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Preacher: Guest Preacher

[0 : 00] Let us now turn to the passage that we read. Gospel according to John chapter 18 and we may read again at verse 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.

And I'd like you just to focus upon one word in that verse and set three thoughts before you.

And the word is there. In an earlier chapter John tells us how Jesus and his disciples gathered together in the upper room.

It was to be the last time of fellowship and instruction prior to the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. And you may remember how Jesus took the role of a servant in that small gathering and how he urges us too to take the role of a servant if we are following the Lord Jesus Christ and getting down on our hands and knees and serving others in this life.

[1 : 48] And you will remember how that appears to have been indelibly engraved in the mind of John.

He speaks of Jesus washing the disciples feet. He also tells us how they observed the Passover meal.

And in relating that piece of information John tells us how Jesus is also aware of the thoughts and intentions of Judas Iscariot. So in verse 13 when he had dipped the morsel he gave it to Judas the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after he had taken the morsel Satan entered into him.

Jesus said to him what you are going to do do quickly. Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that because Judas had the money bag Jesus was telling him buy what we need for the feast or that he should give something to the poor. So after receiving the morsel of bread he immediately went out and it was night and we know from our knowledge of the scriptures that John is not merely telling us the hour of the day or the fact that it was merely night he is indicating to us the darkness that had enveloped and surrounded the mind and the heart of Judas Iscariot.

We also know from scripture how this man went to the religious authorities and agreed with them his act of betrayal. And so here in this chapter we are told of how the church and state Roman power come together. Jewish authorities and the Roman power come together so that we are told that a band of soldiers some officers from the chief priests on the Pharisees came along with Judas to arrest Jesus. That brings me back to this one word there. Because you notice this word is significantly said before us Judas in verse 2 who betrayed him knew the place for Jesus often met there. Verse 3 he went there. On the three thoughts I'd like to say before you you've heard of the three Rs well three Rs. There Christ reveals his authority of power. There Christ rebukes Peter and there Christ restores the ear of Malchus. First there Christ reveals his authority of power and the picture that is depicted for us by the by the Gospel writers is that a large group came to arrest Jesus and we are told they came prepared to meet any resistance that might be offered by Jesus and his disciples. Matthew tells us a great crowd with with swords and clubs came to arrest him. Some are of the opinion that hundreds of soldiers were in this group of soldiers that are mentioned. The word that is translated band speaks of a unit of a legion. Now there were 6,000 soldiers in a legion so a unit of a legion would be a tenth of that 600 soldiers. Commentators are of the view that there may not have been 600 soldiers in the band that came to arrest Jesus but that there could be about 200 soldiers in this group. So here you have Gentile,

[6 : 20] Roman soldiers and Jews coming together to arrest the savior of the world. The fact that they had lanterns and torches could suggest that they intended to conduct a search to find a fugitive.

Remember this was the time of the Passover and the Passover meal was always held at the time of the full moon. May have been cloudy and the moon obscured we don't know.

Not something we are told. The fact that they were in possession of swords and clubs may not just tell us that they thought that they would meet resistance but also it could indicate their own personal sense of fear in coming to apprehend the Lord Jesus Christ. The impression that you get with the behavior of some of these is that they felt intimidated by Jesus. Certainly intimidated by the holiness of his person and given the numbers that came to arrest him, the weaponry that they possess, you would think that they were coming to arrest a highly dangerous armed criminal. He himself states in Matthew's account have you come out as against a robber with swords and clubs to capture me day after day? He says I sat in the temple teaching and you did not seize me. In other words he is rebuking them for their sheer cowardice. Why did you not come to arrest me day after day when I sat teaching in the temple and the answer to the question is simply this. They were afraid of the reaction of the people and so they come out under the cloak of darkness to arrest the Lord Jesus Christ. Why with swords and clubs when he is an unarmed person and he actually shames them into looking and examining the way that they come to arrest him.

But then the scripture writers tell us how could the scriptures be fulfilled? This is how it had to be and Judas who betrayed him was standing with them. There are three brief references to the name of Judas in the brief passage that we read. I get the impression rightly or wrongly that John is reluctant almost to say much about this man. John must have been deeply disappointed in the behavior of this disciple who had spent so much time with the rest of the disciples.

But he was there as a guide to this man who had come to arrest the Lord.

[9 : 48] John doesn't tell us about the kiss with which Judas identified and betrayed the Savior to the arresting mob. John also in his account leaves out the intense and agonizing wrestling that took place in Gethsemane although he himself was there albeit a stern throw away from the agonizing wrestler. It's as if John approaches in his gospel narrative the events that take place yield from another angle as if he wants the reader to see that Christ was in full control of what was taking place. This was not unexpected it was something that he anticipated.

Nor was the betrayal of Judas unexpected he knew it was to occur. These were events that took place according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God and so the person they sought comes forward to meet them. Says John Jesus knowing all that would happen to him to emphasize the knowledge possessed by Christ and he comes forward with a question whom do you seek. Yes they have lanterns and torches but many of the soldiers would have been incapable of recognizing the Lord Jesus Christ.

They would still need some confirmation of his identity hence the necessity for Judas to be there and probably this takes place in John's narrative at the end of verse five when John records Judas who betrayed him was standing with them. But what John principally I believe wants us to see is that nothing lies outside of the jurisdiction of Jesus. Do you notice how John wants to emphasize that point when the mob says that they are looking for Jesus Jesus the Nazarene. Jesus says in verse five I am he and in the Greek original it is just I am and when I say that is important will you agree with me I am. It is as if Jesus is pointing to his divinity. He is taking them back as it were to the book of Exodus to the divine name that is revealed in the book of Exodus. You remember when

Moses was confronted by the burning bush and the wilderness and how he turned aside to see this phenomenon that was inexplicable and when he drew close to the burning bush and he heard the voice address them out of the bush and you remember the conversation that ensued and he asked who shall I say sent me tell them I am that I am is sending you and so many times in John's gospel Jesus had begun a sentence of personal identification and declaration of identity with the words I am.

I am the bread of life I am the light of the world I am the door I am the good shepherd I am the resurrection and the life I am the way the truth and the life. So it's as if Jesus is directing attention to his elevated identity as the Lord of Lords and King of Kings and you notice how John records the response to Jesus when he says I am when Jesus said to them I am they drew back and fell to the ground. What does that tell us tells us something of the evident majestic authority of the voice of Christ how the majestic authority in his voice and presence made them draw back and fall to the ground and so as John describes for us what takes place in this incident he is telling us that in the most vulnerable place in the earthly life and ministry of Jesus perhaps only the temptation and the wilderness comes close to this in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus is arrested by the soldiers with swords and clubs John is saying do you see this is God here not a murderer this is the Lord of glory here you remember how the psalmist expresses it Psalm 27 when evil doers assail me to eat up my flesh my adversaries and foes it is they who tumble and fall or who stumble and fall and there Christ reveals his authoritative power there is as it were an emission of some flash of the brightness that was veiled for the most part during his earthly ministry and that was enough to cross stray with a strange sense of all those soldiers who had come to arrest him and the application of this first point is this if but a little glimpse of the majestic power and authority of Christ during his days of humiliation can have this profound effect upon those who were military personnel for the most part what will it be like when he appears in the glory majesty and power of his exaltation does the reaction of these people who are mainly military personnel who are not easily frightened does the reaction not tell us how we ought urgently to flee to Christ whilst we are in a day of grace and a day of mercy because here you have us at where a picture in miniature of what will take place on the day of his glorious appearing remember how Matthew describes it in chapter 25 when the son of man comes in his glory and he has his angelic host with him all who until then have stubbornly refused to acknowledge Christ who have defiantly refused to worship him yet when he appears in glorious triumphant majesty inevitably must bow before

[17:18] bow so that Paul writes it at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven no earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father and you know there are no exceptions to this no exceptions so if you have not bowed your knee before Christ if you have not called to God for mercy and for salvation for grace will you not be persuaded to call even now because the day will come when that that gateway will be closed no one will have a further opportunity of seeking the grace and the mercy of almighty God there are no exceptions from those who gather before Christ will all have to be there and there is I believe much encouragement here too in the revelation of his authority for the believer because Jesus demonstrates the power that he exercises over evil unbelief idolatry all forms of wickedness even though overall the powers of darkness itself perhaps some of you might be familiar with the hymn writer who expressed it in this way be still my soul the lord is on thy side be still my soul thy best thy heavenly friend through thorny ways leads to a joyful end be still my soul thy god doth undertake to guide the future as he has the past be still my soul when dearest friends depart and all is darkened in the veil of tears then shall thou better know his love his heart who comes to sooth thy sorrow and thy fears be still my soul thy Jesus come repay and as he reveals his authority there I told you he says I am he if you seek me let those men go and you notice there is a note of Royalty authoritative power in these words he is so protective of his disciples in this potentially inflammatory hostile and dangerous situation for Christ is not just demonstrating his perfect submission to the will of the father in his voluntary submission to death to the death of the cross but he demonstrates that he is indeed the good shepherd in his protective care of his disciples it seems to me that if I correctly understand the events that are related here and gathering the information across all the gospel writers that it was probably in the minds of those who came to arrest Christ to also address his followers because they were seeking to suppress the power and the spread of the gospel message and that may be one reason for this demonstration

of authoritative power in order to subdue those who came to carry out the arrest there in Gethsemane Christ's authoritative power is revealed they drew back and fell to the ground they arrest Christ alone that brings me to my second point there he reveals his authoritative power there Christ rebukes Peter I am sure many of us are extremely grateful that Peter is found on the pages of scripture for I think many obvious reasons and here the very moment that Christ has commanded the release demanded the liberty of his disciples we read then Simon Peter having a sword drew it and struck the high priest servant cut off his right here the servant's name was Marcus now this is recorded for us in every gospel but the action that is attributed to

Peter by John is not disclosed by any of the other gospel writers has been that of Peter only John reveals his identity why why does John reveal his identity well the answer that I can give to that is that when John walked his gospel he was an old man and it is very likely that Peter had already been put to death and that therefore disclosing his identity was not in any way going to affect the life of Peter there is something else about this event the other gospel writers do not tell us whose ear was cut off at least they don't tell us his name again only John gives this information the other gospel writers tell us that it was the servant of the high priest but they conceal his identity why do they conceal his identity I'm not sure but it seems to me that it was in the mind of Peter that he was going to kill this man and somehow he was able to dodge the blow and so it was a zeal that was cut off you might say that this was a flashpoint had it not been for the intervention of Christ you know in an inflammatory situation it only takes a spark for an inferno to blaze that's all it means and Peter taking out a sword could have been just the spark that was required to inflame the situation further where people were excitable coming to arrest Christ all it would have needed was a spark to inflame the situation more had it not been for the intervention of the Lord and however you might think of the actions of Peter some might think that Peter was being extremely courageous in taking out a sword in the face of such overwhelming numbers arrayed against him

I don't think it was courageous or bold on the part of Peter I think this impetuous action on the part of Peter speaks of zeal that is not tempered with knowledge there was much ignorance in his action however well-intentioned it might appear because Christ had taught time after time after time the purpose of his coming into the world he came to fulfill the types and promises of the Old Testament scriptures and by fulfilling these to provide salvation for sinners he came for the sole purpose of being the true Lamb of God of being the true Passover Lamb he came voluntarily into the world so that he might be the scapegoat upon whom the sins of his people might be placed his heart was set on accomplishing this formidable work it could not be done without the hiding of his power for a time and to do it he became a willing sufferer and so before we get into our self-righteous towers and begin to say we wouldn't have done what Peter did oh how many things have you and I already done in our ignorance and misplaced zeal that is not at all God glorifying you see it's not by might not by power but by my spirit says the Lord of hosts we are not waging war according to the flesh for the weapons of a warfare are not of the flesh but of divine power to destroy strongholds and Christ emphasizes this in the Matthew account where he says do you think that I cannot appeal to my father he would once send me more than 12 and 12 legions of angels and I I said already there's 6 000 in a legion 72 000 angels you see it's not with the gun or with the bomb or with the sword that the church of

Christ is going to expand in the world is by the power of the spirit of God through Christ you don't compel people forcibly with a gun or a bomb to follow the Lord Jesus Christ they are compelled by the constrain in power of the spirit of God at work in their hearts in such a way that they become submissive to the word of God they don't become they don't do it against their will they do it willingly because of the power of divine grace infused in hearts and lives

[29 : 36] I suppose that's very true but the only thing whatever does against their will disappear before the throne of judgment of God everything you do in this life you do it willingly however you may conceive of it or however you may look upon it you are doing it freely and willingly one of the eminent churchmen of the past Bishop Royal makes the very pointed observation that we should learn from these verses that it is much easier to fight a little for Christ than to endure hardship and go to prison and death for a sake and I believe there is much to learn from this episode to suffer patiently for Christ is far more difficult than to work actively to sit still and endure calmly is far more difficult than to take part in battle and Royal makes the interesting observation that crusaders will always be found more numerous than martyrs see work for Christ may be done from spurious motives from excitement or emulation or party spirit you know if they did it why can't we do it or from the love of self-praise but suffering for Christ will seldom be endured from any but the one motive and that motive I believe is the grace of God perhaps we ought to remember that in forming our estimate of the comparative grace of professing Christians some poor unknown believer who has been lying for years on his or her back enduring pain without a murmur may prove at last to have brought more glory to Christ through his or her patience to have done more good through his or her prayers than the public action of others who may preach speak and write and earn the adulation of the church but maybe not of God the grand test of grace is patience suffering remember God's words about sorrow in the book of acts I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name and you can be sure that

Peter did not have as much good by his impetuous zealous action drawing the sword in fact he did no good at all and when he stood calmly before the Jewish council as a prisoner and said we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard well the Lord and rebuking Peter draws his attention to a higher plane it's as if he's drawing Peter's attention to another sword that is hanging over the God man the sword of divine justice and the exercise of that justice and so Jesus takes this opportunity and rebuking Peter he teaches a very solitary lesson he takes an old testament metaphor from many places but especially from Isaiah 51 and he speaks about the cup something that was symbolic of the wrath of God and he speaks about the cup which he was about to drink to its very depths the cup which the other gospels record for us that he struggles with and says my father if it is possible let this cup pass from me who knows the depth of this cup and the intensity of suffering associated with it we could only say that the one who filled the cup and the one who drank from it but only one person and one alone can speak from experience of the bitter ingredients of the cup and that's the one who drank from it anticipation of its contents caused him to be prostrated in the dust of the garden of Gethsemane the Lord of glory in our nature the one of whom it is true that all things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made he alone drank the wine the undiluted wine of the wrath of the divine just judge and as the content of this cup was revealed to his understanding in all its awful depths his sweat fell as great drops of blood such was the intensity of the pressure in his wrestling with heaven what was in the cup well

I've already stated the contents were a display of the judgment of the divine judge in the exercise of the penalty demanded by the holy law of God for sin what did the holy law of God demand as the penalty for sin death eternal death what was in the cup death oh what a bitter drink the heart of the curse is death separation from God and all that that entails so John wants us to see that Jesus took the cup that he resolved to take his servant ministry to the very end that he would suffer the unmitigated wrath of God against sin not his sin because he had none but our sin he would go to the very end and he would drink the contents of the cup that his father had given to him the cup that speaks of redemption he took the curse he experienced it in all its bitterness and he is saying to Peter Peter I understand why you're bringing out the sword but it's wrong because I'm determined to go to the very end of my resolution to be the covenant mediator between God and man and he doesn't drink back he doesn't flinch so he is saying to Peter how to be strong is to watch and pray it's not to take up arms and so he is drawing Peter's attention to this higher purpose and goal that has been entrusted to him to bear the sins of many shall I not drink the cup that the father has given to me just in passing Martheu Henry makes the observation that every believer is given a cup and interestingly he says it's not an ocean without measure it's a measured drink it's a cup but who's going to measure the ingredients of the cup that Christ took in order that salvation might be in your life and mine yes the zeal of Peter potentially a destructive threat to the very lives of his fellow disciples zeal without knowledge can be very dangerous there Christ reveals his authoritative power there Christ rebukes Peter and briefly there Christ restored the ear of Malchus you know the first miracle of Christ was to turn water into wine the final miracle he performed prior to his crucifixion was the healing or the restoration of Malchus ear the gospel writer Luke and he would tell us because he was a doctor Jesus touched his ear and healed him and I suppose of people were blessing miracles in order of importance

or to give marks for miracles out of ten this miracle would probably be near the bottom of the list humanly speaking because there are many miracles that probably in our minds and we appear far more important than this miracle here he raised people from the dead he expelled evil spirits out of the lives of others he fed five thousand with very little and it's almost as if this miracle is an anti-climax to the ministry of christ and yet it is told it is spoken of in all four gospels that the ear of this man was cut off and it is obvious that there is a very special purpose for this this is the miracle that he that he that he he did just hours before being put to death and it's in the place where he was in an agony where his blood was falling to the ground and only lucas as i said tells us he touched his ear and healed him we don't know if the ear fell to the ground we don't know how badly the cut was but only this that jesus touched the ear and healed him and all the blood vessels were reattached there was no rush into a and e there was no ice used there was no stitches there was no antiseptic bandages he attaches all the blood vessels on the nerve endings could you see where the ear was restored i am persuaded that you could not i do not think you'd be able if you were able to look at malchus tonight which ear was cut off and which had not been cut off it would have been perfectly healing would you have experience deafness or any other disability i don't believe you would and you notice there is no there is no report of any conversation taking place between jesus and malchus but could jesus not have said to this man you are the servant of the high priest high too i'm a high priest he pays you a wage but i can give you eternal salvation and here is malchus as it were standing between two high priests the one mercy less and the other the true merciful compassionate high priest who has been called by god the one who is able to bless malchus had never seen anything so wonderful in his life here is christ performing this miracle in the presence of his enemies demonstrating his power did malchus life change course as a consequence did he repent did he believe did he experience the pains of the new birth did he because the wind was blowing where it wishes round the garden of gethsemane there in that place was he amongst the crowd the next day who were saying truly this is the son of god we don't know but ultimately you see the question is not about malchus it's about you and me

me because we too are like malchus we have been touched by christ the same call that was addressed to malchus is addressed to us and are we willing to have this person as all high priest because if we are there is tremendous encouragement in the word of god we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but one who every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need or you willing tonight to be the servant of this high priest because by nature we are slaves to the prince of darkness but this high priest who has come after the order of malchus edek he speaks of liberty and mercy of redemption oh if you have not done already will you not cry out to this great high priest be merciful to me a sinner so that you too might be able to testify to the healing power of the christ of god malchus could testify to his healing power to his healing miraculous power men and women who were touched by the power of divine grace can testify to his miraculous transforming power malchus could say he healed my ear oh but can you and i testify that he has healed your soul with a healing that is eternal in its nature a healing that will leave you and join the wonders of god throughout the endless ages of eternity there christ reveals his authority of power there christ rebukes there christ restores all may it be that in revealing his authority of power hear this evening in delivering rebuk here this evening and in directing your attention to a loftier plan to the purpose of his sufferings that here you are restored to this newness of life that yellow is able to give let us pray eternal