

the gospel of

JOHN

all intents and purposes

JOHN: A TALE OF TWO SWORDS

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John 18:1-11

The death of Christ was seen as a horrific tragedy by his followers. But unknown to them, it was a plan carried out, an intentional act of sacrificial love. Every moment of his perfect life, his death, his resurrection, all of it was done to intentionally display his rule and reign over the world. How do we obey his commands to love others with the same intentional love? Join us for our final installment. In our walkthrough, the Gospel of John. We will see that God's love is behind all of his intents and purposes. Go to doxa-church.com to learn more about Doxa, find service times, or support the making of disciples and the everyday stuff of life.

Good morning, Doxa. This morning we will be reading John 18 verses 1 through 11:

"When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place for Jesus often met there with his disciples. So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons. Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, 'Whom do you seek?' They answered him, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus said to them, 'I am he.' Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, 'I am he,' they drew back and fell to the ground. So he asked them again, 'Whom do you seek?' And they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus answered, 'I told you that I am he. So if you seek me, let these men go.' This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken of: 'Those whom you gave me, I have lost, not one.' Then Simon Peter, having a sword drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) So Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword into its sheath. Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?' This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Thank you, Sandy. Thanks for doing the reading today. Hey, thanks for being with us as we continue in John's gospel this morning. I found myself a few times this last week just reflecting on the question that Pastor Eddie gave us this last Sunday: Is it significant that as Jesus looks at

his last moments with the disciples, that he prioritizes this conversation around unity? And I think that the answer is an emphatic yes. We'll actually see today that it's obvious that he knew what was coming. He's anticipating what he's about to have to do on the cross, and so consumed by both unmatched terror and unmatched obedience, Jesus heads to the cross and he chooses biblical, sacrificial, way bigger than just getting along kind of unity as his goodbye speech.

And today is really the culmination of what we've been studying over the last four years as we've walked through the book of John as a church together. We've seen Jesus talk repeatedly about this thing, he keeps saying, the hour is approaching, the hour is approaching. And in John 18, we have the hour now before us. Scholar Gary Burge captures this beautifully. He says, it's been a preparation for the coming of the darkness. And in chapter 18, the darkness arrives. So here's the main thing I want us to watch for today, Doxa. There are two swords in today's passage and both of them want Jesus to be something that he is not. And I'm willing to bet that some of us reach for these same things, that we try to make Jesus something that he isn't. And if we're honest, it's really costly to our discipleship, to our, our walk with Jesus as well as our witness to the world. And so worshiping this morning, as always looks like singing. So thank you for participating in that. We're gonna pray together multiple times throughout the gathering, but worshiping today also looks like asking the Spirit if we carry either of these swords with us. So let's pray. Jesus, thank you for Doxa. Thank you for the wonderful and beautiful work that you're doing through your people. I pray that we would open our minds and our hearts to your spirit, that you would speak to us so clearly and that we would feel not guilt or shame, but certainly give us conviction in the places where we are choosing other lesser things. Help us to receive from you. We all needed grace this week and received it. And so help us trust your character and your kindness towards us as we submit our lives to you. We pray these things for your glory and our good. Amen.

Alright, diving in here, walking verse by verse, chapter 18 verse one. If you have your Bible, open that up, or if you have it on your app, that's fine too. Open it up Chapter 18 verse one: "When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron and where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered."

So Jesus finishes the high priestly prayer that we just talked about over the last three Sundays, and he desires to get out of the hustle and bustle of the city, but the rules and regulations of Passover are such that he's not actually allowed to leave the city limits. So his options for a getaway spot are somewhat limited. He's wanting some peace and quiet and, and John gives us this location. It's a real physical place and these little details are really helpful because they help us remember a couple of things easy to skip past for sure.

But number one, it reminds us that these events that we're reading, they're not fairy tales or religious lore. They're actual eyewitness accounts of events that really happened with real people in a real place in real time. And secondly, the details often point to the purpose that the gospel writer had in mind. So we believe at Doxa that God's word was written by human hands and inspired by the Holy Spirit, that each word was exactly what God intended for them to

write, and that he actually did so through their gifting, through their background, through their experience, through their personality, not in spite of it. And this is why the four gospels really focus on different aspects of who Jesus is.

So Matthew writes to the Jews to show that he is the promised king they've been waiting for. Mark writes to the non-Jews, primarily focusing on Jesus as the suffering servant. Luke, the doctor, loves his details and writes to a non-Jewish audience wanting to capture the humanity of Jesus, that Jesus is fully human. And lastly, the book that we are walking through the book of John, he really captures the deity of Christ. So all of them tell us what is true and important about Jesus. So why is John's gospel different? Well, contrary to some critical of John's gospel, the far majority of biblical scholarship holds that John's account parallels the others, even though it includes some details that they don't. And there's actually strong evidence to suggest that John wrote his gospel to an audience believing that they already had access to Mark's writings, which is why he includes, adds some things and leaves other parts out. Modern criminal investigators will tell us that if the gospels all contained the exact same information and the same details written from the same perspective, that that would actually indicate collusion, right? And all the writers getting together beforehand to sort of get their stories straight, like some busted teenagers trying to make their writings seem credible when they were actually false. This scenario would actually cause us concern and should raise suspicion. But this is not what we see in the gospels.

So details like they walked across this creek, they went to this particular garden, these are helpful. They remind us that they are eyewitness accounts, that the author wanted to tell the story of Jesus' life from a particular angle. An angle that God wanted recorded for every believer to know through all human history. So John's angle is to make it abundantly clear what was clear to those who walked with Jesus. Jesus was God. Jesus is God. Now, when it says that they enter the garden, I don't want you to picture your grandmother's rose garden or any of the manicured gardens that we have here on the east side, like the Washington Arboretum or Dunn or Streissguth with, you know, dozens of species of flowers and they're all sort of layered and landscaped for maximum viewing pleasure, right? It's not like that at all. It was essentially an olive tree orchard. So just picture rows of olive trees. If you're nice to Linda. Uh, she's traveled to the Middle East and she actually has with her this morning a book that's got her photographs from this exact garden. So it's really, really cool. And I bet she would love it if all of you swarmed her after the service <laugh>.

So the other gospels tell us that the garden was called Gethsemane, which literally means olive press. In fact, there's a church that's located in this garden, this physical place today. And when they excavated the ground for that church, they found olive presses. So the language here seems to say that the garden was walled off. And this indicates that it was a place of privacy, probably why Jesus was drawn to it. That's where he could have his most intimate conversations with his most invested. Verse two:

"Now, Judas, who betrayed him also knew the place for Jesus often met there with his disciples. So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons."

So Judas uses his experience with Jesus and leverages that to lead the people who want to kill Jesus, right to him. The garden that Jesus like best was tucked away. And so Jesus, Jesus and Judas, they've been there together numerous times. Have you ever had a place that was special to you because only your inner circle was invited there, right? Maybe it's a vacation house that your family goes to year over year. Or like a coffee house or a dive bar where your DNA gets together regularly. Maybe as a kid you had a fort or a tree house in the backyard, and only the people who knew the secret handshake or the password were allowed inside. I want you to imagine that someone who is a part of your inner circle, someone you've laughed and cried with, someone you trusted, has now joined false accusations against you and tells the authorities where to find you. And the worst part is, is he knows exactly where to find you because he's been there with you.

I don't know about you. I feel the insidious nature of his betrayal when I reflect on that. Judas is wicked and in many ways symbolizes the ultimate betrayer. I mean, it's not really a good thing when your name becomes synonymous with being a backstabbing, deceiving, snitchy, little double crosser. If you were telling a story at the office tomorrow and you said, oh, that guy is such a Judas, everybody would know exactly what you meant, right? It's probably better to live and die and be forgotten than be remembered through all of human history as the GOAT of betrayal. And yet the very same sin that calls to Judas, the same temptation that looms the same invitation from the enemy of God, to grab a hold of something that you can hold in your hands like a little more money, a little more power, a little more control, a little more favor from man, that temptation is offered to each and every one of us all the time.

In that sense, there's nothing special about Judas. In fact, that's in all of us. And we're not gonna beat it, we're not gonna endure that temptation unless our heart is captured by something that's more interesting, more compelling, and more powerful. Because Jesus offers us often things that we cannot hold in our hands. And if you've been a Christian for a while, you know this is true. Faith, peace, the very kingdom of God. These are hard things to hold in your hand. They're all invisible, but they're as real as the carpet beneath your feet right now. So if you've been a Christian a while, you've learned it, you can't hold on to both of these things. And if we don't fall more in love with the things that are eternal instead of fleeting, we will walk the path of Judas. We will know of Jesus, but never truly love him. We will always want more in life, but then constantly settle for counterfeits. We will be a slave to the approval of others and never really free. We will be unable to control our appetites and never satisfied.

Let's take a look at the entourage that Judas brings. He may be the most prolific betrayer of all time when it comes to snitches, but he's also not an idiot. I mean, really think about this: he has seen in person the power that Jesus has. He has watched with his own two eyes, the connection between Jesus and the Father and the miracles and the healing and all of the crazy things that happen in Jesus' life on earth. How do you approach trying to contain somebody like

that? Who do you bring with you? You can't exactly throw 'em in the back of the squad car. It's an incredibly difficult task. And so what does he do? Well, he goes and he tries to get back up. He's gonna bring some armed soldiers and some officers, high ranking officers that are battle tested. And we see both the Jewish elite and the Roman military play a role in this pivotal moment. Again, scholar Burge says that:

"John's portrait is clear. The entire world, Jew and Gentile has come around Jesus. Responsibility for what happens next rests with all of them."

So Jew and Gentile show up to try and stop Jesus. They bring lanterns and torches because the arrest is happening at night, which I wish I had time to unpack how shady that is. They bring weapons so they can use force if they need to. They're anticipating that. We'll talk more about that later. There's a lot going on here. Verse four:

"Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, 'Whom do you seek?' And they answered him, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' And Jesus said to them, 'I am he' and Judas who betrayed him, was standing with them." I love that John is making sure that we know what side Judas is on. "When Jesus said to them, 'I am he,' they drew back and fell to the ground."

Now this is a really interesting detail. It's a fascinating little detail that John captures. Imagine seeing this firsthand: these grown men armed and they're sent to the ground. And the Greek word here is consistent with kneeling in reverence, not like tripping over their own feet. And falling to the ground is a common response in the Bible to divine revelation. We see it happen twice in Ezekiel, three times in Daniel, three times in Acts, and three times in Revelation. These men have heard the voice of God. And even though they will carry out their task, Jesus has been crystal clear who he is. They aren't confused. And do not miss this church: They aren't forcing Jesus to do anything he has not chosen to do.

John comes back to this idea over and over and over and over again to make the point that God is in control. Along with his deity and his sovereignty, this is one of the central themes in the book of John. Jesus is in control of his own destiny, and we see it even now in the way that he tells a story of his arrest. Here's a, here's a good Bible question for all you, and I'm looking for a real answer, this isn't rhetorical: what detail that many of you know from the exchange in the garden between Jesus and Judas does John leave out? A little louder? Yes, the kiss, that's exactly right. I believe it's because John is continuing this theme throughout the gospel that Jesus is not being hijacked, he's not being coerced, he's not being caught off guard. And so the kiss isn't the point. Judas is not the one who ultimately identifies Jesus. Jesus is the one who identifies himself. He's the one who's asking questions. He's the one who allows, uh, himself to be arrested and escorted away. At no point is he overpowered or controlled. Matthew's version of this scene has Jesus reminding Peter that he could call 72,000 angels to his assistance at any given moment, right? Judas grabs a couple of lazy priests and some mall cops; Jesus has 72,000 angels on the ready. That is a thought. He is not overpowered, he is not being controlled. He is walking out the planet. He's been given and he knows what's coming. And Judas is not in the

driver's seat. Jesus is. Jesus isn't running away. He's standing in his ground. He's taking the cup the Father has given him. Verse seven:

"So he asked them again, 'Whom do you seek?' And they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' And Jesus answered, 'I told you that I'm he. So if you seek me, let these men go.' This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: 'Of those whom you gave me, I have lost not one.'"

So twice Jesus makes the soldiers say that they are only there for him, that his disciples won't get roped into his arrest. Why? Well, it's because he made a promise already twice, once in John 6 and once in John 17, that he would keep the disciples in God's name. Now, if you are new to the faith, I want you to know that Jesus is kind of a big deal when it comes to promises. He does not promise things lightly. He doesn't promise anything that he can't see through and he has promised to hold on in this story to his friends. Now you could say, well pastor, most of the disciples end up dying pretty horrible deaths. What kind of promise and protection is that? I would say that's true. But he didn't promise comfort or health or wealth or even 80 years on the planet. Not to them, not to us. So we have to give up this silly notion that being at the center of God's will means that we're going to be comfortable.

Doxa, you may, you may disagree with this, but if I died this week, this is what I would want you to know. Number one, God loves you infinitely more than you have ever understood. Number two, you and I require a savior to pay the price of our sins whom there has only ever been one who was willing and able, and that is Jesus Christ. And number three, the greatest threat to your Christianity is not your employer or your schedule or your kids or your parents or the Mormons or the Muslims or the liberals or the conservatives. It's not any government or cult or school curriculum. For most of us in this room, if not all of us, the greatest threat to our Christianity is the notion that we can be Christian and not obey Jesus Christ. There is no version of that. There's no version of being a Christian that requires no loss, no heartache, no real change to the normal everyday stuff of life for us. That our lives would only be marked by health and wealth and comfort, that we'd be feeling good and fully funded, that we can have a savior without sacrifice, that we can have a Lord without obedience, that we can have a king without his rule. It is a lie.

And not only is that belief wrong and incorrect, it's not even wrong in an innocent way. It's actually wrong in a really aggressively harmful way, because that approach to the Christian's faith will always result in one, if not both of two things. Number one, you will be sorely disappointed, because when things do get taken away from you in this life as happens, you'll rage at God and that will create a hard heart in you and you'll distrust his goodness. And number two, you will be bored to tears in your walk with Jesus. Christianity will be a boring, lifeless death march because, and I've said this many times to us, the best parts of the kingdom are only seen when you walk in obedience. The best parts of the kingdom were only seen when you do the things he told us to do.

In 1989, my family bought a minivan. It was a 1989 GMC Safari minivan. Uh, it was not nearly as cool as that one, but that's the closest picture. We never had rugged tires or a suspension

package. We never drove on riverbeds. I don't actually know what that person is doing <laugh>, but it was that color and that is the right year. So that just got a picture of that. And we're gonna leave that picture up cuz it's helpful for this, this story. So my parents purchased this vehicle, we drive it off the lot, and we're driving home and my dad kind of took the long way home so we could kind of see some things and enjoy our new car. It's the first time we had a third row. So we were very excited about that. My sister anxiously jumped into the back row. And as we're driving around the East Bay area in California, my dad said, oh look, there's some new buildings going up. And my sister said, what? I can't see it. And my dad said, just look out the window. It's right there on the right. And she said, I can't see that. A little while later, you know, it'd rained and if those of you who've ever been to the Bay Area, when it rains, everything turns super green. It's really pretty. Not anything comparable to that up here, but for Californians you thought you were pretty special. And so the hills are turning green and my mom's like, wow, look at how green the hills are. And my sister goes, I can't see it. And my mom says, just look out the window. It's right there. She says, I don't see anything. And the sort of tension in the van just keeps rising and rising.

Well it was only after a long drive that my parents realized in their haste to drive off the lot that uh, you can see the back window there is not a window at all. It's a solid panel <laugh>. And my mom had ordered a van with windows all the way down, but they had not installed that last window. And so my sister was having a really hard time seeing anything at all <laugh>. And I have to believe that for some of us here in the room, saying that we know Jesus, saying that we followed Jesus but not obeying him is a lot like sitting in the back row of that van. You will never see the things he wants you to see. You will never get to witness the amazing, incredible and life-changing aspects of so much of what God has for you because you're not willing to step out, encouraged in faith and actually obey him.

Church, a comfortable life is not often the mark of a believer. In fact, it's a huge threat to us. And this is why he chooses the image of an 1100 pound animal in a camel fitting through the eye of a needle, a couple of millimeters, that's not easy to pull off, right? A modernized version of that story would be like driving your Tesla through the Goldendoodle door, right? It's not gonna happen. So then what do we do? Well, we start by taking him at his word that he will not leave us no matter what. Especially if we walk in the courage to make some sacrifices, to not always choose the easy thing to love others in the way that actually requires sacrifice. Jesus is more trustworthy than your plans, your ideas, your intellect, your emotions, your spouse, your parents, your boss, your bank, your best friend. Jesus is more trustworthy than you. And one of the many reasons is that he's in control of all things. Nobody else on that list is in control of all things. But Jesus is.

Another really good reason to trust him is that he cares for us. In fact, this care is why he makes these guards and the religious leaders clarify, not once but twice, that he is protecting them until their time. You're here for me, right? Not them. You promise you're here for just me and not them, right? This is what he's doing: in his care, he's protecting. This last couple verses here, verse 10:

"Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) And so Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath. Shall I not drink the cup that the father has given me?"

You know, when you read the gospels and you see the behavior and the character and the personality of the disciples, it's sort of easy to pick out your favorites, right? And I'll be super honest, I really like Simon Peter. He lived on the coast with his wife. He fished to earn a living. He did really well for himself. He was a successful businessman kind of guy. He was a natural leader kind of guy. He was a, I'll speak for the group kind of guy. He was a no one is getting out of the boat, I'll get out of the boat kind of guy. He's also a cut the ear off of the guy threatening my friend kind of guy. <laugh>. I like him. And we read this story in 2023 and we think, oh, Simon Peter, you're not gonna solve this with the sword buddy. But you can also see his courage. You can see his determination to protect his friend, right? He's gonna go down swinging.

Peter most likely had on him what's called a makhaira. It was a common short sword that was carried in this time. It was kind of their version of a EDC, right? You can see a picture up there, what it looks like. But immediately Jesus rebukes him. And why does he do that? What did Peter do wrong here? I mean, he wanted to protect his friend, right? That doesn't seem so bad. But as we see with Peter a few times, he also wanted Jesus to do things that a military conqueror would. And that wasn't Jesus' plan. Not at all. Peter wanted to redirect or restrain Jesus from the plan at hand, what Jesus calls the cup the Father gave him. See, Peter wanted Jesus, but not the loss and the heartache that comes with following him in the world. Peter's approach was, if the world punches, I'm punching back. And Jesus gently but firmly corrects his thinking. He says, I don't need you to punch back. I can handle my own fight. And frankly, this fight is not gonna go the way you expect.

Alright, we've walked through these verses. I wanna give you some good news, okay? You ready for some good news? Turn to the person next to you and say, here comes the good news. Alright, Jesus, he understands your situation. We talked about how John includes these details that the others don't. In Luke 22, we see that he records Jesus' anguish and anxiety in this garden. A scene where Jesus, this is wild when you really think about it, Jesus asks the Father if he would be willing to change the plan. He says, I'll do what the Father tells me to do, but if you were willing to change the itinerary, I'm a big fan of that idea. He's saying this is immeasurably hard. I don't want to go forward with this.

And that is so comforting to me to know that it wasn't easy for him. Why is that good news? Because it means he actually understands intimately the hardest things that you are facing in your life. Both the life circumstances that go horribly wrong outside of us, as well as all the temptation that we feel inside of us. Hebrews 4:15 says, he was tempted in all of the ways that we are tempted but did not sin. What does that mean? That means there is literally nothing you have ever faced in your life, no temptation, no matter how long you've been on this, on this planet, how long you've been walking with Jesus, there is not a single kind of temptation that you have faced that Jesus is not acquainted with. And here's the part that we miss: When he

was fighting sin and living a holy life, it didn't happen because he had some kind of heavenly hall pass. In fact, Philippians 2 states that he emptied himself and he restricted himself from use of his Jesus power.

So what did he do instead? He relied solely on the Spirit. This is a theological idea that matters a lot. When Jesus fought sin, he did it by the Spirit just like you and I can. When he knew what was coming in the future that happened by the Spirit, just like can happen to you and I, on occasion. Jesus does it the same way that we can. It's easy to think of Jesus as having the like highest heavenly security clearance, and he's got the backstage pass, right? And we're out in the lawn seats squinting, trying to see if we can tell who's on stage. Jesus is on the lawn with us. When the Bible says that Jesus emptied himself, this is what Philippians 2 is talking about. Jesus is able to hear the spirit's voice loud and clear because he is resisting sin, that which squelches or drowns out the spirit. And secondly, he's walking in obedience so that the Spirit has no hesitation to speak to him. This is so practical for us, Doxa. This is what gives us the strength that we need for today. And occasionally, not all the time but occasionally God in his kindness will even reveal to us things that are coming down the road. And everything that we need to do that is found in the spirit. And the best part is when we struggle along the way, he shows us compassion cuz he knows a thing or two about hardship. He knows about betrayal, about loss, about loneliness, about facing something that you just wish with. All of your being was different. He understands your situation.

The word "sword" shows up more times in the Bible than I thought. 406 times to be exact. Granted a lot of it's the Old Testament, capturing different battles and things, but it also shows up in the New Testament quite a bit. Jesus says in Matthew's version of this scene, if you take the sword, you perish by the sword. If you read John 18, you'll notice that there are two swords in the story. There's the makhaira, the sword we talked about earlier in Peter's hand. And then there's a sword at the hip of the Roman soldiers, what was called the gladius. You can see those two side by side. The Roman sword wants to repress and restrain Jesus, to silence him, to make him and his people go away. The disciples sword wants to protect Jesus, but in a way that lets Peter ultimately decide what they face and what they run from. So this sword is trying to redirect or repurpose Jesus. This sword gladly joins a Jesus that crushes the Romans, but not one who was arrested by them.

And some of you in this room, you know people in your life that really embody that Roman sword. Maybe they don't want all Christians to die, but they'd like it if nobody ever spoke to them ever again about God, including God himself. They would prefer it if everyone left them alone and that God and his people were silent. They wish all Christians would just open their minds and quit being so judgey, which I don't totally disagree with that for the record. They'd love to see the government make it harder for religious idiots to do what they do. They'd love to see Christians forced to be quiet.

Some of you here in this room, you carry Peter's sword. You know who Jesus is and you might even say you love him. I don't question the sincerity of that. But you're constantly asking him to do things the way that you want. You're often asking him to do things differently rather than

give you the strength to face things the way they are. Does that make sense? By force, you intend to push back, fight back, and wrestle every difficult situation to the ground. And this can look a lot of different ways: Maybe you're working 60 or 70 or 80 hours a week just so that you're not ever vulnerable enough to need God's provision. Maybe you wall yourself off relationally and emotionally so that nobody can hurt you and you would require God's comfort. Maybe you crush others in every argument because you're ultimately afraid that what they're saying might be a little bit right and you don't know how to fix it. When life punches, you punch back. This is Peter's sword.

Before we wrap up, I want to acknowledge that there is a third category. You've got the Roman guards and you've got Peter, but you also have all the disciples watching the scene unfold. And from the world's perspective, they have reason to be afraid. The swords are scary. They feel the blade of the sword right now, maybe you're in the same, the same space, you're moments away from the next tech layoff or your health continues to wane and wobble, or your family feels more divided than it ever has been, or your marriage is on the ropes, or you've got a child that's running from God, or you're trying to do life on campus and get to your classes and all of it just feels like a huge pressure cooker and you're not sure if you're gonna make it out the other side.

Some of you here are afraid of the sword. And I want you to hear me say, there is no sword that can take away what is most precious to you in Jesus Christ. There is no sword that can separate you from the love of God. There is no sword that can cause you harm, that he cannot redeem. Jesus is not giving up on his plan. He's not giving up on you. He takes the cup. And even if you're facing something right now that you would do just about anything to have it be different, he's not leaving you. And so just like the disciples, we're not guaranteed a comfortable life, but we can know that it's not going to end until the day, the hour, the minute that God has ordained. Your days are numbered and the number ain't changing.

So when threat arises to cut the disciples mission, and maybe even they're very lives short, Jesus, the shepherd steps in. He says, you can arrest me, but they aren't done. They've got work to do, they've got words to share, they've got stories to tell. They've got people to love. They've got miracles to perform. They've got sin to repent of. And when all that's done, then they can join me in paradise. But not until then. And Doxa, for all of us, I know we have a lot of means and resources in our church and there will absolutely be days that are filled with feasts and friends and comfort and those are good things and those days are a gift. But I'm telling you, there are days that feel like God is locked up. It feels like your whole world is upside down. And despite every outside evidence to the contrary, Jesus is absolutely reigning over it all. He's taking every painful, breath-sucking, spirit-crushing hardship that you and I face, and he's weaving it into something beautiful. And this is the crazy part: he's weaving it into something beautiful that you and I will stand on the other side and say, you know what? I get it. I get why he did it that way. I mean, I wouldn't have written it that way. It hurt like hell. But I see now, I see why he used it and I can definitely see why he's good.

Church, Jesus is not threatened by the sword. And he's not needing you to take up the sword and do it your way either. Peter thought he could possibly hold on tightly to the things he loved most and Jesus. And Jesus showed him that's not how the kingdom works. There was no savior without sacrifice. That those that resisted Jesus, they thought they could silence him. They thought they could be rid of his useless religion and all those who followed him. And what they didn't know was their little torches were never going to be able to put out the light of the world. Their tiny knives would not annihilate he who rides the white horse with a sword coming out of his mouth. Jesus is not restrained, he is not repurposed, he is not repressed, he is not redirected. Jesus is Lord over all, he is threatened by no one. And we will all end up laying our swords down.

Let's pray. Jesus, I confess that in my own life I have looked at my circumstances and I have first asked you to change them rather than to change me. I've been quick to be disappointed when comfort leaves. And there have been moments when I'm trying to figure out what you're up to and why you're doing the things in my life rather than looking for the ways that you're trying to reveal yourself to me in the midst of hardship. And so help me, help the people of Doxa, help us look for you in those spaces that you often do the most lasting and the most helpful work in us, in the midst of hard things, in the midst of suffering. That we would praise you for our times of celebration, that we would praise you in the feast, but that we would also recognize your goodness and kindness even when things are hard. I pray that Doxa would increasingly be a church that worships you for who you are and does not ask, or in some weird way try to require that you be something different. You do not bow down to us. We bow down to you. So help us, help us see who you really are. Thank you for your love and grace. Even in the midst of sitting on a throne of power. We pray these things for your glory. Amen.