

# **A Heart to Save Us - *John 18:1-19:16***

## **Introduction**

- Today is Palm Sunday. It's the beginning of the week that led up to the death of Jesus. This week that began with Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, with crowds laying down their palm branches and shouting "Hosanna"!
- But, what we're looking at today, is what happens about a week after that triumphant entry takes place, and things will look incredibly different. Rather than people praising Jesus as a king, they will be calling out for his death.
- We've been building to this moment for weeks now. Throughout all of the farewell discourse, Jesus has been preparing his disciples for these exact moments.
- And starting in Ch. 18 John starts to describe the beginning of the end of Jesus' life, but not by any means the end of the story
- And as we look at this passage today we see so many different stories happening all at once as John gives us such a broad picture of what's going on, and the various people involved.
- But this is so much more than just a story. What we're about to look at is everything that makes the Gospel what it is. It's the very foundation of our faith. Carson comments:
  - *"All the canonical Gospels move inexorably toward the passion and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah; indeed, without this climax, a 'Gospel' would not be a Gospel."*
- What we're about to explore over the next three services is the very crux of what Christianity is, and what the Gospel is. Without these chapters, the Gospel does not exist.
- John's account here gives a unique window, not only into the heart of Christ, but also into our own hearts. The heart of humanity, and against that backdrop, seeing the hearts of humanity exposed, what we see about the heart of Christ is all the more beautiful, and awe inspiring. We see the true beauty of the Gospel.
- As difficult as these passages may be, and how dark they get, as we move through them I want us to be completely in awe of Christ. Amazed by everything that is taking place here and everything that Jesus does.

## **The Heart of People:**

- Now, as we work through this passage, there's a lot of story to cover here. This passage covers the entirety of the arrest and the trial of Jesus, and as we work through these events, I

want us to focus on two main things. I first want us to focus on all of the side characters in this story, everyone around Jesus, and what they're doing as this story unfolds, which will give us a view into the heart of humanity, and I'll warn you, it's not a very flattering view. But then we're going to take a look at what Jesus was doing during all of this, and what we're going to see here is a beautiful contrast between our own hearts and the heart of Christ.

- So to start off, there are so many different people interacting with Jesus as these events unfold, and these are people who have such varied relationships with Christ. They're approaching him from such different perspectives.

### ***Main Characters***

- **Judas: Betrayer**

- To start, you have Judas Iscariot. The disciple who betrayed his teacher, and Lord, giving him up to be killed for money. Ch. 18 begins with Jesus and his disciples in a secluded spot, a garden where Jesus has taken them to pray right before his death, and we're told that it was a spot that Jesus took them to frequently for prayer. But look at what V. 2-3 says in Ch. 18.

*“Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples. So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons.” - John 18:2-3 (ESV)*

- So this just emphasizes the depth of Judas' betrayal, and how close he had been with Jesus at one point, to know exactly the spot that he would take his disciples for private prayer right before the passover. Judas had been with him, shared life with him in an intimate way for years, yet in this moment completely betrays Jesus' trust, using his intimate knowledge of Jesus to bring an angry mob with torches and weapons to arrest him.

- **Peter: Friend**

- Then, as the story moves along and Jesus' trial begins we see a bit of the story of Peter, which is intercut with Jesus' trial. He pops in and out of the story as it goes on.
- But each time we check back in with Peter, while Jesus is on trial, we see people asking Peter if he was one of Jesus' followers, and each time, he denies it, just like Jesus told him he would.
- The first example of this comes in V. 17 as he has a conversation with a servant girl outside of the place that Jesus was on trial

*“The servant girl at the door said to Peter, “You also are not one of this man's disciples, are you?” He said, “I am not.” - John 18:17 (ESV)*

- This is Peter who, just a few hours earlier assured Jesus that he would die before he let anything happen to him, yet here he is. Both in V. 15-18 and V. 25-27 he denies Jesus each time he is questioned.
- So he may not have betrayed Jesus in the same way that Judas did, but in this moment he still abandons his Lord and lets Jesus down during his time of need, denying even knowing him.
- **Annas and Caiaphas: Religious leaders**
- And while that is going on, John describes the beginning of Jesus' trial with the high priest in V. 19-24. And the high priest really should have been the one who was most excited about the coming of Jesus.
- He, along with the other religious leaders, were responsible for being the Spiritual and religious shepherds of the people. They would have known the Scriptures better than anyone, including the Scriptures that described the coming of the messiah, the Scriptures that Jesus fulfilled, and they were responsible for teaching these things to the people. They should have been the first ones to recognize who Christ was and point the people to him, seeing that he was the son of God, but instead they rejected Christ as their messiah and they were the ones to devise this plan to put Jesus to death.
- **Pilate: Government official**
- Then finally, we reach Jesus' trial before Pilate, who is the governor and representative of the Roman government, and John takes more time to look at the interactions here between Pilate and Jesus than he does anyone else.
- We see that Pilate is apathetic in this situation at best. He doesn't really want anything to do with Jesus, look at V. 31:

*“Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.” The Jews said to him, “It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death.” - John 18:31 (ESV)*

- The Jews were not actually able to sentence Jesus to death themselves, or they would have, so they needed Pilate to be the one to condemn him.
- So reluctantly, Pilate questions Jesus, and we see in V. 38-40 that he sees Jesus is innocent, but being afraid of the people, tries to find a clever way to release him so it's not his problem anymore.

*“After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in him. But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” They cried out again, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a robber.” - John 18:38-40 (ESV)*

- Pilate thought this would be an easy way to get himself off the hook, but the people would rather have a violent criminal, who was rightfully imprisoned released rather than their messiah, who had been found innocent. So Pilate goes back to the drawing board, and the beginning of Ch. 19 tells us of Pilate's attempts to make this problem go away so he doesn't have to get involved, but we see the culmination of this trial in V. 12-16 which say:

*“From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, “If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.” 13 So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha. 14 Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, “Behold your King!” 15 They cried out, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.” 16 So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.” - John 19:12-16 (ESV)*

- This is the depth of the betrayal and rejection that Jesus faced. The people that Christ came to save, who hated the Roman government more than anything are crying out for his crucifixion, and saying “*We have no king but Caesar*”. They have firmly turned their backs on him and rejected him entirely.
- This was the same betrayal and rejection that Christ experienced at every turn, even from those closest to him. Jesus came to earth with a heart to save people, yet those same people rejected him entirely, calling for his execution.
- So as we look at this story, and all of the different people involved, we do get a window into the heart of humanity, and we see that it is a heart of rebellion and rejection against God.
- You'd expect him at this point to realize his mistake. These people clearly aren't worth saving. I think any of us, being in Jesus' position would have a pretty tough time laying down our lives for these people who seem to want nothing to do with him.
- And it's easy to look at these people rejecting Christ and think to ourselves, how could they do that? How could they reject Christ like that? But don't we so often do the same thing? Allowing so many things in our life to take the place that Christ rightfully deserves as our king? Crying out “I have no king but money”, or “I have no king but relationships”, or “I have no king but my career”. We are constantly doing this same thing, choosing to reject Christ and do life our own way, thinking we have it figured out, that we know better.
- So why would Jesus choose to die for a people who so constantly reject him at every turn?

## **The Heart of Christ:**

- Well against this backdrop of our sinful and rebellious hearts, I want us to take a step back and look at the heart of Christ in all of this, as he is facing constant betrayal and rejection from all angles. Let's look at how he was reacting to all of the betrayal and rejection that was being targeted at him.
- Right off the bat, looking at the moment that Jesus was betrayed we can see that there is no surprise in him. He knows that this is coming, and intends to do nothing to avoid it.
- Look at V. 4 in Ch. 18:

*“Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, “Whom do you seek?” - John 18:4 (ESV)*

- John Kostenberger comments so perfectly on this verse, saying:
  - *“John portrays Jesus’s arrest from the vantage point of God’s sovereign plan: Jesus, “knowing all that was going to happen to him” (18:4), takes the initiative throughout the entire arrest proceedings.”*
- So Jesus initiates and engages with those who have come to arrest him. He is not taken off guard at any point. He is in complete control, and is prepared to surrender himself to the will of his Father.
- This introduces one of the main things we see about the heart of Christ in this passage, and that is his authority and control. There is not once in this passage, despite everything that is happening, that you feel like things have spiralled outside of Christ's control. Watching how he interacts with those around him, he never appears to have lost his grip on what is happening. You truly get the sense that he knew this was going to happen, and this was always what he intended.
- Later, when Jesus is on trial before the high priests, look at his response to their questioning in V. 20-21:
  - *“Jesus answered him, “I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said.” - John 18:20-21 (ESV)*
- So again, Jesus is not phased at all by these events. He knows that he's innocent, though he has no intentions of fighting for himself, or really trying to defend himself at all. He's not trying to get out of this. Rather he challenges the high priest, pointing out that he has never hidden his teaching, and that if they want to know what he's said, they should ask those who

have listened. Because anyone who has truly listened to his words knows that he's done nothing wrong, and has spoken nothing but the truth.

- Then again, we come to the interactions that happen between Jesus and Pilate, and specifically in 18:33-38 they have a conversation surrounding the authority, and the kingship of Christ.
- Amidst all of these questions, rejections, and betrayals that we read about in this passage, this conversation happens between Jesus and Pilate, and I just want to read these verses to you:

*“So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?” Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” Pilate said to him, “What is truth?” - John 18:33-38 (ESV)*

- So Pilate here is really trying to determine whether Jesus poses some political threat to him, or to the Roman Empire, worrying that he is some new king that will stage some military coup and overthrow the Romans, but Jesus responds in telling him that even though he is a king, he is not a king in the way that Pilate understands it.
- Then in V. 37 Jesus tells Pilate that what is happening, all that he's going through, was his entire purpose in coming to Earth in the first place. His mission, *“For this reason...”*
- This is the reason that Jesus came. To face this rejection, to face these betrayals, and to die on the cross for us.
- Also later in Ch. 19:9-11

*“He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, “Where are you from?” But Jesus gave him no answer. So Pilate said to him, “You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?” Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.” - John 19:9-11 (ESV)*

- Jesus makes clear again, this is not being done to him. No one that he has interacted with has any real authority over him, except what he has allowed.
- This conversation about the authority of Christ, and his kingship makes this situation all the more staggering. At any point, if he wanted to end all of this he could have. He could have stopped all of this from happening and avoided having to endure a death on the cross, but despite this, he humbles himself, allowing others to have this authority over him.

- This reminds us of what was happening in the beginning of Ch. 13 and the conversation that Jesus had with his disciples about the humble, sacrificial love that he would show for them as he washed their feet. In this moment Jesus, the ultimate authority is humbling himself here to earthly authorities.
- So while the heart of humanity is full of rejection and rebellion against God, we can see that the heart of Christ is full of incredible love.
- This is so powerful. I want you to think about everything that we've seen about Christ up to this point. Jesus is God, he is the same Jesus who we were so in awe of last week when Darryl took us through his beautiful prayer in Ch. 17, showing how he is constantly praying for us. The same Jesus who has exposed his heart of love to his followers in so many ways in the past number of weeks as we've worked through the book of John. This is Jesus who has shown himself time and again to have all authority on earth, yet he has humbled himself here in such an amazing way. He never lost control, but allowed all of this to happen to him.

## **Conclusion**

- So what could possibly motivate him to this? What could motivate Christ, who is the ultimate king, and has the ultimate authority, to willingly humble himself to this level of torture and humiliation? Jesus tells Pilate that he has no authority except the authority that Jesus himself has given him, so why did Jesus give him that authority?
- Why would Jesus be willing to die for humanity that has a heart of pure rebellion against him, and that has rejected their creator and their king?
- I want to read for you Romans 5:6-8

*“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” - Romans 5:6-8 (ESV)*

- We see the truth of these verses play out in real time in this passage. While everyone was fully set against Christ, having firmly rejected him, he still went to the cross as an act of love offering salvation to us, and as an act of obedience to his Father.
- So we look at the heart of all of these people around Jesus, the way that they have rejected him and betrayed him, even at the most intimate level, and we see that we ourselves have rejected Christ in very similar ways, but be encouraged.

- While we were still sinners, living in rebellion against God, Jesus chose to face this death for us, so that we could have a relationship with God. He willingly took this on himself for our sake.
- So as we come to Good Friday in just a few days, I want us to remember this. The heart of Christ is to offer himself to save us, even while our hearts were against him.
- So I want to challenge you today, as you read about the sacrifice that Christ has made and all that he's done, give your life to him. Make him the ultimate authority in your life. As we see all that Christ has done for us, let our lives be lived to say "We have no king but Christ". Submitting ourselves to him and living for his glory alone, recognizing the amazing sacrifice that he willingly made for us.