

Written Copy: John 18:6-11 "Jesus in Control"

Midweek Lenten Service #2

Wednesday, March 16th, 2022

Text: John 18:6-11

⁶ When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground. ⁷ So he asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." ⁸ Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go." ⁹ This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one." ¹⁰ 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.) ¹¹ So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

Witnesses to Christ:

Jesus is in control and in charge throughout His Passion, even though it doesn't always look that way. Judas and the crowd he brings think they are in charge when they go to arrest Jesus, but He makes them fall backward to the ground by one simple utterance. Malchus believes he can subdue this prisoner, Peter thinks he needs to defend Jesus, and both are wrong. He is the sinless Son of God with the power of a legion of angels at His disposal who will go quietly, not because He is overpowered, but because of obedience to the Father and love for all mankind moving Him to become the perfect Lamb of Sacrifice. Jesus is in control, and through this submission to the powers of darkness He extend His control through the gift of faith over all who will come to believe in Him, His death and resurrection

Focus Statement:

The Lord Jesus Christ remains in charge no matter how things look in the Garden of Gethsemane. He is not being overpowered by evil but is willingly giving Himself over so that by faith His reign and rule can come into the hearts and minds of those who believe they are in control. He comes alongside us now and uses our fellow Christians to comfort is as we've been comforted.

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

Various people think they have control over the situation. The disciples think that with Jesus behind them they can overcome any opposition and stand with Jesus as He ushers in the new Kingdom of David. Judas and the Sanhedrin think they can overcome Jesus and His disciples and take Him into custody by force. Peter thinks he can live up to His promise to stand by Jesus no matter what. All these think they have some manner of authority or control over the situation. We can look to ourselves and to those with temporal power and authority for answers, but that is looking in the wrong place.

What the hearer should do as a result:

Look not to yourself but trust in God working through faith in Christ over all things. Know that what looks like defeat is actually God working out His will and His way that all those who He calls to faith will remain in faith to life everlasting

Subject Sentence: Despite how it looks to us, Christ is in control

Introduction:

Shalom! As promised, I'm back again. For those of you who may not remember I am the Apostle John. And your Pastor tells me that you are focusing during special Midweek Services on the events leading up to Jesus' suffering and death on the cross as recorded by me through the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit. And tonight you are focusing on my account of what happened when Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. Reflecting back on this time now, if I was to give this account a descriptive title, it might be "Who's in Charge?" And the different players in this drama would all have different answers to that question. Judas and the mob he led thought they were. We disciples thought we had a good handle on how things were supposed to go. But there is One who really was large and in charge, who was in complete control. And all parties involved didn't realize just how much He was in control.

Who was He to us at that time? He was a man. He was a very special man; one who had the power and authority from the Heavenly Father to do what no other man had ever done, that had a special relationship with the Father that no other man had ever had before. He was the Messiah, the one sent by God to save us from Roman rule with the power and authority from God Himself to win the day. But all the same, just a man. How differently would we see things after His resurrection! But that's a story for a different day.

We were sure we knew exactly what His mission on earth was. So sure that when He began talking about being arrested, and then suffering and the hands of the religious leaders and government officials, we refused to listen. After all we knew He could call upon the forces of nature to fight for Him, how could anyone overpower Him? With this in mind Peter made some bold statements to Jesus as we were on our way to Gethsemane after leaving our celebration of that special supper in the Upper Room. When Jesus told us that they would strike Him, the Shepherd, and we the sheep would be scattered Peter responded "***Even though all fall away, not me, I will stand beside you no matter what. I am ready to go with you to both prison and death.***" Peter meant those words, and we all agreed whole heartedly. Well, it's easy to talk brave when you're not yet facing the danger.

The Gospel Account

So it was that we came to the Garden of Gethsemane. This was the place where we would bed down for the night. It was the Passover celebration and good and faithful Jews had flocked to the city from throughout the Roman Empire. The city was packed with these pilgrims and there was no place in the city for us to stay. We expected this to be like any other night. Jesus would take some time to teach and review the day, and then pray to the Heavenly Father before going to sleep. But this night would soon take a turn we never expected.

You see, we weren't the only ones who knew of this location. Judas knew. Judas, who had taken off during the Passover celebration in the Upper Room. We thought that since he held the money, he had gone to pay for something. We weren't that concerned that he hadn't returned. We thought that he would eventually catch up, since he knew right where we'd be.

And he did catch up; he and a whole mob of evil men. Judas showed up with a contingent of Roman soldiers armed with swords, temple soldiers under the control of the chief priest armed with clubs, and a crowd of onlookers that followed the contingent just to see what the excitement was all about. It was a mob that Judas had gathered together, provided at the request of the ruling council, just to face a carpenter from Galilee and his twelve followers who had never been trained as soldiers. It was cloudless full moon night, yet they came with lanterns and torches. They thought that Jesus would try to hide in the Garden. How wrong they were.

Judas, knowing right where we'd be, led them straight to us. Yet instead of hiding in the Garden, or sneaking off another way, Jesus stepped out to meet them. He knew they were coming to arrest Him, yet with a boldness none of us had, He stepped right out in front of us to meet them face to face. It was almost as if the battle lines were set: Jesus in front with us disciples cowering behind Him, and across from Him the soldiers and the mob. Judas greeted Jesus with a kiss, the agreed upon signal, but then instead of joining us behind Jesus, stepped back in with this evil crowd. That was the moment it began to dawn on me that Judas had become a traitor. He wasn't forced to lead this group to Jesus as I first imagined. He was with them!

Jesus was not running and hiding, but taking control of the situation, addresses the captain of this contingent of Roman soldiers who stood at the front of this mob by saying, "**Who are you searching for?**" Now it's not like Jesus didn't know. He knew they were there for Him. He just wanted them to hear themselves answer that question. And they did saying, "Jesus of Nazareth." Now at this point those soldiers, as well as the mob behind them thought they knew who was in charge and basically how things would play out. They knew that for the most part we were unarmed and not soldiers. And while there might be some resistance, it wouldn't be anything these trained Roman soldiers, as well as the Temple Guard behind them couldn't handle.

Jesus answered showing them who was really in complete control of all things; and not just at this moment but leading up to it and going forward from here. He answered, "**I AM He**". Jesus answered giving them the Greek translation of the Hebrew name by which the LORD God of Armies had made Himself known to us, His Covenant people. He answered giving the Holy Name of God by which we were to worship Him, ***I AM WHO I AM, or Yahweh!***"

And how did these well-trained soldiers react? These soldiers trained to stand strong as they marched into battle, but here facing only a rag tag motley group of fishermen, how did they react? They fell back away from Him and fell to the ground! The whole mob did. It was an amazing sight! It was a momentary light of encouragement telling me that we might just get through this in one piece.

And what exactly was it that caused these men to fall back and fall to the ground? It wasn't just the words themselves that were spoken. If I had said them even in reference to Jesus, there's no guarantee anything would've happen. It was who was speaking these words. It was God the Son, the divine nature joined with a human nature and body. It was the Word made flesh. It was the voice of the very God Himself whose spoken word has the power to create the entire earth, and the universe, and all living beings. Standing there Jesus may not have looked like much to them, but He truly was and is the One who holds the power over life and death for all creatures. His words have the power of God to make things happen. And He was showing all of us just how large and in charge He was even facing this evil mob.

Well, those soldiers and the mob picked themselves up and faced Jesus once again. You might be wondering as I did later why at least some of that crowd, if not all of them, didn't high tail it out of there. Even with this miraculous sign, they couldn't see Jesus for who He really is behind the mask of His human nature. That requires faith, something this crowd didn't quite have. So they got up and stood there, the battle lines still drawn, but those of us behind Jesus were a little more emboldened, and perhaps on the other side they were a bit less sure of themselves.

Jesus, still large and in charge keeps things moving by once again asking them **"Who are you seeking?"** And once again they replied, "Jesus of Nazareth". Jesus responded **"I told you that I Myself am He. Now, since you are only here to arrest me, let these disciples of mine go. I'm the only one you want."** This was Jesus fulfilling a promise He made to the Father in the upper room earlier that night, that He would make sure none of us would be harmed physically, at least not yet. He knew that if we were made to suffer now like He was about to, it would cause us to fall away from faith. We were not ready for that, yet, as much as we thought we were earlier.

Jesus' response was the cue to action for Malchus, the servant of the High Priest, who had been given orders to put Jesus under restraints and bring Him to the home of the High Priest. Knowing that He had these soldiers backing him he moved in to bind Jesus. Now I told you that we had been emboldened seeing these trained soldiers fall to the ground, and had once again seen the supernatural power of Jesus at work. Peter, emboldened by this, and perhaps hearing in his head once again his promise of standing with Jesus no matter what chose this moment to act. He drew his sword and acted, taking a swipe at Malchus' head in what I'm sure was intended to be a kill shot. Only that's not what happened. Instead it sliced Malchus ear off. How exactly Peter missed delivering a killing blow I'm not entirely certain of. But if I was a betting man, I would bet that it was another act of Jesus supernatural power at work.

Peter's attack was a sign of aggression. And it came right after Jesus had negotiated our safe release. If the soldiers were the ones in charge this could've resulted in a bloodbath. But Jesus, still large and in charge, despite how things looked, once again took control. He told Peter sternly to drop that sword back into its sheath, that there would be no more violence done by any of us against these men. Jesus went on to point out that if there were to be a battle to protect Him it wouldn't be us who would fight. Jesus had 12 legions of mighty angelic warriors that were at the ready to fight and defend Him. But that was not to happen either.

That was not part of the plan of salvation that the Heavenly Father had sent Him to fulfill. As Jesus explained to us as they took Him away, this was His time to submit to the powers of darkness, the powers that Judas had crossed over to work for, the power of the devil himself. But this wasn't Jesus being overpowered. Jesus was still large and in charge. This was Jesus working pulling all the strings so that the Father's will is done.

And what is the Father's will? That Jesus drinks that cup that was being handed to Him by the Father. The cup that was the Father's wrath over the sins of the whole world and the sins of all those assembled: the mob's sins, the sins of us disciples, and your sins. What would happen from here on out would be Jesus taking all those sins upon Himself and suffering for them as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus was in charge throughout this whole time. He was taking charge and ownership of your sins, so that you would never have to pay the price of eternal suffering and death for them, ever. How can I know for sure this is true? How can you know for sure this is true? That's the blessing of living on the other side of the resurrection. Christ rose again, never to die, and you will too, because your sinful account has been paid in full by Him.

What this means for Us?

What should this have meant for us 11 disciples going forward? That no matter how bad things would look leading up to and including Jesus' suffering and death, He always remained large and in charge. Things may have looked to be out of control and in the hands of evil, but that was never the case. Jesus did give Himself over to the power of darkness, but even the powers of darkness must bow the will of the Father according to the work of the Son. This was God using the very worst the devil could muster for the eternal good of all God's children.

How should you see this today? Your Pastor told me that evil is hard at work here in your kingdom as well as in other parts of the world. You see and hear of evil things happening and it looks as if the devil and the forces of evil are having their way and are unstoppable. He said you may even be worried that this is the beginning of the end. We certainly thought it was when we saw our beloved Messiah die upon that cross. But the resurrection told a far different story. This was all God working for the good of all mankind. We just couldn't see the whole picture at that time.

Conclusion

I want to leave you with this. No matter how things appear, God the Father is at work through God the Son by the power of God the Holy Spirit active and at work in this world. There will come a day when the evil that is running amok will get what it justly deserves. It may happen in your lifetime, or maybe years after you are gone. But it most certainly will happen on the Last Day when our Savior returns and judges that evil. But God's concern between now and then is not that your country remains standing, that your standard of living remains what it is, or even that you have a comfortable life. This world will one day pass away. And if His efforts in your life have only been about your earthly existence then what good will that do in eternity? Jesus came to drink that cup of wrath for you so that you would be made good enough to live with His Spirit comforting and strengthening you now, through whatever may happen, so that you will be with Him in the eternal joys of life everlasting. He will fight the battle against the forces of evil to keep you steadfast in faith. The battle belongs to the Lord. Shalom!