



SCRIPTURE + SHARED

Week 5 – John 17:20-18:27

Day 1 – John 17:20-26

²⁰"I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, ²³I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

²⁴Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵"Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. ²⁶I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

Understanding the Passage:

In this third and final petition, Jesus prays for those who will put their trust in his word. Just as Jesus' word divides those who refuse and reject it (Matthew 10:33-35), those who receive it and keep God's word will become one. We see in the Gospel of John a recurring theme of being one with the Lord. As Dr. Jaime Clark-Soles said, "we are one heart living in one house as one big family." Those who are at one with Jesus are at one with each other. We are unified together as one family based on God's love for us and our love for one another.

This prayer for communal unity may seem a bit unfamiliar in our modern individualistic culture today. Typically, we use much more private language when talking about our faith. "Have you accepted Jesus as your personal lord and savior?" "Have you invited God into your heart?" Even our understanding of the afterlife is often more focused on the individual than on community. While individual transformation is important, this passage can remind us that it is not the extent of God's redemption for the world. God, of course, wants us to be in right relationship with the creator, but also calls us to be in right relationship with one another and with the world that God is redeeming. So if you claim to love God but are struggling to love your neighbor, God is likely calling you towards a deeper understanding of love.

Jesus concludes his prayer with a plea that the love the disciples have among themselves would be the same love that the Father has had for him. Because of Jesus we can know the love of God and also love others in a more divine way.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. Other than your family, with whom would you consider yourself in community? On what is that community based?
2. When you think about God's work in your life, is it more personal or communal? Why?
3. Who is someone God might be calling you to love better today? Ask God to pour love into your life, allowing you to love those around you who are difficult to love.

Day 2 – John 18:1-11

¹After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. ²Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. ³So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. ⁴Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" ⁵They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. ⁶When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they stepped back and fell to the ground. ⁷Again he asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." ⁸Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So if you are looking for me, let these men go." ⁹This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken, "I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me." ¹⁰Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus. ¹¹Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

Understanding the Passage:

Today's passage begins the passion of Jesus in John's gospel. In the synoptic gospels, Jesus asks God for the cup to pass from him. This story is not found in John however. For in John, Jesus' crucifixion is his glory, so all that leads up to it is necessary. What is also unique to John is the "I am he" response Jesus gives when the Pharisees said that they were looking for Jesus of Nazareth. This is significant because John is particularly emphasizing the incarnation of God in Jesus throughout his Gospel. Jesus is the word of God made flesh. Those around Jesus fall back to the ground after Jesus says "I AM he," revealing the power and presence of God as Jesus invokes God's name from Exodus (3:14).

Jesus shows his love for the disciples by peacefully surrendering and asking the release of those who are with him. When Peter responds with force, Jesus rebukes him reminding him that this is something that must take place. This is important for our reading of this passage because often times we focus on who is to blame when it comes to the crucifixion of Jesus. Was it the Pharisees, who were threatened by him and the power he held, which were to blame? Or perhaps the Romans, who looked down on the Jews and saw his crucifixion as opportunity to humiliate their new spiritual leader? Or what about Judas who was closest to Jesus; surely he should be blamed for the arrest and eventual death Jesus experienced on the cross?

Here the Gospel of John reminds us that God is in control of all things and that Jesus knew his fate. Ultimately the passion of Jesus was the culmination of the work that God had come to earth to accomplish. The Word became flesh and lived among us, showing us through his life, death, and resurrection the love of the Father so that we may join into that salvific work.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. Have you ever been betrayed by someone close to you? How might knowing that Jesus has been betrayed help your reaction to such difficult emotions?
2. Place yourself in this story; what role would you likely play? Would you be Judas who betrays? Peter who reacts with violence? Or one of the other disciples who runs away when they come to arrest Jesus?

3. Go back and read this story in the other Gospels noting the similarities and differences in each story. What aspects of the betrayal and arrest of Jesus stand out to you?

Day 3 – John 18:12-18

¹²*So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him.*

¹³*First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. ¹⁴Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people. ¹⁵Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, ¹⁶but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in. ¹⁷The woman said to Peter, “You are not also one of this man’s disciples, are you?” He said, “I am not.”¹⁸Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself.*

Understanding the Passage:

Before Jesus will be handed over to the Roman authorities he is questioned by the Jewish priestly council. In the Gospel of John we see Jesus being taken to Annas who was related to Caiaphas, the current high priest. Annas was the high priest prior to his son-in-law and likely still held a high level of authority and influence. The Gospel writer then reminds the reader that the current high priest ironically predicts Jesus’ crucifixion. This is another example of someone who was in power, according to the world, merely playing a side role in the spiritual unfolding during this critical moment in history.

In this passage we also see the first of Peter’s three denials of Jesus that were predicted earlier in the text. Many have suggested that the other disciple in this scripture is likely the “beloved disciple” referred to elsewhere in the Gospel. The Gospel of John is unique in that it takes the time to point out that it was a charcoal fire that Peter was warming himself next to when he first denies that he knows Jesus. Later Peter will be next to another charcoal fire when Jesus meets him on the beach after his resurrection. One can imagine the powerful memory that Peter must have had linking his denial of Jesus to his eventual reinstatement with the smell of the fire nearby.

When Jesus asks Peter later if he loves him, he is being confronted with the memory of his betrayal. In just a short time we see Peter go from being ready to die for Jesus during his initial arrest, to a man who is denying that he was one of the twelve disciples. The fact that the police are there warming themselves as well adds to the tension of this scene between Peter and those to whom he wishes to remain inconspicuous.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. Put yourself in Peter’s shoes; what sort of conflicting emotions are happening as you follow Jesus towards the beginning of his trial?
2. Have you ever had a smell that brought you back to a specific memory? Something that caught you off guard and immediately brought back emotions from the past?
3. Have you every denied God to others or in your heart? In what ways do you compartmentalize your relationship with Jesus and the world?

Day 4 – John 18:19-24

¹⁹Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. ²⁰Jesus answered, “I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. ²¹Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said.” ²²When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, “Is that how you answer the high priest?” ²³Jesus answered, “If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?” ²⁴Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Understanding the Passage:

This initial questioning by Annas shows the open nature of how Jesus has taught his followers. Unlike the priests, who have schemed and plotted in secret, working behind closed doors and under the cover of darkness, Jesus has spoken in the daylight, out in the open for all to see and hear him. Jesus is allowing his actions to speak for themselves. He need not testify to what he has been teaching because everyone, including his accusers, already know.

The police officer then wrongly assumes that force is the way to bring Jesus into line. Similar to when Jesus was arrested, the human response is far too often a violent one. Jesus points out to the assembly that the violence is senseless, irrational and unnecessary. If Jesus is saying something wrong then they should testify against him, but they are unable to do so and resort to anger and violence.

Throughout today’s scripture, Jesus’ words dominate the interrogation. Neither the high priest’s questions nor the police officer’s blow can rob them of their power. Once again those who are supposed to be in control are usurped by the one who actually has the power. This reversal of the power dynamic between Jesus and those in authority is a reminder to us that even though these things are happening to Jesus, it is God who is ultimately in power. Annas’ only response to Jesus’ challenge is to send him on to the high priest Caiaphas.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. What thoughts or emotions come to you after reading today’s passage?
2. When have you been tempted to use force when interacting with someone? Do you feel like Jesus should have stood up for himself more?
3. Have you ever felt powerless to change something? How might this passage be a comfort to you when considering power dynamics in the world?

Day 5 – John 18:25-27

²⁵Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, “You are not also one of his disciples, are you?” He denied it and said, “I am not.” ²⁶One of the slaves 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?” ²⁷Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

Understanding the Passage:

While Jesus’ trial is occurring inside, Peter’s denials are happening outside. Peter’s story has been a focal point in recent chapters, beginning with his discomfort at having Jesus wash his feet, to the brashness in which he cuts off the ear of the slave in order to defend Jesus, to now fulfilling Jesus’ prophecy that he will deny Jesus three times. In today’s scripture we see the second and third denials of Peter.

Only in the Gospel of John is the third questioner identified as a relative of the man whose ear had been cut off by Peter. This adds more context to the moment of Peter’s third denial because, unlike the first two times where the person is merely suspicious of Peter, this person actually saw him at the arrest and has a pretty good reason for remembering him because of what he did there. Peter is basically caught red-handed and is still insisting that he not only wasn’t there but does not know Jesus at all. Once Peter

has denied Jesus for the third time, he hears the cock crow, bringing him back to reality as he realizes that he has done the very thing he swore he would not do.

Peter has been known for his brashness at times in the Gospel narrative which has served him well at times and has caused him to stumble at others. The same disciple who was first to declare that Jesus was the “Son of the living God,” and who was ready to walk out on the water to Jesus, was also the one who struggled to grasp what Jesus was here to do and how things would end. In the beginning Peter could not accept that Jesus would suffer and die for the sins of the world. He wanted Jesus to stand and fight the corrupt powers of the day and save the people. Later on, Peter would better understand Jesus’ purpose and would go on to do amazing things through the Holy Spirit, but it is helpful to us that we remember that he struggled along the way.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. Have you ever been caught red-handed in a lie? Did you feel compelled to dig a deeper hole in order to maintain that lie even in the face of what was rational?
2. Have you ever struggled to understand God because you wanted God to be something a bit different than God actually is?
3. Can you relate to Peter’s story in the Gospels? Where do you see yourself in the disciple?

Video Discussion Questions:

1. Have you, like Peter, betrayed Jesus because it is inconvenient for you to be a Christian? Think about your actions as well as spoken words.
2. What do you think it meant that a garden is where he is arrested? What were gardens normally used for in Jesus' life?
3. The people that came to arrest Jesus brought torches (unnatural forms of light) to arrest the light of the world. They couldn't see that Jesus was the true light. Have you ever tried to bring your own false form of truth to a situation because you couldn't see the truth in front of you?
4. Who do you think the author of John meant to imply was sitting on the bema seat? How does that change your understanding of this scene?
5. Do you see situations today in which the religious leaders are in cahoots with the government? How can you work to turn the tide on those situations?