

Series: Receiving life by believing in God’s Son (a Gospel of John study)

Sermon Text: John 18:1-12

Key Words: Friends, Fail, Faith

(*This account is also found in Matthew 26:36-56; Mark 14:32-52; Luke 22:40-53)

We’ve just finished an amazing journey through some of the most incredible chapters of the Bible, John 13-17, where Jesus addressed God’s love for us, the Spirit indwelling us, and the unity He gives us. While contemplating this next series in chapter 18, I realized the subject matter extends into the next chapter with an ironic central idea in 19:1-3, “*Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. They came up to him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ and struck him with their hands.*” I also found the words “king” and “kingdom” appear 12 times from 18:1-19:15; and there’s a backdrop of friends, religious leaders, and government officials failing Jesus who stood as a bright light in darkness. So, it seemed logical to title our series, “*No matter how things appear, Jesus is still King!*” We’ll explore the value of knowing “*Jesus is still King*” when friends fail us (18:1-12), when religious leaders fail us (18:13-27); and when political leaders fail us (18:28-19:15). **Each week** of this series, we’ll also go over a verse Christ followers should memorize and never forget...John 16:33, “*I’ve 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.*” Now, I think we’re ready for today’s...

BIG IDEA: Jesus is still King when friends fail us.

Observation #1: *This was Genesis all over again.* After the upper room foot washing in John 13, 14:31 implies the group went outside where Jesus taught more and offered the John 17 prayer. Next, *verses 1-2* say that *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. Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples.* John retold history through the lens of faith. Chapter 1 presents the gospel as a new Genesis--new creation emerging from old. In the beginning, we’re told God enjoyed quality time in a *garden* with Adam and Eve, so it’s no small discovery that Jesus *often met* with His disciples in a *garden*! It’s Genesis all over again, including the sinful disruption found in *verse 3, Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns, torches, and weapons.* If you recall, John cited several failed attempts to capture Jesus because “*It wasn’t His time.*” Then came a shocking twist where Jesus appeared to set up His own capture in John 13:27... “*After he had taken*

the morsel, Satan entered Judas. Jesus said to him, 'What you're going to do, do quickly.'" No doubt, John wants our eyes of faith to see Satan entering the **garden** through **Judas** to finish what He started in the Genesis 3--only this time Satan is coming for God and humanity (the old Adam) is helping! Do you know the "Old Adam" and "New Adam" concept? It comes from the Apostle Paul's resurrection discussion in 1 Corinthians 15 where he said, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive...Thus it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living soul; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.'" Jesus is the "New Adam" sent by God to do what "Old Adam" failed to do and Satan wants to stop that. That's the underlying story of Scripture, so it's naturally the backdrop of this **garden** of Gethsemane showdown (cf. Matt. 26:36; Mark 14:32). This segues into...

Observation #2: Jesus proved God is still in charge. Verse 4 says, *Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said, "Whom do you seek?"* Unlike the first Adam, Jesus *stepped forward* to care for creation instead of hiding in the **garden** and letting evil have its way. In *verses 5-6, They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth" and Jesus said, "I am he."* *Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.* Ironically, a sandal-wearing Rabbi and his "small group" caused a **band of** well-trained **soldiers** to **draw back**. I see 3 ways to view what went down: 1) The soldiers stepped back and stumbled; 2) The soldiers **drew back** and dropped to defensive positions; 3) The soldiers fell over in fear. Whichever view we adopt, John wants our eyes of faith to recognize a fearful reaction to Christ's answer. How often we forget the power behind truths Jesus spoke! John also wants us to read the words "**I Am**" and recall the [6 other "I am" statements](#) he previously documented--each are a nod back to [when God said had a similar conversation with Moses in Exodus 3](#).

So, put the scene together in your mind...as they scoured the dark **garden** in search of their prey, the light of **their lanterns and torches** suddenly flickered upon the face of God who **stepped forward** as light in darkness and startled them with powerful words! Continuing to take charge in *verses 7-9, He asked again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus answered, "I told you I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go." This was to fulfill the word he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one."* Not only did this remind me of when Moses told Pharaoh to "Let my people go!", but it's fascinating to see the words of "human Jesus" framed like an Old Testament quote. Anyway, by leading His bloodthirsty captors into a remote **garden** and away from the Passover crowds, Jesus was fulfilling His John 10 promise to protect the sheep His Father

gave Him. And what does John want faith-filled eyes to see? That nothing occurs without God's "say so." That "No matter how out of control things appear, Jesus is King!" (i.e., Citizens of His kingdom can always rest in His care because the outcome of our human messes is guided by Him/we can never mess stuff up so badly that it derails God's plan to rescue His creation and restore justice). Now...

Observation #3: Trusting God's story empowers us to holster our swords. Verse 10 says, *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.)* I love how John "humanized" the *servant* by stating his name, which significantly means "my king." How did Jesus view *Peter's* retaliation? In *verses 11-12, Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" So, the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him.* Evidently, God wants His people to handle conflict better than the world does--maybe even take short-term losses for the long-term benefit of others. Think with me...if the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit abide in us (make their home in us), then aren't we filled with supernatural power to handle our business differently? Trusting that "No matter how things appear, Jesus is still King!" helps us fight with redemptive weapons (e.g., repentance, forgiveness, mercy, grace, joy). The world views these as "weak" weapons, but our eyes of faith know "*For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds*" (2 Corinthians 10:3-4). We'll trust the tactics when we trust the story, and in **the words of Professor NT Wright**, here's the next part of the storyline, "*The true Adam will be sent to his death by the false ones, so that the garden may be restored, and instead of bloodshed there may be healing and forgiveness*" (cf. Zechariah 4:5-7; Ephesians 6:12-13).

Let's pray: Father, your word consistently demands your people respond differently to persecutors and troublemakers. The Old Testament book of Zechariah (4:5-7 NLT) says our victories come, "*Not by force nor by strength, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of Heaven's Armies.*" The New Testament book of Ephesians (6:12 NLT) reminds us, "*We're not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.*" We fight with human weapons because we fail to realize every trial has complexities we can't imagine. So, no matter how ugly things get in this world, may the image of Jesus telling Peter to "*holster his sword*" paralyze us when we consider revenge or returning evil for evil. If that doesn't do it for us, then may the image of our Savior "*dying so others might live*" be enough to help us do good when we're misunderstood and mistreated. Amen.

Let's sing: "I'm Overwhelmed by You"

So, what's your NEXT STEP?

- Remember, our next step always begins with faith in Christ. Either placing faith in Him for the first time or exercising faith to repent, change, and grow. Either way, His Spirit will help you.

Quotes related to this passage:

- **The Garden of Eden, again:** “The story of Adam in the garden, in Genesis 2 and 3, stands behind the garden of betrayal in this chapter as well as the garden of Easter in chapter 20. John is, after all, writing a kind of ‘new Genesis’, as we saw at the beginning...The roles are reversed. Sinful men, violent men, men with weapons, come to the garden in the dark, looking for someone. The someone who was the father’s only son...Jesus doesn’t hide. He has no reason to. The father has given him a cup to drink, and he’s going to drink it...The new Adam steps forward to meet the old; the Word who was and is God comes to greet ‘the world’; the light of the world stands before those who, in their darkness, have come with torches and lanterns. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness is not going to extinguish it.”
Professor NT Wright
- **Timing and locations:** “The construction of this sentence (literally, ‘Having said these things, Jesus departed . . .’) suggests that although the men had left the upper room, they did not set out for the garden until Jesus had finished praying. Perhaps Jesus concluded His ‘farewell discourse’ in a courtyard outside the residence where they had eaten . . . or under torchlight on the southern steps of Herod’s temple...David also crossed this valley when put to flight by Absalom’s revolt, during which one of his trusted advisors had betrayed him (2 Sam. 15:23-31). John may have mentioned the Kidron Valley detail as a deliberate allusion to this well-known event from Israel’s history, much like someone today alluding to the beaches of Normandy. Immediately, visions of D-Day spring to mind...Their destination was their customary retreat (18:2), a walled garden on the Mount of Olives, perhaps on the western slope overlooking the Holy City. According to Matthew, Jesus prayed for approximately three hours (Matt. 26:40, 42, 44). When Jesus finished praying, Judas arrived with a small army of Roman soldiers and temple guards. At the time of Jesus, a Roman ‘cohort’ consisted of 480 fighting men, not including officers and support personnel.” Pastor Chuck Swindoll
- **The number of soldiers:** “The appearance of a Roman ‘detachment’ (Gk. *speiras*) in this posse has posed historical problems for many. A cohort could consist of a thousand men (760 infantry, 240 cavalry) and be led by a chiliarch (lit., leader-of-one-thousand, generally translated commander, captain, or tribune)...but it is not necessary to think that all of them are present. This is likely a detachment large enough to warrant bringing along their commander (18:12) and equipped with weapons (18:3b). During festival seasons the Romans were aware of the explosive atmosphere in the city, and reinforcements routinely came to Jerusalem.”
Professor Gary Burge
- **I AM:** “Jesus again employed the highly significant self-designation *egō eimi* [1473, 1510], ‘I AM’ (4:26; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; cf. Exod. 3:14). He used this culturally and biblically loaded terminology to identify Himself as deity.” Pastor Chuck Swindoll
- **Christ’s supreme power:** After writing “No matter what dark threat hangs over us, it is less than him who fought and mastered it in his Easter victory”, Pastor Bruce Milne added this stunning quote from someone named P. T. Forsythe, “For the devils we meet were all

foredoomed in the Satan Christ ruined. The devil is in the end a bull in a net, a wild beast kicking himself to death.”

- **The sword:** “Peter’s sword is a ‘machaira’, a short sword or a long knife (probably worn with everyday garments).” Professor Gary Burge
- **Slicing the servant’s ear:** “Peter had earlier stated that he was ready to go into battle with the Lord and to give his life in the fight (13:37; cf. Matt. 26:33-35). He obviously meant what he said...Some expositors—including me in the recent past—have suggested Peter intended to kill the man by splitting his head open, and that Malchus dodged at the last moment, thus losing his ear. However, after reconsidering several details, I prefer another explanation... Because John typically includes details for their symbolic value, it’s more likely Peter aimed for the man’s right ear for the express purpose of leaving an insulting injury. Malchus was an emissary of the high priest, and therefore represented his authority. Cutting off an ear or a nose was considered particularly humiliating, especially since Jews barred maimed individuals from serving in the temple...Jesus rebuked Peter for behaving like a nonbeliever and for failing to see the plan of God unfolding, despite Jesus’ many predictions.” Pastor Chuck Swindoll
- **Images of atonement:** “The action of Jesus in drawing the enmity upon himself for the freeing of the disciples is, more generally, a depiction of his whole work of atonement. He takes our place, absorbing our guilt and all its implications, that we might go free. He who might have summoned twelve legions of angels, whose regal majesty could send his enemies reeling to the ground, accepts his arrest, trial and death in willing submission. His words to Peter unveil his heart: Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me? (11). The cup is the symbol of the judgment of God; it is the cup of the wrath of God against human sin (cf. Is 51:17-23; Jer 25:15-28; Zc 12:2).” Pastor Bruce Milne
- **Holstering our swords:** “What, after all, might it look like if the Jesus of John 13–17 were to come out of the upper room, after the meal with the disciples, the footwashing, the sublime discourses and the prayer, and were to stand facing ‘the world’? Would you expect him to wave a magic wand and win a cheap victory? Would you expect him to lead a military revolution? Of course not (though Peter, clearly, was still thinking like that; putting his thoughtless action alongside Jesus’ denial of military intent in 18.36 gives us plenty to think about, not least the sense that, as with the first Eden, bloodshed is the sorry sign of human failure).” Professor NT Wright
- **Injustice:** “Jesus entered the world in controversy and lived much of His life under the shadow of doubt. Injustice is an inevitable fact of life in a fallen world. Sooner or later, everyone will be misunderstood, misquoted, falsely accused, slandered, gossiped about, or openly maligned. We bear the image of God, who loves justice as much as He loves mercy, and that aspect of our nature longs for right to prevail over wrong . . . especially when our own well-being is at stake. Jesus was the only person to live His entire life without failing morally, yet He was arrested, tried, convicted, and condemned to suffer a criminal’s punishment. His arrest was a betrayal, His trials a farce, His conviction illegal, and His punishment a travesty of justice. Yet throughout the ordeal, He remained calm, He answered sincere questions directly, He spoke the truth with dignity, and He calmly resolved to allow the Father to vindicate Him at the proper time.” Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Quotes related to the larger context:

- **Full life:** John said he wrote this letter to help us find “*fullness of life through believing Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.*” Chapters 1-12 contain 3 years of real-life stories where people met Jesus during His public ministry. Chapters 13-21 slow way down as Jesus began to reveal His (God’s) heart to His disciples in the week leading up to the cross and resurrection.
- **Book Context:** The Gospel of the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee, provides a clearly stated purpose. *John 20:30-31* says, “*Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*” Some people demand to have all their questions satisfied before bowing to Jesus, yet John claimed his limited account was enough to bring anyone to faith. As we read it, our Savior and friend emerges from the pages as a real person in the real world. Jesus shows us what we could become, if we too would rely on His infinite Father who will gladly supply whatever we need.
- **Life in his name:** Life is the Greek word, “zōē”, which means “Life, Living, Lifetime, Life-Giving” and is where we get the word, “zoology” in English. Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words says it’s “used in the NT of life as a principle, life in the absolute sense, life as God has it, that which the Father has in Himself, and which He gave to the Incarnate Son to have in Himself, Jhn 5:26, and which the Son manifested in the world, 1Jo 1:2. From this life man has become alienated in consequence of the Fall, Eph 4:18, and of this life men become partakers through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, Jhn 3:15, who becomes its Author to all such as trust in Him, Act 3:15, and who is therefore said to be 'the life' of the believer, Col 3:4, for the life that He gives He maintains, Jhn 6:35, 63. Eternal life is the present actual possession of the believer because of his relationship with Christ, Jhn 5:24; 1Jo 3:14, and that it will one day extend its domain to the sphere of the body is assured by the Resurrection of Christ, 2Cr 5:4; 2Ti 1:10. This life is not merely a principle of power and mobility, however, for it has moral associations which are inseparable from it, as of holiness and righteousness. Death and sin, life and holiness, are frequently contrasted in the Scriptures.”

Other Articles/Songs/Videos:

Direction for discussion leaders:

1. Keep circling back to the big idea and main points of the passage to stay on track.
2. Keep the discussion around 30mins. Go for a single, not a home run.
3. Keep the group small for deeper sharing. Once you hit the “sweet spot”, spend your time there.
4. Keep these simple questions in your back pocket: What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

Preparation questions for John 18:1-12.

- As you read this section, which words stand out as you and why? What does this section seem to be about?

Application questions from John 18:1-12.

- Have you ever been betrayed by a friend? How did that feel, and how did you respond? How does the life, death, and resurrection of Christ help us process betrayal?

- Would you consider yourself “a trusting person” or “a wait and see person”? Why do you think this is? After meditating on John 16:33 and 1 Corinthians 13: 1-8, what do you think a Christ-like view of trust would involve?

Here are some great resources for digging deeper into community group life...

How life together looks <http://austinstone.org/stories/film/item/140-missional-community-lukes-story>

Rethinking what we do https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvWnXYSELF4&feature=player_embedded

Numerous articles to provoke thought <http://toddengstrom.com/archives/>

What groups of 2-3 might look like <http://toddengstrom.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/LTG-Overview.pdf>