

John 18: 1-14; “Jesus’ Arrest in the Garden”, A Palm Sunday Sermon
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 24th, 2024,
In the Afternoon Worship Service.

Behold, the majesty and glory and power of the love of our Savior towards us who are sinners! The Son of God is willing to be taken into the hands of wicked men, to be bound, and to drink the cup of sufferings which His Father had given Him, so that we could have eternal life! It is good for us to see that these things that Christ submitted to, before His crucifixion, were just as much a part of His sufferings on our behalf, as the crucifixion itself was. This is what I would have you see by faith.

The question that I would ask is this: What did Jesus know that night, in the garden, that demonstrates to us the majesty, the glory, and the power of His love for us as sinners? Our text says in verse 4, “Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, “Whom are you seeking?” The Lord Jesus knew who they were seeking for, and for what reason they had come. It was His love to stay and not to run away. Let me tell you now, of the love of Jesus Christ which was manifested in the Garden of Gethsemane that night.

1st of all – There was a definite majesty in His love toward sinners. (verses 1-7)

“When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered.” People sought the Lord Jesus for various reasons in that day. Some sought Him to follow Him, and others sought Him to do Him harm. But no one could remain neutral to Him. It is the same with His cause and His truth today. On that evening, Jesus knew the treacherous heart of His own professed disciple Judas, that he was seeking Him to betray Him.

And He knew that this whole detachment of troops that was sent by the chief priests and Pharisees were there to seize Him. They had tried to seize Him at various times before, but He had escaped their hands. “His time was not yet come” to die, but He knew that this time was theirs; their hour, and the power of darkness. Christ’s loving majesty is seen in His going with His disciples, on the night of His betrayal, to the place of prayer and communion where they had often gone before.

He did not run away from what knew He must pass through. He went with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, and with them He entered that garden. This brook, in the days of Hezekiah, was a place where the priests, after they had cleansed the inner part of the House of the Lord, brought out all the debris that they had found in the temple and carried it out to be thrown in this brook. (2nd Chronicles 29: 16) They also cast out the altars of the false gods that they removed, into this brook. (2nd Chronicles 30: 14)

It was called the Black Brook because, “there was a canal which led from the altar in the temple to it, by which the blood and the soil of the sacrifices were carried into it.” (Gill’s Commentary) Jesus was taking His disciples over this brook, was showing them and us, that this is where He must deal with His fears and overcome them for our sakes. This deep valley, this dark brook, where it seemed that everything defiling and polluting ran, was something that Jesus had to go over to prepare for the sufferings that He would undergo.

He was about to take upon Himself all the guilt and shame and sorrow which attend upon sin, for all his chosen ones. This brook pictures for us, all that Christ would encounter that night when it says in Matthew 26: 36 that, “He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed.” It says that He said, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.” Jesus knew that He had to go forward to meet His sufferings on behalf of all of sinners in all generations, not just those disciples there in the garden with Him at that time. He had already, “offered up His prayers and supplications with vehement cries and tears to the One who was able to save Him from death.” (Hebrews 5:7)

He knew that Judas had betrayed Him, He knew that the soldiers were coming to find Him there. The majesty of His love is, that He knew and stayed! He knew and He went forth to meet them. See them coming with lanterns and torches and weapons. They are a great multitude with swords and clubs coming to take Jesus, and what does He do? He goes forward to meet them! John Gill states in his commentary that King David with his loyal followers, years before, had fled from his son Absalom, going over this brook. "Here," he says, "we find the Son of God crossing over this brook to meet the wrath of His Father."

Our Lord demonstrates His majestic love in His entire willingness to be taken and unjustly treated for our sakes. Jesus was perfectly sinless. But if we know ourselves, we know that we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We deserve to be arrested and taken away to a trial before God. He steps up to be taken away in our place, to meet charges and punishments that were totally undeserved. But he willingly strides forward to meet this group being led by Judas and asks them, "Whom are you seeking?" They answer Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." They have heard that he is a very bad man, and are willing to believe that He has committed blasphemy in saying, "I and my Father are One". (John 10: 30) But Jesus says, "I am He."

Matthew Henry says, "When the people would have forced Jesus to take a crown, and wished to make Him a King, He withdrew and hid Himself. (John 6: 15) But when they came to force Him to His cross He offered Himself." Lampe remarks, "that the first Adam hid himself in the garden. The second Adam went forth to meet His enemies. The first felt guilty, the second innocent." This is love indeed! After Jesus admits that He is the man that they are looking for, He demonstrates His Majestic love again in this miracle that follows.

Will you recall with me that the first man Adam and his wife Eve were placed in a Garden, the Garden of Eden in the Beginning? Adam and Even were righteous and they were innocent of any sin until they ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which God had told Adam not to eat of. God told him that if he ate from that tree that he would die. But Eve was deceived by the Serpent Satan, who convinced her that she would not die, but that she would become wise. She ate, and then she gave some to Adam and he ate. And then when God came to look for Adam, he had hid himself in the Garden.

And so here we find the Lord Jesus, the second Adam having to pass the test that Adam failed to pass of maintaining His perfect righteousness and yet be willing to suffer for sinners in their place. He, the second Adam, went forth to meet His enemies. The difference here is that Adam felt guilty in the Garden, the second Adam, our Lord Jesus, felt innocent." This is love indeed! After Jesus admitted that He was the man that they were looking for, He demonstrated His Majestic love again in the miracle that is related for us here. After Jesus said, "I am He," we find all His enemies drawing back and falling to the ground.

You would think that this would have stopped this group of soldiers and wicked men. You would think that this would give them pause. They were pushed backward by an invisible hand, as if God the Father is saying – I would never permit you to lay a hand on My Beloved Son were it not my purpose to deliver Him into your hands. But My wrath against sinners must be satisfied. The meaning of this miracle did not come into their carnal minds, so depraved were they. They were so intent on taking Jesus and doing Him harm.

And so we find the Lord Jesus saying to them, once again, "Whom are you seeking?" Take notice that He does not say – Don't you fools understand that you can never take Me, the Son of God, without the Father's permission? That's why your all lying on the ground! He knew the hardness and desperate wickedness of their hearts. And so He patiently says to them again, "I have told you that I am He." I want you to see how patient the Lord was, in His bearing what we deserved to suffer, in His demonstrating in this majestic way, his willingness to be arrested unjustly, on our behalf?

2nd – I want to show you that there was a definite glory in the love that He manifested towards sinners that day. (verses 8, 9)

He says in verse 8, “I have told you that I am He”. “Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way.” This is the glory of the love of the Lord Jesus for sinners, that He becomes their substitute. The disciples are in danger of being taken along with the Master, but the sacrificial love of Christ must stand alone, stand by itself, because these actions that He was taking were to be done on behalf of all that the Father had given Him. They must be allowed to go, to leave, and be free, while He remains. This reminds me of John 10: 11, 12 – “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.”

“But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them.” “The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.” The Lord Jesus not only would not leave and not flee, but He would make sure that He was the only one who was to be taken that night. Now we see why He asks the men coming to take Him, twice, “Whom are you seeking?” He is saying that if they had come for Him alone, then all the rest with Him should not be taken.

Unbeknownst to them, He was also saying that He would take their place in judgment, in the sight of the Father as well. He would become their substitutionary atonement. In John 17: 12 we find Jesus praying and saying, “While I was in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those who You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” In our text in verse 9 it says – “that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, ‘Of those whom You gave Me, I have lost none.’”

John Trapp says, “Christ spake it of their souls, it is here applied to their bodies. God hath a fatherly care of both, and will not lay more upon the outward man than the inward shall be enabled to undergo. As a good shepherd, he interposes between the wolf and the flock: as a heavenly eagle, he hath ever an eye to his nest, when he flies highest from it.”

The glory of Christ’s love, is that He keeps His people, who are the sheep of His pasture. He was concerned with their physical preservation at this time because he knew that the keeping of their eternal souls was involved it. Many of them would die martyr’s deaths later, but that would only be by His grace and appointment. The Lord Jesus knew that the understanding and faith of His disciples at this time was not strong enough to bear up under what was coming for Him.

Indeed He knew, as I said before, that it was absolutely essential for their eternal salvation to be secured that He face and endure the cross alone; that He lay down His life for His sheep. They could have no part in it, for He must purchase their souls, their lives, their bodies, their future inheritance, all of it, at this time! Their salvation must be all of His doing, to be all of grace. He would keep them from the immediate danger of being taken, and tried. And He would keep them from the eternal danger of losing their souls, by doing all for them as their good shepherd.

Will you not believe that He also did this for you? Jesus had to be taken in your place. Jesus had to be bound so that you may go free. Jesus had to be tried and found guilty and stand condemned, for you to be acquitted. Jesus must lay down his life for you to be His sheep, and not to be lost. When you believe in Jesus, you come to understand the glory of His love in going to the cross to bear what you so richly deserve, the punishment and wrath of God against your sin. Jesus must pay it all for you, but He does so, and He thereby shows the glory of His love to all sinners who believe in Him; even you.

3rd – I want to show you that there was a definite power in the love that He manifested towards sinners that day. (verses 10-14)

How well we see this portrayed in the life of Peter at this point. Peter was not going to let His Master be taken. In Matthew 16: 21-23, we find that Peter was trying to keep Jesus from the cross and death. This was even after Jesus had specifically said that, “He must go to Jerusalem, and

suffer many things from the elders and the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.” Peter takes Jesus aside and says, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!”

Now here in John 18: 10, we find Peter showing his strong determination to prevent Jesus from having to do what He knew that He must do, and go through what he knew that He must go through. It says – “Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear.” “This shall not happen to you, Lord,” is still uppermost in his mind. His intentions were good, but they were human. They were fleshly; they were well-meaning, but they were not of grace.

This is often what human nature will try to do in relation to the Lord Jesus. It will say with Peter – Lord, I can solve the problems related to my sin, and other people’s sin, by self-determination and force. I will not submit to this, and I will not let this happen to You. I believe that I can keep it from happening to either of us! God’s purpose, you should know, was to ordain, to allow, and to permit Christ to suffer at the hands of wicked men. He did this for the sake of sinners who so very much need His salvation. There was power in Christ to triumph over the worst sins of men by His sufferings!

It was the worst sin ever committed by men, that they put the Lord Jesus to death. But God not only permitted it, He ordained it. (Acts 2: 23; Acts 4: 28) And He ordained this terrible sinful act to take place in order that His higher purpose could be fulfilled; the saving of Peter’s soul! And it will save your soul as well if you will trust in Christ. It is His being taken to the judgment of the cross that is meritorious in God’s sight. You will not solve the problems of your sin or other men’s sins by carnal methods or weapons. But you will triumph by faith in Christ and find working in yourself, the power of His love.

“Put your sword into the sheath, Peter, Jesus says to him; “Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?” And so He must, and so He did, for Peter and for all His people. Jesus has drunk the cup of the Father. And since He drank it to the dregs, you and I will never be taken to the Judgment Hall. We will never be punished for our sins. And we will always know the care of our Great Shepherd, even in our worst moments. He will not lose one of you who sincerely puts their trust in Him. And He has shown you, dear ones, by His love, the way to conquer. It is by His grace that this same love, majestic, glorious, and powerful, is found in you.

Put away your sword, which you have taken out against the Lord’s enemies, and take up the cup that the Father has given you. It is not the cup of His wrath. That was the cup which Jesus had to drink. Rather, it is the cup of salvation He gives to you, because you have taken Christ. And you are able to drink it because Jesus said, “Therefore if you seek Me, let these go their way.” If God punished Christ, then He will not take you in judgment. If wicked men took Christ and bound Him, and put Him to death on the tree, it was because Christ was willing to stand in your place that night in the garden. If He was willing to be led away to suffer, will you, then, be unwilling to take up the cup of salvation? I pray not!