

John 18:1-18

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[0 : 00] The second passage which I read with you in John's Gospel, chapter 18, if you wish to look back to it, verses 1 to 27.

I want us to work our way through that tonight, and it's one of the dangers when two different people are preaching in the same venue. And when I heard Jonathan mentioning John's Gospel this morning, my heart shrank and sunk until I heard his chapter.

And it is quite amazing, without liaison, that God does put something on the heart, and I hope possibly a continuation of this morning, although on a different theme.

John's Gospel is full of symbols and symbolism, and Jonathan did touch on that this morning, and I would like to continue there. In the situation we have before us in chapter 18, the private ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, together with his disciples, is about to come to an end, and the drama of redemption is about to begin.

Man will do his worst, and God will respond with the very best. You may perhaps recall Romans chapter 5 and verse 20.

[1 : 28] I'm sure a verse well known to you. The law was added so that the trespass might increase, but where sin increased, grace increased all the more. Or possibly known to many of us, or possibly known to many of us, much better is, but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

And one of the best ways of, I find, realizing the truths in John's Gospel is to pay attention to the symbolism that is involved.

John's Gospel is saturated with situations and descriptions, with very important spiritual truths. As we saw this morning with the shepherd.

And I would like, for the next while, if we could look at some of these symbols together. First one, and I'll read verse 1, is the grove or the garden of obedience.

When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side, there was an olive grove, and he and his disciples went into it.

[2 : 46] The Kidron Valley is located east of Jerusalem between the city wall and the Mount of Olives. And in there, on this garden grove we have referred to here, we all commonly know as the Garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus, it would appear, often went to this garden, no doubt, to rest and get peace from the crowds that were surrounding him. But we're also told he went to pray.

There is reference to that in Luke's Gospel. Jerusalem was filled with many people, no doubt, being the time of the Passover, who would have been attending there. And he would have desired to get a bit of privacy with the disciples.

And it's also important for us to realize that Jesus knows, who knows the end from the beginning. He knew what was about to happen. Jesus was well aware of the fact that the one who was to betray him was to come looking for him.

Jesus was aware that this was to happen. And he was ready in his own mind for this time. It's interesting that human history began in a garden, as we read off.

[4 : 03] Now that the Lord God had planted a garden in the east of Eden, there he put man, he had formed. History of mankind began.

Yes, the first sin of disobedience was in that Garden of Eden. The first Adam disobeyed God and was ultimately thrown out of that Garden in Eden.

But it's surely interesting here, the last Adam, as referred to by Paul in Corinthians, was obedient to the extent he went into that Garden of Gethsemane, submitting to God's judgment, submitting what he was to be well aware of was to be the punishment for mankind's sin.

In that Garden, the first Adam brought sin and death to mankind. But the second Adam, by his obedience, brought righteousness and life to all who will put their trust and faith in him.

Philippians chapter 2, we're told, He, that is Jesus, humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross. As described for us in Revelation chapters 21 and 22, one day the end of this world will come, and the heavenly city as described by John, where the tree of life grows.

[5 : 35] There will be no more death. There will be no more curse. In that garden the tree of life grows. There will be no more curse. There will be no more curse. There will be a river of the water of life, as we are told, that will flow ceaselessly, produce a bountiful fruit.

Yes, the Garden of Eden was the garden of disobedience. The Garden of Gethsemane was the garden of sacrifice, the commencement of that sinless sacrifice that was required by God.

perhaps you'll already be aware but the name Gethsemane just as a little aside means oil press now I'm not claiming any knowledge of this but it is interesting the olives would have been picked and put into the press to extract the oil from them and there is a version Isaiah where it's referred to I have trodden the wine press alone and it brought to my mind yes Jesus must have been hard pressed in fear of perhaps going too far the Kidron Valley there is a small brook that goes through there and I'm sure you maybe are aware you maybe not but the name Kidron means dusky and gloomy and I've read in commentaries that that brook would often have been darkened by the blood of the sacrifices that were being made and here was Jesus in the middle of the darkness hard pressed the waves and the billows of God's wrath and punishment for sin coming upon him as we're told in Psalm 42 deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls all your waves and breakers have swept over me

Kidron Valley had a special significance for King David he had crossed there too when he was rejected by his nation and betrayed by his son Absalom it is interesting in verse 18 of our passage here Jesus had been rejected by his people and yes betrayed by what was meant to be one of his own disciples King David's counselor Ahithopel hanged himself David's son Absalom fell upon a tree whereby he died hanging on that tree and Judas the betrayer hanged himself Jesus fully knew what lay ahead of him yet he went into this garden in obedience to God's will he left eight men at the entrance and took with him

Peter James and John no doubt desirous of companionship of support of prayerful support that they should surely give him at this critical hour yet what did they do slept I ask the question what great encouragement were they to him and I ask myself as well as I ask you how much encouragement are we to the Lord Jesus perhaps it was easy for these men to boast their devotion to Christ it's not easy to stand up here I can tell you and it's very nerve-wracking but it's testing and sometimes we can fail miserably however before we condemn or judge these men who slept let us each one examine our own hearts how much sleeping have we done even this very day rather than praying there is no doubt and many of you here from the west coast like myself are well aware historically in our church there was much more praying than what we see today and they saw answers to prayer and I would challenge myself as well as you how much do we pray or do we prefer to rest or do we prefer to have the barbecue out in the nice weather rather than attend the prayer meeting we should really look for it the second symbol

[10:37] I would like us to look at is verses 2 to 9 now Judas who betrayed him knew the place because Jesus had often met there with his disciples so Judas came to the grove guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials and chief priests and Pharisees they were carrying torches lanterns and weapons and so on down to verse 9 where Jesus himself then said this happened sorry verse 8 I told you that I am he Jesus answered if you are looking for me then let these men go this happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled here we find one of the 12 disciples Judas Iscariot who no doubt for up to about 3 years had lived with and been around the Lord Jesus a great deal he had the privileges that we have never had and not many people did have at this time and yet how well did he know him do you think when he had to come for him with a detachment of soldiers

I don't honestly know but from what I understand in the original language it's a cohort of soldiers which is something between three and six hundred men how well did Judas know Jesus you must ask yourself you must ask yourself and I ask the question give some thought to the privileges Judas despised and the opportunities he wasted did he not realize that the lab of God was going to submit himself meekly as he said he would or perhaps did he suspect the potential resistance that may come against him despite the apparent submissiveness Jesus was always in full control Jesus knew exactly what was about to take place

Jesus was in control of it despite that Judas it would appear expected some kind of confrontation he arranged to identify Jesus by kissing him he had this prior arrangement we have that confirmed to us in Matthew's gospel on the account here but Jesus shocked both Judas and the soldiers when he boldly presented himself identifying himself to them he had nothing to fear Jesus had nothing to hide and scripture tells us he would willingly lay down his life for his sheep we learned something this morning of the good shepherd how good the shepherd would willingly lay down his life for the sheep these sheep being you and I this is our savior laying his life down willingly for each one of us furthermore by surrendering to the officers not only spiritually but physically you notice

Jesus in verse 6 said I am he and on the hearing of that the soldiers drew back and fell to the ground why was that have you ever given thought as to the contents of these verses this strong detachment of soldiers draw back from one individual and fall to the ground that is because they realized his deity they realized God's divine son speaking to them the Romans who would have been in the majority here would have been struck by the bearing of the Lord Jesus and the obvious situation despite his impending arrest his cool calm collective attitude undoubtedly there was an emotional situation before us here we're not told as to what Judas would have said to them in any briefing but there's no doubt they were taken aback the Jewish leaders had tried to arrest Jesus before without success but here they are overwhelmed by his submissiveness and it's perhaps a manifestation of the divine power of the

Savior is it not even an exhibition of his majesty when in fact he turns and confirms the words of Psalm 27 when evil men advance against me to devour my flesh when my enemies and my foes attack me they will stumble and fall prophesied so many years before Judas' kiss given to the Lord was certainly an act of treachery recorded there for us in Matthew's Gospel and these days and even in our own day to kiss someone is to show an affection members of a family would kiss each other good friends would kiss each other I must say I'm not partial to it myself really but a lot of people do I sometimes go across to Northern

[16 : 32] Ireland and I'm a bit overwhelmed with the amount of it that goes on there and that's no disrespect to our Irish brothers and sisters in Christ but I sometimes feel personally it's a temptation a dangerous area and I'm always careful about it it was the practice the disciples greeted a rabbi by kissing him it was also a sign of devotion and obedience but Judas kissed the Lord Jesus Christ though he did not even belong truly as a disciple to him Judas there standing with the enemy kissed the Lord and when people today pretend to know and love the Lord Jesus these same people are committing that same sin a kiss of betrayal and these people will be held accountable one day it is bad enough to betray Christ but to do it with a kiss and a sign of affection surely is the pits of hell itself well then we've looked at the garden of obedience we've looked at the kiss of treachery and I want us now to look at the sword of rebellion if you look at verse 10 with me please then Simon

Peter who had a sword drew it and struck the high priest servant cutting off his right ear the servant's name was Malchus we're told in chapter 25 of Matthew's gospel that all the disciples had courageously affirmed their devotion and their support to the Lord so here we find this situation where no doubt Peter is getting wound up and a bit volatile and before we know it his sword is drawn and he's chopped the man's ear off there's no doubt admirable and supportive and I suppose put in the situation I've never had a sword in my hand but I might have been inclined to do such a thing if your Lord and Savior is surrounded by so many people he's betrayed by a kiss and you realize what's going on you're going to come to his defense but Jesus warned them

Jesus taught them and there's no doubt Peter misunderstood the teaching of our Lord Jesus had said about swords earlier that evening as is described for us in Luke's gospel Jesus warned them that from now on the situation would change and they would be seen as enemies at no time is Jesus suggesting that they use these swords in fact Jesus gives them the new sword of the spirit as he was telling and taught however Peter it would appear took his words literally and chopped this man's ear off Peter I would suggest to you symbolizes rebellion and I challenge myself here how much I take from the Lord's teaching Peter should have known that Jesus was about to be arrested he had plenty warning for it his enemies were all around him and there were numerous references made

Peter made every mistake possible he fought the wrong enemy Peter used the wrong weapon Peter had the wrong motive and Peter accomplished the wrong result what sort of witness was this for the Lord what sort of testimony was this for one of the Lord's people Peter openly resisting the will of God hindering the Lord in his work as one might immediately admire his courage and sincerity was it not more a demonstration of zeal without knowledge and again to apply it to ourselves how often do we seek God's will and guidance for our decisions that we take how often do we hurt the cause and I'm speaking to myself more than any of you but I ask the question our lifestyle for the cause in which we profess to believe in is it pleasing to our

Saviour is it transmitting his love that he showed for you and I are we showing it in our lives why was it that Peter failed so miserably well it's quite obvious if you look at the passage before us he argued with Jesus when Jesus warned him that he would deny him Peter argued with him he just wouldn't have it and then he slept when he should have been praying he talked when he should have been listening yes I'm very guilty of that one and he imitated the enemies of Christ by producing a sword these enemies came to arrest Jesus they were armed but here is one of Jesus own men and he's out with his sword Jesus did not need

[22 : 41] Peter's protection as stated in scripture he could have summoned legions we're told of angels if he so wished in his controlled attitude he went on to heal the ear of that servant typical love of Christ and fortunately for Peter no doubt because if that man's ear and injury had continued there's no doubt Peter would have suffered accordingly but the Lord in his demonstration and healing power his last miracle before going to the cross restores this man's ear and prevents Peter from any further problems and trouble surely an act of grace towards an enemy if you think of it clearly an enemy standing with the men who came to arrest him the Lord heals him however

Jesus did not judge him he healed him and it was our last the last public miracle before the cross and it's worthy for us to highlight that this miracle does reveal his grace towards us towards sinners like you and me if Jesus had had the power to stun an armed mob and heal a severed ear surely he could have removed himself from the situation of arrest and it is a sad thing when well-meaning Christians take up the sword for the wrong reasons we have seen it we've read it we've heard of it but Jesus himself did he not say later in this gospel before us my kingdom is not of this world if it were my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews but now my kingdom is of another place and it would do well for each one of us to remember that although placed in this world by God our future is in another place how much do you pray for the coming of God's kingdom kingdom how much do I pray for the coming of God's kingdom or do we have plans to buy a new car or build a new house which takes precedence would it not please me and you to see the

Lord Jesus return tomorrow I ask you the question honestly are you ready if he return tomorrow I've said from this pulpit before if Christ were to come back tonight will he come back for you the next symbol I would suggest to you is the cup of submission mentioned when Jesus commanded Peter put your sword away shall I not drink the cup the father has given to me this is Christ submitting to it Peter had a sword in his hand Christ had a cup in his hand Peter was resisting God's will Jesus is accepting God's will yes and it does help me greatly when I read how Jesus prayed to

God that if it were possible that this cup would pass from him I feel personally it does show us something of the humanness of Christ the uncertainty he must have gone through humanly speaking that if this cup of judgment could pass from him it would be pleasing to him but he went on to say not my will but you will be done to the extent that ultimately on the cross he cried out at that time when he was deserted and separated from his father in heaven my God my God why have you forsaken me these penetrating words son to a father the sinless son of God he who knew no sin made sin for us the drinking of a cup is often used throughout scripture to illustrate experience and suffering and when

Babylon captured Jerusalem we are told in Isaiah chapter 51 they drank from the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath you have drained to its dregs and you know who more spoke of the cup than Jesus himself we had it and sang from Psalm 23 this morning you anoint my head with oil until my cup overflows Jesus compared his sufferings to the drinking of a cup he compared the cup to his blood his shed blood for the remission of sins and so the image of the cup was familiar to the disciples to drink the cup means to go through a difficult experience and I'm sure there's not one of us here present or listening who haven't had these difficult experiences cups that are difficult to hold cups that are difficult to participate of and I found it quite amazing in preparation for this that the origin of the saying we use maybe flippantly it's not my cup of tea would actually come from that cups that we would rather not have cups that we would rather not experience it's not my cup of tea meaning saying no to a certain course of action and I understand the trophies that are designed like cups and sometimes referred to as cups have that name have that identity through the hard experience that has to be gone through for those who win them the cup of joy the cup of demand the cup of pain as Andy

[29 : 41] Murray well knows perhaps next year sorry for diverting Jesus was able to accept that cup why because he knew in himself that it was prepared for him by his father and he trusted that father and so must you and I friend we must trust God when he gives us a cup that maybe is not the most pleasing to us and I ask there is there a lesson for you and I we should never ever fear any cup that God causes us to hold God is my loving father I trust God is your loving father such love can no man give you it is also worthy of recognition the Lord Jesus has drunk the cup to its dregs and there is nothing that he won't be there before us the cup prepared for us will never contain anything that's going to harm us and ultimately to

God will be the glory and ultimately if you trust in God yours will be that glory too he promises it to us and it should be highlighted Jesus in giving himself over to his enemies he was then bound God had ordained what happened to happen Jesus knew it was going to happen he was amongst the enemies totally submissive the last and briefly symbol I would like us to look at is the fire of denial where Peter is there gathered a disciple I fully believe a believer of the Lord Jesus Christ as his savior is inside being tried he is outside denying him

I'm not going to go through it but you all well know how Jesus foretold it was going to happen he first comes to the place where he can't get into and the girl in the reception or whatever it was recognizes him and asks him is he not one of them first denial over despite what Jesus had said first denial and then he goes through and he subsequently challenged again are you not one of them second denial he denied ever known and you see Peter gradually sinking in it's cold we're told and he's around the fire with the enemies of Christ hence we sang from Psalm 1 blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners don't get me wrong

I honestly do believe it's a great thing to go out and witness but to go and sit in a pub to witness I don't believe I'm sorry I've seen the damage and the temptations that pubs do I've seen the hell bound life I went through through drink and here we see Peter sitting in the counsel of the wicked and he's challenged again he broke down we could almost say in modern day terms he lost the plot and before we know it he's cursing and swearing I understand that reference actually is not oaths as such but he's trying to create an oath that as sure as what he's saying is the truth denying his

Lord he almost reminds me of Jonah if you want to go down a certain route there's no doubt the devil will give you away Peter is there and he's denied his Lord and on the third occasion we're told that the rooster crowed and he realizes what has happened and I ask myself as well as I ask you have you heard the cockerel crow in your life have I heard the cockerel crow in my life how often do I go about my life and daily duties and not necessarily showing the example in my life that I should and denying the Lord but thankfully

[35 : 14] Jesus restored Peter Jesus took Peter back more strongly than ever and as we know or if not you can read he went on to be used mightily by God he he said the symbol we should realize here is that the crowing of this rooster symbolized the dawning of a new day and the account also tells us that Jesus turned and looked at Peter and that look broke Peter's heart it was a realization of his sin it was a realization of the wrong he had done and it's worthy of our attention to recognize and contrast Peter who denied Christ to Judas who betrayed Christ Peter wept over his sins and he repented Judas admitted his sin but never repented and went on to hang himself

Judas experienced remorse and regret but not repentance whereas Peter was restored in 2nd Corinthians chapter 7 Paul relates to his joy when he states yet now I am happy not because you were made sorry but because your sorrow led to repentance how sorry are you tonight I know that 30 years ago on the 10th of last month God brought me to a situation in my life where sorrow overwhelmed me and I was left with nowhere else but to run to him and to accept that free offer of salvation that he so wonderfully gave to me God and

I am not saying life hasn't had its ups and downs since but godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation we are told and leaves no regret however in Judas' case worldly sorrow brings death you know in the garden of Gethsemane that night both guilt and grace were found together Peter was guilty of resisting God's will Judas was guilty of the basest kind of treachery ever the mob were guilty of rejecting the son of God and treating him as the lowest criminal despite his innocence but through it all Jesus was gracious demonstrating his love even for his enemies like

King David crossed the Kidron so did Jesus conscious that he was going to be betrayed Jesus went into the garden surrendering to the Father's will he gave his disciples protection yielded himself into the hands of his enemies that he would suffer on a cross ultimately to die he who knew no sin made sin for us love so amazing so divine demands my life sorry my soul my life my all how is it with you today have you realized that love do you realize your responsibility before God tonight of that great offer of salvation at no cost offered to you and

I close with a question a serious question what's in your hand tonight is it a sword or is it a cup amen let's pray