

# 3/27/22 - John 18:1-12 - "The Good Shepherd"

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[ 0 : 00 ] Today's story picks up after the high priestly prayer that Brent preached on last week in chapter 17. And so we're going to be focusing, as David read, on the account of Jesus' betrayal that takes place in John chapter 18.

And we're just going to be looking at the first 12 verses, which are really the beginning of the passion narrative that we will be focusing on for the next few weeks.

And so I've titled this sermon, The Good Shepherd. And I think we can see Christ in this sermon acting as the Good Shepherd.

So the gospel account in John is one of the four gospel accounts. And the other three, as we learned last week, and maybe you know, are called the Synoptic Gospels.

And they're recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. And this account shows up in those gospels in Matthew 26, Mark 12, and Luke 22.

[ 1 : 05 ] And the Synoptic Gospels all record a very similar set of events with similar details, Luke having a little bit more details. But John's account is not different.

It tells the same account, but with far more detail. And so he chose, I think, these details very specifically. But to summarize the events that lead up to this scene, we know that there was the Lord's Supper on Thursday night of the Passion Week.

And then Jesus foretells Peter's denial. And then they head to the garden, which is where we find them in our passage today. Or at the base of the Mount of Olives, as we're told in some of the accounts.

But then John, he provides far more detail of the events leading up. In fact, he takes four chapters to introduce us to the discourse that happened on the night before he was betrayed.

And he spends a lot of time talking about the discussion that takes place between Jesus and his disciples. And then he also gives us an account of the high priestly prayer, which the last two sermons were on.

[ 2 : 20 ] His prayer for his disciples and then his prayer for his church, his believers. And this narrative of the Lord's Supper started way back in John 13, 36.

And so it's been a while now since we really started this. But this is just one night that's expanded into all of these chapters. And so we know after this prayer, as Brent preached on last week, that Jesus then leaves in the late hours of the night with his disciples and heads across the brook to the garden, which in some accounts is called Gethsemane.

And some accounts is just told that it's a garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives. And so in John 18, that's where we find Jesus and his disciples. And it's just 12 verses that we have that tell this account of his betrayal.

And it's presented to us by John as a short story, you could say. And it's really the introduction to the passion narrative. But even within this story, these few verses, it kind of plays out like a classic story with three acts.

And so that's how I've broken it up into sections today. If you're taking notes, the first act is going to be the setup in verses 1 through 3. The second act is the confrontation in verses 4 through 9.

[ 3 : 45 ] And the third act is the resolution in verses 10 through 12. And so in the first scene, just to kind of summarize what was read and what was written by John, in the first scene, we find Jesus in this garden outside Jerusalem.

And it's in the late hours of the night. And then John introduces us to the antagonist of the story, who would be Judas and his followers, that are there to betray Jesus, along with a band of soldiers. And we're told that these soldiers are armed with swords and clubs and torches. And so they're there to search out Jesus and to arrest him.

And then the second act of the scene is where Judas and Jesus come together in this confrontation. Perhaps we expect with what's being set up that this confrontation would be bloody. But as we see, Jesus steps forward and confronts them and asks, who do you seek? Which is kind of an odd question, considering that we're told by John he knows why they're there.

[ 4 : 55 ] But he asks them, who do you seek? And they say, Jesus of Nazareth. And then a few more words are crossed between them.

But then in the third act, the resolution, just as quickly as the events occur, we see a resolution. And Jesus simply surrenders and goes with the soldiers and turns himself in to face the high priest. And so it's kind of an anticlimactic outcome from what we would expect, given all of the foreshadowing that John gives us with introducing the scene and the soldiers.

But I think John has a purpose in the way that he structures this. And he tells us later in his gospel what is the purpose. It's interesting in their literature that they kind of tell us the main point at the end in summary.

And we'll look at it today in John 21, 31. But he really tells us why he arranged these words this way to bring to our attention this idea about Christ.

[ 5 : 59 ] But that's what I want to spend our time today looking at, is what details of this story really highlight how John saw Christ and how he wanted us to see Christ.

And that's really the focus of the story, is Christ himself. And so as we start out with the first act or the first part of the scene, this is the setup.

It takes place in verses 1 through 3. And we discussed this a little bit, but let's dig a little deeper into the details of this. We know that this scene takes place at night.

It's late and dark. And it's important to reflect back on the previous discussion because, as John said in the first verse, when Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples.

And so this takes place immediately after the previous discussion. And this previous discussion actually started way back in chapter 13, verse 27, when Jesus told Judas, as he was leaving, what you are going to do, do quickly.

[ 7 : 07 ] And so we then have four additional chapters documenting this discussion between Jesus and his disciples. And some of the highlights of this discussion are when different characters ask Jesus questions.

Back in John 13, verse 36, Peter asks him a question and Jesus answers. And then in 14.5, Thomas asks him a question and Jesus answers.

And then in 14.8, Philip asks him a question and Jesus answers. And then Judas, not Iscariot, the other Judas, to make it confusing, in chapter 14.22 also asks him a question.

And then we don't get their names, but a few other disciples ask him questions in chapter 16, verse 17. And Jesus patiently, carefully answers all of their questions in this upper room discourse, as it's called.

But then in chapter 17, we get a detail of his prayer, his high priestly prayer for those whom believed in him and those who would believe in him. And that's chapter 17.

[ 8 : 12 ] But we're told after all of these events take place, all in one night, this is just one night that all of this took place, he left with his disciples and he crossed the brook Kidron and entered the garden, Gethsemane.

And that's where our story starts, in verse 1. We find Jesus and his disciples in the garden. And the other gospel accounts tell us that this garden was at the base of the Mount of Olives, and it was sometimes called Gethsemane, which could be translated as oil press.

And so some people think that this was maybe a walled garden in which the olives that came from the mountain were pressed to make olive oil. But we do know that this is a place that Jesus and his disciples had come often from the account.

And I think that the brook Kidron stood out to me because I don't know what the brook Kidron is unless you've been paying careful attention to the Old Testament. And so why does John include this detail about this location?

We know if you look at a map of Jerusalem that the temple is in the northeast corner, and to the east of the temple is a wall, a tall wall, and then from there, there's a deep valley.

[ 9 : 31 ] And at the base of this valley to the east is a brook Kidron. It normally runs dry for most of the year, but during flood season, it would be a torrent, and during winter season, it would be a brook, a small stream of water.

And so in this season, Jesus and his disciples cross the brook, and then they enter this garden at the base of the mountain. And I think one of the reasons maybe John included this detail was to authenticate his account.

He knew this detail that most people wouldn't know, and so that bore witness to his having been there, part of this event. But I also think it's interesting that this brook shows up in 2 Samuel chapter 15.

And this is, if you're not familiar with 2 Samuel, the account of David and Absalom. So jumping back over 500 years now, in this account, David, his son Absalom, betrayed him, and David was forced to flee the city with many of his loyal followers.

And when they fled, they fled this same way. They crossed the brook Kidron, and they took refuge at the Mount of Olives, where David actually climbs the mountain and worships God.

[10:45] And I think that's interesting when we see these two accounts side by side, that the rightful king of Israel has been forced to take refuge at the Mount of Olives.

So maybe that's why John included this, right? We don't really know. He doesn't tell us, but I still think it's pretty cool when we connect those two pieces together. In either case, the atmosphere is set, right, in our scene.

John has made it clear that they're in the garden. It's in the dark of night. And we know that Jesus spent the night praying. He was up the entire night.

And his disciples who were with him, some of them were praying, some of them were sleeping. And we also know from the Synoptic Gospels that Jesus was praying specific words to the Father.

In Matthew 26, specifically in verse 39, he says, Let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.

[11:48] And he's talking about the cup of suffering that he is to face on this very night. We know that his soul is sorrowful, even to the point of death.

And so he asks John and Peter and James to wait and pray with him. And if you know the story, you know three times he comes back and finds them sleeping, as was the mood of the night.

But in the third time, he wakes them and he says, My hour has come. Look, my betrayer is at hand.

And so it's interesting to note that John is one of only two people who were there for the entire scene of these events.

And so he's one of the disciples who witnessed firsthand, he was the closest to Jesus, all of these events. And so when the Spirit, as we're told, brought these events back to their minds so that they could write these Gospel accounts, John had witnessed all of these events firsthand.

And he chose to write them to us in a specific account. I think it's interesting if you look at John 21, 25, all the way at the very end of his Gospel, he says this.

[13:04] Now, there are also many other things that Jesus did for every one of them to be written. I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. And so it's clear that although John maybe wanted to write us a 500-page novel about Jesus' life, he only had a few sheets of paper.

And he chose carefully what he included because he wanted us to see something about Jesus. And in this account, although he only had 12 verses, he also wanted us to see something specific.

So that's what I want to draw our attention to as we move forward. But now that the scene has been set, in verse 2, we're told that Judas knew of the garden. So this is a bit of exposition on John's part. He tells us that Judas knew of this place because he had stayed there before with the disciples and with Jesus. And so it seems from the account that Jesus had stayed here before.

And it's interesting that this garden was adjacent to the temple. And so it would have been easy for Jesus to teach in the temple by day and retire to the garden by night. And it seems that's where he was staying so that he wouldn't be taken before his time had come.

[14:19] But he spent his time in this garden teaching the disciples and praying with the disciples. But then in verse 3, as the events continue to unfold, Judas Iscariot suddenly arrives back on the scene with a band of soldiers and some officers from the high priest and the Pharisees.

And it's interesting to note, and I don't know this number accurately, but this band or cohort of soldiers could have been as many as 600 soldiers. So this was no small group.

The other three accounts say it was a crowd of people. So it wasn't a small group of people. But we're also told that in some of the accounts they had swords and in others they had clubs.

They had torches and lanterns in all the accounts. But the way that they were armed, it was clear that they were ready to search the garden, the dark corners of the garden, to find Jesus and to capture him at all costs.

They were armed and prepared. And this is interesting since Jesus only has 11 disciples. You really need 600 people to capture him. But it would seem that they came well prepared.

[15:25] They were on a mission and they weren't about to lose. Notice also that we're told that officials from the high priest were leading them, not the high priest themselves.

So rather than defile themselves in arresting Jesus, they sent officials in their stead so that they didn't have to take part in these events.

Also, we notice that Judas was acting on the authority of the high priest, that he had been sent there with their authority to arrest Jesus. And a last point that is interesting to note from the list of people who were there is that these were soldiers and officials and Pharisees and Judas.

So there were Gentiles and Jews and Pharisees and one of his own disciples. Right?

This is a crowd that represented all of the people, not just one. And this confirms what Jesus had said back in John 15, verse 21, right?

[16:29] That the world hated him because they didn't know the Father. It wasn't just a group of people, a sect of people. It was the world that hated him.

And then as the scene continues, Jesus steps forward. Rather than them searching for him, he simply steps forward to meet them.

No search, no fight. He just steps forward. And now as we move into the second act of the scene, the confrontation begins in verse 4.

As it begins, John offers us another moment of exposition. He tells us something important. And he says that Jesus knew all that would happen. Important note, I think, to interrupt the story with this.

But then he comes forward and he puts himself between the disciples and this crowd. He steps forward as a protector, as a shepherd, and puts himself between the disciples and this band.

[17:36] And he says, whom do you seek? I think it's an unusual question. He obviously knows the answer. And John wants us to know that he knew the answer. But he wants to know what they would say.

He wants to know how they would answer. And their answer is important. They say, Jesus of Nazareth. Why specifically Jesus of Nazareth?

Right? We know that he was from Bethlehem, but they chose their words carefully. Their words were, in fact, denying who he claimed to be.

By saying Jesus of Nazareth, they were making clear that he was a rejected king and Messiah from an insignificant town of Nazareth.

Right? Their words themselves were a denial. Even after all of his works and his words that we see in John, all the things that he performed.

[18:39] The officials made clear with their answer that they were denying him, that they did not believe who he claimed to be. And then he answers them, right?

Despite their denial, he gives them an answer. He says, I am he, the one you're looking for. And then in response, the crowd draws back and falls to the ground.

Kind of crazy if you think about it. 600 people just falling to the ground at his two words. So what about his answer was so profound that it would knock them to the ground?

Maybe you would say he spoke it with some authoritative, commanding voice of God. And his voice, the power of his voice, knocked them to the ground. But I think we need to look more closely at this answer, I am he, if we want to see why this had power to knock them to the ground.

And actually, this phrase, I am he, shows up 88 times in the Gospel of John. And I think there's a reason why.

[19:50] First of all, the words I am, as translated in English, are the verb to be, the present active form of the verb to be. And it's just as common in Greek as it is in English.

And so to write a narrative, you would need to use these words. But John uses them carefully in a few specific places. He intentionally uses these words to draw our attention to some of the things that Jesus said about himself.

And there's actually a series of them in his discussion in the preceding chapters of John, leading right up to this verse in chapter 18.

And in each one, he is responding to a criticism of the crowd or even his own disciples. He's teaching something about himself. And so he says, I am. And then he tells us something about the Christ. And I've summarized them here. And I'm going to bring to our attention some of them. Because we've been going through this series for a few years now.

[ 20 : 56 ] And maybe you don't remember all of them. But the first one that really stands out is in John chapter 6, verse 35. If you've got John open in your Bible, you can flip to it.

But this takes place the day after John fed the 5,000. And he said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger.

Whoever believes in me shall never thirst. And we know in response to this and other things that he said that the Jews grumbled. They were upset by what he said.

But then later in John 8, verse 12, there was a division among the people over who the Christ was. And so he said to them, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. And he said a few other things.

[ 21 : 53 ] But at the end of this account in chapter 8, they picked up stones to throw at him. They were prepared to kill him. Later in chapter 10, verses 7, and then also in 11, Jesus had healed a blind man.

And the Pharisees were persecuting him because of what he had done. If you wanted to look at it, it was 10.7 and 10.11. But he said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

All who come before me are thieves and robbers. He is rebuking the Pharisees for their false teaching. And then in verse 11, he says, I am the good shepherd.

The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. And these statements as well caused a division among the Jews. Some of them believed that he was the Christ, the anointed one of God.

And others believed that he was blaspheming. And then later in John 11, verse 25, right before Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, Martha was confused about the resurrection and Jesus' power over life and death.

[ 23 : 05 ] And so he said to her in verse 25 of chapter 11, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet he shall live. And we know in response to this that the Pharisees began plotting to kill him.

He was in Jerusalem. And this led up to the events of the Passion narrative. And the last one I want to highlight for today is during the discourse between the disciples and Jesus in John 15, verse 1, when he is teaching the disciples of what is to come, and he is teaching them of their ministry.

Actually, I skipped one. We need to go back to 14, 6 first. Still in the same discussion with the disciples, Jesus says to Thomas in chapter 14, verse 6, I am the way and the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. And the disciples still weren't convinced with his answer. And so they said, show us the Father, and that is enough, right?

They wanted him to speak plainly to them. And so right at the end of his teaching to them in chapter 15, verse 1, he explains to them in their ministry after he is gone, if they are to bear fruit, that they must abide in him.

[ 24 : 31 ] We preached on this a few months ago now. And Jesus says, I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. And he teaches them that they must abide in him.

But even with his words, they still were a little bit confused. And they asked him, please speak plainly to us. Put it in terms that we simple fishermen can understand, right?

But each of these statements, and there are actually seven of them, and John chose seven because that's the number of completion, were included to help us understand something about Jesus and how he prepared his disciples.

So in summary, he was teaching them that they must abide in him. They must follow his way. They must receive life from him. They must obey the voice of the good shepherd.

The good shepherd enters by the narrow gate. He provides light in the dark world. And he is the only source of bread or life, right?

[ 25 : 38 ] And maybe you've heard this before about these seven I am statements of Jesus. But in each one, the focus is not on I am.

It is on who he is and what he's done. And that's what, when we read these, should be our emphasis. Who is Jesus? What has he done? But in contrast to these seven, John offers three more I am statements in the gospel account.

And these ones are different. Because in these ones, Jesus simply refers to himself as I am, which would be grammatically awkward in Greek, in Aramaic, or in English.

But there's an intention with how he uses them. The first one actually also occurred way back in John chapter 6, verses 18 through 20, when Jesus is walking on the water during the storm and the disciples call out and he says, it is I, do not be afraid.

If you look at the Greek, it's actually not it is I, it is I am, do not be afraid. In John 8, 58, when he is confronting the Pharisees, at the Feast of Booths, Jesus said, truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.

[ 27 : 01 ] And they picked up stones to throw at him, right? And then here in our verse for today, in John 18, 6, when Jesus said to them, I am he, they drew back and fell to the ground.

So we've kind of gone off on a tangent about I am, but what about these words, I am he, made them fall to the ground? Well, in our modern English translations, even older translations like the King James, it says I am he.

But in the Greek, we could ask Peter, it says ego, I me, I am, right? It just says I am. And in this context, this phrase I am would be equivalent to him taking the covenant name of God, Yahweh, by saying I am or I exist.

He is calling himself by the name of God, right? In John 8, 58, those listening from the Pharisees, they knew this phrase.

And when he called himself by that name, they picked up stones to throw at him because if he was not God, then this would be the greatest act of blasphemy to call himself by I am.

[ 28 : 17 ] So they were going to kill him. And in our verse here, it was equally clear. These officials of the high priest, standing there with 600 soldiers, are suddenly faced by Jesus saying, I am, right?

I exist. I am the creator of all things. And so in speaking this, as they called it at that time, unutterable name of God, they were either shocked or awed or so moved by the power of God that they simply fell to the ground, all 600 of them, right?

And so John has carefully crafted this narrative using this phrase, I am, to bring our attention to this moment where Jesus makes clear that he is claiming to be God, fully God, fully man.

But then the story rapidly changes gears, right? Because in verse seven, with all of these officials falling on the ground, Jesus doesn't run or flee with his disciples as perhaps they could have, taking advantage of the moment, right?

But rather, he simply says, who do you seek? He repeats the question again. And again, they respond, Jesus of Nazareth.

[ 29 : 44 ] Even after all the events that just transpired, they simply stubbornly, hard-heartedly respond by denying the name of Christ and calling him again, Jesus of Nazareth, right?

And then interestingly, in verse eight, he again responds, I told you, I am. So if you seek me, let these men go.

And so we see, he simply submits and allows himself to be arrested so that the disciples can go free. John reminds us, he brings our attention back a couple verses to chapter 17, verse 12 with another expositional statement that this was to fulfill Jesus' words that he said, of those who you gave me, I have lost not one, right?

And so through his surrender, he fulfills his own prayer. And he fulfills the word of God. We see an act that confirms his high priestly prayer, that he is in perfect unity with the Father.

That he simply surrenders and fulfills all of Scripture and the word of God. And so he says, this reminded me of Philippians 2, verse six.

[ 31 : 31 ] Although he was in the form of God, he took the form of a slave and humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death. And I don't want to move past this passage because I think in our day, we can miss the gravity of this scene, right?

The Passion narrative has been made into many movies and recounted and most of us have read it enough times that maybe it's become mundane to us.

But the anticlimactic outcome of this event is really profound for those who witnessed it and those who are hearing it for the first time. Right? Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem on Sunday of Passion Week and he was welcomed as the anointed king of Israel, their savior and rescuer.

And five days later, simply because he rose Lazarus from the dead and claimed to be God, now they have rejected him and set plans and motions for his arrest and their purpose is to kill him.

The high priest expected that he would defend himself and so they sent an excessive force of 600 people to arrest him. They expected that he would flee and so they came prepared to search him out.

[ 32 : 55 ] But instead, he simply surrenders totally against everyone's expectations. Even the disciples didn't expect this to be the outcome.

And we see this in the next section, right? What does Peter do? He draws his sword and prepares to attack. So as we move into the resolution of this discourse, of this event, in Act 3, I want to look at verses 10 through 12.

As I said, Peter, he's prepared to attack. He draws his sword. He's not ready to let his savior go without a fight. He doesn't understand why Jesus would surrender.

He believed, as he confessed earlier, that he was the Christ, the son of the living God, and yet he still takes matters into his own hands. Right? He has a Roman sword.

This would be a short sword that he could hide within his clothing. And he pulls it out and either swings it at the head or stabs towards the face of this servant and misses and cuts off his ear.

[ 34 : 10 ] Right? So, pretty brutal. But, amid the chaos, John records a couple of details.

Right? He tells us this servant's name was Malchus, the servant of the high priest. And although we don't know much else about Malchus, we know that Jesus didn't leave him deformed, but instead healed his ear and restored him.

And so, again, we see that Jesus surrendered not only to save the life of his disciples, but even to show compassion and mercy to his betrayers. And then Jesus rebukes Peter, right?

He says, should I not drink the cup that the Father has given me? And the point is clear that John wants us to see that Jesus' surrender was of his own will in obedience to the will of the Father.

It was he who chooses to give up his life. And this is in confirmation and in fulfillment of John 10, 18. John said, quoting Jesus' words, for this reason the Father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.

[ 35 : 25 ] No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.

And so we see Jesus living out who he said he was, the good shepherd, voluntarily laying down his life for his sheep.

Here in the garden, he literally surrenders to preserve his disciples physically from being destroyed by this band of soldiers.

But then in a few hours, he will lay it down on the cross for the preservation of all who would believe in him. Jesus is ready to drink the cup that the Father has given him.

He's prepared to take upon himself the suffering, the shame, and to bear the fullness of the wrath of God. And if we don't get the imagery of the cup, it's really highlighted in Isaiah 52 and 53.

[ 36 : 40 ] And we find in Isaiah 53, and we can't read all of it now, but that Jesus was innocent and righteous, but he was prepared to act as this sacrificial lamb that would be offered up for our guilt.

And we know that in the midst of his anguish, both when he was praying in the garden and when he was on the cross, that he had joy because he was satisfied in knowing that by his death, many would be accounted righteous.

Right? But for now, in verse 12, without spoiling the rest of the Passion narrative, as the confrontation ends, the soldiers, their captains, and the officers of the Jews arrest Jesus and they lead him away.

Right? Again, an anticlimactic ending. to these events. And if you know and hopefully have read the gospel, you know what comes next. But at least for these three scenes that John recounts, the end was anticlimactic.

There was no confrontation, no physical confrontation. But as he ends, John lists again that we have soldiers and captains and officers and Judas.

[ 38 : 06 ] Right? So we have Gentiles, we have Romans, we have Jews, we have Jesus' own disciple working together collectively, representing all of humanity, betraying Jesus and sending him to his death.

Even Peter himself in a few moments would deny him three times so that none was there to defend him. I think in these 12 verses, John paints a pretty vivid, beautiful picture of what he saw in Jesus, of who he saw in Jesus.

But he also contrasted it with a disturbing image, an indictment of what he saw of humanity. Right? Before we close, I want to jump back to the beginning and look at this word that we skipped over. Where does this event take place? It takes place in a garden. And gardens in scripture are always intentionally meant to remind us of Eden when God was with man in perfect unity.

And so this garden, this confrontation takes place in a garden and it's between man and God. Right? God comes forward and he asks a question, a question he already knows the answer to. [ 39 : 33 ] Right? But this time, the roles have been reversed. In Eden, it was God who stepped forward and man who stood accused.

Right? It was God who had the power to decide man's fate. But in Gethsemane, it's God who stands accused and man who, at least as they think, decide God's fate.

Right? In Eden, man was guilty and God was just to condemn them. But instead, in an act of mercy and grace, he showed them compassion and sent them out with the promise of redemption.

In the garden of Gethsemane, it's God who's innocent. Man has no right sending him to his death.

But instead, in a tragic display of cruelty and defiance, they sentenced God to death.

Even so, even with their hard-heartedness, Jesus chooses of his own and only free will and perfect submission to the sovereign will of God to lay down his life, be put to death, to save even those who denied him and betrayed him.

[ 40 : 56 ] I think the point of John's account is to show us the beauty and the goodness of God, even as he faced such treachery from his own creation. All he wants us to see and to believe is that Jesus is the Christ, that he is the Son of God, and that by believing in him, we may have life in his name.

The promise of eternal life, the reality of a transformed life. So I think John chose his words carefully and he chose them well.

As we close, I just want to leave you with one final set of thoughts. I think in well-written stories and good movies, characters are developed so that we as the audience can connect to them.

And in this account, it would be easy to connect with maybe John as the witness or Jesus himself as the hero or maybe as Peter, the defender of his savior.

But I think what John really wants us to see is that we're not the hero or one of the disciples, at least not at one point in our life.

[ 42 : 18 ] Instead, we are the betrayer. We are the hard-hearted sinners who denied God and made ourselves God in his place. And so we stand condemned, but there's good news, right?

As Paul says in Ephesians, but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our sins, made us alive together with Christ, right?

And I just want to leave you with a few things to maybe think about in this sermon, because John, he wants us to see and to believe that Jesus was the Christ, but he wants it to do something in our lives, something lasting and transforming.

First, he wants us to know that this work of Christ, laying down his life and taking it back up, was accomplished by him alone, obeying the will of God and paying a debt we could never pay.

Also, he wants us to know from Judas' account that those who ultimately deny God will be destroyed. I think sometimes we forget that, but also that those who confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from the dead, they will be ultimately saved.

[ 43 : 39 ] We need to remember that John was a witness and an ambassador for the gospel, for God. And so he implores us here and through us that we be reconciled to God.

And he has given us this ministry of reconciliation so that God through us might reconcile the world to himself. And so we are ambassadors of Christ.

And so as witnesses of Christ, we're called to be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, we are called to shine as lights in the world.

And so empowered by his spirit in us, we are called through submissive obedience, as he said in his example, to live out as witnesses and ambassadors to the world this ministry of reconciliation.

Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.