

The Word Became Flesh

The Arrest of Jesus

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: John 18

Speaker: Joel Greenwood

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It's good to be back this week. Last week, Josh shared with us the end of what is known as Jesus' farewell discourse in John chapter 17 as we continue to work our way through the gospel of John. I want you to know that John chapter 17 is actually Jesus' longest recorded prayer. And so when you went through that last week, if you have any anxiety because you feel that your prayers need to be super long, just remember, that's the longest prayer recorded by Jesus in the Bible, and it's only one chapter.

It is one of my favorite prayers that is recorded in Scripture, certainly from Jesus, because in that prayer, Jesus prays specifically for you and for me. In that moment, when Jesus is praying, He prays for those that will believe in the message that the disciples are sharing, that He is the Messiah. And so when He prays for those who would believe, He is praying for you and me specifically because we believe that message.

Jesus knew that His time had come to offer Himself as a sacrifice in our place, and it's amazing to me that during this time, in the midst of all of the chaos that has to be going on in His mind as He is thinking about what is coming, of all of the things that He could be thinking about and praying about, He was thinking specifically about you and about me. Isn't that humbling? That in His final moments, we were on His mind.

Jesus is now wrapping up His time in ministry. He has spent the last three or four years teaching and training the disciples as He is instructing them, and now it is going to be their turn to pick up the mantle and continue this teaching. So today we move to John chapter 18. As we continue in our series, the Word became flesh.

In John 18, we're going to begin a dramatic shift from Jesus' private teachings to His disciples, and we are now going to move on to the next phase of His life, which will involve a betrayal and arrest and trials. We will go from one of my favorite prayers in all of Scripture, John chapter 17, to some of my least favorite moments of reading about Jesus.

In chapter 18, we will see that irregardless of what is happening, Jesus was in complete control, and He willingly suffered for us. This will shine in complete contrast to Peter's fear that we will see, as well as the political cowardice of the Roman leaders and the Jewish authorities. In John chapter 18, we're going to be broken up into four different sections.

The first section are verses 1 through 11, and here we are going to see the scene of Jesus being arrested in the garden. The second session is verses 12 through 24, where Jesus is going to begin to be interrogated by Annas and Caiaphas, the high priests. An interesting note, as we hear the name Caiaphas, you may not be familiar with that.

It's interesting that in history, at that moment, Caiaphas believed that he was going to be an important man in human history, that many people would remember his name, and of course Jesus would be forgotten. But yet, as I was typing out this message in Microsoft Word, when I type the name Jesus, Microsoft Word recognizes that name. But yet when I type the word Caiaphas, I always get those little red scribbly lines, right?

Because nobody knows who Caiaphas is as God would turn the tables. Verses 15 through 18 and 25 through 27 is our third section, and here we deal with Peter's denial, and you may recognize that. And then the final section is verses 28 through 40, and this is the trial of Jesus before Pilate, the Roman authority. As we move into John chapter 18, Jesus and His disciples are now going to leave the upper room and they are going to move to a new setting.

So let's pray and then jump into John chapter 18:1. Heavenly Father, we come before You today. We thank You for Your words of truth. As always, we pray that You would speak to us through the power of Your Spirit, that You would guide us and direct us towards You, that we would take our next step towards You. Father, for some, that might be a first step, and for others it might be their 100th step.

But my prayer is that my words would not get in the way of what You want to speak to us this morning, and that You would be lifted up and praised. And we ask this in Jesus' name, amen. John chapter 18, starting in verse 1, John tells us that when Jesus had finished praying, He left with His disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side, there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it.

Now Judas, who betrayed Him, knew the place because Jesus had often met there with His disciples. So Judas came to the garden guarding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. John tells us they were carrying torches, lanterns, and weapons.

Now, I want to help you picture this because you potentially have seen this in shows or movies that have portrayed this scene, but here is modern-day Israel, and where I have the arrow pointing is the Kidron Valley, which is just to the east side of Israel. The Kidron Valley sits between Mount Zion, which is where the temple would have been. So that's on the right side of the picture. You can see the city walls there.

It would have separated Mount Zion from the Mount of Olives, which would have been on the left side. What you see there in that picture are a bunch of tombs that are there on the Mount of Olives, and it goes up from there. The Kidron Valley separated these two mountains, and many theologians believe that in that little valley there would have been a brook that would have run, and that this brook actually came from Mount Zion, and it would have helped to carry the blood from sacrifices away from the temple.

It was a natural way for them to be able to clean that away. If this is true, then the Kidron Brook that Jesus and His disciples stepped over to get to the Garden of Gethsemane would have been tinted red from all of the Passover sacrifices that week. So I just want you to picture this. This would have been a vivid reminder of Jesus' soon-to-be sacrifice as He would become the Passover Lamb.

Now, the garden that they would go into is not a garden that you may think of of vegetables and plants and flowers and things like that. It would have been a garden of olive trees, and you can see some in the lower right corner there of the picture. Those are olive trees. And again, John tells us that the disciples knew this place because they often went there, probably during the time of Passover. And so Judas knows this place, and John tells us that he was guiding a group of Roman soldiers.

Now, if you've ever watched any movie that portrays this, there's maybe a few guys, but what we need to know is a group of Roman soldiers could have been as many as 600. That's a little different than what you picture, isn't it? Now, maybe it was 200, 200, 400, or 600. Those are our greatest guests, but that's just Roman soldiers. There also were officers from the Temple Security Force that were there. Now, why would there be that many soldiers? Why did that many people go?

Well, maybe they were expecting some kind of battle. It's still more than I would imagine in my head, and John tells us that they were carrying lanterns and torches. And so think about a group of, even if it's just a couple of hundred, in that day and age, there wouldn't have been as much light pollution. There they are in the garden. They would have seen this group of soldiers coming with the lanterns and torches, that is, if they had been awake, right? As we know, many of them fell asleep.

So let's go on and see what is going to happen in verse 4. "Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to Him." And I love that John puts that in there. Jesus was not surprised by what was going to take place. He was not going to cower. He was not going to hide. Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to Him, went out and asked them. He confronted them, "Who is it that you want? Who are you looking for?" "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

"I am He," Jesus said. And John lets us know that Judas, the traitor, was standing there with them. And when Jesus said, "I am He, they drew back and fell to the ground." Here is a truth that you and I need to recognize from Scripture that Judas nor anyone else can catch Jesus by surprise. His entire life was leading up to this moment, and so you and I can take peace in the fact of knowing that there is nothing in your life that takes Jesus by surprise.

There's nothing that takes him by surprise. He will prepare you for everything that comes your way. You know, sometimes things happen in our life that are outside of our control and they're difficult and well-intentioned people will say, "God will never give you more than you can handle." Have you ever heard this before? I know that they are trying to be encouraging, but can I just tell you from personal experience that God always gives me more than I can handle?

I think that what we should say instead is, "God will never give you more than He can handle." Because that's the truth of it. God wants us to depend on Him. It's a good thing because that means that Jesus is on your side and you can't lose. Now, as we jump back into this story, Jesus, not taken by surprise, confronts the soldiers. Again, He doesn't hide from them.

He simply asks, "Who are you looking for?" And then He responds by saying, "I am." Now, we should pick up on this. I know we've been doing this series for seven years, but do you remember how many times Jesus said, "I am?" And do you remember that when He would say, "I am," that he was really quoting when Moses saw God in the burning bush, and he said, "Who should I say sent me?" And God replies to Moses to say, "Tell them, 'I am who I am has sent you.'" And so when Jesus says, "I am He," He is again making this proclamation that He is the Messiah, He is the Lord, He is the great I am.

And this time, John tells us, there was such a display of divine presence and majesty and power when He says, "I am," that the enemies of Jesus were powerless to stand against Him. Can you imagine a couple of hundred people just falling over as He says, "I am He?" Let's go on to verse 7.

Again, as they are either laying on the ground or now working themselves back to standing, Jesus asked them, "Who is it you want?" "Jesus of Nazareth," they said, "And Jesus answered, 'I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go.'" And I love that, that even in this moment where Jesus is going to be arrested and taken, he is not concerned about Himself. He is only thinking about His friends. Let them go.

John tells us that this happened so that the words that He had spoken would be fulfilled, "I have not lost one of those you gave me." Then, John tells us, Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest servant cutting off his right ear, and John is the only one that tells us this, that the servant's name was Malchus.

And so many theologians believe that John had a connection with the family of the high priest because he actually knew this man whose ear Peter had just cut off. In verse 11, John tells us that Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away, shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me." Jesus is not looking for a battle. He came into this world for this moment. Now we have to understand Peter's mindset.

Again, I know it's been a while since we've read this, but Peter, just a few hours earlier, had been told by Jesus that he was going to deny him three times. And so he decides to take matter into his own hands. And so there are two options here as to what actually took place and what was going through Peter's mind, but we don't have the answer. Option number one is that this was a true act of courage.

Peter was trying to say, "I'll show you, Jesus, I will fight to the death," as he is showing He's willing to die. Or two, it has been noted but not proven that Peter, who was more than likely holding the sword in his right hand, unless he was left-handed, which is far less common, must have attacked the high priest servant from behind because it would be near impossible to cut off his right ear if he was facing the servant Malchus.

Have you ever thought about that? If you're holding a sword in your right hand and you go at somebody, you're going to cut off their left ear. So some theologians say it is possible that Peter deliberately chose a non-soldier. This is simply a servant of the high priest. He could have attacked any of the Roman soldiers, and instead he attacked him from behind, and this was not a shining display of courage, but it was just another thing that Peter does that we all can relate to, right?

Now, regardless of what actually took place, and whether he cut his ear off from the front or behind, we know from the other gospels that Jesus picks up Malchus' ear and puts it back on anyway, if you could imagine that. But here is a truth that I take from this section. When we try to take things into our own hands, we only make a mess of it. Peter was trying to take the situation into his own hand one way or the other, and yet it just made a mess of things.

Now we're going to begin the first interrogations. We're going to move on to section number two, verse 12. John tells us that then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound Him and brought Him first to Anas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people.

So earlier on we read that Caiaphas had made this prediction that it would be better if one man died than for all of Israel to lose to the Romans. And so we already know this is probably not going to be a fair trial, right? We move on in verse 15. Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Most theologians and I believe that this other disciple is John, and we will talk about why as we continue.

Because this disciple was known to the high priest, that was John, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard. So he was known to the high priest so he could follow Jesus, but John tells us Peter had to wait outside the door. The other disciple who was known to the high priest, again, John tells us that, came back and spoke to the servant girl that was on duty there and brought Peter in.

So he goes back and he obviously knows this servant girl and says, "Hey, he's with me, let him in." And so Peter, who had been embarrassed in the garden, embarrassed that he is going to deny Jesus, is now hoping for a second chance to show his loyalty by following John into the court of the high priest to try to be by Jesus, to show, "Look, I am willing to sacrifice." Many theologians, again, as I have stated, believe that John was this other disciple, that he maybe even was related to the high priest family.

Whether that's true or not, we don't know, but he certainly was able to get Peter in. And so we look at verse 17, "You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?" The servant girl asked Peter, and he replied, "I am not." "It was cold," John tells us, and the servants and officials stood around a fire that they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.

As a servant girl asks this question, she seems to ask in a way that implies that she already knew John was a disciple of Jesus because she says, "You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?" It seems like it would have been an easy response for Peter just to say, "Yes, I am." He could have whispered to her. It doesn't seem like anything negative would have happened to him, but he denies Jesus anyway. And so this leads me to my third point that is true of our lives.

How often are our denials and sins pointless with nothing to gain and everything to lose? How many times do we make decisions thinking that they are going to be for our better, that they're going to be for our enrichment, that they're going to provide something that we need or want, and we find out that that decision we knew was against God actually only brought pain. Here is Peter. He doesn't really have any reason to deny Jesus at this point, nothing to gain but everything to lose.

We go on to verse 19. Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about His disciples and about His teaching. "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in the synagogues or at the temple where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question Me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said." And when Jesus had said this, one of the officials nearby slapped him in the face.

"Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded. "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "Testify as to what is wrong, but if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" Then Anice sent him bound to Caiaphas, the high priest. Now, there's some confusion here that I want to help clear up. Caiaphas was the official current high priest at this time, but Anas, who was his father-in-law, is the one that had the relationship with the Roman leaders, and he held a lot of authority, and so both of them were viewed as having the authority of the High Priest.

But both of these trials, before Annas and Caiaphas, the whole thing was a sham. The whole thing was already decided, and we can see that it is going to turn violent, that they already have judgment in mind. This is not a trial to find out if he is guilty or not. It is a trial to find a way to make him be quiet. In verse 25, meanwhile, John tells us Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself.

So they asked him, "You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?" And he denied it, saying, "I am not." One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off. How does John know that? He has to have a

connection here. He knows that those two people are related. The third person that's going to ask Peter whether he knows Jesus is related to Malchus, and he challenged him.

Didn't I see Him with you in the garden? Didn't I see you with Him? In other words, this man was there too, and again, Peter denied it. And at that moment, a rooster began to crow. And so Peter fulfills Jesus' prophecy about his denials. Now, I have to imagine that there's no way that John went to Peter and asked, "Hey, is it okay if I include this in my gospel?" Right? Could you imagine being Peter?

I mean, of all the things that he did that were great and were amazing and the courage that He showed in life. And then we have this recorded. I truly believe that God wanted this in the Scriptures. He wanted John to record this so that you and I can say, "You know what? If even Peter had struggles, it's okay that we do too." It's okay that we do too. Peter saw all of these amazing things happen. He had confessed that Jesus was the Messiah, the one who was to come.

He had just cut off a guy's ear in the garden and watched Jesus heal it and put it back on, and yet He denies even knowing Him. It is okay we are going to have trials. We are grateful for God's grace and His mercy. We go on to verse 28. Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. We know this to be Pilate. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness, they did not enter the palace because they wanted to be able to eat the Passover.

So here are these Jewish leaders that are having an illegal trial of Jesus to condemn an innocent man to death, and they are more concerned about remaining clean so they can eat the Passover than what they are going to do. It just shows their mindset. So Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?" "Well, if he were not a criminal," they replied, "We would not have handed him over to you." Of course, there is no real trial.

The Jewish leaders had already made up their mind to kill Jesus, and Pilate is beginning to pick up on this fact. Again, the Jewish leaders did not want to enter the house of Pilate because he was a Gentile, and if they went into a Gentile's home, they would be unclean and unable to celebrate the Passover. We go on in verse 31. Pilate said, "Take Him yourself and judge Him by your own law, but we have no right to execute anyone," they objected.

And this took place to fulfill what Jesus had said about the kind of death He was going to die. Now, this is important because Jesus had prophesied that He would be hung on a tree. He knew that He was going to be crucified. If the Jews were going to kill Him, He would have died by stoning, but if the Romans were going to kill him, he would die by crucifixion. You see, the Jews were not looking for Pilate to be a judge. They instead were looking for somebody who could execute the sentence that they had already illegally passed on Jesus.

Verse 33. So then Pilate went back inside the palace. He summoned Jesus and he asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews? Is that your own idea?" Jesus asked, or did others talk to you about me? "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priest handed you over to me. What is it you have done?" Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world.

If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders, but now my kingdom is from another place." "You are a king then," said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. For everyone on the side of truth listens to me." Pilate is trying to wiggle himself out of this situation.

He doesn't want to make this decision. He was already involved in the case because he is the one that had to approve the detachment of Roman soldiers to go and arrest Jesus. And so he's now trying to find out why the Jews hate Jesus so much and more importantly, was Jesus a threat to the Roman Empire? As he questions Jesus, he would find out that the kingdom of God or Jesus' kingdom is not a threat to the Roman kingdom because this kingdom is based on love.

It's based on sacrifice. It's based on humility. And this is in stark contrast to the kingdoms of this world that are based on force, pride, the love of human praise, a desire for domination, and self-interest. Pilate knew that Rome had nothing to fear of this heavenly kingdom that Jesus was talking about. Isn't it amazing how completely different God's kingdom is from every earthly kingdom?

I think this is a good time for you and I to determine what type of kingdom we are building. What are we interested in? Building a worldly kingdom which are built by force, by fighting, by pride, by the love of human praise, others lifting us up, a desire to dominate or to rule other people or self-interest? Or are we looking to build God's kingdom with love, sacrifice, and humility?

They are in stark contrast to one another. We wrap up in verse 38, "What is truth?" retorted Pilate. And with this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and he said, "I find no basis for a charge against him, but it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" And they shouted back, "No, not Him.

Give us Barabbas." John tells us, "Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising. Do you know that we live in a world today where there are many who believe truth is personal. It's individual. They think that there is no one absolute truth about God, but only my truth and your truth, and one is as good as the other.

But as we read in the Scriptures, Jesus said, "I am the truth." This is the absolute that makes our worldview different from those that don't believe in Jesus. Jesus is our absolute. And I find it interesting that Pilate didn't just say, "Jesus is just not guilty," he says, "I find no fault in Him at all." Isn't it amazing that a pagan Gentile ruler can make this statement, and yet the religious leaders of the Jews want him killed?

I pray that we never find ourselves in that spot and make the same mistake that we miss the Messiah. If anyone knew what it meant, that Jesus died in His place, it was Barabbas. Barabbas was supposed to be the man on the Middle Cross that day. From the Romans perspective, he was a terrorist, that's the word that we would use today. He was a murderer.

He was a zealot trying to raise Israel back to power against the Romans. And yet, on that day, He was set free while Jesus was crucified. We can read the story and think about Barabbas, and we have one very small line about who He was. Yet, as we sit here today, you and I, every single one of us, are Barabbas. Every single one of us deserve death.

That is the price that should be paid for our sins, for our errors, for our wrongdoing. It should be us that was on that cross. If you walked in today and you shook my hand, and you say, "Hey, Pastor, how are you doing today?" You know that my response is always better than I deserve. Why do I say that? I say that because I know that I deserve to be hung on that cross. That's where I should be. That's the price that I should have to pay.

But yet, because Jesus took my place, I was set free. And so no matter what is going on in my life, the trials, the hurts, the pains, the tribulation, if you ask me, "How am I doing?" I know that my answer can always be better than I deserve. You and I can hold on to a truth today. It is the truth of His Word, the Scriptures, and it is the truth of the Living Word, Jesus.

We can live knowing that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. And my prayer for all of us is that we would put our hope and our faith in Him. The Scriptures say that when Jesus died on the cross, He truly did take our place. He paid the price so that you and I could be made righteous before a holy and righteous and a loving God. And that that is available to every single one of us.

The apostle Paul later would go on to say that if you would confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. It's available to everyone at any time. It's the acknowledgment of your wrongdoing. It's recognizing that you deserve death, that Jesus took your place, and that's why we say His blood covered our sin because by Him dying on the cross, it covers us and makes us clean so that we can stand before a righteous and a holy God.

And that is available to you. Now, I know many of you here today have already made that decision, that first step toward Jesus of giving your life to Him, confessing that to Him, making that proclamation. But maybe you're also here today, and for whatever reason, you have fallen into one of the many traps of this world in trying to build your own kingdom. You've just gotten lost along the way, and you still come to church, and you still try to do the right things, but really, everything you do is to advance your kingdom.

And maybe today is that time where you say, "You know what, God, I just want to take that next step towards you. I want to advance your kingdom. Help me once again to give over control of my life to you." The altars are always open. There will be people on the sides that would love to pray with you. If you come to the altar, we'll leave you

alone unless you ask us to pray with you. You can just do your business with God, and please don't worry what other people are going to think. If the Spirit is speaking to you, would you hear His voice today? Let me pray.

Heavenly Father, thank you for the truth. Thank you for Jesus. Thank you for sending him to take my place on the cross because of my sins, because of my mistakes, because of the things that I have done that have gone against you. We are grateful for Your grace and for Your mercy and for Your love.

May we take our next step towards You. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.