

Communion

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Preacher: David MacPherson

[0 : 00] This evening, we remember and celebrate the manner in which Jesus gave Himself over to death in our place. His life was not snatched from Him. Rather, Jesus consciously and carefully gave Himself over to His enemies. This truth is repeatedly evident in the gospel accounts, very especially as His appointment with death approaches. He sets His face to Jerusalem, and He walks purposefully into the clutches of His enemies. In the passage we have read, and that we are considering this evening, this is very evident. It's evident even in the smallest details. For example, notice what we are told there in verse 2 of the olive grove into which

He went. And then we're told, almost in the passing, and He and His disciples went into it, and sorry, and what follows in verse 2, because Jesus had often met there with His disciples. He'd often met there with His disciples. Indeed, He had. And it is for that reason that He is there on the night of His death. He intends to be found. He intends to be arrested.

Jesus gave Himself over to death. He gave His life as a ransom for many, as a ransom for you, if you are trusting in Him as your Savior. Now, this evening, I want to consider this matter of giving, but I want to consider it from a slightly different perspective. I want to consider it from the perspective of what was given to Jesus by the Father. Yes, Jesus gave Himself, and that is what we will remember very particularly in the sacrament. But this evening, I want to think, on the basis of this passage, what was given to Jesus by the Father. I want to suggest that in these verses that we've read, in John chapter 18, there are three gifts of the Father alluded to. Indeed, two of them are explicitly presented as that which the Father has given Jesus. And we want to consider each of these in turn.

I'll mention what they are, and then we can think of each one. First of all, we find that Jesus is given a name by His Father. He's given a name. But then also, we find that He is given a people. And there is, in Luke's commentary, sorry, in John's commentary on what is going on, explicit reference to this people that Jesus is given. And then finally, the third thing we want to notice is that Jesus is given by the Father a cup. He is given a cup that He must drink. Well, let's think of each of these in turn.

[3 : 21] First of all, He is given a name. What name is He given by His Father? What is this name that the Father gives to His Son? Well, as we look at the passage, what is the name that His enemies identify Him with? Well, they answer is a simple one. It's there in verse 4 where Jesus sees them approaching, and He says, who is it that you want? And they reply, Jesus of Nazareth. He is the one we are looking for.

This is the name of the one we are seeking. That is His name. His name is Jesus. Now, this name that He owns, who was that name given by. Who gave Him this name? Was it His mother who gave Him the name? Was it His father? Was it Mary? Was it Joseph? Well, we're told in Matthew's Gospel, in chapter 1, in verse 21, who it is that gives Jesus that name. The verse, I think, is familiar to us. The angel is speaking with Joseph, and there we read of the forthcoming birth. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins. Now, the angel, as we know, is a messenger of God, and the angel, as a messenger of God, carries the name that is to be given to the one to be born. The Father has determined, and He commends to the angel this task of ensuring that the name that this child that is to be born will bear is the name that He gives him, the name Jesus.

And we're told not only what it is, but we're also told the reason why this particular name is given to Him, because He will save His people from their sins. That is the meaning of the name. He saves. He's the Savior. And just in a few moments, when we are participating in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as we eat of the bread and as we drink of the wine, as we remember the death of this one named Jesus, we remember that He is indeed our Savior, and we gather as those who

have been saved by Him, the one who bears this name that His Father gave Him, Jesus. But is that the only name He has given?

I wonder what significance we can attribute to the manner of His reply to those who have come to arrest Him. We notice that in verse 5, immediately after Jesus Himself asked them, who is it that you're looking for? And they replied, Jesus of Nazareth. And then we notice how Jesus responds to that. We read there in verse 5, I am He, Jesus said. And then in verse 6 we read, when Jesus said, I am He, they drew back and fell to the ground. The soldiers, this band who have come, Judas Himself, they all draw back and fall to the ground. It's a very unusual turn of events. These men who are heavenly armed, who have all the cards in their favor, if you wish, and yet Jesus simply says these words, I am He, and they draw back and fall to the ground. And I wonder what is going on there. Is there any hint there as to what Jesus is saying and what the significance of what Jesus is saying is, particularly in regard to this matter of the name that He has given? Well, the words that [7:17] Jesus uses there, or the words that we have certainly here in John's Gospel translated, I am He, are the Greek words, ego, I am He. There's two words, I am. This is what Jesus says, I am. When the enemies say, it's Jesus of Nazareth we are looking for, Jesus responds, I am. These are the same words that Jesus used as we find them recorded in this same Gospel in John chapter 8 and verse 58, where they clearly have a divine significance. In John chapter 8 and verse 58, I tell you the truth, Jesus answered before Abraham was born, I am. The same words, ego, I am.

Now there in John chapter 8, clearly there is a divine significance. Jesus is claiming for Himself the divine name, I am that I am. And might it be that here in this olive grove with His enemies before Him, when He speaks these words, words that have this powerful effect on His enemies, they draw back and they fall to the ground. Might it be that here also Jesus intends there to be that deeper significance.

He's not simply saying, yes, I'm Jesus. Though indeed that may be all that He is saying. That is possible. But might it be that there is more to it than meets the eye. I am is the response that Jesus gives to those who are before Him. Indeed, in the Septuagint, in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, that very significant verse that we've considered on one or two occasions in the recent past, in Exodus chapter 3 and verse 14, where God reveals to Moses or reminds Moses of the divine name and the significance of it, I am that I am. The first two words, I am, are in the Greek translation these same words, ego, I am.

Is Jesus alluding in this way to His divine identity? Well, we don't know for sure, but it seems at least possible and perhaps likely, especially given the manner in which John in this gospel so often makes reference to the I am sayings of Jesus and their significance. And also, just as we consider the impact of Jesus saying what seems such simple words, they say, we're looking for Jesus of Nazareth, and He answers, I am He. Why would those words produce such an impact that they draw back and fall to the ground? It is very mysterious. Did the men perhaps who were there in front of Him understand something of the significance of the words that Jesus is using? Well, even if Jesus was alluding to and claiming for Himself on this occasion the divine name, it does seem highly unlikely that Roman soldiers or those who conformed this band who come to arrest Him would have got it, that they would have identified the significance of it. It seems very unlikely. But even though they didn't intellectually grasp the significance of it, is it not possible that the veiled glory and majesty of Jesus in His incarnate state, we know that as He became flesh, He veiled His glory, He veiled His majesty. Those who saw Him, saw Him as just another man. But might it be that on this occasion, as death approaches, there is for an instant, in a small measure, something of His glory, something of His majesty unveiled as He declares these words, I am. And His enemies there before Him, they don't understand why, but they are struck down and they fall to the ground by a mysterious apprehension of His divine persona. The name that He has given, He has given the name Jesus,

Savior, He saves. He has given the name Lord, Yahweh, I am that I am. How do we respond to the name that He has been given? One day, we will all stand before Him face to face, and what weight of glory we will behold.

[11:57] In the words of Augustine, who comments on this very incident, he says as follows, what will He do when He shall come to judge, seeing He did this when He came to be judged?

And that is something worth pondering. He is given a name. But there's a second thing I want to mention here, and it is that He has given a people. And here, the language in the passage is explicit, that He has given a people. Verses 8 and 9, I told you that I am He, Jesus answered. If you

are looking for me, let these men go. This happened so that the words He had spoken would be fulfilled. I have not lost one of those you gave me.

See, what follows here in the incident of Jesus declaring, I am He, I am, ego I me, what follows, not only their drawing back and falling to the ground, but rather what immediately follows is beyond comprehension. And it only serves to illustrate what, though the language may sound harsh, is the brutalizing effect of unbelief. Now, what do I mean by that? Well, what I mean by that is these men, they have heard Jesus declare these words, I am. The impact of these words has been for them to fall back and be cast down to the ground. They have had, even though they perhaps have had great difficulty in understanding what is going on, they have had a glimpse of the majesty of God in Jesus Christ. And what do they do? They get up, they dust themselves down, and with the help of

Jesus Himself, they arrest Him and take Him to His death. The brutalizing effect of unbelief. How could anybody do such a thing? How could anybody not for a moment ponder, well, who is this man? Do I participate in the arrest of this man who by simply declaring, I am, has this effect on us? In the words of John Calvin concerning these men who came to arrest Jesus, how dreadful is their stupidity? And they're giving the full meaning to that word dreadful. It is a dreadful thing that men can be so foolish, to have a glimpse, even a glimpse of who Jesus is, a glimpse of His glory, of His majesty, of His identity, and then to ignore Him, or then to do Him harm, or then to stand against Him. What utter folly, indeed, stupidity. But then what happens? Well, particularly what happens in the light of what we are considering that Jesus is given a people? This is our concern at this point, that Jesus is given a people. What happens in the light of that? Well, what we find is that Jesus ensures that His disciples are protected from the violent clutches of these soldiers. We've read that there in verse 8. He says to those who have come to arrest Him, if you're looking for me, then let these men go. By all means, arrest me. That is why I'm here. That is why I came here. I'm practically handing myself over to you. You wonder even if the word arrest is accurate. Jesus wasn't really arrested. Jesus handed Himself in. You know what it's like now when somebody commits a crime and for whatever reason decides that there's no point in running away, so He goes to the police station and He hands Himself in. It doesn't really constitute an arrest because He's handed Himself over. Well, this really is what we have here. Jesus is handing Himself over to these soldiers. But in so doing, He says, but these disciples, you don't need them. You can imagine in the darkness, you can imagine in the scoffoffle, and that it would have been so easy for these men who would come to say, well, let's just take them all. They're troublemakers as well, no doubt. And Jesus says, no, don't touch them. Take Me. Take Me, but leave them alone.

Now, this action on the part of Jesus is in itself revealing and moving. In His own dark hour, His concern is for the physical protection of His disciples. Or if we can think of it in these ways, or in this way, the lamb to be slaughtered acts as the good shepherd of His sheep. And that is still so today. He still is the one who is concerned for the safety and protection and well-being of His people.

[16:55] But of even greater interest to us is the reason that John gives for Jesus' concern to protect His disciples. That He does so is there before us. It's very clear. But notice the reason that John identifies as to why Jesus protects His disciples. In verse 9, we have that reason given. This happened.

This action of Jesus on behalf of His disciples, that they would be protected from those soldiers who had come to arrest Him. This happened so that the words He had spoken, that is the words Jesus had spoken, would be fulfilled. I have not lost one of those You gave Me. I have not lost one of those You gave Me. The language there is language that we find just in the previous chapter, in chapter 17.

First of all, if we notice there in verse 6, Jesus is praying to the Father, I have revealed You to those You gave Me out of the world. They were Yours. You gave them to Me, and they have obeyed Your Word. Similar language, just a little further down in verse 12.

While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by the name You gave Me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction. So, though perhaps it's difficult to identify the exact location of this quote, if you wish, the language and certainly the truths that find expression in these words are found even just in the previous chapter where Jesus is praying to His Father.

Father, these disciples who are surrounding Jesus, these disciples who will soon run away and abandon Him, these disciples are precious to the Son because they are the Father's gift to the Son.

[19 : 05] John assures us the reason that Jesus did this was because Jesus was engaged in protecting this gift that the Father had given Him, the gift of a people, the gift of these disciples.

Jesus is concerned for them and acts to protect them. Given by the Father, protected by the Son, or we might say given in eternity and secure for eternity.

And we are there. We are among those who have been given by the Father to His Son. We are among those whom the Father in eternity determined would be His precious gift to His Son, Jesus. We are those whom Jesus receives and who lovingly protects and care for, as He did even on this occasion for His disciples.

We are among those of that people given by the Father to His Son. Indeed, Jesus prayed for us even in the garden before He headed to this olive grove across the Kidron Valley.

[20 : 23] The chapter begins by making reference to Jesus praying when He had finished praying. And what had He been praying? Well, He had been praying for His disciples, not only those who surrounded Him, but as we well know from that high priestly prayer in chapter 17, praying also for those who would, in due course, put their faith in Him and become part of His people.

He had been praying for us, and He continues to intercede for us and to care for us, we who are this precious gift that He has received from His Father.

Let us remember this as we eat and as we drink. He has given a name, Jesus, Savior.

And a Savior needs a people to save. Well, He has given a people. But a Savior must also have a means whereby He saves this people.

And this brings us to the third and final gift of the Father to His Son that we find referred to in this passage that we are considering.

[21 : 32] He is also given a cup. Notice there in verse 11, Jesus commanded Peter, Put your sword away. Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?

Well, we know the story. We know what it was that produced these words on the lips of Jesus. Peter wants to protect Jesus.

He wants to save Him from His enemies. And so, he draws the sword and he attacks violently this servant, Malchus. And what does Jesus say?

Well, we've read the verse, Put your sword away. And then, what is of particular interest to us this evening, Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?

What is this cup that the Father had given Him? What must Jesus do with this cup that the Father has given Him? Well, the cup is the very same cup that Jesus had asked the Father to take from Him.

[22 : 36] Indeed, just moments before, as He prayed to the Father. As we find it recorded in Matthew's Gospel, in chapter 26 and verse 39.

There we read of how Jesus prayed concerning this very same cup. And what is the prayer of Jesus to His Father? There in Gethsemane, we read, Going a little farther, He fell with His face to the ground and prayed, My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me.

This cup that here in Matthew's Gospel is not identified as being a cup that was actually given to Him by His Father. It is only John who gives us that detail or that precision.

But here in Gethsemane, Jesus is praying concerning this cup. And His prayer is that it be taken from Him. We know the answer of the Father to that request.

The answer was silence. But it was an eloquent silence. It was a silence that declared to Jesus, No, I will not take this cup from you. I am giving you the cup.

[23 : 45] It's not another who is giving you the cup. I am giving you the cup. I will not take away that which I am giving you. It is I who give you the cup. And so, no, it will not be taken away.

We know there in Gethsemane that Jesus accepts this answer. He is not resigned to the answer. He accepts that this is the Father's will.

And He is willing to fulfill the Father's will. This is the cup that the Father has given Him. It is the cup of His impending death.

The cup is His death. Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me? He says, yes, I will. Yes, I will die. Yes, I will continue to my appointment with death.

So, the cup is His death. But does identifying the cup as His death exhaust the meaning of the cup that He is given?

[24 : 48] Well, it doesn't exhaust the meaning. Because as we turn to the Old Testament Scriptures, it is very evident that this language of a cup that is given, this particular cup that is given

to Jesus, is language that speaks of the wrath of God.

It is the cup of God's wrath that the Father is giving to His Son. There are many references where we find the cup of God's wrath being referred to.

And we'll only read one of those because the others are very similar in their content and no purpose will be served in identifying more than simply one.

But notice on one occasion in the Old Testament where there is this language of the cup of God's wrath. In Jeremiah chapter 25 and verses 15 and 16, This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, said to me, Take from my hand this cup filled with the wine of my wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it.

And when they drink it, they will stagger and go mad because of the sword I will send among them. God speaking of this cup of His wrath filled, yes, even with wine.

[26 : 01] And who are to drink the cup? Well, there in Jeremiah it's clear. And indeed, if we had the time to look at the other references, we will find that invariably those who are to drink the cup of God's wrath are, not surprisingly, His enemies.

This cup is to be drunk by His enemies. It is for His enemies that God prepares the cup. It is to His enemies that God delivers this cup that they must drink. So what must Jesus do with the cup He has been given, this cup of God's wrath?

Surely not drink the cup destined for the enemies of God. How can it be that the eternal Son of God, the one loved dearly by the Father, how can it be that He would drink the cup that is destined for the enemies of God?

But that is precisely what He must do. Jesus portrays the drinking of this cup as an inescapable necessity.

Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me? Can you even envisage me not doing that which the Father has commanded me to do? I must drink the cup.

[27 : 14] He must drink it. Why must Jesus drink the cup that is destined for the enemies of God? Well, He must drink the cup that you might be spared from drinking that same cup.

That is the cup that you deserve to drink. That is the cup that I deserve to drink. That is the cup that every sinner deserves to drink. Enemies of God deserving to drink of the cup of God's wrath.

And Jesus, He drinks it for us. He drinks it to the final drop that we might not drink, not even a drop of it.

Jesus at Calvary was made sin for us. And for that very reason, He was also made an enemy for us. And so He drank the cup given to Him by the Father.

So Jesus is given a name. He is given a people. And we are that people that He has given.

[28 : 21] And He is given by the Father also a cup. A cup that He must drink. And this evening, as we participate in the Lord's Supper, we remember and we gratefully remember and celebrate that He drank that cup in our place.

That we might drink another cup. A cup rather of loving kindness. And we can maybe think just for a moment of that as we proceed to the sacrament.

Given a name. Given a people. Given a cup. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray.

Let us pray. Okay. Let us pray. Let us pray.

Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray.