

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

Sermon Text: John 18:13-14, 19-24

Key Words: Religious Leaders

(*This account is also found in Matthew 26:57-58; Mark 14:53-54; Luke 22:54-65)

Our series title for 18:1-19:15 is, *"No matter how things appear, Jesus is still King!"* It's about the value of believing this 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**, we're also considering something vital Jesus said about following Him in 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."* Today's passage will challenge us with the following...

BIG IDEA: Jesus is still King when religious leaders fail us.

After Jesus let Himself be captured in the Garden of Gethsemane, we're told in *verse 13 they first led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year*. Oh, that makes sense, right? Jesus is being interrogated by the *father-in-law* of a Jewish official. Something's clearly not right. **For context**, [Annas](#) was the former *high priest* from 6-15 AD who'd been removed by Rome. This was demeaning to Israel because the [office of high priest](#) had been a life-time position as far back as Moses's brother, Aaron (cf. Numbers 35:25). We're told *Caiaphas* was *high priest*, yet we'll learn *Annas* was pulling the strings like a mafia godfather (cf. Luke 3:1-2). By appeasing and colluding with their Roman rulers, His shadowy family reigned until long after Christ's resurrection. In fact, Peter and John will get a *"do over"* with this *high-priestly* family later in Acts 4!

Now, *verse 14* says *it was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people*. John had mentioned this in chapter 11 after Jesus became popular for resurrecting Lazarus and the chief priests and pharisees convened to *"make plans to put him to death."* Not what we'd expect from religious leaders, right? **This detail** also reveals they'd been after Jesus for over 2 years. So, why the sudden urge to storm Gethsemane? And why start days prior to Sabbath and the beginning of their week-long [Passover festival](#)? Furthermore, Israel was governed by Rome, so they needed approval to carry out capital punishment. Jesus had to be framed as [a terrorist or political threat](#) for Rome to consider [crucifixion](#). Oh, and this had to be done fast because Jewish law forbade capital punishment during holy week. They'd have been wiser to wait a week, but Judas' betrayal served up the chance they'd been waiting for! John wants us to feel the chaotic nature of this moment, but he also wants our eyes of faith to see God's orderly plan emerging from this chaos (cf.

Galatians 4:4-7). Such faith kept Jesus composed as He suffered terrible injustices and the failure of friends like Peter, who as we learned last week in *verses 15-18*, was outside denying and lying, as Jesus was inside being faithful and true.

Verse 19 says ***the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching***. That seems innocent enough, but Jewish procedure involved interrogating witnesses to ensure credibility, not the accused. John wants us to realize **this isn't an official trial**. It's a "backroom interrogation" designed to get Jesus to incriminate himself, so *Annas* and his cronies could become witnesses. Jesus knew the law was on His side, so in *verses 20-24*, ***He answered, "I've spoken openly to the world. I've always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I've said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard me; they know what I said."*** When he said these things, ***one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?"*** Jesus answered, ***"If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?"*** *Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest*. He was slapped for having unflinching integrity, but it helped him endure this insidious interrogation and get passed on to *Caiaphas*, who may have been in another part the house (for details about that trial, see Mark 14:53-65). All Jesus was asking for was a fair trial--there were thousands of Palm Sunday witnesses who could've set the record straight. And, of course under God's law, that would've turned the heat lamp on these self-righteous religious leaders (cf. [Deuteronomy 19:15-21](#))! Ok, that's plenty of context to setup our final 2 observations...

Observation #1: God's people were led by unjust shepherds. Back in chapter 10, certain leaders in Israel were unmasked as poor shepherds of God's flock. They weren't trusting God's story, which had been passed down from generation to generation--the story of God's promise to restore justice by sending His suffering servant (Jesus). These impatient religious leaders colluded with the government in hopes of restoring justice, peace, and prosperity through human schemes. **New Testament** scholar, Gary Burge thinks "*Caiaphas is a parable as much as he is a man. He is a Christian in Washington cutting deals with political action groups...a theologian at denominational headquarters winning respectability by cutting out ancient and cherished beliefs—revising them for the modern world to gain the respect of Caesar, to make the church palatable for the world.* Caiaphas kills Jesus. In his theological wisdom and hard-earned ecclesiastical prestige, he has lost sight of God. He is a failed leader." God sent Jesus to reset the standard for Christian leadership, which leads to...

Observation #2: Jesus modeled integrity in the face of injustice. John's way of telling the story proves Jesus is still King, even when religious leaders fail. He's the good shepherd from John 10 who promised to lead His sheep through whatever happens and to keep adding sheep to the fold. Our hope must be rooted in our perfect shepherd, not imperfect people, so we never give up on the church He promised to build (cf. Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 5:21-33). Jesus never promised perfect leaders, nor did He promise to eradicate injustice in our lifetime. Now, Jesus clearly asked for justice during His trial, so there's nothing wrong with us calling for it and working for it. Just remember, we follow a King who willingly endured the most unjust acts ever committed to bring salvation to more sheep!

Jesus modeled a better way to handle injustice. The one who had every right to wipe out the entire high-priestly family, humbly spoke truth without fighting back. He didn't dehumanize them by trying to fix or cancel them, rather Jesus gave them a chance to repent, choose better, and be part of making things right. That's the kind of people Jesus wants us to be. I mean, when Jesus got slapped, did He use His Father's good laws to justify vengeance and revenge? No, He became the pattern for who He called us to be during His [Sermon on the Mount](#) in [Matthew 5-7](#), *"You've heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, 'Don't resist the one who is evil. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also'."* You see, the whole "eye for an eye" thing was given to stop revenge from spinning out of control, not justify giving people what they deserve. Where would we be if we all got what we deserved? Oh, yeah...in HELL. We're not a people who celebrate punishment and vengeance, rather we're people who offer second chances at great cost to ourselves. In fact, that's the point Jesus was making in Matthew 5. He said, if we *"don't love and pray for our enemies"*, then we're not children of His Father who is good to those who do evil. That seems to be the lesson Peter learned from His failure. **He later wrote** in 1 Peter 2:19-21, *"For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. 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."*

Let's pray: Father, there's no denying the damage that's been done and continues to be done by the failure of religious leaders and Christians who have missed what Jesus is all about. My heart grieves for those who've been hurt by Christians and walked away from the church Jesus founded. They are so vulnerable without the comradery of your sheep, and their absence makes our witness

dimmer. As your sheep, we must keep our eyes on our shepherd, who restores our humanity, not by running from us, but by offering restoration at great cost to Himself. Like Jesus, may love and redemption guide our pursuit of justice. May we trust that if God brought redemption through Christ's unfair moment He can do so again and again. May we be like our Good Shepherd and Great High Priest, who chose not to quit before Israel's failed religious leaders. May we also remember that *"Because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted"* (cf. Hebrews 2:18) and that *"Our high priest sympathizes with our weaknesses, and in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need"* (cf. Hebrews 4:15-16). Help us, oh God, to see the redemptive value of *"dealing gently with the ignorant and wayward"* (Hebrews 5:2). Amen.

Let's sing: "Mercy"

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:

- **Timing and Context:** "Because the Jews reckoned the year by the lunar cycle, it's almost impossible to pinpoint the exact date of Jesus' crucifixion. The day could have occurred anytime between late March and early April... During the first century, the office of high priest in Israel was essentially the same as king; however, his appointment had to be approved by Rome and he governed under the authority of the Roman procurator. Annas was originally appointed high priest in AD 6 by Quirinius, but was later deposed by Valerius Gratus in AD 15. Nevertheless, he remained the head of a vast empire of organized corruption in Jerusalem. "He and his family were proverbial for their rapacity and greed." [1] After his removal from office, he wielded power through his son, Eleazar, and then his son-in-law, Caiaphas. In fact, his family held a virtually unbroken line of succession after Caiaphas through four more sons and a grandson." Pastor Chuck Swindoll
- **The High-Priestly Family:** "Annas is well known even though he appears second to Caiaphas in the New Testament (Luke 3:2; John 18:13, 24; Acts 4:6). Josephus indicates that he was appointed in A.D. 6 but was removed from office in A.D. 15 by Valerius Gratus, Pilate's predecessor. He continued to enjoy enormous influence, however, and considerable popular support since Judaism resented how the Romans controlled the high priesthood (his festival vestments were kept, for instance, in the Antonia Fortress). Five of Annas's sons became high priests as well as his son-in-law Caiaphas. Thus Annas enjoyed great power and was the patriarch of an influential priestly family, well known for its wealth, power, and greed... The Mishnah supports the ongoing holiness of such deposed high priests (Horayoth 3:1-2, 4), and

Luke follows this practice when he mentions Annas in his Gospel (Luke 3:2). That Jesus is sent first to Annas is plausible if he is the de facto power behind Caiaphas. This meeting may have been arranged in advance if Caiaphas (who originally determined that Jesus should die, 11:49–51) is seeking to broaden his base of support vis-à-vis Rome.” Professor Gary Burge

- **The judgment hall:** “At the east end of the Royal Portico in the temple, seventy-one elders sat in semicircular rows around an area resembling a threshing floor. The Sanhedrin officially met here to set national and religious policy and to rule on civil and criminal cases. All of their deliberations and decisions were open to the public.” Pastor Chuck Swindoll
- **The hasty trials:** “In reporting Jesus’ trial he concentrates on the other element, the arraignment before the Roman procurator. If that conveys a sense of haste, we are getting the picture accurately. Because of the proximity of the Passover Sabbath, and the week of the feast of unleavened bread which followed, it would not be possible to crucify an offender during that entire period as it would infringe the holiness of these days. Frank Morison, in his intriguing bestseller, ‘Who Moved the Stone?’ suggests the authorities had probably decided against taking Jesus before the feast days, and that it was Judas’ unexpected appearance, with the offer to lead them to Jesus in a highly opportune circumstance for arrest, that sent them scurrying to get their act together on the Thursday evening. If Jesus’ execution was to be carried through, they had to have him tried and formally condemned by the Sanhedrin early on the Friday, then get Pilate’s confirmation by mid to late morning, so that he could be on the cross by midday, and dead and off the cross again before sundown inaugurated the Sabbath.” Pastor Bruce Milne
- **Rules broken:** After citing how Annas broke 18 Jewish rules, Pastor Chuck Swindoll wrote, “Jewish tradition carefully regulated the conduct of criminal trials, even more so than civil cases. No trial was to be held in secret or at night, and the only proper place to hear criminal cases was the “Hall of Judgment” in the temple. Furthermore, when hearing evidence, the accused could not be compelled to testify in his own case. All charges had to be substantiated by multiple corroborating witnesses. Annas broke Sanhedrin rules by asking Jesus directly about His followers and His teaching, hoping to hear something incriminating. According to Mishnah: Sanhedrin 3:3-4, the accused may not be compelled to present evidence against himself; furthermore, the presiding judge may not examine a witness (or the accused).”
- **The interrogation:** “Annas, who probes two things: Jesus’ teachings and his disciples (18:19). To what extent is he a genuine threat? Does he have a strong following? Is he promoting some sort of conspiracy? A secret conspiracy? To what extent does he threaten their interests? Jesus’ sharp answer—pointing out that Annas should be talking to witnesses—unmasks the priest’s attempt to make Jesus’ incriminate himself.” Professor Gary Burge
- **Treating Jesus like a terrorist:** “Jesus, meanwhile, is quizzed about his disciples and his teaching. That’s standard practice. If, today, they catch someone they think is a terrorist leader, they want to know exactly what he’s been saying and teaching, and who his closest associates are. Jesus won’t give them any help with finding his followers, but when it comes to his teaching, he is hardly going to start giving them a résumé of everything he’s said over the past two or three years. They weren’t ready for a careful explanation of the ways in which the kingdom of God both is and isn’t coming, the difference between the normal revolution of Jesus’ contemporaries and the radically different revolution he was pioneering. Go and ask the people who heard me, he says. They’ll tell you. The slap on the face goes with Peter’s

slicing off the servant's ear. Violence has begun and will escalate from here. But, already, Jesus has begun to take the rebuke that his follower had earned.” (Professor NT Wright)

- **The charges:** “‘False prophecy’ is the classic charge against Jesus reported in the Talmud (b. Sanh. 43a). To qualify as a false prophet, one must ‘secretly entice’ or ‘deceive’ the people (Matt. 24:11, 24; Mark 13:5, 22; Luke 21:8). The punishment for this was death (Deut. 13:1–11). Twice before this was precisely the suggestion uttered by the crowds (7:12) and the Pharisees (7:47).” Professor Gary Burge
- **Omission of the trial before Caiaphas:** Pastor Bruce Milne wrote, “*John does not give any detail of the trial before the Sanhedrin, although Jesus’ appearance before them, and their verdict, were critical for the pursuance of the case against Jesus with the Roman authorities. The reason for John’s omission is probably that he has already reported a Sanhedrin meeting which agreed upon a capital sentence (11:45–53).*” Pastor Chuck Swindoll wrote, “Unlike Matthew and Mark, John does not include the details of the Lord’s trial before Caiaphas, who officially held the position of high priest (unlike his father-in-law). Unfortunately, justice didn’t fare any better in this trial than the last (Matt. 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65). While the hearing appeared more legitimate—conducted by the actual high priest and attended by several members of the Sanhedrin—it violated many of the same rules. The trial was held in secret, at night, and in the high priest’s palace instead of the council’s meeting hall. Furthermore, no advocate for the accused had been provided, and the council pressed the case against Jesus rather than impartially weighing evidence.”
- **God’s purposes will prevail:** “But despite the darkness of the story, John is quick to assure us that God’s glory is nevertheless at work. This is the King of glory, now arrayed before Israel. God is at work within these events (this is ‘the hour’ he planned from the beginning) and Jesus is still in control. He asks the questions and makes the judgments. He alone has power that comes from ‘above.’ Despite the difficulties of the world’s treatment of God and his Son, God will prevail. God’s glory and power cannot be suppressed or be contained by the plots of human antagonists.” Professor Gary Burge
- **Enduring Injustice with Grace:** “Because we bear the image of God, justice satisfies a deep-seated, God-given need; however, because we are polluted with sin, our desire for justice becomes a supremely selfish pursuit. Outrage demands satisfaction. Bitterness demands revenge. A self-centered hopelessness begs heaven for relief. Desperate isolation longs for an advocate, while an uncaring world idly watches our suffering. In that lonely crucible of unfairness, the silence of heaven can be deafening. Perhaps you are currently suffering in obscurity. Slander has sullied your reputation. Gossip has isolated you from those you respect. A false accusation has turned the course of your life. Persecution has fallen upon you instead of those who are genuinely guilty. Let me assure you, the Lord does hear your cries for help and hope, and He has not ignored you. Justice will be served, although not as you might want—or when. Jesus promised neither to take us out of the world nor to prevent the world’s oppression. Instead, He prayed that we would be preserved through trials and persecutions (John 17:15). Therefore, He will not preserve us from injustice; rather, He has promised to preserve us through injustice. Moreover, He promised glory on the other side of our suffering. The agony you suffer—though it feels overwhelming—will not go to waste. If you allow it, this experience can be the means by which God brings you His greatest blessings.”

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 18:13-14, 19-24.

- As you read this section, what seems strange to you and why? What are your takeaways from Christ’s encounter with Israel’s high priest?

Application questions from John 18:13-14, 19-24.

- How can a desire for self-interest or self-preservation lead Christians, even religious leaders, to misuse God’s laws and forsake fidelity to Christ? Where have you seen Christians cross lines when it comes to things like national pride, politics, and justice? What’s the right balance?

- How should God's people respond when religious leaders or other Christians fail us? What dangers can occur (for us, for others) if we give up on Christ's bride, the church? What can we learn from Jesus to help us endure such trials of faith?

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>