

November 8, 2015
Sunday Morning Service
Series: John
Community Baptist Church
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as we prepare to study John 18:1-11.

1. Why did Jesus lead the disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane if Judas knew that is where He would probably go?
2. Why were so many soldiers in the group with Judas?
3. Why did the soldiers fall down when Jesus told them “I am He”?
4. Why did Peter have a sword with him?
5. How could the disciples have reacted in a demonstration of faith in Jesus?
6. What would you have done?

SHEATHE YOUR SWORD
John 18:1-11

The world is falling apart right before our eyes—or so it seems. In the past several months, we have witnessed and experienced storms more vicious and damaging than any previous storms on record. We now know what a “1,000 year rain” is. We have seen the reports about the mother of all hurricanes that struck Mexico with 200 m.p.h. winds. We hear almost every day about the effects of the drought in the west that is worse than any drought on record in America.

On the other side of the world, war in the Middle East has the whole region set on its ear. Thousands of refugees are fleeing their homelands and scattering throughout Europe. And Europe does not know what to do with all the people. Some love them; many hate them. Others fear the onslaught is going to erupt in civil war. Russia is flexing her muscle in Syria and people who know something about the Bible are sure the Antichrist is somehow going to pop out of the whole mess.

As we have said before, persecution against Christians is at an all-time historic high worldwide. People who love Christ, but happen to live in virtually any of the Middle Eastern countries, worship at the peril of their lives. Prison has become a most common house of worship for believers in those lands.

In response to all this chaos, some followers of Christ actually wonder where God is. “Why does He allow these terrible things to happen?” they wonder. We hear professing Christians bemoaning the current leadership of this once Christian nation and fear that in the next election things will actually get worse. They ask, “How could God allow this in the nation that once honored Him?”

There is no need to ask such questions. God is in control. In America we are being governed by fools and sinners because, as a culture, we abandoned God and His Word. God promised many times in His Bible that people who reject His governing in their lives will reap governors who do not know Him or His Word. The once great America is under the direct judgment of God right now. He is not absent. He is very present. People just don’t understand that He is in control.

People in our society today are so much like the people in ancient Israel who were being pummeled by God’s judgment all the while accusing Him of being absent, wondering why He was not in control. They were unable to see His hand of judgment. For hundreds of years God had promised through the prophets that He would send specific judgments against His people if they rejected Him. As far back as Moses’ day, he warned, *The LORD will strike you with wasting disease and with fever, inflammation and fiery heat, and with drought and with blight and with mildew. They shall pursue you until you perish (Deuteronomy 28:22).* In time, the people rejected God, He kept His promise, and they still didn’t “get it.” Even while they

endured famine, enemy attacks, and finally destruction, they never understood that this was God's controlling hand. Jeremiah bemoaned, *Then I said, "These are only the poor; they have no sense; for they do not know the way of the LORD, the justice of their God"* (Jeremiah 5:4).

In similar fashion, Jesus taught His followers over and over, with a certain amount of detail, what was coming to pass. He told them that when they went to Jerusalem, one of their own would betray Him and turn Him over to the authorities. He told Peter that he would deny Him. He promised that everyone would scatter. But in the context of all of these things coming to pass, the disciples responded as though they never heard such things. Looking at the picture painted by this text, we get the idea that the disciples were convinced they needed to take matters into their own hands.

What a picture this is of our own foolishness. We claim that we trust our Savior. We claim that we believe He knows all things and is in control of all things. Then we proceed to act as if nothing will turn out right unless we manipulate and control all the circumstances that come to bear in our lives. Instead, we need to be zealous to know our Lord from the Scripture. We need to be zealous to do what pleases Him. We need to be zealous to submit to His leading.

Jesus Led His Followers to the Place of Arrest (vv.1-3).

At the precise time according to the Divine plan, Jesus led His followers to a garden (vv.1-2). We know by reading the entire story that this is a picture of the Master leading the disciples to the place of testing after having instructed them. John wrote, *When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered (v.1)*. After Jesus had instructed the disciples, it was time to move to the next step in the process of redemption.

That instruction is probably what we find recorded in the previous four or five chapters. There we read that Jesus had warned Peter that he would deny Him and warned the rest that they also would forsake Him (13:38; 16:32). He warned that He would return to the Father and send the Holy Spirit (14:1-30). He warned that the world would hate the followers like they hated Him (15:18-25). He

promised that they would experience great sorrow but that the sorrow would be turned to joy (16:16-24). He prayed that they would be set apart for God's glory through His Word (17:1-26).

After all this teaching, one would think that the disciples would expect a serious trial, would expect the outpouring of the world's wrath, would expect Jesus to be killed, rise again, and go to heaven, and would expect the presence of God the Holy Spirit. They did not. We have far more instruction from Jesus than those eleven had up to this point. And yet we respond to various situations, trials, and speed bumps of life as if God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not at all aware of our circumstances.

Every step of this journey to the cross was orchestrated by God. The other Gospel writers point out the detail of Jesus praying and agonizing in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mt. 26; Mark 14; Luke 22). While Jesus prayed for strength, the disciples slept. Jesus was well aware of the coming events and the disciples were clueless.

The record reminds us that Jesus continues to pray for us because often we are as dense about the future as the disciples were. He had prayed most recently, *"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word"* (John 17:20). That is us. He is right now interceding in heaven for us. Hopefully, we are not as careless as the disciples. People who are overconfident about their abilities tend to fall into sin. We easily ignore Paul's warning, *Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall (1 Corinthians 10:12)*.

The Master leads us to the place of testing. He often leads to a familiar place. He took the followers to the Garden of Gethsemane *for Jesus often met there with his disciples (v.2b)*. Maybe this particular garden was a place where Jesus and the disciples met any time they were in Jerusalem (which was not many). Certainly it was a place they frequented during this week leading up to the Passover. Luke told us that *He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him (Luke 22:39)*. Furthermore, because Jesus and the disciples typically stayed in Bethany each night during this week, they would have walked past the garden on their way up and over the Mount of Olives. Matthew points out that Jesus taught (or argued with) the people at the temple daily, *and leaving*

them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there (Matthew 21:17). Some nights they might have slept in the open in the garden. And every day he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet (Luke 21:37).

Based on other information about Jesus, we would not be surprised to learn that He spent much of the night in prayer in that garden. At any rate, Judas was very familiar with the garden. Because of that, the story seems to indicate that the enemy set a successful trap (vv.2-3).

Events transpired as they did because the enemy discerns the habits of Jesus and His followers. *Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples (v.2).* Judas knew where to send the authorities because He was aware of Jesus' habits. Oh no! What a terrible choice Jesus made to go to the garden that night! No. Jesus led the disciples to that spot so that the enemy could find them.

Does it concern us that the enemy is well aware of our fellowship habits? That has always been the case. Remember that Daniel's enemies knew that they would have to trap the servant of God regarding his practice of prayer. They knew for certain that Daniel would pray three times a day. Does the enemy know how to disrupt your time of Bible reading and prayer? Do the pawns of Satan today know what truths we stand for, what beliefs we will not negotiate? Are we afraid that the enemy knows?

On one hand, we are wise to exercise due discretion about keeping our habits of fellowship private. In a day when many professing Christians post every detail of their lives on social media, we are wise to keep much to ourselves. And yet, on the other hand, if there is any truth to the theory that the government and google know our every thought as well as our habits, do we fear what they know?

There is a certain amount of fear that comes from knowing that the enemy controls fearsome resources. *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 (v.3).* Who did Judas bring with Him? The *officers from the chief priests and Pharisees* were the temple guard. They wielded authority over temple and religious issues. That they were the arresting authorities

is clear because they took Jesus to the Sanhedrin, not to Pilate's headquarters. The *band of soldiers* provided back up, support, and a force to quell any riot that might erupt. This band of soldiers is described by the word *speira*. It referred to a Roman military unit of about 600 to 1,000 soldiers. This cohort was stationed in Jerusalem because of the volatile political situation. They would especially be on guard during the Passover when passions ran high. But it is doubtful that 600 -1,000 soldiers were in this group. Maybe only about 200 members accompanied the temple police.

Imagine how those country-bumpkin disciples felt as they squinted their eyes to try to figure out how many soldiers there were. A show of authority of any size can be unnerving and cause us to scatter or be silent. But consider how our forefathers in the faith stood in the face of formidable threats. We wonder who could stand against the religious authorities of Jerusalem? After being filled with the Holy Spirit, the apostles did. Who can stand against the power of Rome? The early Christians did. Who withstood the persecuting Roman emperors? Our forefathers gave their lives by the hundreds because they refused to back down. Who withstood the inquisition of the Roman Catholic Church? Men like Luther, Knox, and the other Reformers did. Who withstood the attacks of Henry VIII, Bloody Mary, and other pro-Catholic kings and Queens in Europe? Tyndale, Bunyan, Ridley and a host of other preachers gave their lives resisting the persecuting enemy.

Life has not become more pleasant for Christians in modern days. How many believers were punished or executed in the Nazi prison camps? How many Christians have suffered in the Gulags of Communist Russia? How many Christians stood successfully against Mao Tse Tung's rape of China? And who stands today in the face of persecution and execution committed against those who love Christ all over the globe? The enemy is fearsome, large, powerful and opposed to Christ. But we do not lose heart while looking at the massive gathering of soldiers. Why? Jesus promised, *"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33).

Jesus Knew What Would Happen (vv.4-9).

He knows because He is God (vv.4-6). While the disciple were no doubt quite afraid, God the Son did not hesitate to confront the enemy. *Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" (v.4).* In retrospect, we take great comfort in the certainty that Jesus was well aware of circumstances. He knew what was happening at the moment. Jesus knew why the soldiers with weapons had arrived. Jesus knew who brought them to that spot. Jesus did not run away to hide, but approached the enemy.

When He approached the enemy to surrender to arrest, Jesus knew what this arrest would lead to. He understood the mocking, torture, lying, humiliation, and eventual execution that would result. But He came forward to address the enemy.

Also, we should stand amazed at Jesus' willingness to cooperate when He knew what was about to transpire. How could He calmly approach the very people who would lie about Him and execute Him though He was innocent? He had settled that matter when He laid aside His glory and took on the form of a man. He reaffirmed His intention to win our salvation only moments before as He consecrated Himself anew to the task. He had prayed, *"And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth" (John 17:19).* He had concluded, *"My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:39).* He was confident, *"That is why my heart is glad and my soul rejoices. My body rests securely because you do not abandon my soul to the grave or allow your holy one to decay" (Psalm 16:9-10 GWV).*

Jesus showed us what faith in God looks like in a time of crisis. Peter picked up on Jesus' lesson and challenged us: *"For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly (1 Peter 2:20-23).*

We do well to trust our Savior in such times of testing because

God the Son reveals authority. *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.* In some miraculous way, Jesus revealed a small amount of His glory during the confrontation. According to the Greek text, Jesus spoke two words *ego eimi* which means most literally "I Am."

That statement held great meaning for the Jews. It was the name by which God revealed Himself to Moses and the slaves He released from Egypt. The Jewish temple guard knew exactly that Jesus just claimed that He is God. Along with that statement, it seems like some kind of force accompanied the claim that knocked the enemies to the ground. Common sense would conclude that Judas and the soldiers ought to run away from this power and authority. But sin and Satan are not so easily dissuaded. We cannot help but observe sinners mocking God, virtually calling God out as brazenly as the religious authorities who challenged Jesus to come down from the cross. How brave they are.

The soldiers picked themselves up, composed themselves, and continued to exert foolish human authority toward God the Son. He knows who He will save (vv.7-9). The enemy does not have authority over those who the Master protects (vv.7-8). *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."* Again the enemy asserted that they wanted Jesus the Nazarene. They did not seek for God the Son who astonished people with His teaching. They were not looking for the Son of man who proved His divinity through great miracles. They wanted to arrest Jesus, the mere man from Nazareth, who was just another hillbilly from the hills of Galilee in their minds.

Jesus gave Himself into their hands but demanded that they let the followers flee if they chose to do so. The soldiers could have arrested them too. The disciples feared the authorities greatly. But they were safe in Jesus' care – even if they were ignorant of that care.

Our Master completes the eternal plan. *This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one" (v.9).* Jesus had already made this point about protecting the people God the Father placed in His care. He had prayed, *"While I*

was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled” (John 17:12). Fulfilling the Father’s Word, the eternal plan of the Godhead was Jesus’ compelling motivation.

The decree of salvation was settled in eternity. The plan for God the Son to win that salvation through His sacrifice was determined in eternity. The people who will be saved through that sacrifice is determined in eternity. The Son accomplished every detail of the plan in order to guarantee that God is true to His Word and promises.

We followers should be so thankful for our Savior’s affirming work. We should trust Him fully in all matters, not just in salvation for the future. We should demonstrate that trust in how we live.

Jesus Controlled the Situation (vv.10-11).

Though Jesus was in control, that did not keep His followers from trying to take control (v.10). One follower thought he was doing God’s will. *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.) (v.10).* Peter, who vowed to die for Jesus, drew a sword and managed to cut off a servant’s ear. Here was proof positive the man was a fisherman – not a soldier. It is good for us to be content to do what God has equipped us to do.

But why did Peter even have a sword? Had Jesus not approved of taking along a sword? Some of His words at the Last Supper might indicate such was the case. *He said to them, “But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one” (Luke 22:36).* A moment later, *they said, “Look, Lord, here are two swords.” And he said to them, “It is enough” (Luke 22:38).* In the first text, Jesus spoke metaphorically. He was explaining that because of His crucifixion things were going to change. His followers were not going to be welcomed and cared for by strangers. It was going to be a time of conflict – a time when they would need to provide for themselves. Therefore, the sword motif was simply a graphic way of describing the hatred of the world coming against them. This idea is affirmed when the disciples pointed out that they had two swords available and

Jesus responded, “That is enough of that kind of talk.” Also when Peter did decide to use the weapons of the flesh to defend his position, Jesus told him to stop acting that way.

Let us be slow to criticize followers like Peter. We, the followers of Christ, often demonstrate how challenging it is to rest in Christ’s control. The most natural reaction in times of testing is to resort to the fleshly instincts. We argue, we fight, we defend ourselves because we really don’t trust Christ. We go to great extremes to remove the trial in life because we disagree that God knows the best way to make us like Himself. We even spend much time and effort trying to elect a good president and good congress because we fail to realize that God is using bad presidents and a weak and foolish congress to judge our nation for our multiplied sins and offenses against Him.

While we run ourselves ragged trying to do what is unnecessary, our Master executes the Divine plan (v.11). He does not need our protection. *So Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword into its sheath” (v.11a).* Jesus’ plan was to complete the will of the Father by dying on the cross. Peter’s plan was to protect the Messiah so that He could restore Israel. Israel needs a Messiah who can protect Himself. We need a Savior whose word, work, and salvation eclipse anything the world has to offer. Therefore, we yield to Him by using the proper weapons. Paul taught, *For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:4).* Our most effective weapon is God’s teaching from the Bible.

Jesus didn’t need a human body guard. He was okay. Oh, but He was being arrested. That’s right. He must do the Father’s will. Therefore, He rebuked Peter again saying, *“Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?” (v.11b).* Jesus came to do the Father’s will. My salvation is the Father’s will. So is my sanctification. Therefore, the better response is to know and practice the promises of God’s Word and trust Him to do what is best not only for me and for you, but for our nation, our world, yea, for all creation. Put away you human defense and trust in God’s Word.