

Sermon Notes, March 5, 2017

The Passion of Jesus: The Real Jesus-I AM, John 18:1-11

In the weeks leading up to Easter, millions of Christians all around the world spend their time thinking about why Jesus suffered and died. In the weeks leading up to Easter we're going to look at one of the gospel writers, Saint John, and we're going to look at how he tells the story of Jesus' last days, his suffering, and his death. The passion of Christ according to Saint John.

As we look at this account, we're going to see three things. We're going to see the greatest claim in the history of the world, the greatest problem in the history of the world, and the greatest mission in the history of the world.

1. The greatest claim in the history of the world

You see that when you get down to verses 4 & 5. It says, "Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, 'Who is it you want?' 'Jesus of Nazareth,' they replied. 'I am he.'"

Literally, the word *he* is not there.

What Jesus actually said when he stepped forth in front of the Roman soldiers was, "I am."

Jesus has taken the divine name upon himself.

Now, if Jesus Christ really made these claims, and he did, then if you decide he's right, you have to fall on your knees in love and commitment and say, "Be Lord of my life," and absolutely build your entire life around him. Or if you decide he's wrong, you should have nothing to do with him. You shouldn't want to read his teachings or find him inspirational at all. You should have utter disdain for him and his faith.

Secondly, however, believe it or not, that's not the most surprising thing about the text.

2. The greatest problem in the history of the world

When he gets out there and he says, "I am," what happens? This is verse 6. "When Jesus said, 'I am he,' they drew back and fell to the ground." *What? Who is this?*

Nobody can stay on their feet in the presence of God. Everybody loses their footing.

Ezekiel. The priests at the dedication of the Temple. Peter. Isaiah.

Before Jesus gives himself up, before he lays his glory aside, before he goes to the cross, he shows who he really is. Even just a glimpse, even just a beam through the crevice, as it were, is enough to knock an entire Roman legion flat.

Nobody can stand in the presence of God. That's one of the things the Bible says. We've completely lost this idea in our culture. We just think of God as a warm and fuzzy and he just loves everybody and it doesn't matter what they're doing or how they're living. Nothing in the Bible says that, but not only that, common sense doesn't say that. If Jesus Christ in the garden of Gethsemane, who was veiling his glory and who was about to lay aside his glory, if we couldn't stand before him and keep our feet, how will we stand before him if we ever really meet him? How will we stand before him if we ever do get to judgment day?

The answer is we won't. That's the great problem the human race has.

3. The greatest mission in the history of the world

What is the solution? The solution, of course, is in the text. Jesus, very deliberately, says, "I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go." That phrase "Let them go," ironically, maybe not ironically, is a phrase that means "Forgive them and take me. Me for them. Substitution. Let them go and take me." And if you're wondering about the rest of us, the answer is in the very last words of verse 11, where he says to Peter, "Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

The cup. Do you know what this is? All through the Old Testament, the cup is a judgment day thing. The cup is what God is going to

make the tyrants drink & oppressors drink on judgment day. The cup is suffering. The cup is punishment. It's judgment. It's justice. On judgment day, all the evildoers are going to drink the cup.

What is Jesus saying? "I'm going to the cross, and on the cross I am going to have all of the judgment you deserve fall on me. Everything you deserve is going to fall on me. I will go to the scaffold. I will take the wrath of God meant for you upon myself."

Jesus has been saying, "I did not come to rule; I came to die. I did not come to pick up the sword; I came to give my life. I'm going to be betrayed. I'm going to be given into the hands of the chief priests." He has been repeatedly telling Peter. He has been getting him ready with the gospel, telling him the gospel up to this moment. Now is the key moment, and what does Peter do? He gets out his sword, and he attacks.

I want you to know how comforted I am by what Peter does. I am comforted by Jesus' response to Peter. He doesn't reject him. This is unyielding love. Friends, this is unyielding love.

- No amount of pain will stop Jesus Christ from saving us.
- No amount of our stupidity will stop him from saving us.
- No amount of not practicing the gospel in our daily lives will stop him from loving us.