

*So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him. First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people. Simon Peter followed Jesus and so did another disciple, since that disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, but Peter stood outside at the door. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door, and brought Peter in. The servant girl at the door said to Peter, "You also are not one of the man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself. The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said." When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" Jesus answered him, "If what I said was wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said was right, why do you strike me?" Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You also are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of them man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" Peter again denied it, and at once a rooster crowed.*

**John 18:12-27**

## **"I Am He."**

Properties Chair, Carl Mende

Our Call to Worship this morning finds Jesus and the disciples in the garden being confronted by Judas and the soldiers he has brought with him to arrest Jesus. Jesus had just finished praying for His disciples, they had entered the Garden of Gethsemane and they were immediately confronted by Judas with a *"band of soldiers"*. In the Greek, the word used for *"band"* indicates a Roman *"Cohort."* Now a cohort was typically made up of 600 soldiers, but most of the commentators that I read said that it would be like saying that "They sent the police to arrest him." It does not mean that they sent the entire police force but it does imply that it was more than just a couple of people. It was a sizable group, maybe even a few hundred.

I think it is amazing to note that the religious authorities feared a Galilean carpenter so much that they sent the equivalent of a small army to arrest him. It also says that they were carrying lanterns and torches with them. The implication being that the soldiers thought that they would have to search for Jesus, that He would be hiding in the garden. But what we see is that Jesus' complete knowledge of the situation is going to dictate His actions going forward. Jesus did not wait to be apprehended but voluntarily confronted His enemies.

It says that Jesus, *"knowing all that would happen to him,"* stepped forward and confronted them saying, *"Whom do you seek?"* They answered Him and said, *"Jesus of Nazareth,"* to which Jesus responds, *"I am he."* Now in the Greek, the *"he"* is not present. Jesus actually said, *"I am"* and Leon Morris says that His answer is in the style of deity. In other words, rather than hiding, He was confronting them and boldly declaring His deity. When He said this I can picture and imagine that Jesus allowed just a tiny bit of His power and deity to shine forth and it says that the soldiers *"drew back and fell to the ground."*

What Jesus was saying to them was; *"You may be coming to arrest me, but I am voluntarily giving myself up. I am still in charge and I submit to this willingly."* Jesus repeats His question saying, *"Whom do you seek?"* and again they say, *"Jesus of Nazareth"*. Jesus repeats His declaration, but this time says, *"I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go."*

Even at the moment of His arrest, Jesus' thoughts were for the protection and safety of His disciples. By asking them twice, *"Whom do you seek?"* and having them respond with *"Jesus of Nazareth,"* He made them declare that their business was with Him and not His disciples. John writes that: *"This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one."* Recall back in John 17, when He was praying to the Father, Jesus said, *"While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled."*

The arrest of the disciples at this point would have been a severe test of faith and Leon Morris says that, *"to preserve the disciples physically at this moment was to preserve them spiritually."* So the soldiers and temple guards arrest Jesus, bind Him and take Him before Annas, who was the father-in-law to Caiaphas, the High Priest. Annas was the former High Priest and William Barclay, in his commentary, says that Annas was the real power behind the throne in Jerusalem.

Barclay goes on to add that at the Court of the Gentiles in the Temple, there were sellers of animals for the sacrifices and their shops and tables were known as the “Bazaars of Annas”. They were the property of the family of Annas and it was those sellers that we read about Jesus driving out of the temple. So it is no wonder that Jesus was first brought before Annas.

Annas proceeds to interrogate Jesus asking Him about His disciples and His teaching. It’s interesting to note that Annas first asks about His disciples. It seems to indicate that he was interested in how large a following Jesus had. Jesus in His reply never mentions the disciples, but continues to protect them by putting the emphasis on Himself. Jesus responds by saying, *“I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said.”*

At first glance it may seem like Jesus was being argumentative to the former High Priest, but what we see here are two things: First, that in saying, *“I have said nothing in secret,”* it made the interrogation by Annas unnecessary because public testimony of Jesus’ teaching was easily available and secondly, under Jewish law it was illegal to call upon the accused to incriminate himself. It was the responsibility of the accuser to bring forth witnesses. Jesus was reminding them that they were violating the principles of Jewish justice. In effect He was telling them that He knew that the trial was a sham and that they had already condemned Him.

What did John write about Caiaphas? *“It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people.”* In other words, Jesus was condemned before He was tried. After He said these things one of the officials who served Annas, struck Jesus across the face saying, *“Is that how you answer the high priest?”* Jesus responded by saying, *“If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?”* Jesus once again puts them on notice for the need for witnesses. You see Jesus never had any hope of justice. It is also interesting to note that this slap across the face is the first of many blows our Savior will suffer on His way to the cross.

So where does that leave us? What have we seen here? First, we have seen the courage of Jesus. He didn’t hide, He stepped forward to confront His enemies, saying, *“Whom do you seek?”* Next, it shows us his ultimate authority. When faced with Jesus in His true nature as the Son of God, it says they *“fell to the ground.”* It also shows us His protective love for His disciples, when He said, *“if you seek me, let these men go.”* Finally it shows us His utter and absolute obedience to the Father. After Peter cut off the ear of the servant of the High Priest, Jesus said, *“Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?”*

What we see is that Jesus was never an unwilling participant in this story. The central theme that we see all throughout this account was that Jesus was never in a position where He was not in charge. He knew He was condemned before any of it took place and He chose to voluntarily go to the cross for you and for me. In Philippians 2 we read, *“And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

Jesus voluntarily went to the cross to pay the price for our sins. This is the Savior that we put our faith and trust in. This is the Savior that we love and worship.