

The Arrest

Last 24 Hours of Christ

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This morning, I do want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the gospel of John, the fourth of the four gospels, chapter 18. Now as you're finding John 18, for those of you who at times want to put your eyes particularly on the page, let me encourage you also you may want to turn to Matthew 26 as well. In fact, today as we come to the scene there in the heart of the garden of Gethsemane, we not only find this account in the gospel of John but in all four gospels because we are simply walking through what you and I know as the last 24 hours of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Now if you're new to us, you're a visitor today or maybe you haven't been with us in some while, don't worry we're just in the early stages of this journey walking through the respective gospel, seeing the entirety of everything that took place in those final 24 hours. And today we make our way again to the garden of Gethsemane. We find that Judas and a group of men are in the background making their way toward where Jesus is praying. Today, we find ourselves with what we call the arrest of Jesus Christ. In those final 24 hours, we're about 25% in, we're about six hours into this and what we're about to see is that from this point forward technically nothing will be the same.

John 18:1 it says,

1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. 2 And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples. 3 Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. 4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? 5 They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. 6 As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground. 7 Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. 8 Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: 9 That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me

have I lost none. 10 Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. 11 Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

As we read through this story according to the gospel of John, it is the famous betrayal of Jesus by Judas, and we know most commonly and rightfully so that that betrayal was done with that famous kiss and, of course, that is listed in the other gospel accounts but the reason that I wanted to read from the gospel of John is we see a perspective, we see an angle of the arrest unlike any other, after all, Jesus simply speaks a word and everybody who is gathered falls back.

As we walk through this passage as we've done in previous weeks, I just want to kind of navigate through a series of somewhat obvious questions but to really help us really grasp what is happening, and one of the things that we discover is that by walking through these events of 2,000 years ago, they cannot be relinquished just to this vacuum of history, we're going to discover that when we get to the final question, the "why" question, that everything that happened in those last 24 hours is very prophetic for the world you and I are living in today. The world we navigate today, tomorrow, whatever may befall us, we see the hint and the idea of the prophetic of how to live.

So let's begin with the "when," when does this story take place? Well, the obvious answer is it takes place between Jesus Christ having that famous prayer in the garden of Gethsemane where he said, "Not my will but yours be done," three times, and what we know of the trial of Jesus that will commence in the midst of the night which when we get there you'll discover if you don't already know, that every aspect and facet of it was illegal, unethical and immoral and I'm being nice using those descriptors. Now why is that important? Because this event, yes, it is between two subsequent events but more than that, up until this point things have been decently calm. I mean think about it, the Last Supper, sure, he kneels down and washes their feet, they have a meal together, and I'm sure that at times conversation got a little loud but not much out of control. They make a journey to the garden of Gethsemane, the Bible says they sang a hymn, Jesus is teaching, obviously they're communicating, even in the garden when Jesus pulls away from Peter, James and John there was tension and the Bible says in the gospel of Luke that his sweat was as blood, but there wasn't chaos. From this point forward, this is why the "when" part is important, from this moment forward, chaos is going to ensue. There's not going to be another calm moment. There's not going to be another time to just take a deep breath and collect one's thoughts. From this moment everything from our perspective is going to "go sideways."

So who is there? I've used a good old Southern word here and let me say it differently than it's spelled on the screen: e'rybody. Y'all have heard that before, right? Who came to the gathering? E'rybody. That's our way of saying, "Man, there were so many folks here I didn't know who was there and people I didn't expect there, everybody was there." And the reason I use that word is because not every soul and citizen of Jerusalem was there but everybody who's important to the story is there.

Now the two principal characters obviously are Judas, who will betray him, and Jesus Christ. We know that but then it says here in verse 3 that he received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees. Now you go walking through scripture and you'll discover that when the Bible says "a band of," it is typically somewhere between 4 and 600. It can vary on occasion so let's just kind of take the middle ground, there are 500 individuals who have shown up with lanterns, torches and weapons, basically a small militia has gathered in the garden of Gethsemane. It mentions the Pharisees. It mentions the chief priests. I think there's more than just what we might call today the mercenaries that have shown up, the leaders who have funded this, organized this and plotted this, want to make sure it goes as they have paid for it to go.

Then you have the disciples. We know that Peter, James and John were there in the inner part of the garden, but the others were on the outskirts and they may not have exactly necessarily been right where it was happening at first but I can promise you when they heard all the noise they quickly followed. And in the gospel of Mark 15, there is this unique story about the arrest of Jesus where there's a young man, maybe late teens, early 20's, we don't know for sure, that it says he was wearing a linen coat and because of all the chaos, he actually ran away wearing nothing but his birthday suit. Now we don't know exactly who he is. There are many that believe that he is the John Mark who the Lord inspired to give us the gospel of Mark, but I think we can safely say by looking at who is there, chaos has ensued. You've got a militia of 500 men, you've got religious leaders, you've got disciples running into each other, and you've got a teenager running through the garden naked.

Chaos has arrived to the story but the next question is very critical: where did it happen? Now I know what you're thinking, "I got this. It's the garden of Gethsemane. We've been there for three weeks. This is the easiest one to answer." Well, you're technically right but I want you to look at verse 4, "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him." Push pause. Imagine the scene. He's there in the middle of the garden of Gethsemane which means to be pressed out. Peter, James and John have fallen asleep three times on their watch. The other disciples are on the outskirts. It's not a very large place, so to speak. He knows that Judas has gone to betray him because at the Last Supper he told him, "Go do what you must do." And I don't care how you "slice or dice it," 500 men with weapons in a garden aren't going to be real quiet.

So Jesus knows, hears and sees what's about to happen. Notice the next statement, "went forth unto them." Now that statement is critical to our text. What is about to befall Jesus Christ, he's about to be illegally tried, he's about to be beaten, mocked, made fun of, harassed, threatened. I mean, according to Isaiah 52, his body will be almost absolutely unrecognizable and what is not recorded? He didn't hide behind an olive tree. In fact, he didn't just stay silent and say, "Well, maybe they'll just by." What does it say he did? He went forth. He engaged. This is why it's so critical because everything that's about to take place did not happen because Judas and these men were clever. It did not happen because man's ploys are that ingenious. Let me tell you why it happened, it happened because Jesus Christ, God in flesh, said, "Now is when redemption will take place."

You see, a couple of chapters earlier in John 10:28, there's all kinds of threatenings going on and Jesus makes this great statement, he says, "Nobody takes my life lest I give it." In other words, you look at the story in Luke 4, you know, they take a group of men, and if you're not familiar, Jesus preached his first sermon and they tried to throw him off a cliff. Do you know what the Bible says? He escaped in the midst of them. There were a lot of thoughts of how that happened. It doesn't matter, the fact is that's incredible. This same Jesus walked on water, multiplied the food, don't you think in a great game of hide-and-seek he could get away?

And what does it say? He went forth. He said, "Nobody takes my life but I will give it." He initiates. You know, in Hebrews 12 it talks about the great cloud of witnesses and such that surround us, and then in verse 2 it says, "And Jesus Christ, the author and the finisher of our faith, for the joy that was set before him endured the cross." It's almost and it's a horrible analogy and so forgive me for doing so, it's like that athlete who knows it's his time to get to bat, he knows it's his time to run the play, that knowing, "All right, all that I've done is for this moment." He went forth.

So what happened? Well, the first thing I want to call your attention to, an unbelievable display of power. Notice in verse 5 after he said, "Whom seek ye?" in verse 4, "Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them." Look at verse 6, "As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground." There's 500 men with weapons. Jesus simply says, "I am he." Now there's a lot of good discussion and debate. Did he say as you and I would say, "I'm here," or did he invoke the name of God according to Exodus 3 when Moses said, "Who do I say has sent me." And he says, "I AM WHO I AM." I've got news for you, it doesn't matter which one of those equations you want to pick, Jesus spoke and they fell down. It shows for us the unadulterated power of God just with his voice. You realize in Hebrews 1:3 it says that the Lord upholds the whole creative order simply because he said so. The Bible says that one day at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue will confess. It shows us the power of when God speaks, humanity falls.

Ah, but there's another power. Are you ready? It shows us the incredible power that sin has on us. Look in verse 6, Jesus says a word, knocks them down like bowling pins, and they get back up. Now I don't know about you but I might have enough intelligence to say this might not have been a good idea.

Now one of my favorite stories and I account for it all the time because it just blows my mind, is the story in the Old Testament when Samson kills 1,000 men with the jawbone of one single donkey. And the reason it's so mesmerizing to me, and you've heard this before, is there's 999 dead guys and the last guy says, "Yup, I can take him." Now think about this for a moment: 500 most likely well-trained soldiers with one word fall down and the power of sin to say, "I don't care who this guy might be, we're still coming after him."

But then there's this picture. One of the reasons that I love this account in the gospel of John is what happens immediately after they "apprehend him." In verse 10 it says, "Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Now allow me to paint a picture for you. All these men have come upon Jesus to apprehend him, he's incredibly physically, numerically outnumbered yet the Bible gives us very much the specifics of who it was that Peter tried to take out. Now it says that it was his right ear. Now that may not seem significant to you but allow me to "paint a picture." Do you think for one moment the person who we know as Peter is an indecisive person? No. In fact, if anybody puts the proverbial foot in his mouth, it is Peter. I mean, he is the one, he is quick to respond, he is quick to speak, he has never waited a moment in his life. So do you think that for one moment Peter sat back and said, "Hm, what would be the best way to articulate a response to this situation?" No. Do you know what he did? He came out swinging because that's what Peter does. And by the way, this old fisherman of a guy, don't you think he knew how to "wield a sword"? After all, he had his own sheath. This was his. He was a concealed sword carrier, to put it in our terminology. He was certified. He'd gone to the class. He knew what he was doing.

You say, "Why is that so important, his right ear?" Anybody who has any experience at all with a sword would never strike an opponent, let me allow a clock illustration, from 12 to 6. You would never do that. Have you ever in your life seen a "sword fight" where somebody comes at it from the top to the bottom? Never. Number one, if this guy's in a militia, which he was, he probably had a helmet on. Number two, even if you think, well, maybe he was trying to, as the old movie says, a flesh wound and take one of the arms off, he would have had some type of material on. Why the right ear? Here's my thoughts: because he was going to decapitate him. This is Peter. He's not after a flesh wound. He's not here to tickle him. He's here to take his head off and when you go to take a "head off," you don't go from 12 to 6, you go from 9 to 3, or 3 to 9, whichever way you're swinging. Why is that important? Because the only way I can picture that his ear gets cut off is that when Peter came swinging he ducked and it sliced it off.

Now we know from the other accounts that Jesus reaches down and he heals it and here's the picture that I want to draw more than just the actual swinging of the sword. Jesus tells him, "Put the sword up, this isn't the time." How many proverbial black eyes does the church have when we come wielding the sword alongside of the message? Think about that for a moment. How many times have we been like Peter trying to take it in our own hands? They've outnumbered us and we're just going to start swinging and what do we usually do because we're humanity? We "go for the clean head-shot." It's an incredible picture of not only what transpired there in the garden of Gethsemane but more than that, Jesus making it clear, and this is going to be important when we get to the "why," that when it comes to propagating truth, if you've got the sword of the Spirit, you don't need a metal sword from your sheath. We'll deal with that in just a moment.

Then it's very prophetic. Now this is where we need Matthew 26 to come into play. You see, in the background here there's some conversation that takes place and, to me, this is

one of those passages, one of those verses in the Bible that you can read 100 times and still not weigh the gravity of it. There in Matthew 26:53 when disputing about the situation, Jesus makes this statement, he says, "Do you not know that I can call down 12 legions of angels right now?" Now some of you may be questioning why is that so significant. Let's look at it numerically or quantitatively. A legion was on the low side 2,000, on the high side 6,000 so we've got a lot to work with there, but more importantly it's not the quantity, it's the quality. You see, unfortunately our culture has been done a horrible injustice by what we might call the Hallmarks of the world because biblical angels are not short fat guys with halos who sit on clouds. No, in fact, the book of Isaiah 37:36, there is an angel, one angel who shows up and he kills 185,000 men in one night. Guess what? With one sword. It's almost as if the Lord is looking at Peter going, "Seriously? I've got 12 legions of angels at my disposal and you think you can take this?"

Now let's do some math for just a moment. If one angel has the capacity to kill 185,000 men in one night with one sword and Jesus says that, "I can call down 12 legions," if a legion is only 2,000, that means he is saying that, "Right now I have the ability with one word to eliminate 4 ½ billion people," which by the way, the world population wasn't even close to that in those days. Let's go to the high side. What if it had been 6,000? What if that's the legion number that Jesus was referring to? You can run the numbers, 13.3 billion. Let's put that in today's terminology. That means that Jesus Christ even today if this scene were to happen today, in the snap of his finger could eliminate all of humanity two times over and he says, "Don't you know I can but not now." You do see why this is prophetic, right? Because there is coming a day where he will. There is coming a day where literally with his word he speaks and what he said, "Do you not think I can," will actually take place.

So let's get to the "why." Why is this story so important for us? Why is it important for us to see what happened with Malchus' ear and with the legion of angels? Why is that so important? Because it shows us the power of God. You say, "Well, I know Jesus spoke and 500 people fell backwards." You think that's impressive, Jesus can take a sinner who has transgressed and rebelled against him their entire life and with one word say, "You're forgiven." With one word, "You're saved." With one word, "You're going from hell to heaven." Do you not see the power? In fact, Jesus made this statement earlier in the gospel of John, "Do not fear him who can take your physical life but he who has possession of the soul."

You see, it's not about just falling backwards and getting a second chance to get back up, it's not about the jawbone of the donkey back in the days of Samson, the reason it's so important for us is because Jesus Christ alone has the power and authority to determine where you spend eternity. You don't. Oh, we're good at thinking we do. We concoct our plans, we have ideas, we have spreadsheets. "Oh, if I do this versus that everything is going to be good." No. According to John 5:20 all judgment, that means your soul and mine, is in the hands of Jesus Christ alone and for ourselves, that's a lot of power because most of the people that we listen to most frequently don't have any authority over our soul but we allow them to dictate our actions. Jesus has power over our soul and how often do we say, "Eh, I'd rather listen to the loudest voice"?

But it's also a picture, a picture of what happens when the word of God truly goes forth in our life. You know, when you get to Ephesians 6 it talks about the armor of God that's placed on a believer in Jesus Christ. It talks about the helmet of salvation. It talks about the shield of faith. It talks about our feet being shod with the preparation of the gospel. It talks about the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness. It talks about all those things that are "defensive" in nature. Do you know what the only offensive weapon that we have listed there is the sword of the Spirit which the Bible clarifies is the word of God. You say, "Why is that such a critical picture?" Because why do we continue to pick up physical swords to "get our way" when Jesus says, "Just have me speak it and it's done." Do you know one of our biggest issues? We're just like Peter, we'd rather go out and fight somebody than get on our knees and actually pray that God takes care of it. Do you know what the Bible says? "Revenge is mine saith the Lord." Man, that's a bad picture because we look a whole lot like Peter, don't we? Somebody says something ugly to us, we go swinging. Somebody believes the wrong thing, we go swinging.

And when Jesus speaks it, it happens and last but not least, it's prophetic and I mentioned all the numerical possibilities and, by the way, if you're one of those who really enjoys the end of the Bible, particularly the book of Revelation, it really doesn't matter how large the population gets, by the time all the judgments are done the number of humanity could be easily taken care of with the smallest number of legions. Why is that critical? Because there is a day coming that Jesus Christ is going to physically return, and when he does so in Revelation 19 it says he has the armies of heaven with him. That's not just the angelic beings that he referenced and, by the way, you do understand 12 legions is child's play because Hebrews 12 says the numbers of angels is innumerable. Not only the angelic beings but it says that you and I as his believers, we follow him and guess what commences there? Exactly what Peter wanted then and what Jesus said could happen if he spoke it. There is coming a day where Jesus Christ will speak it and those that have rejected, those that have said, "I'm not interested. I'd rather do it my way. I like what somebody else says versus what you say." According to those passages in the Bible that the blood of those who are destroyed will rise to the bridle of the horse.

Why is this important? Because only Jesus Christ has power over your and my soul. Only the word of God has the capacity to truly do what we want done in the flesh. And one day Jesus is coming back and you're going to have to make a very important decision before then of which side you want to be on. There's only two sides: there's the one that experiences victory in Jesus and there's the one that unfortunately receives the opposite, and the only person who determines which side you're on is not anybody that you can find on social media. It is Jesus Christ alone who has the power to forgive, save and one day rectify all matters.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. Maybe today as we talk about this famous scene in the garden, maybe you're that individual here in person, maybe you're watching online, maybe you're that individual that says, "You know what? I'm on the wrong side of history. If things were to commence right now, it doesn't look good for me." I've got great news for you, remember Jesus is the only one with the power to save

and to forgive and the Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord, whoever calls on him will be saved. You don't have to "do anything," you don't have to perform a certain way, you don't have to stop certain things. Let the Lord take care of that, just call on him.

If you're that person this morning whether in person, online, can I just implore you to do what Romans 10:13 says, just cry out. You don't have to do so out loud. You don't have to say the same thing that I or maybe somebody else might or might not say. This is your conversation with the Lord. But maybe, just maybe, you got a little something like this. "God, today I recognize that I've got a sin problem. I've been in the wrong places, doing the wrong things with the wrong people. God, I've tried to clean it up, I've tried to make it look pretty, but you and I both know it's pretty ugly down deep. And God, I believe, the Bible says the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. God, today I want you to know I believe, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he came for me and on behalf of me. God, I believe he loved me so much he lived a sinless life rejecting all earthly temptation. And God, I believe that when they nailed him to the cross, he was bearing the punishment and the price of my sin. And God, I believe that three days later when they discovered that the tomb was empty, that Jesus Christ and he alone made it possible and feasible for my sins to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers to the issues, the struggles and the problems of this world, but there's one thing I know and one thing I believe is that Jesus Christ is the only one who can forgive me of my sins and save my soul. So God, I'm asking you to do just that. In the best way I know how, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe you're that person here this morning who had that conversation with the Lord for the very first time. We would love to celebrate with you, to pray with you, pray for you. In a moment, I'm going to pray for us and as we stand and sing just step out and step forward, we'd love the privilege. Maybe you're here today, maybe you're already a believer and maybe you need to rededicate yourself to the Lord, maybe you and whatever your respective family size looks like say, "You know, this is the place where we're supposed to be." We would love to celebrate that in just a moment. But maybe today you say, "Do you know what, pastor? I know I'm saved. I'm already part of this incredible body of believers. I've got all that stepping out and stepping forth stuff covered." Maybe it's about when you step out of here in just a moment. Maybe it's about having the perspective the Lord wants you to have rather than what your friends are telling you. Maybe it's seeing the world through his eyes and not through the same eyes that we often have that Peter has as well.

Lord Jesus, as we come to this time of decision, thank you, thank you that in spite of the spiritual baggage and junk we may have brought into this place, that you desire to clean it all up. God, you desire in your own way to spiritually sanitize it all and to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Help us, O God, today that no matter what it is you've laid upon our heart, no matter how the Spirit of God has moved through the word of God, may we just simply respond caring that the only one is you that we answer to. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.