

Text: John 18:1-11

Title: "Believe because He accepted the Father's cup"

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Introduction: In chapter 13 John told us that Jesus knew that His hour had come during which He was to depart out of the world (v. 1). Now in chapter 18, Jesus begins to depart. In chapter 20 we read that John tells us about Jesus's departure so that we might believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life in His name (v. 31).

The prologue of John's Gospel at the start of chapter 1 told us to believe because Jesus is the Word who became flesh (vv. 1-18). Then from the rest of chapter 1 through chapter 12, John gave us many reasons to believe from the life of Christ while His hour had not yet come.

We learned we must believe because John the Baptist was His forerunner, because the Spirit anointed Him as Messiah, and because His disciples followed Him. We must believe because He did what John calls seven *signs*, mighty miracles, each with a clear message – turning water into wine (ch. 2), healing a nobleman's son (ch. 4), healing a lame man (ch. 5), feeding 5000 with five loaves and two fish (ch. 6), walking on water (ch. 6), and healing a man born blind (ch. 9).

We must also believe because of the truth of Jesus's seven great discourses: Nicodemus learned that Jesus is the gift of the Father's love (ch. 3); the Samaritan woman learned even she could believe and be saved (ch. 4); and Jesus's enemies learned that His works and the Father's works are the same because He is God's Son (ch. 5). We must believe because He is the Bread of Life (ch. 6), the Light of the World (ch. 8), the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep (ch. 10), and the Resurrection and the Life, who raised Lazarus from the dead, His seventh miraculous sign.

Jesus was zealous for His Father's house (ch. 2), hated by the world (ch. 7), descended from above (ch. 8), and the one who gives His sheep eternal life (ch. 10). For all these reasons and more, we must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life in His name.

In chapter 12 Jesus was anointed for His burial and then entered Jerusalem on the 10th of Nisan as the fetched Passover Lamb of God. Once the hour came, Jesus loved His own to the end and taught us to love one another as He has loved us (ch. 13). He stills the troubled heart and shows us the Father because His words are the Father's words (ch. 14). Standing outside the eastern gate in the temple courtyard, He told His disciples that He is the True Vine, in whom they must abide (ch. 15). He would send them another Comforter (ch. 16), and He prayed for them audibly so they could hear Him (ch. 17).

And now in our chapter, Jesus steps out of the temple courtyard eastward, descending down the 200 foot drop into the Kidron Valley, on His way with His disciples to the Mount of Olives on the other side, where there was a walled garden named after the olive-press there (Gethsemane), and where He knew Judas could find Him (vv. 1-2). Jesus had often gathered there with His disciples. In that sense, that garden is very much like our church building. This place is also where Jesus has often gathered with His disciples. What a privilege it is for us to be part of such a gathering this morning.

So when Jesus took that first step eastward, He began the departure out of this world, which He told His disciples about back in chapter 13. John wants us to know that this is a journey that Jesus chose to make willingly, understanding fully the suffering that was to come.

We learn from the Synoptic Gospels of the struggle that the man Christ Jesus endured as He prayed while sweating drops of blood with one request on His lips, "Father, if it be

possible, let this cup pass from Me. Nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done." He received no help from the prayers of His sleeping disciples, but angels did come to minister to Him. And then at last came the betrayer's kiss.

Reflecting on these events sometime later, John repeats nothing in our passage about the struggle Christ endured. Instead, John wants us to understand that Jesus was no unfortunate martyr brought to an unexpected and tragic end by His Jewish enemies and their Roman allies. John wants us to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life in His name, because He accepted the Father's cup of suffering willingly. His prayer in the garden had been answered, and now it was time to begin drinking from that cup. I want us to see three ways Jesus accepted the Father's cup.

I. Jesus went out to accept the Father's cup (vv. 1-4).

Illustration: Note that John tells us about Judas's allies, torches, and weapons, but not about Judas's kiss. It takes some work to fit Judas's kiss into John's account of Jesus's arrest. I think the commentator Westcott does a good job of this. His conclusion says that Jesus exited the walled garden under darkness to meet Judas and his allies.

In the dim light of the torches, Judas did not at first recognize the Lord, so the Lord asked, "Whom do you seek?" Having received the answer Jesus confirmed, "I am." After they fell back, Jesus asked again whom they sought. After they replied again, "Jesus the Nazarene," then Judas confirmed for them with his promised kiss that this one in the dark was indeed the one to be arrested. So the kiss came between verses 7 and 8 of our passage. After, rebuking Judas for the kiss, Jesus argues for the protection of the other disciples in verse 8.

Application: What is clearly emphasized by the Apostle John, of course, is that Jesus accepted the Father's cup of suffering

by going out Himself and by making sure He was identified and arrested by Judas and his allies. He did so “knowing all things coming upon Him” (v. 4).

Those who came upon Him at the start of this ordeal included a Roman cohort (v. 3, “band of *men*,” KJV). These were auxiliary soldiers from Caesarea who would have been stationed at the fortress of Antonia to the northwest of the temple complex due to the swelled crowds of the feast day. The temple police of the Pharisees mentioned here, who had made the deal with Judas, would have wanted the backup of the Romans, fearing the potential for a mob riot at the arrest of Jesus.

In the end, none of those precautions were necessary. Days earlier, Jesus had come to Jerusalem as the fetched Passover Lamb. Now, like obedient Isaac who climbed on the altar of his father Abraham in Genesis 22, Jesus obeys His Father in heaven by going out of the garden to drink the cup. He did that for His disciples, but also for Judas, the temple police, the Roman cohort, and for you and for me. Jesus is the Lamb of God who willingly died for the sins of the whole world (John 1:29). For this reason, John says we must believe.

II. Jesus is who He is to accept the Father’s cup (vv. 5-8a).

Illustration: If you are afraid of heights, you know that this fear of falling is heightened because the height causes you to begin to lose your balance.

On my visits to Newport, RI, when my brother was in Navy chaplain training, I had to drive over some bridges that were extraordinarily high to let tall ships pass under them. Whenever I drive over a tall bridge like that, I am immediately less comfortable than when I am driving on terra firma. Should I ever have to walk over a bridge like that, the feeling would get even worse. And I do not let myself even think too long about what it would be like to ascend the maintenance

ladders the sky-bound poles of bridges like that often have. I would not even be able to stand up, let alone climb up those.

Application: In our passage, the enemies of Christ are no longer able to stand up due to their fear of heights. The height they fear is not the physical height of a bridge, but rather the spiritual height of the One they have come to arrest.

They do their best to ignore His height. When asked by the man in the dark for whom they are looking, they do not say “We seek Jesus, who is the Christ, the Son of God.” Instead, they say, “Jesus, the Nazarene.” These Judean Jews looked with contempt on members of their race from Nazareth.

In John 1:46 Nathaniel asked Andrew, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” In Judea the answer was always “No.” In John 7, Judean Jews anchored their unbelief on this misunderstanding, “Search and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet” (v. 52, Nazareth was in Galilee). Desperately hanging on to that same anchor of unbelief, the Jews have come to the garden looking for merely “Jesus the Nazarene.”

Jesus simply responds “I am,” (*ego eime*). This is the name the Jews read in the Greek translation of their Old Testament, where God told Moses, “Tell them *I am* has sent you” (Exod. 3:14). The One who sent Moses to Egypt was now sending Himself to Calvary to redeem sinners from slavery to sin.

In John’s Gospel Jesus has already said, “I am the Bread of Life” (6:35), “I am the Light of the World” (8:12), “before Abraham was, I am” (8:58), “I am the door of the sheep-fold” (10:7), “I am the Good Shepherd” (10:14), “I am the Son of God” (10:36), “I am the Resurrection and the Life” (11:25), and “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes unto the Father but by Me” (14:6). He is the only way, truth, and life because he is the *I am* of Exodus 3. He accepts the Father’s cup of suffering being who He is.

Remembering the loftiness of these true claims of Jesus of Nazareth always makes His enemies weak in the knees and His people strong in the spine. Judas, with his weaponized gang, fell down backwards, but after the resurrection the apostles preached boldly in the name of Jesus of Nazareth:

Acts 2:22-24 - "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it."

Acts 3:6, "Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk."

Acts 4:10, "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole" (note also v. 12).

Acts 10:37-38, "That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree."

And when Saul of Tarsus knelt blinded on the road to Damascus, asking the question, "Who art thou Lord?", the answer came back, "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecuted." Saul got knocked down in unbelief, but in faith he stood up to

follow Jesus of Nazareth and become the Apostle Paul. The men of our passage get knocked down in unbelief, having heard the explanation for who Jesus of Nazareth truly is, but they get back up in that same unbelief. How shall we respond this morning to this Gospel's message of who Jesus of Nazareth truly is? Shall we leave this morning continuing in the same unbelief with which we came?

III. Jesus protected His disciples when He accepted the Father's cup (vv. 8b-11).

Application: The most difficult night of Peter's life begins here. Before it is over, he will have denied the Lord three times and reverted back from leader of the apostles of Christ to secluded fisherman on the shores of Lake Galilee. His difficulty begins when he cuts off the ear of slave Malchus with a sword. He has taken matters into his own feeble hands. The other Gospels tell us that Jesus's hand picked up that ear and put it back on the slave. He did so having asked that Peter and the others be let go. In view of that astounding miracle, the enemies of Christ could only obey.

Far worse than Peter, however, Judas also had taken matters into his own hands. Peter's denials came from a fearful heart of faith; Judas's denial came from a bold heart of unbelief. It turns out that the fearful heart of faith and the bold heart of unbelief can produce the same kind of denials. As Jesus asks for the protection of the eleven, it was Judas who felt he was safe enough to not need the Lord's protection. He had the temple police and Roman cohort on his side.

But after events had unfolded, John remembers that Jesus's word of prayer in 17:12 was fulfilled. Jesus did not lose one of His disciples that night or any night thereafter. Judas would lose everything – even the 30 pieces of silver he had jingling in his pocket as he kissed the Lord. The eleven with the fearful heart of faith lived to see Christ build His church through

them. Judas, courageous with his heart of unbelief, would soon despair, commit suicide, and perish forever. Jesus accepted the Father's cup of suffering in order to protect us from this result of unbelief. Though often fearful, may we truly believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life in His name.

Conclusion: The cup that the Father gave to His Son to drink was very different from the cup that Jesus had given His disciples to drink at the Passover meal earlier that evening.

Jesus drank the cup of God's wrath against our sin by dying as a sacrificial Lamb on the cross of Calvary, so that you and I could celebrate the Lord's Table, remember what He did for us, and thank Him for it by drinking a simple swallow of grape juice on the first Sunday of the month. What wonderful grace is this? We must believe because Jesus accepted the Father's cup of suffering, giving us the far different cup of remembrance to drink.

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*