

John 18:12-27

Teaching Points

Our text this evening follows Jesus from His arrest in the Garden in Gethsemane to His appearance before the High Priest. We also follow Peter who denies his Lord three times. As we take in these tragic scenes, we should remember that Jesus is doing what He said He would do and Peter is doing what Jesus said he would do. Scripture is being fulfilled and the words of our Lord are coming to pass.

Jesus is doing what He said He would do

Read Matthew 16:21. What did Jesus say would happen to Him? That very thing is happening here in John 18. This is the beginning of those “many things” He will suffer at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes. We hate the thought of Jesus’ betrayal, the disciples scattering from Him, and the crooked leadership interrogating Him. But none of this took Jesus by surprise nor did any of it deter Him from obeying His Father and pursuing our salvation. As always, Jesus is in complete control. Let us never lose sight of the sovereignty of our Lord.

Discussion Question: Why do you think John included the statement in verse 14 about Caiphas’ words from John 11:50?

Thoughts: One reason John reminds us of what Caiaphas said is to show that the judgment against Jesus was already decided. It would not be a fair trial. Caiaphas was not ready to see that justice was done. Rather, he was a cynical politician who had already spoken in favor of Jesus’ death.

Jesus Interrogated

In asking Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine, Annas basically asked Jesus, his prisoner, “Tell us all what You’re guilty of and everyone who is with You.” Jesus did not mention His disciples at all (two of them are right there on the premises!). Jesus protected them in every way possible.

Jesus taught openly. He didn’t keep His doctrine a secret. One man said, “Truth is bold and barefaced; when heresy hides itself, and loathes the light.” Jesus was not being uncooperative, but actually asserting His legal right. It was the duty of the high priest to call forth witnesses under the Jewish law. Jesus is saying, “If my teaching is being called into question, evidence should be heard in the normal way.”

At this point, an unnamed officer, without warning, strongly slapped Jesus with the palm of his hand. This began the physical abuse of Jesus that would end in His crucifixion. With this slap, that officer also verbally accused Jesus of disrespecting the high priest. Jesus asked both the unnamed official and Annas to justify this physical abuse: “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil, but if well, why do you strike Me?” Jesus exposed the shameful truth, that they did not follow their own standards and practice of justice with Jesus of Nazareth. Then, as if He were a dangerous criminal, they sent Jesus bound to a more “official” trial to the actual high priest.

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Peter is doing what Jesus said He would do

Look back at John 13:36-38 where Peter pledges to “lay down his life” for Jesus. How did Jesus respond? Jesus not only questions Peter’s courage, but gives the specifics of his upcoming denials: Peter will not only NOT lay down his life for Jesus, but will deny Him three times before the rooster crows. Imagine how those words would have landed on Peter...what a “gut-punch.” And Peter did exactly what Jesus said he would do: He denied Him three times before the rooster crowed.

There are so many details surrounding Peter’s denials for us to consider. The disciples all forsook Him and fled (Matthew 26:56), yet Peter and “another disciple” (John?) followed Jesus to the residence of the high priest. One disciple is allowed in and then gets “permission” for Peter to enter the courtyard from the servant girl who works the door. That very same servant girl then asks Peter, in effect, “You’re not one of Jesus’ followers too, are you?” That means she knew the “other disciple” was a follower of Jesus, yet Peter denied being one himself. Why would he do that? Why be afraid of a servant girl who already knows that this “other disciple” belongs to Jesus? Peter denies two more times. The third time, John tells us, he denies knowing Jesus to one who is a “relative of him whose ear Peter cut off.” The words of this servant (v.26) could read, “I saw you with my own eyes, didn’t I?” Peter says, “no.” There’s more. The parallel account in Matthew (26:74) tells us that Peter denied this third time with cursing and swearing. He must have been hoping that this would make them think even more that he was not associated with Jesus. Immediately a rooster crowed. After his denials and the crowing of the rooster, Luke adds this detail: “And the Lord turned and look at Peter.”

Discussion Questions: What part/s of this whole scene of Peter’s denials stick out in your mind? All four Gospel writers mention this account with varying details. Why do you think they all tell us about Peter’s denials.

Thoughts: *Peter’s failures remind us that we are not as strong as we think we are. And Jesus knows us better than we know ourselves. Perhaps Peter saw Jesus get slapped by the officer (v.22) and came to conclusion that this whole incident was going to be more violent and messy than he had thought? The shock of this sight increased the level of stress and panic for Peter as he stood and warmed himself. His faith and his courage failed...proving the need we all have for a Savior.*