**THE BETRAYAL AND ARREST OF JESUS**

John 18:1-12

The last time I was here in class with you, 3 weeks ago, I read the first 12 verses of John Ch 18 which gives us John’s account of the arrest of Jesus. This morning we will read the passage again and then look at it in a little more detail. John Chapter 18 begins… READ John 18:1-2

1 When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. 2 Now Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples.

Jesus and His disciples enter a garden. We know from the other gospel accounts that this is the Garden of Gethsemane. John says it is a place where Jesus often met with His disciples. Judas, being one of Jesus’ 12 disciples would certainly know where this meeting spot is. Luke mentions that it was Jesus’ custom to go to this place. (22:39) Sometimes Jesus would go there alone to pray. Other times He would bring His disciples there to teach them. This garden is a special place. It is a familiar place. So, just picture the scene – it is now the wee hours of the morning, Friday morning. This garden has a lot of olive trees and it’s dark. It’s quiet and secluded. John doesn’t mention this but the other 3 gospel accounts tell us that when they first enter the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus goes off by Himself to pray. He leaves 8 of His disciples at the gate and takes the 3 leaders, Peter, James and John with Him a little further into the garden. He tells them to sit here while He goes off to pray, a stone’s throw away. He says, “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Matt 26:41) I believe Jesus tells them this because at this pivotal moment in time Jesus Himself is being tempted by Satan. Jesus is the Son of God, yes, He is God, but remember -- He is also fully human, is in human flesh. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. If you’ll recall at the beginning of His ministry Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness. I firmly believe that here at the end of His ministry Jesus is once again being tempted by Satan. So Jesus goes to the Father for strength. Jesus pours out His heart in prayer to the Father, His soul troubled, overwhelmed with sorrow, in anguish. Jesus lays down with His face on the ground praying earnestly, His sweat like drops of blood falling to the ground. He is praying for the Father to help Him overcome temptation. And what temptation is that? It’s a temptation that Jesus has seen before. Matthew 16:21-23: “From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, ‘Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.’ But [Jesus] turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.’” So Jesus recognizes Peter’s words as Satan at work. Jesus is being tempted to avoid the cross and disrupt God’s plan.

I believe that Satan is tempting Jesus to avoid the cross and all the horrible things associated with it – the physical pain; the shame; the betrayal and denial and abandonment of Him by His own disciples, His closest friends; the rejection by His own people, the Jews. But worst of all having the sin of the world heaped upon Him, the sinless Son of God. And then the abandonment by His Father for the first time ever as God’s wrath is poured out on Him and He turns His face away because He cannot look at sin. Jesus knows all of this awaits Him (see v 4) if He is obedient and follows through with God’s plan. Jesus knows that dying on the cross is God’s plan and He has even mentioned this several times during His ministry. But now that the time has come, Satan is attacking Jesus full force. All of this weighs heavy on Jesus’ heart. Three times Jesus prays, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” Jesus, both fully God and fully man, is totally honest with the Father – “if there is any other way to accomplish My mission, then let it happen. But nevertheless I will do what You want.” So physically and emotionally draining is this time in the garden for Jesus, just like His temptation in the wilderness, that afterward the angels come and minister to Him, they strengthen Him. So now Jesus is ready. He has prepared Himself for what will happen next. He is resolved to go to the cross.

Jesus knows what He must do. And He knows it is God’s will, God’s plan. He must complete His mission. From a human standpoint if He had wanted to avoid the cross He had opportunity to do it. He could have quietly slipped off into the darkness. Instead, READ John 18:3-9…

3 So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers [“cohort” (NASB) of Roman soldiers, anywhere from 200-1000 men] and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons. 4 Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, “Whom do you seek?” 5 They answered him, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus said to them, “I am he.” Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. 6 When Jesus said to them, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground [show cover slide]. 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.” [Jesus points to His 11 disciples who are standing with Him] 9 This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: “Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one.” [from His high priestly prayer, John 17:12]

The silence of the dark night is broken. We can hear the muffled sounds of voices and footsteps – hundreds of men are making their way up the Mount of Olives to the garden. John mentions that with Judas are the temple police (Jews) and Roman soldiers with their officers (Gentiles). They’re all fully armed. Evidently they are expecting some sort of resistance. Through the trees you can see the flickering of torch lights. The sounds get louder and louder, the light gets closer. Like I said before, if Jesus had wanted to avoid the cross He could have easily made His escape into the darkness away from the oncoming mob. But He doesn’t do that. V 4, “Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, CAME FORWARD.” Jesus is no victim. Out of His love for us and in obedience to His Father Jesus willingly steps forward. He lays down His life for His sheep, just as He said He would (Jn 10).

The actual arrest scene that’s recorded here is unique to John’s gospel. Judas leads an armed contingent of hundreds of men to the place where he is certain Jesus will be at this hour. Mark’s gospel describes the group as “a crowd with swords and clubs.” Jesus goes forward to meet them. He doesn’t run away or hide. He meets them head on. He has prepared Himself for this. He knows what He must do.

John doesn’t mention anything about the betrayal kiss that Judas gives Jesus as a sign of who they are to arrest. John chooses to leave that particular detail out. Instead Jesus simply addresses the mob. He asks them, “Whom do you seek? Who is your arrest warrant for?” So they tell Him, “Jesus of Nazareth.” And Jesus flat out tells them, “I am He. I’m Jesus of Nazareth.” That’s when something truly amazing happens. This armed mob, hundreds of men, inexplicably drew back and fell to the ground. Jesus’ simple reply causes hundreds of armed men to fall down. And only John records this. Why? Well, it is essential to the purpose for which John writes his gospel. He states this in John 20:31: “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.” So John shows that Jesus is the Son of God thru His various signs and wonders. Here, even at Jesus’ arrest, we see the power of God on display thru the spoken words of Jesus.

Also, only here in John’s account of the arrest do we see Jesus protecting His disciples. This band of men, by their own verbal declaration, has come to arrest Jesus and Jesus only. They’re not there for the disciples. So Jesus points this out to them and says, “Let these men go.” The disciples are free to go. Jesus is protecting them. He knows where they are spiritually. He knows His disciples aren’t ready to handle what would happen to them that night if they’re arrested. Later on, after the resurrection, following the ascension and Pentecost these same eleven disciples will because of the indwelling Holy Spirit become bold. Later they will be able to handle persecution and suffering, but not now. And so Jesus protects them at this time. And as John points out – this fulfills what Jesus prayed to the Father earlier in John Ch 17, v 12.

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?” 12 So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him.

The last thing that John mentions about Jesus’ arrest is the actions of Peter as he takes out his sword and cuts off the high priest’s servant’s ear. This was not a good night for poor old Peter! After this we’re told that Peter denies Jesus. And not just once, but three times. You can’t help but ask yourself why Peter does what he does here. Yes, in John 13:37 Peter did declare to Jesus, “Lord, I will lay down my life for You. I will be bold. I will stand up for You and defend You.” And here we see him putting his words into action. But Jesus had told His disciples repeatedly that He must die. But Peter just doesn’t get it. So then, Jesus rebukes Peter and tells him that He must drink the cup – “I must die, I must experience the wrath of God. It’s why I came, Peter. Don’t you get it?” Then Luke 22 tells us that Jesus restores Malchus’ ear. This is probably done to protect Peter from being arrested as much as it is to display that Jesus is God. And so with that Jesus is arrested and led off to face a mock trial. Matthew adds that “Then all the disciples left Him and fled.”

So there is the arrest of Jesus. So what is the application?

(1) Jesus willingly went to the cross. This was not an easy thing to do. Satan tempted Him to avoid the cross, but out of His love for us and motivated by His obedience to the Father, He did it. He carried out God’s plan at a great cost to Himself personally. In the same way Satan may tempt you and me to shortcut or avoid God’s will for our life – avoid the tough decisions and experiences and take the easy road. Don’t give in. Do God’s will God’s way. Not sure what that is? Pray for wisdom. It’s important that we discern what God’s will is for us and do it. And that we discern what is Satan’s temptation and run away from it. How do we discern which is which? The same way Jesus did – thru prayer.

(2) Even at His arrest, Jesus showed His power and authority as the Son of God. He didn’t need His disciples to fight for Him. As He says to Peter in Matthew’s account, “Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once send me more than twelve legions of (72,000) angels?” Jesus laid down His life willingly. He was no victim. He did this because He loved you and loved me. Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.

(3) Jesus protects His own. First Corinthians 10:13 offers us a great promise: “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” He did that with His disciples the night of His arrest and, my friends, He does that for us even today.

God loves us. The Father formulated a plan whereby we could be saved from our sins, rescued from the devastating results of Adam’s sin passed down to us. His plan provided a way that we could then have a relationship forever with Him. Jesus, the Son willingly laid down His life for us, His sheep. He paid the price on the cross for your sins and for mine. “For our sake He (God the Father) made Him to be sin, who knew no sin (Jesus), so that in Him (Jesus) we might become the righteousness of God.” The Holy Spirit convicts of our sin and draws us to God. After we are saved He indwells us and daily guides us, empowers us, shows us how to live a life pleasing to God. So if God loves us that much, what then should be our response to Him? *Let’s sing that little chorus “Glorify Thy Name.”*