

## Intro - Open to John 18:12-27

My next-door neighbor has a few roosters which are very confused on when dawn is. They crow, seemingly at all hours of the day. If only they just crowed in the morning like they are supposed to. We are heading toward a roosters crow at the end of our passage this morning. I have been reorienting my disdain for the rooster crow from something annoying and seemingly random to see God's truth in the interruption.

The unique feature of our passage this morning is how the story goes back and forth between two scenes. The first is the arrest and the interrogation of Jesus by the high priest. The second is about how Peter follows Jesus into the high priest's courtyard and how he then denies Jesus.

**Jesus is the truth, a truth to be affirmed not just in private but when challenged in public.**

4 phases of the story: Bind, Obscure, Affirm and Deny the Truth.

## One – Bind the Truth

Read John 18:12-14

We pick up where we left off last week at his arrest in the garden. He is arrested and bound. They are going to attempt to put truth on trial. They take him first to Annas, who is introduced as the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who is the high priest for that year. A careful reader will discern that Annas is also called the high priest and the trial that Caiaphas leads is not detailed by John. The fact that there are 2 high priests gives us a glimpse at the turmoil in the religious leadership.

Annas was the high priest but was deposed, was removed from office, by Rome and they put in another priest (whose name isn't important). Then he was followed by Caiaphas. Annas is still considered by many to be the true High Priest because High Priests were supposed to serve a life appointment. When Rome had meddled in their religious order, they kept Annas on as the unofficial high priest. He is the shadow priest alongside Caiaphas.

Annas also has a personal interest in Jesus' arrest because Jesus had interfered with his business. What business is that you might ask? Annas was the "owner" or the one who got a cut from all of the selling of sacrificial animals and money changing that happened in the temple courtyard. The courtyard that Jesus, not once, but twice cleansed as a "den of robbers" to return the temple to his Father's house of prayer.

Jesus just that week had cleansed it a second time, disrupting Annas' bazaar. In Annas' mind, Jesus had robbed him of his income. Annas, like the mob boss he was, had his dirty hands in the sacrifice selling business which Jesus brought to a halt on the busiest week of the year.

Jesus was of course being arrested because they were accusing him for blasphemy (of which he is not guilty) but most importantly, for this trial here, he has embarrassed the religious leaders and interrupted their most profitable season for corrupting Passover and its sacrificial worship of God. They are being exposed for being the snakes they are.

Verse 14 gives us more insight into why Jesus, the truth, has been bound. Caiaphas prophesied in [John 11:49-52](#) that Jesus would be killed, and intended to fulfill his prophecy by falsely accusing him and killing him as a sacrifice for the people. Like a priest, he thought in terms of sacrifices. But the sacrifice he had in mind was to preserve his own power and greed.

The remarkable nature of Jesus, the truth that he is, shines through despite being bound and subjected to evil plans. Remember back to Isaac, Abraham's son was once bound but freed when God provided the sacrifice. Jesus is now bound to be the sacrificial lamb that God provided.

We should not be surprised that this type of behavior is rampant in our world today but it's not just in corrupt religious leaders, it is also Jesus' own followers who can obscure the truth.

## Two – Obscure the Truth

Read John 18:15-18

As we shift to the disciples, most had been scattered after the arrest. Peter got up the resolve to follow Jesus with the author of this account, the apostle John. We know this was John because 1) the other alternatives are simply not as good and 2) when John references himself throughout his gospel he disguises himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" or at the end in John 20:2-8 he calls himself "the other disciple" and 3) multiple times John and Peter are mentioned together throughout this gospel and John refers to himself in a disguised way each time.

As I mentioned last week, John knows the high priest and gets them through the door into the courtyard of the high priest's palace where likely both Annas and Caiaphas lived. It may have been Peter's fault he would deny Christ 3 times in this courtyard but John tells us, he got him in the door.

At the door as they are coming in, Peter is asked, “**You also are not one of this man’s disciples, are you?**”. So clearly, she knows John is Jesus’ disciple and she let him in. She assumes John isn’t bringing another disciple in and asks him in a way where she expected him to say “No”. At least in this first encounter, for Peter to tell the truth, he is led into an easy denial. His bravery and honesty and faith would have to overcome the question’s intended answer to surprise her with a “Yes”.

As we get to verse 18, I want you to notice the reversal that has happened. Judas was with the enemies of Jesus in his arrest and now Peter finds himself standing with the enemy as well. Trying to fit in around a fire with those who arrested Jesus. Judas tried to obscure the truth by getting Jesus arrested. He denied that Jesus is the Messiah to justify his greed. Peter does the same. He obscures the truth, just plays into the easy answer at the door. A simple, “I am not”. That gets him entry, but it begins his greatest regret.

Opposite of both these men is Jesus who although bound, is about to Affirm the truth that Peter and Judas have denied.

### **Three – Affirm the Truth**

**Read John 18:19-24**

It is well established that Jesus was not really given a trial. He was simply led along according to the powerful men’s evil schemes. John is the only one to record this informal interrogation by Annas the high priest in the courtyard. Since Annas was deposed he was not the one to perform the religious trial, but he would be respected by being given the first swing at Jesus. Since Jesus is innocent, the priest is trying to get Jesus to incriminate himself so he can bring that information to Caiaphas.

Today in America we generally have robust protections for those accused. We have the bill of rights which enshrines protections for citizens against a tyrannical government. The 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment allows a you to remain silent and not answer questions because you are more likely to incriminate yourself than exonerate yourself. Even if you are perfectly innocent, anything can be used against you if you have an aggressive investigator and prosecutor. Just like the 5th amendment, Jewish law said you do not have to testify & incriminate yourself. Annas had no crime to charge Jesus with so he dug for one. Jewish law required the testimony of 2 to 3 witnesses to be heard BEFORE the prisoner is interrogated.

Annas questions him about his disciples to see if anything about them is criminal. To find out if he is mounting an insurrection or conspiracy against the religious or state leaders. He also digs into his teaching to see if anything was worthy of the death penalty they had already decided to give him.

Jesus responds to the heart of the issue. The truth of his teaching. He does not respond about his disciples but in his protection of them, he challenges the high priest that he was always spoken openly. He has been truthful and has nothing about his teaching that he has hidden. This is a direct rebuke to the dealings of the pharisees. They are about to have a hidden early morning sham trial. Jesus calls them to recognize that nothing he has said has been hidden or false.

He has been faithful to God the Father to teach in accordance with the truth. The fulfillment and explanation of the Old Testament in his teaching and in his coming.

He then challenges them in their false accusations because he knows that some among them have already heard his teaching. He says to ask them, for they know what he said.

Turn to **Matthew 21:23**, now this is just a few days before. That week they had sent some to hear his teaching in the temple (after he cleared it of their money changers). Jesus challenged them on John the Baptist, was his baptism of God or not. They would not answer because they knew he spoke the truth when they would not. Then flip to **chapter 22 verse 15**, they asked about taxes, trying to catch Jesus as someone who loved Rome and would be considered an enemy of the Jews or as someone who they could report to Rome as being a rebel. He gives a beautiful reply. He asks for a coin, asks them whose face is on the coin, and said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.

Was that not clear enough? Jesus was perfectly consistent in his teaching, honoring God, honoring man. Calling out sin. Breaking tradition to do the best thing when they themselves break the law of God.

So, either all those in their midst who heard him teach came back and did not give a report or they lied and just reported that Jesus defended his abandonment of tradition. That he was too dangerous, too frustrating to pin anything on. The response becomes unsurprising. Violence.

A clear violation and mistreatment of one accused in court. But the informal setting emboldened the officer to probably gain favor with the High Priest. He then challenges Jesus for his response.

Notice that they do not challenge his truthfulness. That is apparent. They challenge his tone, or his lack of respect for authority. They ultimately respond with violence instead of actually presenting contrary evidence.

Here is something that will be helpful to us when we are falsely accused as Christians living and defending the truth. When we are maligned in public for our faith in Jesus. If we are truly speaking the truth. If we are blameless of sin and of just laws, then we can be confident to speak the truth but we should expect similar responses.

Now, with the newly invented concepts of hate speech and verbal violence. This is an easy road in our society to ignore truth in favor of what feels right or what society has decided is right even devoid of truth. It is becoming increasingly popular to avoid discussing the substance of an argument or a truth claim by resorting to violence or verbal ad hominem attacks. Ad hominem which is Latin for “to the person” is a strategy of response where you just attack the person not the idea. You attack their character, their motives, or another aspect of the person, rather than the substance of the argument. Examples:

Christians teach that Jesus raised from the dead. They claim that we are simpletons who would believe anything (attacking our intelligence).

Christians teach that there is only salvation in Jesus Christ. They claim that we hate everyone else (attacking our character).

Christians teach that men are to lead the church according to God’s design. They claim this isn’t what the Bible says, its about control (attacking our motive).

My friends, Jesus endured threats and attempts on his life many times in his ministry. He chose not to go to certain places or to withdraw at times because the time had not come to be handed over. But now the time had come. He now stands before men who are seeking to malign his character, his disciples, and his motives. They can’t get him to reveal anything so they move into physical assault rather than verbal.

Jesus’ answer is instructive. He tells them to deal with the substance of his answer. To deal with the truth. Jesus wants his opponents to see, and now us to see that the matters of opinion, of loose ideas about what is right, especially because of who is in power, is not what matters. We must bear testimony to objective truth and be ready to stick to it. He challenges them to bring a witness if he is lying.

He was ready to be struck instead of engage on their level of deception. He engaged on the level of truth. He affirmed the truth, of which he himself embodies as God in the flesh, and he was struck here and eventually struck down for it.

Annas has heard enough and got nothing. He sends him on to Caiaphas, or more accurately the trial which Caiaphas is leading but he has no ammunition. Caiaphas brings false witnesses. This part isn’t recorded in John but to keep the record straight, we can see this sentence as both the sending to Jesus to Caiaphas, and for John’s telling, the end of the religious trial of Jesus. Jesus will then be sent to Pilate, the Roman official for sentencing

Now as we shift back to Peter we see the frailty in humanity, as we deny the truth, to see the greater beauty of Christ’s truth.

## **Four – Deny the Truth**

**Read John 18:25-27**

We are back to Peter’s denial of truth. He is gathered around the fire with the servants and officers of the temple. They begin to see that he doesn’t belong and the questions begin. This question now assumes he is a disciple of Jesus making his denial even more bold. What was a private denial with little consequence the first time has now turned into a public denial in front of a group.

Then a relative of Malchus, who was at the arrest recognizes Peter as the one who cut off their cousin’s ear. The easy answers are gone. Peter now must deny a specific question. It’s more difficult to squirm out of.

Matthew 26 records Peter going so far as swearing he is telling the truth. That he should be cursed by God if he is lying. His abandonment of Jesus has reached his peak. Every chance for brave affirmation of the truth have been passed.

Now two things happen in this last moment. One here mentioned and the other, mentioned in Luke 22:61. A rooster crows, and Jesus sees Peter at this moment.

At the arrest Jesus has defended his disciples. He let them escape. He even warned Peter that he would betray him. Jesus has been hearing falsehood after falsehood lobbed at him. He is being dragged from kangaroo court to kangaroo court. From across the courtyard as Jesus is being led from out of the house, when I believe the trial before Caiaphas is over, the rooster crows and he locks eyes with Peter.

I cannot imagine the immediate guilt. Remembering that Jesus had predicted this. Remembering his pride in saying that he would never do it. Remembering that he tried to fight with his sword for Jesus. Yet Jesus knew. And now Peter does.

What was in the eyes of Jesus in that moment?

### Psalm 30:5

For his anger is but for a moment,  
and his favor is for a lifetime.  
Weeping may tarry for the night,  
but joy comes with the morning.

I want you to imagine this moment of the rooster crowing with me. The rooster crow is a symbol of Peter's denial of the truth. Yet it also signals the start of a new day. A new day for repentance. A joy only found in repentance in a new day. Peter's weeping over his denial and his sin which began in that moment would be turned to joy on the third morning.

### 2 Corinthians 7:10

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

The sovereignty of God planned that rooster's crow at the exact moment as both Peter's conviction of sin and his invitation to repentance in a new morning. Peter, through Christ's coming death, brought salvation without regret. We can see that our sin, when convicted by the Holy Spirit, leads us to repentance.

Peter and Jesus both had a chance to tell the truth there in that courtyard. Peter denied the truth and led him to repentance and faith that bolstered his testimony of God's goodness to use him to build his church. Jesus affirmed the truth in the perfection that led him to the cross.

We are invited along with Peter to tell the truth of our sin, for Peter his pride. For you it may be lust, or greed, or gossip, or gluttony, or sloth.

I hope for you this morning that you will see that like Peter at one time you denied the truth. Either with your lips but since we are human we are sinners whose hearts are far from God until he saves us.

## Conclusion

Our faith too will be tested in public. There is no such thing as a private Christian faith. Or a faith that is only lived out at church or at home. We should expect to have to profess faith in Christ, a costly faith, in public. We do not whisper the truth, we do not hide the truth within the walls of our church or homes. We put the truth as the light of the world on a stand and proclaim it proudly like our Lord.

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