SOLDIERS

"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." (vv. 4-6).

What produced this strange reaction? Here was a whole detachment--literally a cohort--of soldiers (about 600), plus a crowd of others with swords and clubs. Judas is leading the way. Instead of waiting to be found, Jesus went forward to meet this crowd. In response to their question he openly identified himself. Their reaction was to draw back and fall to the ground! John represents their response as a miracle! They did not fall down WHEN he asked them what they wanted. They fell down only AFTER he said "I am he" or literally, "I AM."

When Jesus said, "I AM" he was answering with the divine title for God in the Old Testament. In Exodus 3 when God called Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, he said, "I am who I am. Tell them that I AM has sent you to them." So when Jesus replied to them with His own great name, I AM, it had the effect of throwing them into confusion and making them helpless to even stand before him.

Alexander Maclaren says,

"I am inclined to think that here...there was for a moment a little rending of the veil of his flesh, and an emission of some flash of the brightness that always tabernacled within him; and that, therefore, just as Isaiah, when he saw the King in his glory, said, "Woe is me, for I am undone!" and just as Moses could not look upon the Face of God, but could only see the back parts, so here the one stray beam of manifest divinity that shot through the crevice, as it were, for an instant, was enough to prostrate with a strange awe even those rude and insensitive men."

John is giving us a great contrast---a revelation of the glory and power of Jesus at the very moment of his apparent weakness and arrest in Gethsemane.

First, John is showing us at this important moment that Jesus was more than a man. He stood there in lowly humiliation, but he was really God manifest in human flesh. And as they came to arrest him he gave them a brief glimpse of his glory! And they couldn't even stand before him.

Secondly, his display of power over his enemies shows that his death was voluntary. Do the Jewish authorities or the Roman soldiers think they are in control? They are not! Is Jesus a helpless victim? Far from it! John tells us in verse 4 that Jesus "knew everything that was going to happen to Him," and this is why He stepped forward and asked them, "Who are you looking for?" In a very real sense, these Roman soldiers did not arrest him, he arrested them. He made them realize they were in way over their heads. Then he voluntarily surrendered himself to them. He went to the cross of his own free will. He said in John 10:17-18: ***"I lay down my life--only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again."*** If he had been unwilling to die, no amount of troops or weapons could have forced him. He chose to lay down his life, in obedience to the Father's will.

Finally, Jesus acted as he did to make it clear that those who were arresting him and those who commanded his arrest were without excuse. Their guilt and sin were exposed. They could never say that they were ignorant of who he was. For a brief moment they had a glimpse of his divine glory. If they chose to continue as they were after being knocked off their feet, it was because they did not want to heed the truth, not because it was unknown to them. The Bible says there is coming another day, when the guilt and sin of man will be exposed and the glory of Christ will be fully unveiled--at his second coming. Every man will be without excuse on that day. The book of Revelation says that those who have rejected Christ will be terrified and call on the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. I used to say to the men in the prison on Sunday mornings that the most dangerous place in the prison was the chapel. Because if you hear the gospel of Christ and continue to reject him you will be accountable to God on the day of judgement for refusing God's offer of salvation through his Son.

I wonder what was in Judas' mind as he struggled back to his feet!?

Secondly, there is another feature of the arrest of Christ that the other gospel writers overlook that also shows Christ's lordship and control of the situation...

II. HIS PROTECTION OF HIS DISCIPLES

We see this in verses 7-9:

"Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?" and they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." "I told you that I am he," Jesus answered. "If you are looking for me, then let these men go." This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me."

The soldiers had not only intended to arrest Jesus, they had planned to arrest the disciples too. We know this because Mark tells us of their attempt to seize a young man who was wrapped in a linen cloth but who fled away naked when they tried to grab him. Many believe this was John (Mark 14:51-52). But Christ protected all his followers.

Martin Luther believed that protection of his own was the greatest miracle of all that happened in Gethsemane. It is just one small example of the fact that Jesus constantly preserves and protects all those whom the Father has given to him.

John 6:37 - We are the Father's gift to the Son

Col. 1:12-13 - God has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light by rescuing us from the dominion of darkness and bringing us into the kingdom of the Son he loves

John 10:27-30 - Jesus gives us eternal life and we will never perish

Hebrews 7:25 - He intercedes for us in Heaven

I Peter 1:3-5 - He guards us by his power

Hebrews 2:18 - He sees us through temptation

Phil. 3:20-21 - One day he will transform our bodies so that they will be like his glorious resurrection body

Jude 24,25 - He will make us to stand blameless in the presence of his glory with great joy. *"Unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."*

When you put all these verses together they tell us that Jesus shows his effective, preserving grace to us by bringing us out of the darkness of this world into his own marvelous light, by giving us eternal life, by interceding for us in heaven, by guarding us by his power, by seeing us through temptation, by saving even our bodies at the last resurrection, and by bringing us finally into the presence of his glory. He does for us just what he did for his disciples in danger. He protects and preserves us, and he doesn't lose any of those who belong to him.

TRANS: There is one final incident in this passage. The first two we looked at are not mentioned by any of the other gospel writers, but this one is mentioned by all of them. It concerns Peter who drew his sword when he saw that Jesus was about to be arrested and swung it at the head of the servant of the High Priest. He ducked and only lost his ear. Luke tells us that Jesus rebuked Peter and then touched the ear of Malchus and healed him.

*Not only did Jesus reveal his **power** over the soldiers and **protect** his disciples, but he showed his **mercy** toward his enemies even while they were trying to arrest him and kill him.*

III. HIS MERCY TOWARD HIS ENEMIES

This is an illustration of the mercy of God in Christ. This is evidence that today is the Day of God's grace. God is not dealing with the human race in judgement today, but in grace. It is a day in which "whosoever will may come." God in his grace is reaching out, inviting all to repent and come to Christ.

But if you will not come to Christ now, you will face a future day in which the time for repenting will be over and the wrath of God which was poured out upon Jesus in your place but rejected by you, will fall upon your head.

Notice finally the Lord's majestic summary statement: Put away your sword Peter, *"...shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"*

CONCLUSION

How does this passage relate to those who have not yet trusted Christ?

There are two cups spoken of often in the Bible. One is the cup of salvation. It is mentioned in Psalm 116:13: "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD." The other cup is the cup of God's wrath or tribulation, which is referred to here. Earlier Jesus had prayed that this cup might pass from him (Matt. 26:39). David had spoken of it, saying "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup" (Psalm 11:6). Two cups, the cup of salvation and the cup of God's wrath. Every person who has ever lived will drink from one of them. But those who drink of the cup of salvation---will only drink of it because Jesus drank the cup of God's wrath in their place.

How does this account of the arrest of Christ relate to us as believers in Christ?

Though Christ's Gethsemane is far beyond any experience any human experience, Gethsemanes are a part of the lives of believers.

C. E. Macartney has written a poem entitled "Gethsemane"

Down shadowy lanes, across strange streams

Bridged over by our broken dreams;

Behind the misty caps of years,

Beyond the great salt fount of tears,

The garden lies. Strive as you may,

You cannot miss it in your way.

All paths that have been, or shall be,

Pass somewhere through Gethsemane.

The truth is that all of us will have times of ultimate stress in which the cup will appear to be too much for us. We will all go through times when we feel like the world is falling apart. We feel like we are going to be crushed. But just as Jesus was in control of his destiny in Gethsemane, he controls our destiny as well.

Joseph discovered this. After his childhood, it seemed as though he was lost in an uncaring world. First, he was sold into slavery by his own brothers. Then promoted, then demoted because of his righteousness. Then promoted in jail, then disappointed by his friends. He seemed to be forgotten, and alone. But finally raised up by God to save his people. In retrospect we can see that God was at work. But during the process it would have been very hard to see and understand. It was that way with Moses. It was that way with Paul. It is that way with us. God is in control.

The rest of that poem is in your bulletin:

*All those who journey, soon or late,
Must pass within the garden's gate;
Must kneel alone in darkness there,
And battle with some fierce despair
God pity those who cannot say,
"Not mine but thine," who only pray,
"Let this cup pass," and cannot see
The purpose in Gethsemane.*

Gethsemane was not a tragedy it was a triumph. If we are God's children our Gethsemane's are not really tragedies either. It is so encouraging to see that behind what appears to be a tragedy stands the loving and wise purpose of the Lord of human history. Life may be dark at times, sorrows will come, and at times the whole world may seem to be falling apart. But that is not the end. ***"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose"*** (Romans 8:28).

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