

Jesus Arrested

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[0 : 00] Good morning. There's so much in these verses that we are considering that what I say this morning is only going to touch, is only going to scratch the surface.

These last few weeks have been sad for us as we have lost a friend to a battle with cancer. We knew what was coming and it pained us to hear of the details of that fight.

The daily updates that we would get as the situation was worsening and as we prayed for a different outcome, it was hard to hear. At the funeral, some of our children gave short accounts of the memories that they had with their mother growing up.

And more recently in the days as they watched life slip away, the peace that she had in her life and the challenge that that was to them.

They said that in that situation that it has drawn them closer to the Lord and it has made them stronger in their faith. There's one or two friends here that were at that funeral today.

[1 : 18] And they would have heard this, that our friend had a peace that passes normal human understanding. She had a peace because it was given to her by God.

It was a direct consequence of her relationship with God. That God is in complete control and that the hope that she had, that when she left this earth, she would go to be with him forever.

However, this is real life. Where we have great sorrow and pain. And yet as Christians, we often talk about peace and comfort and joy.

The joy that it is to know that the one that we love, who we have lost, has gone to be with Jesus forever. You see, in our passage today, we're in the middle of a historical episode that sometimes we just gloss over without letting the reality of the situation hit us.

We say things like, Friday's here, but Sunday's coming. And even though that is true, it somehow allows us just to skip over the part of suffering and horror of what happened to Jesus.

[2 : 41] We've named it Good Friday. And like Christmas, I think that we often see Easter through a rose-tinted view. There's birds in the air.

There's lambs in the field. There's fluffy yellow chicks. Maybe you're thinking of Easter bunnies and chocolate eggs. Or flowers growing in the garden. And Rachel and I have been watching out the back window as the squirrels have been building a nest.

And the birds and the snowdrops and the crocus and the daffodils. And all of these things have been coming to life. We've been watching these birds making a nest, waiting to welcome new life into this world.

And Rachel and I, as others in this audience are, well, for us at Easter time, God willing, we will welcome new life into this world. The nights are lighter.

And we've anchored Easter at a time where there is just a little bit of joy. The Easter story is a story of joy for many of us. Because it's a story that leads to life.

[3 : 48] Our series is called Life in His Name. Life in Jesus' Name. Jesus said that I am come that you might have life and that you might have it abundantly. But Easter is also a story of difficulty.

A lot of pain. A lot of anguish. A lot of things that we maybe don't fully understand. The account of what happened to the Lord leading up to His death.

On one hand, brings us joy. But on the other hand, it might make us just feel a little bit of sorrow.

The eternal Son of God was offered up for you and for I.

That eternal Son of God was mistreated by those whom He had created. That eternal Son of God was rejected by the nation that He had chosen.

There's a verse in Psalm 30, verse 5. It says this, that weeping endures for a night, but joy comes in the morning. And it's easy for us to say that after an event.

[4 : 56] It's easy for us to say that after, you know, in hindsight, it's easy for us to say that when the raw pain has subdued after death. Now for a few minutes this morning, I want us to dial in on these hours that we have read about in John chapter 18.

I have a simple ABCD this morning that I want to look at. Hopefully it's a simple structure that will help you remember what we have thought about this morning. Let's start with this A and B.

The arrest and betrayal. I've deliberately missed out C there because I don't know whether to put in there capture or challenge that this is to us.

Or control or a list of other C's that came to mind as I put this up. But then we have the denial at the end there. So we'll fill in that blank as we get through our message. This sequence is a dramatic story that we've read about in the progression of the Lord entering into Jerusalem.

And up until that point of dying on the cross. Our scene here in chapter 18 is set during the night before that awful day. And even though on that following day there will be a period of darkness, the scene that we have is a very dark scene.

[6 : 12] This is the night of the Passover. Earlier in the evening, Jesus and his disciples, like the thousands of Jews who were crammed into Jerusalem at that time, were eating the Passover meal together.

They would have recited stories passed down from generation to generation. They would have talked about the lamb, the Passover lamb, from the time of their forefathers escaping from Egypt.

They would have prepared the bitter herbs and the unleavened bread. And as they ate that together, they would have talked about this lamb that was taken and sacrificed and eaten.

And they would have reminded themselves of the significance of the meal and how the blood of the lamb was preserved and delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians. And how the lamb would have been food for their journey.

And yet they were totally unaware that in 12 hours time, the man that they had been following for the last three hours would be slain like a lamb. And be sacrificed for their deliverance and for to bring about peace with God.

[7 : 18] In our chapter here in verse 1, we read that the Lord Jesus goes out with his disciples to a place that they often went to. He crosses over the valley and up the side of the hill to the olive garden, a place that we know as Gethsemane.

It's a place that the Lord Jesus often went with his disciples. We go there to spend time with them for rest. They would pray there. They would meditate. They would commune together.

It's not the first time that God has communed with people in a garden. It's very similar to a story that God communed with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. And in that garden, it's in similar fashion.

Adam and Eve betray God. Just as Judas is about to betray God. Unlike the scene in the Garden of Eden where Satan comes in subtly, in this scene that we have, a band of soldiers and the temple guards, they came in loudly.

As I've been looking through and studying for this passage, the scholars would say that there's maybe up to 600 people, 600 soldiers would have been involved there.

[8 : 32] That's what a cohort of the soldiers would have looked like. Plus the temple guards and the police and some of the Sanhedrin and the mob that would have come to collect him. A big, angry band of soldiers came that night to take the Lord Jesus.

Not subtly, but by force and aggression. You know, Jesus was in that familiar place with his disciples. And if we had read in Matthew or Mark, we might have seen a little bit more details than what we see in John's Gospel.

But in that familiar place, Judas betrays the Lord Jesus. And I wonder that if in our familiar places we betray the Lord Jesus.

Maybe not in the same way that Judas betrayed him. But I wonder if we betray him in another way. A man who had personally spent three years with the Lord Jesus, witnessing incredible miracles.

Often in that place in Gethsemane with the rest of the disciples, praying and spending time with the Lord Jesus. And yet it just shows how very little he knows about the Lord Jesus as we see unfolding in John chapter 18.

[9 : 50] I wonder if that's the same as us today. I wonder if, even though we might have been on the Christian pathway for quite some time, just how much do we know about the Lord Jesus? I think as we read through John 18, maybe it just shines, or it just puts a mirror in front of us, just to look

into there and ask ourselves the questions, do we see ourselves in this passage?

You know, I suggest that Judas was worried that Jesus would somehow escape. As he hatched that plan with the temple guard, the temple priests and the guards, that he would come and give that secret signal of a kiss in order, I don't know what he thought, not to give the game away. They came in force. And as I mentioned earlier, the people that have researched this would give the indication that it was a big band of soldiers that came to take the Lord Jesus with torches and lanterns as they came to light up that hillside as they hunted for him. But he did not realise that Jesus was the Lamb of God who would meekly submit. There was no need for battle. Jesus shocked Judas and the arresting officers by boldly presenting himself. He had nothing, the Lord Jesus had nothing to fear and nothing to hide. He would willingly lay down his life for the sheep. And furthermore, by surrendering to the officers, Jesus helped to protect his own disciples.

[11:23] It's what we read here. He kept them safe, not only spiritually, but physically, that none of them would be hard, that the scriptures would be fulfilled, that none of them would be harmed, none of them would be lost. You might ask yourself the question, why did the soldiers fall back when they came to ask the Lord Jesus, when the Lord Jesus asked them, who have you come to seek?

And he answered, I am he. You might wonder why they fell back. This is a title, we've thought about different I am's in Bruntsfield before. This is a title, I am. It's one that the Jews would recognise as a statement that would mean that he is the son of God, that he is God.

But I think in the Lord Jesus has been bold in the way that he declared that I am he. It would strike them that he was in total control.

You know, this wasn't a physically charred situation. We don't really know what Judas said to the priests and the Sanhedrin as they hatched this plan to come and to capture the Lord Jesus. What he said that would prepare them for this confrontation. We remember that the Jewish leaders before would have tried to capture the Lord Jesus. They tried to take hold of him.

[12:41] They tried to arrest him. And always without success. And I wonder as this band of people came, whether they came for conflict. And yet they were met with surrender and calm and peace.

And I think they were confused. Lord Jesus asked them again, who is it that you want? And that kiss that Judas gave, which was repeatedly given to the Lord, was one of these acts of, was probably one of the worst acts of betrayal that we've ever seen in history.

Now I'm going to move on to denial before we come back to what our C is. But Peter also betrays the Lord Jesus in John 18. I think if we betray the Lord Jesus, it's probably more like how Peter betrayed the Lord Jesus.

I think if we betray the Lord Jesus, it's in our words and in our actions. The man who came to suffer for his disciples is the man who came to suffer for you and for me.

To give up his life, to be judged for our wickedness, and yet, like Peter, we can often deny the Lord Jesus when we're asked. Graham has mentioned this over the last few weeks.

[13:57] On Monday morning, when you get into the office or the staff room or university and you're asked what did you get up to at the weekend, what is your answer? This servant girl, she asked Peter, are you not one of this man's disciples?

And Peter denied it. So tomorrow, I wonder what my answer will be. Will my answer be that I have spent time, we have spent time with each other, that we've spent time in Bruntsfield, that we've spent time thinking about the Lord Jesus and reminding ourselves of the one who loved us and gave himself for us.

Or I wonder if we'll be quiet like Peter and choose not to say anything and deny that we have anything to do with the Lord Jesus. If you're like me, then that will be true of many Monday mornings when I've been asked what did I get up to at the weekend.

And many times, I've failed because I stayed silent and I denied taking a stand with the Lord Jesus. It was easier for me to align myself with what the world thinks should happen at the weekend rather than what I actually did.

Our series is this, Life in His Name. And Jesus came that we might have life, abundant life, life in His name, and yet somehow we can be embarrassed by that.

[15:25] Peter gets a lot of stick in our, and sometimes the way that we describe this scene as He's standing by that fire. We've got to remember that this is in the middle of the night.

It's in a cold part of the day. And, you know, Peter is standing there to get a heat and he denies the fact that he is one of the Lord's disciples or that he knows the Lord Jesus.

Bear in mind that the people who lit the fire are the soldiers. The same soldiers that came to Gethsemane to capture the Lord Jesus and witness Peter cutting off the ear of the high priest's, the servant's ear.

Peter is standing right beside them. I think we give Peter a lot of stick because we think, Peter, you should have took a stand for the Lord and you didn't. And yet in that situation, Peter is fearful for his life and he's fearful what people think about him or what people will do to him.

You know, Peter was embarrassed by it. He understood that his physical life might be in danger if he identifies himself with the Lord Jesus. If he said, yes, I'm one of his followers and one of his disciples and one of the people who believe that this man is who he says he is, the Son of God, that he is God, that he is the Lamb of God who comes to take away the sin of the world.

[16:47] You know, Peter feared for his life and he denied the Lord Jesus. And next week, we'll come to see, I don't see Archie here today, but Archie is speaking next week and next week, we'll come to see that Peter not only denies him once, but he denies him again and again.

And I'll leave that cliffhanger there because that is where our passage stops, right in the middle of Peter's denial. This brings me to my last point.

And it is this, control. What was taking place in this scene that we've thought about, even down to this minor detail of a cock crowing twice in the middle of the night, significant enough to be heard and to be counted.

This is because the Lord is in control and Peter knew that. Not only was the Lord in control, but the Lord knew all things.

He knew what was going to befall him. And that is something that I think we should cling to today. Jesus' testimony throughout his whole life is that he is in control. He was in control then and he's in control now.

[18:03] When we think about the scene that is chaotic, that has drama, as I've said, you know, think about this, you know, possibly hundreds of soldiers marching through the streets of Jerusalem.

Down over that river, up the other side of the hill, into the Garden of Gethsemane with torches and lanterns and weapons in the middle of the night.

It's just such a commotion. Probably, there's a lot of things that are going on in Jerusalem at this time, but probably they've gathered people as they've pushed through the streets of Jerusalem, waking people up and wondering what it is.

You know, if we see any kind of activity outside at two o'clock in the morning, then we are naturally curious. Maybe a mob has gathered behind this band of soldiers and it just seems to be that nobody knows what's happening and there's nobody in control, but God's in control and Jesus knows that this is the time, this is his time that has come.

Remember in John 17 he said this, the hour has come. You know, many times in his ministry people would come to take the Lord Jesus and yet he would slip away. They would come to kill him or to seize him and yet he would not allow it, he would pass through because the appointed time had not come.

[19:22] But the time has come, a time of his choosing, a time that was chosen before the creation of the world. You see, the Lord Jesus is in complete control. arrest, betrayal, denial, but right in the middle of all of this chaos we see that Jesus is in control.

Now you might think that A, B, C, D is fairly elementary. It's too simple for you to remember but we should remember this if you remember nothing else, that Jesus is in control and we know and we experience this in our lives when we surrender to him.

I don't want to steal the message for the next few weeks but this might be the last message that you, this might be the last Christian message that you hear. It might be the last time that you've got an invitation to come and meet this Jesus.

Jesus knew and he foretold what would come. The Lord Jesus said to Peter, you will deny me three times before the cock rose twice. He said that because he knew that it would happen.

He knew that he would go to the cross, he knew that he would give up his life he knew that men would rip the beard from his face or tear strips of flesh out his back with that scourge.

[20:42] He knew all of these things and yet he faces them with peace. He surrenders himself to those that come to take him captive. In fact, even though men came to take him captive, we

remember these words that he said, no one takes my life, I give it.

He willingly becomes the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. I hope next week that you do hear what the message is because you'll hear that there is a time in the scene where Peter has an opportunity to repent.

Peter has the opportunity to realise who the Lord Jesus really is. That he has come, that we might have life and that we might have abundant life, we might have eternal life.

He's come that our sins can be forgiven. He's come that we can be restored, that we can be reconciled. You know, Jesus goes to the cross in order that we might be forgiven and that it might produce righteousness and repentance in our lives.

And we have an opportunity today to repent. Now, there are many Christians in the room that have given their life to the Lord Jesus. those that know their sins are forgiven.

[21 : 58] And yet, it may be that in some way we identify with Peter this morning and that we are living akin to Peter's denial by our words and our actions, by the way that we live.

We deny the Lord Jesus. Well, this is an opportunity for us to repent, to come to God. But it's also an opportunity if you've never come to know God's grace in your life, if you've never come face to face with the reality that there is one who gave up his life for you, who suffered and died and bore the judgment for your sin, if there's never been a time in your life where you've known God's forgiveness and the peace that Jesus offers us, well, there's an invitation today for you to come.

I want to take you back to that funeral on Friday. The continuing theme that came through loud and clear was that our friend had peace with God. A nurse came in recently and asked her if there's anything that she could do for her, anything that she was worried about and she said this, she said, no, I'm going to be with my saviour.

She had a peace in her soul and there was no enmity between her and God. that relationship was restored. It was reconciled. I hope you have that peace too.

Lastly, Jesus has this peace. This is what gives me joy this morning. Jesus has this peace as he faces what's to come. His relationship with the Father was never broken.

[23 : 38] Even though he must go through this devastating experience, even though we see the agony in the garden, praying to God, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Sweating as it were, great drops of blood, just showing us his full humanity.

But in such turmoil and agony, we read these words and we've read them today in John 18. Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given to me? This was his lot.

This was his portion. This was his plan. This is why he came. So let us fully realize, let us fully appreciate the zoomed in details, all that Jesus has gone through, knowing what was to come, knowing that he is in complete control.

I want to leave you a verse in John chapter 20. It's a verse that we often quote when we preach from John and it says this, these things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in his name.

Thank you.