

John 18:1-27
2 Samuel 15
Psalm 41

“Ask Those Who Have Heard Me”

October 18, 2020

2 Samuel 15 recounts the rebellion of Absalom and David’s flight from Jerusalem.
It is – in a way – David’s Gethsemane.

Of course, unlike our Lord Jesus, David’s cross is self-inflicted.
God had told David that his sin with Bathsheba
would result in trouble in his own house.
His son, Amnon, had raped his half-sister, Tamar –
and when David did nothing about it,
Tamar’s brother, Absalom, killed Amnon.
Again, David did nothing about it –
and so the poison continued to work its way toward the heart of the kingdom.

Absalom began to plot against his father –
and in our text that plot comes to fruition.

Absalom recruits one of David’s closest advisors – Ahithophel –
who was Bathsheba’s grandfather.

We don’t know entirely why Ahithophel betrays David.
He probably objected to David’s murder of his granddaughter’s husband!
And *everyone knew* that David had failed to lead his household well –
and that was trickling over into the way that David led his country.

But for whatever reason, one of David’s closest advisors now betrays him
and joins Absalom’s rebellion.

In Psalm 41, David reflects on this.
Psalm 41 opens with a blessing on the one who remembers the poor.
And then turns immediately to repentance –
“heal me – for I have sinned against you.”

In the light of 2 Samuel 15,
perhaps David is acknowledging that Absalom was right:
David had become lax in remembering the poor
and ensuring justice in the land.
David’s laxness with his family – letting them get away with murder –
was paralleled by David’s laxness in doing justice in the community.

Even Ahithophel – “my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread,
has lifted his heel against me.”

But David turns – he repents – and he seeks the LORD with confidence –
knowing that God delights in him – and therefore he says,
“you have upheld me because of my integrity.”
Not “because of my perfection”
(after all, David confesses his sin at the beginning of the song!) –
integrity means that when you sin, you confess –
when you fail, you repent.

Think of how many times your children say “but I didn’t mean to!”
Of course not!
Most of the time we do not *intend* harm.

But we do harm unwittingly – or half-wittingly –
after all, we often have *some* idea that this may not be very helpful.

So I suppose that makes us half-wits!
Or dimwits.

But either way, we need to sing Psalm 41 with David –
and with Jesus,
because even though Jesus never sinned,
he could sing this song.
He sang Psalm 41 on the night he was betrayed.
The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me...

And though Jesus never sinned – he did become sin for us.
And when he took our sins upon himself, he bore our guilt.

And so we get to sing Psalm 41 with Jesus!

Sing Psalm 41 (TPH)
Read John 18

We saw back in John 13 that there were three main characters at the Last Supper:
Jesus is at the center – with Judas and Peter.
In John 18, Judas and Peter again are found flanking Jesus –
or, well, they are present...and not very helpfully present!

Jesus’ hour has come.
He must go – alone – to the cross.

1. “Across the Kidron” – the Betrayal of Jesus (v1-11)
a. Jesus and Judas (v1-9)

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. ³ 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. 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.”^[a] Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. ⁶ When Jesus^[b] said to them, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground. 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.” ⁹ This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: “Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one.”

When Jesus had spoken these words.

Jesus has preached his final sermon to his disciples.

He has prayed for them.

Now his hour has come,

and so having spoken these words—with these words lingering in their ears—
he went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley.

John is the only one of the four gospels that mentions the Kidron Valley.

The brook Kidron twice played an important role in the history of the kings.

We read in 2 Samuel 15 how King David was betrayed by his son, Absalom,
and was driven out across the Kidron into exile.

Josiah, the great reformer imitated his forefather Asa
and burned the idols at the brook Kidron—outside the city.

(1 Kings 15:13; 2 Kings 23:4;

No doubt John is reminding us of David’s day.

David and his household fled from Jerusalem as the betrayer came upon the son of God,
the anointed king.

They crossed the Kidron and went out into the wilderness.

David went into the wilderness, knowing that God had promised him a kingdom—
but, betrayed by his son, he cannot see how God’s promises
will come to pass.

Now, a thousand years later, Jesus, knowing that his betrayer is coming,
goes out across the Kidron—this time not into a wilderness—

Unlike David he goes into a garden.

Unlike David, he takes his household—his disciples—into a trap.

David had fled from his betrayer—because the hour had not yet come.

David was only a picture—a type—of Christ.

But now the hour has come for the Son of God to face his betrayer.

David could not see what God was doing.

But Jesus “knowing all that would happen to him,
came forward and said to them, ‘Whom do you seek?’”

They answered “Jesus of Nazareth.”

Jesus said to them, "I am he."

Now John points out that Judas is there.

Judas has been absent for the last three chapters.

He missed Jesus' final sermon.

He was not present for Jesus great prophetic prayer.

But now, "Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them."

One of the twelve—one of those who broke bread with him around the table earlier that evening—now has lifted up his heel against him. (Ps 41:9)

Absalom had not crossed the Kidron in pursuit of David.

Ahithophel wanted to –

Ahithophel urged Absalom to pursue David immediately.

But Absalom listened instead to David's friend – Hushai the Arkite.

Jesus has no such friend.

Judas takes the counsel of Ahithophel and crosses the Kidron with his soldiers to find the son of David.

As Jesus puts it in Luke's gospel,

"This is your hour, and the power of darkness." (Lk 22:53)

Jesus comes to meet his betrayer, declaring "I am he."

And such is the power and glory revealed in Jesus,

that the soldiers who had come to arrest him draw back and fall to the ground.

This is but a token of what Jesus could have done, if he had wanted to avoid capture.

He reveals here who is really in charge.

If it were not the Father's will, they could not touch him.

So he asked them again,

these cowering soldiers, fallen to the ground before him,

"Whom do you seek?"

And again they say, "Jesus of Nazareth."

So Jesus replies, "I told you that I am he. So if you seek me, let these men go."

Who is in charge here?

John tells us that Jesus is protecting the eleven:

"This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken:

of those whom you gave me I have lost not one."

Jesus said this in his prayer in 17:12.

When John speaks of the fulfillment of OT prophecy,

he says, "this was to fulfill the word spoken by

Isaiah, or David, or the prophet."

But now he uses this form to speak of the words of Jesus.

Jesus is not only the one who fulfills OT prophecy,

but he also fulfills his own word.

But Jesus' power will be displayed in one more way.

b. Peter and the Cup (v10-11)

¹⁰ Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant^[c] 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?"

Because Simon Peter, full of zeal for Christ,

hoping to begin the battle for the throne of Israel,
drew his sword and struck the high priest's servant, Malchus,
cutting off his right ear.

Luke 22 tells the same story,

but Luke mentions that Jesus healed the servant.

John assumes that you know that part.

But he has a different point to make.

Jesus has just commanded the soldiers not to arrest his disciples.

Peter has attacked the servant of the high priest.

Any soldier in his right mind would arrest Peter and bring him along

(and probably the rest of the eleven—

since they were obviously a threat to the peace of Jerusalem!)

John does not wish to clutter up his story with miraculous healings
that might distract from his purpose.

It is not the healing of the servant's ear that John finds remarkable.

It is the power of the Word who became flesh.

By his word he protects his disciples from the soldiers.

By his word he is able to disarm Peter,

commanding him to put his sword away.

"Put your sword into its sheath;

shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

And so, in obedience to Jesus, the soldiers arrest Jesus and take him to Annas.

I know that many of you struggle with the cup that God has given you.

The situation that you face in life.

You sometimes hear people say, "God will never give you more than you can handle!"

That's.... malarkey.

God gave Peter more than he could handle.

Peter sins at least four times in this chapter.

First, by cutting Malchus's ear off.

And then three times by lying – as he says that he does not know Jesus –

and that he is not Jesus' disciple.

We saw last week that Aaron *really* screwed up just before he became High Priest.

Now we see that Peter fails miserably – just before he became chief of the apostles.

(Protestants have no objection to the idea that Peter was the chief of the apostles:
we just reject the idea that somehow the Bishop of Rome gets to be his heir!)

But in contrast we get to see Aaron’s descendent in action in verses 12 and following,
as the soldiers take Jesus to Annas.

2. “One Man Should Die for the People” – the Arrest of Jesus (v12-18)

a. Jesus Taken to Annas (v12-14)

¹² So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews^[d] arrested Jesus and bound him. ¹³ First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. ¹⁴ It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people.

John then provides a little explanation of who Annas was.

Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest,
the one who had prophesied that it would be
“expedient that one man should die for the people.”

In verse 19 Annas is also called the high priest.

Contrary to the levitical law, the high priesthood had become an appointed office,
with priests serving at the pleasure of the Roman governor.

Annas had been appointed high priest by Quirinius,
and had served from 6-15 A.D.

Now, as an old man, Annas had watched five sons, a son-in-law, and a grandson
serve as his successors.

While no longer the high priest himself,
he was the patriarch of the high priestly family.

And now Jesus, the Son of God—the Word who was in the beginning with God—
must come before the patriarch of the priestly house –
a dynasty based on the flesh.

Jesus represents a priesthood “which, according to the Spirit,
incorporates into the true priesthood...

all those who...are included in the Messiah through faith.” (Schilder, 2.23)

Hebrews tells us that Levi—and the whole Aaronic priesthood through him—
paid tithes to Melchizedek in Abraham.

Now Annas, the proud and haughty son of Aaron,
refuses to give honor to the one who comes in the order of Melchizedek,
but dares to stand before the Son of God as judge.

b. Peter’s First Denial (v15-18)

¹⁵ Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Since that disciple was known to the

high priest, he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, ¹⁶ but Peter stood outside at the door. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door, and brought Peter in. ¹⁷ 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.” ¹⁸ Now the servants^[e] and officers had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.

Meanwhile, Peter and “another disciple”—no doubt John—followed Jesus.

They want to know what will happen to their Lord and Teacher.

Peter had protested in 13:37 that he would follow Jesus—even to lay down his life for him.

John was known to the high priest—he had connections—so he spoke to the servant girl, and Peter was also allowed to come into the courtyard.

But when she saw Peter, she thought he looked familiar,

“You also are not one of this man’s disciples, are you?”

The other gospels do not mention John’s presence.

Here, it serves to highlight Peter’s denial.

Because John was known to be a disciple of Jesus.

But Peter is so afraid of what will happen,

that he refuses to be identified with Jesus.

“I am not.”

“ouk eimi”

In John’s gospel Jesus has often said “ego eimi” – I am.

In Peter’s denial of Jesus we hear also his confession:

I am not.

I am not Jesus’ disciple.

Jesus had said, “I will lay down my life for you!!”

But as the cross approaches, there is *no one* who can stand with Jesus.

There is *no one* who can die with Jesus.

Everyone falls away.

3. “Ask Those Who Have Heard Me” – the Questioning of Jesus (v19-27)

a. Jesus before Annas (v19-24)

¹⁹ *The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said.” ²² When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, “Is that how you*

answer the high priest?” ²³ *Jesus answered him, “If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?”* ²⁴ *Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.*

Now inside the palace, Jesus is brought before the high priest.

This is Annas (since we are told that Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas in v24).

Annas seems to conduct a preliminary investigation
to prepare for the meeting of the Sanhedrin.

He is called “the high priest” in the same way that we still refer to “President Obama”
even though he is no longer in office.

So the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.

Annas and Caiaphas were convinced that the world was following Jesus (12:19).

If they didn’t stop this, then Jesus would lead a rebellion against Rome,
bringing down the wrath of the Roman army upon Jerusalem.

So Annas asks first about Jesus’ disciples.

In the days of the kings, the leaders of Jerusalem were trusting in Egypt
to deliver them from Assyria.

They refused to trust in Yahweh to save them.

And just as the Assyrians dominated the mind of Hezekiah,

so now Rome dominates the mind of Annas and Caiaphas.

Their fear of Rome and their lust for power has blinded them to the Truth
who stands before them.

Convinced that some secret plot is at work,
they ask Jesus what he is up to.

But Jesus has no secret agenda.

“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.”

Jesus has preached the gospel of the kingdom openly.

Implicit in this reply is the response: “why are you examining me?”

You know full well what I have said—where is the fault?

For which of my good deeds do you condemn me?

For what truth am I considered a heretic?

Jesus is quite emphatic:

I have spoken openly.

I have always taught publicly

I have said nothing in secret.

But what about you?

The priests have plotted and acted in secret.
Jesus was arrested privately—away from the crowds.
Jesus has not been arraigned before the Sanhedrin,
but before Annas and Caiaphas.
The high priests are conspirators—not Jesus!

You can understand, then, why one of the officers strikes Jesus:
“How dare you speak to the high priest in that manner!”
The officer is attempting to uphold the dignity of the priesthood.
But he can only do so by striking the one without whom the priesthood has no dignity.
Blind to the light of the world, and deaf to the Word made flesh,
he sides with the shadows, and falls into darkness.

And Jesus replies, “If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong;
but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?”
The Light of the World is shining brilliantly in this dark room,
but none have eyes to see.
The private tribunal is over.
They have enough material to go on,
and they will make their case before the Sanhedrin,
so they send Jesus bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

In John’s gospel we don’t get to hear about the trial before the Sanhedrin.
John assumes that you know all about it from the other gospels.
The only religious trial in John is this secret hearing.
The contrast is intentional.
Jesus is the one who acts openly before the world,
speaking the truth as he heard it from the Father.
He is the Light of the world.
But the priests hide in the darkness.
They refuse to face the truth, but cower in the shadows,
fearing for their own privilege and power.

b. Peter’s 2nd and 3rd Denials (v25-27)

²⁵ Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, “You also are not one of his disciples, are you?” He denied it and said, “I am not.” ²⁶ One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, “Did I not see you in the garden with him?” ²⁷ Peter again denied it, and at once a rooster crowed.

But before you look down your noses at the priests,
John reminds you of Simon Peter.
While Jesus testifies that his teaching was open and public,
and how he said nothing in secret,
Peter is cowering in the shadows—just like the priests.

While he stands at the fire, warming himself,
those standing around ask “you also are not one of his disciples, are you?”
Jesus has just said to the priests, “Ask those who have heard me...they know what I said.”
Well, here is one of those who heard.
And the servants ask, “aren’t you a disciple of Jesus?”
But Peter denied it, “I am not.”

But one of the servants there was a relative of Malchus,
the man whose ear Peter had cut off.
He had been there a few hours before—
and he remembered the man who had dared to take a sword
to the high priest’s servant—and his relative.
“Did I not see you in the garden with him?”
But Peter again denied it, “and at once a rooster crowed.”

Jesus with Caiaphas’s father-in-law.
Peter with Malchus’s relative.
Jesus said to Annas, ask those I taught—they will tell you what I said.
I like how Klaus Schilder reflects on this:

“We who calmly read these things are being taken from the street by Christ himself
and are being placed in the presence of Annas.
Remember now that Jesus Christ is at this very moment saying to Annas,
‘You may ask him, you may ask her, what I said.’...
“No, do not reply that you beg to be excused from this matter.
Simon Peter made the same request.
But the very moment in which Jesus takes pride in the fact
that the first hewer of wood and drawer of water
who is casually snatched from the street
is able to state the essence of Jesus’ teaching,
one of his great ones, one who had been with him upon the mountain,
with him in the room of the Passover, and with him in Gethsemane,
arises, and swears with an oath:
“I know not the man; the Nazarene means nothing to me.”
And this terrible culmination was the result in Simon Peter of the secret thought:
I shall hold myself aloof from this matter.
“Step out into the open now, son of man, whoever you are,
you who are literally steeped in sermons...in edifying books...
Annas....the flesh, the natural world is asking Christ this question:
“who are you; what are you doing, what is the thrust of your preaching?”
And Christ *pointing to you* answers:
Ask him. He can tell you if he wants to do so.” (2.43-44)

After all, we stand with the servants of this world every day.

Every day the world asks “who is Jesus?”

“Are you his disciple?”

And too often we cower in the shadows, denying the Christ who bought us.

Brothers and sisters, we can't do this anymore!

Of all the inhabitants of South Bend and Niles, Elkhart and Mishawaka,

you *know* the teaching of Jesus!

Let us then live as his disciples,

as those who are empowered by his Spirit to bring the gospel of Christ
to the ends of the earth.

Amen.