

A Tribute to the Lamb – Betrayed!

Part I

John 18:1-11

Introduction

I want to invite you to chapter 18 of John's gospel. The moment has come; the hour has arrived that Jesus had long talked about – it is the hour of betrayal, trial, and crucifixion.

The Lord is about to face the most difficult moments any human being could ever experience. He is about to drink a tragic cup, ordained by the counsel of Almighty God before the foundations of the world were ever put in place.

The next two chapters before us mark the last hours in the Lord's life. And, though these chapters are filled with pain, abandonment, and the cry of separation and death, looking back on them, they are nothing less than a wonderful tribute to the Lamb of God. They are a tribute to His love, His sacrifice, and His loveliness. By studying this *written* tribute, may we become more like Him, so that our own lives will become *living* tributes to the Lamb.

Look at chapter 18, verse 1.

When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, into which He Himself entered, and His disciples.

Centuries before, King David had quickly crossed the Kidron valley and traveled across the brook. His own son, Absalom, had betrayed him and the nation had rejected him.

Now, centuries later, the Son of David crossed the Kidron brook, rejected by the nation and about to be

betrayed by one of His own followers. The betrayer should have learned from Absalom, for just as Absalom would hang from a tree and die from the spears of loyalists, so Judas would soon hang from a tree and ultimately, perish.

There is another fact that I found interesting in this. The time of these events is the Passover celebration. Already thousands of lambs had been sacrificed in a week long ceremony. The blood of the lambs was poured on the altar as an offering to God. Just thirty years after Jesus died, a census was taken and the number of lambs slain was 256,000.

Now, from the altar, there was a channel that was cut which carried the blood from the altar down to the brook Kidron. The blood would stain the waters of this brook and, when Jesus crossed the brook, it would be already dark with the blood of the lambs. Undoubtedly, in His mind, He surely knew that soon His own blood would be poured out as the Lamb of God who had come to take away the sins of the world.

The Betrayal of Judas – Ridiculous!

The first character to enter the garden is Judas – and we know he is possessed by Satan himself.

Notice verse 2.

Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place; for Jesus had often met there with His disciples.

The motivation of Judas has already been clearly given. It was pure, naked greed. When his greedy

heart saw that Jesus' kingdom plans would not involve an overthrow of Rome, and that thrones for each of the disciples, that Jesus had promised, would not materialize here and now, he decided to get whatever he could while the "getting was good".

He had already sold his loyalty for thirty coins of silver. Ancient records have revealed that this was the cheapest price for a slave. One account revealed that thirty pieces of silver had been the price of a slave that had been gored by an ox. So, Judas sold the Savior for the price of a crippled slave.

Frankly, Judas is a hard man for me to understand. Max Lucado's recent work entitled, *On the Anvil*, provoked my thinking. As I was reading it, his chapter on Judas made me realize that part of my problem is that I fit into the same category of thinking that Lucado confessed. He writes,

I have always pictured Judas as some wiry, beady-eyed, wormy fellow, pointed beard and all. I've pictured him as estranged from the other apostles. Friendless, distant, undoubtedly he was a traitor . . . yet we have no evidence that would suggest that he was isolated. At the Last Supper, when Jesus said that His betrayer sat at the table, we don't find the apostles immediately turning to Judas as the logical traitor. I think we pegged Judas wrong. Instead of sly and wiry, maybe he was robust and jovial. Rather than quiet, he could have been outgoing and well-meaning.

The question remains, how could Judas betray the Lamb of God? We do know for certain, that Judas had walked with Jesus, talked with Jesus, eaten with Jesus, and slept on the same hillsides and in the same borrowed homes with Jesus. He had followed the Lamb for years; he had heard Him teach; he had watched His miracles unfold. But, the truth is, Judas did not know the heart of Jesus.

Lucado wrote,

He knew the actions of Jesus but had missed out on the mission of Jesus . . . he wore the garments of religion, but he had no relationship with Jesus.

Now notice verse 3. This has always been an amazing verse to me.

Judas then, having received the Roman cohort, and officers from the chief priests

and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.

Imagine that – they are prepared for everything except what will happen. I believe that they prepared for at least three things.

They prepared for deception

1. First, they prepared for deception – and thus, the plan was for Judas to identify Jesus with a kiss.

Perhaps they thought one of the other disciples would step forward and say, "Take me, I'm Jesus."

They prepared for such loyalty.

So, as the mob entered the garden, Mark's gospel, chapter 14, verse 45, records, Judas went up to Jesus and said, "Rabbi!" – as if to say, "Beloved Teacher!"

Then, he kissed Jesus. The word used in this verse for "kiss" is the Greek word, "kataphileo". It is an intensified word that indicates a close embrace and perhaps, several kisses on the cheek.

Now, a kiss was common in Christ's day. A kiss between a student and his teacher was a mark of homage and respect. Inferiors kissed the back of their superior's hand, but if they were above the level of a servant, they could kiss the palm. Those who sought pardon from an angry monarch would kiss their feet. Slaves often kissed the feet of their masters. We even use the phrase "kissing up to someone" to mean we are trying to gain favor with them. But a kiss on the cheek was a sign of affection and intimacy.

Thus, the kissing by Judas was despicable; it was the worst of false affection.

Imagine as well, the spiritual truth that here, in utter deceit, you have the Satan identifying the Savior; you have the serpent embracing the Son; you have the lion clutching the Lamb. The hot breath of that old dragon was upon the cheek of mankind's deliverer! And Jesus knew it!

Betrayal is always a terrible thing, but when it comes with a kiss; in other words, when it comes from a loved one – a supposed friend or relative – it is especially heartbreaking. Yet, there was no rejection from Jesus. He never said, "Judas, you make me sick. Get away from me."

Matthew tells us, in chapter 26, verse 50a, that Jesus simply said to him, "Friend, do what you have come for."

Kent Hughes makes the application, that Jesus did not just say, “. . . love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you . . .”, as recorded in Matthew, chapter 5, verse 44, but He *lived* it! He practiced everything that He ever preached! And what an incredible sermon He lived at that moment!

We are called to do the same thing, in Philippians, chapter 2, verse 5,

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus

Have you ever been betrayed, misinterpreted, rejected, abandoned? Has it been with a kiss? You must feel you are entitled to write that person off; you are entitled to a little hatred. Jesus says, “No, you are not.”

And, in a moment, I want to show you how Jesus could handle betrayal with such composure.

They expected cowardice

2. But first, not only were they prepared for deception, they also expected cowardice.

Look back at John, chapter 18, verse 3b.

. . . [they] came there with lanterns and torches . . .

Barclay makes the interesting conjecture that they were expecting Jesus to hide.

The Passover moon was full and, verse 18 tells us, the night was cold and thus, probably cloudless. There was enough light to clearly see their way into the garden on this moonlit night. Why not a torch or two for the leaders; why all the torches and lanterns in many of their hands? They must have thought that Jesus would hide! They thought they would have to search among the trees and in the hillside nooks and crannies to find Jesus. They would need every lantern possible to peer up into the olive trees and behind every rock!

But, instead of hiding, verse 4 reveals that Jesus stepped forward and identified Himself as the Man they were seeking!

They anticipated resistance

3. Finally, the leaders of this late night arrest had anticipated resistance!

Verse 3 tells us that Judas brought with him, a “Roman cohort” or battalion – that was six hundred

armed Roman soldiers. There were also officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, or Sanhedrin.

The temple had its own type of private police force to keep good order, and the Sanhedrin had its police officers to carry out its final verdicts and decrees.

Why did hundreds of Roman soldiers and many of the Jewish police force come? Why did an army come to arrest an unarmed Galilean carpenter?

Because they knew He was no ordinary man. They had seen His miracles and, on several occasions, had sought to arrest Him, but He had somehow escaped their clutches.

So, this time, they were prepared for a little supernatural power. They were ready to handle not only twelve men, but, perhaps, an extra show of power from this miracle man – so they sent an army.

But, they were not prepared for what would happen!

The Announcement of Jesus – Revealing!

Look at verses 4 through 6.

Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth, and said to them, “Whom do you seek?” They answered Him, “Jesus the Nazarene.” He said to them, “I am He.” And Judas also who was betraying Him, was standing with them. When therefore He said to them, “I am He,” they drew back, and fell to the ground.

You need to understand, this is more than simply identifying that He is the one they are looking for. At least three things happened simultaneously.

He announces His deity

1. First, Jesus just announced His deity.

Notice, in verse 5 and again, in verse 6, Jesus responds and identifies Himself with the words that you are probably familiar with now, “ego eimi,” or “I AM”.

It is the name of God that was revealed for the first time to Moses at the burning bush, in Exodus, chapter 3, verse 14. Moses asked, “Lord, what shall I tell the people Your name is?”

And God responded, “Tell them My name is I AM.”

In the Septuagint, those Greek words are “ego eimi”.

Already, in John’s gospel, we heard the Lord shock the establishment by referring to Himself as “ego eimi”. It was a claim of deity! And, in these verses, Jesus again claims the name of almighty God – “I AM”.

Then notice, in verse 6b,

. . . they drew back, and fell to the ground.

One breath of omnipotence slammed them flat on their backs! It is as if Christ pulled back the curtain on His deity for one brief second and they all did what everyone will do in the presence of God – fall prostrate before Him.

He reveals His authority

2. Jesus Christ is, secondly, revealing His authority.

Jesus is in command here – make no mistake! No one is going to take His life – He has chosen to give it up. He is not hiding – He is revealing; He is not cowering – He is in command. So, He even helps His frightened, intimidated enemy to arrest Him.

This is not the decision of the Sanhedrin, the religious leaders, the nation Israel, or the emperors of Rome – this is the decision of the Lamb, the “I AM”. He is not a victim. Why? Because He has already chosen to die!

He fulfills His Word

3. Thirdly, He fulfills His Word.

Notice verses 7 through 9.

Again therefore He asked them, “Whom do you seek?” And they said, “Jesus the Nazarene.” Jesus answered, “I told you that I am He; if therefore you seek Me, let these go their way, that the word might be fulfilled which He spoke, ‘Of those whom Thou hast given Me I lost not one.’”

In other words, Jesus was making sure there would only be one cross, not twelve, excluding the two criminals who would also be there. None of the disciples were to die along with Him. The Word had already declared it, and Jesus was going to make sure that the word was fulfilled.

The Courage of Peter – Reckless!

Now Peter, who has been standing nearby taking this all in, decides it is time for a little action. So, in verse 10, we are told,

Simon Peter therefore 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.

Now, either Peter was a bad shot or Malchus was quick enough to duck. So Peter’s small “machaira” or sword missed his skull and yet, severely cut his right ear.

Stop here for a moment. We so often talk about the weakness, faithlessness, and cowardice of Peter, as he denies his Lord three times. In fact, we will talk about that in the future. But, for now I want you to notice his courage!

At this moment, he, one man, drew his sword against hundreds. Peter is recklessly prepared to take on hundreds of soldiers, all alone, for the sake of Christ. Bless his heart, that is Peter! Would to God there were more Simon Peter’s among us.

There are enough of us who will calculate the risks; there are enough of us who will warn of the dangers; there are enough of us who will hesitate at possible failures, but there are simply not enough of us who will risk everything for the honor of Christ.

Peter did! I am not sure, however, where Peter got his courage from. Perhaps he thought that if he got into deep trouble, the Lord would just knock everyone down again.

So, Peter swings, the servant screams, and soldiers level their spears at the heaving chest of Peter.

Imagine this scene. One author has colorfully written,

Imagine the pounding tension in that garden as Malchus stood wide-eyed, blood pouring through his fingers as a hundred steel blades rang from their scabbards in terrible symphony.

Now what happens?!

Matthew’s gospel records Jesus saying, in chapter 26, verses 52 and 53.

. . . Put your sword back into its place . . . do you think I cannot appeal to my Father, and

He will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?

In other words, “Peter, we’re not fighting this battle with steel swords. If we were, I could have, right now, here by my side, seventy two thousand angels! But, that’s not the kind of battle we’re really fighting.”

Paul picked up this theme as he wrote, in II Corinthians, chapter 10, verse 4,

. . . the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

He would write in Ephesians, chapter 6, verse 12,

. . . our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness . . .

Do you know what Jesus said to this mob? Luke records Him saying, in chapter 22, verse 53b, just before they took Him out of the garden,

. . . this hour and the power of darkness are yours.

In other words, as Warren Wiersbe wrote,

Peter was fighting the wrong enemy, using the wrong weapon, having the wrong motive and accomplishing the wrong result!

Now, what about this wounded servant? Turn back to Luke’s gospel, chapter 22, verses 50 and 51.

And a certain one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus answered and said, “Stop! No more of this.” And He touched his ear and healed him.

Do you want to see mercy in the midst of madness? Do you want to see the love of God extended to the enemy of God? Here it is!

Now Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John tell us, specifically, that Peter’s sword literally cut off the servant’s ear. The Greek word can be translated, “to shear off, to cut away”. Yet, Luke’s gospel is the only one that records Jesus healing the servant. Perhaps Luke, being a medical doctor, was the only writer who found it of any interest!

What I find interesting is that Luke does not tell us that Jesus picked up the severed ear and re-attached it; Luke, the doctor, noted every detail of this

operation, and he simply said, “[Jesus] touched his ear and healed him.”

The noun used in verse 51 to refer to the ear differs from verse 50. In verse 51, it actually refers to the place of his ear; you could translate it rather woodenly, “Jesus touched ‘where had been his ear’”. The reason I am pointing this out is because we could so easily overlook an astounding act of Christ. He said, “I AM,” and only God has the power to create out of nothing. This is not a medical re-attachment, but a miracle re-creation!

Imagine! There is Malchus’ severed ear lying on the ground – but he has a new right ear! There is no torn, bloody flesh – but a whole ear! Further, there is no more bleeding, no more cries of pain – but, for a moment perhaps, just the hushed sound of men marveling and wondering at this One they have come to arrest.

What was in the future for Malchus – the man with the original “miracle ear”? Did his boss, the high priest, forbid him to speak of the matter? Did his superiors scold him for having let the Nazarene touch his ear in the first place? Was he pressured into denying it ever happened? I do not know, but I do know that Malchus would never ever forget that night.

Perhaps, some time later, he put his faith in the Lamb.

The Perspective of Jesus – Resigned!

Now I want you to see the underlying perspective of Jesus. Let us go back to John’s account, in chapter 18, verse 11.

You are about to read the perspective that allowed Jesus Christ to model handling betrayal – with composure. This was what enabled Him to face the angry mob with calm, with authority and also, with mercy. Look at verse 11.

Jesus therefore said to Peter, “Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?”

The drinking of a cup is often used in Scripture to illustrate experiencing suffering and sorrow. When Babylon captured Jerusalem, the city drank from the “cup of trembling”, according to the King James Version of Isaiah, chapter 51. Jeremiah, in chapter 25, pictured God’s wrath against the nation as the pouring out of a cup. To drink the cup means to go through with a difficult experience.

We even have the expression today, for something that is distasteful, “That’s not my cup of tea.”

Many trophies are designed like cups, suggesting that winners have persevered through demanding experiences.

Jesus now refers to all the suffering He is about to experience as a cup from which He must drink.

How was Jesus able to accept and drink from His cup? Verse 11 tells us – His perspective was perfect in that He recognized that the cup had come from the Father.

Jesus saw the Father behind everything. He did not see Judas – He saw the Father. He did not see the angry mob alone – He saw the Father.

Our little flip calendar, that sits on the kitchen counter at home, had the quote, “The eyes of faith are simply eyes that are able to see the hand of God behind everything!”

Jesus could handle betrayal, pain, and suffering because He could see the hand of the Father giving Him the cup.

C. S. Lewis wrote,

At the heart of the obedient life is submission to the sovereignty of God . . .

(that is another way of saying, “. . . seeing the hand of God behind everything!”)

. . . even when in the valley of the shadow of death, even when the darkness of the forest around us oppresses, even when we find ourselves in a wilderness experience face to face with the devil himself. Even in the dark, we seek to trust the sovereignty of God.

What an example Jesus Christ was for us. Are you in the valley? Have you been betrayed? Are you rejected? Do you suffer? Do not be afraid! The cup has been mixed and handed to you by the Father! Will you not drink it?

The old American maxim is rather interesting. It says, “If you have peace when everyone around you is in panic, maybe you don’t understand the problem.”

Well, take a look inside this garden. With the mob – it is pandemonium; for the disciples – it is panic; for Jesus – it is peace.

The legacy of the Lamb, from inside this garden, is that He lived what He promised in John, chapter 14, verse 27.

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

Where are you in this garden scene?

Where are you in this garden scene?

- Do you identify with the mob of rejecters?

In Matthew, chapter 12, verse 30a, Jesus said,

He who is not with Me is against Me . . .

There is no such thing as neutrality when it comes to Christ.

- Do you identify with the betrayer?

Are you someone who pretends to love God and Christ, but in truth, you are after whatever you can get – and if you cannot get it, you will sell Jesus, if something better comes along?

- Are you like Peter?

Are you convinced that the Lord needs your protection and, by your own strength, you are trying to serve Him?

- Are you like the Lord?

Do you say to this question, “That’s not fair – no one measures up”?

I know that, but the truth remains, according to Philippians, chapter 2, verses 5 and 8b.

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus . . . [For Christ] humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

What cup has the Father handed to you? I believe your ability to drink from it is directly related to your ability to see that He gave it to you. The only way you will ever be able to drink from your cup is to believe that it has indeed, come from the Father. That will involve great faith. Will you trust the Father and drink your cup, as Christ drank His?

And think of Christ’s cup! As Spurgeon once preached, “Knowing full well the contents of His cup, He took it and lifted it to His lips and He drank damnation dry!”

What a savior! We pay tribute to You, oh Lamb of God!

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