This morning, we resume our study in the book of John in chapter 18, retracing Jesus' steps to the cross. To truly understand the significance of the cross, we must:

- Have a right view of Jesus in all His majesty and righteousness.
- Have a right view of man in their depravity and deficiency.

Before we look at these two starkly contrasting portraits of Jesus and mankind, let me give you some background to set the stage.

Verse one says that... “When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, in which He entered with His disciples.” The words that Jesus had just spoken are recorded in John 13-17 during the final Passover meal with His disciples. Having finished the Passover meal and giving His final instructions to His disciples, Jesus led them to the infamous Garden of Gethsemane. It was here that Jesus would pray to the point of absolute surrender and resolve to drink the cup that the Father had set before Him—namely, the cross.

According to vs. 2, Gethsemane was also the most predictable place where Judas might find Him to carry out his mission of betrayal. And so it is no surprise that in vs. 3 Judas, “having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.”

This is no small band, including both Jewish and Roman authorities, to intercept Jesus. The officers are the Jewish temple police sent by the chief priests. The Roman cohort was a detachment of at least 200 armed foot soldiers and cavalry. And though they came by night to take Jesus as their prey, He was not taken by surprise.

Jesus’ Majesty and Righteousness

Let me highlight 5 strokes in this portrait of Jesus’ greatness:

1. **His divine omniscience (vs. 4).**

   It’s extremely important for you to understand that nothing took Jesus by surprise. He is not merely the victim of circumstance. He is conscientiously and fully aware of all things, including future events, the Father’s will, and the hearts of men.

   Already we saw Jesus’ omniscience powerfully at work in the opening verses of John 13: “Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end...Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God, and was going back to God, rose from supper...and began to wash the disciples’ feet.” (John 13:1-5).

   Now in John 18:4, it says, “So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth...”

   In His divine omniscience, Jesus is fully aware of every detail He is about to face. There are no surprises, no unexpected turn of events, and no attempt to escape them. In light of this, the 2nd stroke of greatness we see in this portrait of Jesus is...

2. **His invincible resolve to do the Father’s will (vs. 4).**

   Don’t miss this remarkable detail in verse 4: “So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, “whom do you seek?”

   Just prior to this in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus said to His disciples, “Arise, let us be going: behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!” Yet notice that Jesus is not fleeing his captors. He is going out to meet them!

   This is more than great courage. This is an invincible resolve to do the Father’s will. Remember, the setting here is Gethsemane. Jesus has
just prayed 3 times, “Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me, yet not as I will, but as You will.” Then He arises to go out to meet His enemies, walking straight into His Father’s will.

Again this is confirmed in vs. 11, when He says to Peter, “the cup that the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?” Jesus has His eyes set on one thing only—His Father’s will.

3. The resident glory of His greatness (vs. 5-6).

When Jesus asks, “whom do you seek,” they respond in verse 5, “Jesus the Nazarene.” “He said to them, “I am.” In our English translations, we supply the word He at the end of Jesus’ answer: “I am He” (Italics). But in Greek it’s unnecessary and it’s absent. So Jesus literally says, “I am.” Apparently this was more than just a simple way of identifying Himself. It was a revelation of His divine nature—the indwelling glory of His greatness as the Son of God.

This is seen in vs. 6: “when He said to them, ‘I am He,’ they drew back and fell to the ground.” Even a momentary unveiling of His divine glory and greatness stripped His armed foes of any power and they fell limp to the ground.

Jesus has all the power at His disposal to decimate any foe, yet He chooses rather to walk resolutely into the Father’s will, which meant into the hands of Jewish authorities.

And in as much as Jesus’ heart is set on honoring the Father, so His enemies’ hearts are set against the Son. Even this display of Jesus’ power and authority that pressed them to the ground did not deter or even call into question the evil mission of their hard hearts.

To the clamor of armor, they stumble back to their feet and through their sinful choices carry out the sovereign plan of the very God they oppose.

4. His protective love and Godward allegiance (vs. 8-9).

Jesus answered, “I told you that I am He; so if you seek Me, let these go their way,” to fulfill the word which He spoke, “Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one.” (vs. 8-9)

Here we see Jesus taking on His acclaimed role as the Good Shepherd. In John 10:11-18, Jesus says: “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.”

And so we see Jesus’ protective love for His disciples. He knew what their faith could and could not bear; and He delivers them from the predator’s claws.

Yet this is more than just a protective act of love toward His disciples. It’s an expression of faithful allegiance to His Father (9). He will allow no one to snatch from His hand, those that the Father has given Him (10:28; cf. 6:39; 17:12).

There’s tremendous comfort here for all of Christ’s followers.

(John 6:37-40) “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this
is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

Our assurance does not ultimately rest on our faithfulness to Christ, but on His faithfulness to us out of His unfailing loyalty to the Father.

5. His willing and unwavering obedience to the Father through suffering (vs. 10-11).

There’s tremendous irony here: Jesus had the power to overcome His enemies and chose not to. Peter didn’t have the power to overcome his enemies but tried.

Out of self-preservation and jealousy for his Lord, Peter impulsively draws His sword and strikes. But Jesus rebukes him. This is not a time for self-defense, but sacrifice. Jesus’ words are weighty: “the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?”

This is the cup of the Father’s will. This is the cup Jesus resolved to drink. Yet what did this cup entail?

Jesus uses the term “cup” to refer to His death. In the Old Testament, the term cup was often used to refer to God’s judgment and wrath. Jesus would not only endure extreme physical suffering, but He will also become the ultimate sin offering bearing the full cup of God’s just wrath and judgment for sin.

So when Jesus sets His resolve on the Father’s will to go to the cross, He walks under the judgment of God for our sin so that God, having fully poured out His just wrath for sin on Christ, might release mercy to us because of the sacrifice of Jesus. And in all of this the Father is glorified through the judgment of sin, mercy toward sinners who repent and believe in Jesus, and He is glorified through the vindication of His Son in the resurrection.

So how does what we’ve seen in this portrait of Jesus reveal both His majesty and righteousness?

We see His majesty in His divine omniscience and overwhelming glory, not to mention His sovereign authority. He is under no mans’ control. Even His enemies apprehend Him only because He places Himself in their hands.

We see His righteousness in His perfect loyalty to the Father’s will. He knows His Father’s will; He resolves to do His Father’s will; He is loyal in His allegiance to the Father’s will; and He is willing and unwavering in His obedience to the Father’s will.

Man’s Depravity and Deficiency

Now let’s turn our attention to vs. 12-27 to see a graphic contrast of the depravity and deficiency of man.

1. Depravity: We begin with a caricature of man’s depravity (sinfulness) by observing the Jewish authorities. So the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him, and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people.” (John 18:12-14)

Let me begin by introducing you to Annas. Annas was the most powerful man among the Jewish authorities. He was a former high priest and the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the current high priest. His four sons had also occupied the high priesthood after him, at a time when the position was attained by bribery with the Romans. Annas remained extremely powerful and was notorious for being a greedy man.
Annas’ power was attained by his wealth, and his wealth was attained by extortion. Annas was the man behind the money changers in the temple taking advantage of average and often poor people. Twice when Jesus cleansed the temple and drove out the money changers it was Annas who was behind the whole operation, which was known as the Bazaars of Annas.

And to make matters worse, all of this extortion was propagated by someone who occupied the high priesthood, wearing garments inscribed with “Holiness to the Lord.” Annas and his crew were a wretched mockery of God. What a stark contrast to Jesus who lived His whole life for the singular purpose of God’s honor.

It’s no surprise then that Jesus was first led not to Caiaphas, but to Annas. You can imagine how Annas would have wanted to be the first to gloat over the capture of Jesus who had publically denounced his evil schemes.

What about Caiaphas? Suffice it to say that Caiaphas was right in step with Annas. In vs. 14 we are reminded that Caiaphas “was the one who advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people.”

John 11:51 clarifies that Caiaphas did not say this on his own initiative but was prophesying that Jesus would die on behalf of the Jews. In other words, Caiaphas said this, not because He understood God’s plan of salvation; rather he proposed killing Jesus to ruthlessly preserve his own power and prestige along with the rest of the crooked powers to be.

It is this corruption of character that we have just seen that makes an absolute mockery of the trials of Jesus. Virtually every line of jurisprudence was violated by the Jewish authorities. John gives us just a sampling here in John 18. In vs. 19, Annas questions Jesus about His disciples and His teaching. But in vs. 20, Jesus replies by saying, “I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret.” Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said.” (vs. 20-21)

Jesus’ response is not a rude attempt to be uncooperative. He’s exposing His accuser’s departure from the law. It was illegal to force the accused to testify against himself or incriminate himself. Jesus’ call for witnesses is not an attempt to escape His circumstance, but a call to uphold the law.

(vs. 22-23) When He had said this, one of the officers standing nearby struck Jesus, saying, “Is that the way You answer the high priest?” Jesus answered him, “If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?”

It was illegal to strike a prisoner, especially one not yet convicted, just as it was illegal to hold a trial by night, try criminal cases during Passover, or try a man without witnesses. Even this pre-trial by Annas was inappropriate as only Caiaphas, the reigning high priest, could bring official charges against the accused.

Jesus’ response in vs. 23 is telling: “If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?”

2. Deficiency:

Finally, we not only see the deep depravity in the hearts of Jesus’ accusers, we also see the deficiency in the heart Peter.

While Peter failed to comprehend the unfolding of God’s plan, he also demonstrated a heart of loyal friendship to Jesus. At times, his enthusiasm for Jesus got him into trouble, like when he rebuked

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3 MacArthur, 320; Barclay, 265
4 MacArthur, 320; cf. Acts 23:2
5 John 18:10; Matt 16:22; Mark 8:32
Jesus for suggesting that He would be crucified, or when he cut off the slaves’ ear in Gethsemane.

Again we see Peter’s courage and commitment to Jesus as he follows him at great risk into the courtyard of the high priest.

So what went wrong? Why the great collapse as Peter denies his Lord 3 times? There’s no doubt the pressure Peter felt was immense. Not only did his life appear to be at stake, but Satan had demanded permission to sift him like wheat (Luke 22:31).

Don’t miss the contrast in John 18: Jesus went to the cross with an undivided heart of loyalty to His father—walking directly into the fire of suffering. But Peter found his heart caught in the inner conflict between self-preservation and confessing allegiance to Jesus.

Later in his life Peter would stand under equal, if not greater pressure. But something defining had to happen in Peter. His self-reliance had to die and in its place His confidence in God had to take root—a confidence that could only be found in entrusting himself to God as Jesus did, so that He would stand not by His own strength but God’s.

I Peter 2:21-23 ~ “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously”

I Peter 4:19 ~ “Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.”

Like Jesus, we are called to set our resolves on doing the Father’s will while entrusting our souls to God who is faithful. In other words, we do what we know is right in God’s eyes, entrusting our eyes and our future to Him knowing that He is faithful.

**Big Picture:** You’ll never truly understand the significance of the cross until you have seen Jesus in His majesty and righteousness and man in his depravity and deficiency.

The cross is where the glorious righteousness of Jesus and the wicked sinfulness of man meet. Jesus willfully and deliberately walked into the suffering of God’s judgment on the cross to deliver us from the damnation of our depravity.

The cross, and therefore the gospel, is not ultimately man-centered but God-centered. When Jesus went to the cross it wasn’t just to save us from our sin; it was to glorify God in saving us from our sin.

God is glorified in the rescue of sinners; and He is glorified in the judgment of sin. Which way will He be glorified in your life?