

## John on Jesus - Life Feels Out of Control!

**August 11, 2013**

Good morning Faith Church. We are back in the Gospel of John and rapidly approaching the end of the book. The most intense moments in the history of the world are in front of us. There is some exciting stuff to cover in the next few weeks. Turn in your Bibles to John 18. We are going to handle this Sunday a little differently than usual. I will begin by telling you where we are going rather than wait until the end to draw conclusions.

How many of you have wondered if God is in control? Most of us believe God is in control. How many of you wonder if God has control of everything? How many of you have felt angry toward God because he didn't protect you from trouble? Today, you hear many people who are angry with God because of natural disasters, like tsunamis. If God is in charge of the world, why did he let so many innocent people die? For some of us, our tsunami is not a natural disaster, it is a relational disaster. "God, if you are in charge of everything, why did my wife leave me?" "God, if you are in charge of everything, why do I have cancer?" People feel God failed them in their times of need. There are even theologians telling people not to be angry at God in the face of natural or personal disasters because they aren't God's fault. They claim that if God could have prevented a tragedy in your life, he would have. Stop being angry at God. He is doing the best he can.

Maybe, this morning, you came in the doors with your life in a wreck. You are wondering if God can do something to fix your life and the future. This morning, we will discover the answer.

This morning, we will also learn that while God does no evil and he is not the author of sin, he is bigger than evil. God can take the bad stuff that happens in our lives, that Satan intends to destroy us, and God can bend it and use it for our good and his glory. This means God is bigger than our errors, our sins, our mistakes and our foolishness. God, in his love for us, bends all of the trash that happens to us and all the trash we bring on our own selves, and can twist those tragedies into something that does us immense spiritual good and brings Christ glory.

Where are we going to learn all this? We will find our answers in the arrest and trial of Jesus. We are working our way through all of John 18 to John 19:16. This is a huge piece of text with many opportunities to bunny trail. I will try to avoid most of them.

As we read through this text, let's keep looking for the theme of God's control over all things.

When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples. 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. John 18:1–3 (ESV)

Just so you can picture this, the word *band* could also be translated cohort. A cohort was a 10th of a Roman legion. That would be 600 soldiers plus the rent-a-cops from the temple that worked for the chief priests and Pharisees. I

don't know if there was a full cohort of 600 soldiers sent to arrest Jesus but it was a large group, which I think is rather humorous. Apparently, they were expecting some kind of ninja skills on the part of Jesus.

Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground. So he asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go." This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one." John 18:4–9 (ESV)

Notice that Jesus knew all that would happen to him. Nothing was taking Jesus by surprise. The way everything unfolded was controlled by God.

Something I noticed that is exciting is when Jesus asked them who they were looking for. They said, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus responded by saying, "I am he." After Jesus said these words, they drew back and fell to the ground. What isn't apparent in the English but is apparent in the Greek is the words Jesus used. In the Greek, Jesus said, "I am." He used the name of God from the Old Testament, Yahweh. I think what happened is when Jesus used God's sacred name, he intentionally leaked a bit of his glory that was veiled in human flesh. You have 400-600 guys with swords draw back, which in the Greek means to start to do something, then hesitate. Then they were knocked on their butts by the two words from Jesus' mouth. It was like a group Taser experience. Who was in control?

After they got off the ground, Jesus said to them, "I told you I am the guy you are looking for. Let these men go." Do you think they were originally planning to only arrest Jesus? Don't you think it would make sense to arrest all

the disciples? Why leave the rest of the disciples running around Jerusalem during Passover telling the crowds that the Jesus of the triumphal entry was in jail?

After Jesus displayed a little of his power and it knocked them on their butts, that convinced them that Jesus had a good idea, let everybody else go. If Jesus was the only one who wanted to be arrested, that was good enough for the soldiers. Notice the Bible says it happened this way to fulfill prophecy. God said it would happen this way. Who's in control? Judas? The soldiers? Jesus.

Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?" John 18:10–11 (ESV)

Here is more humor. Do you think Peter was aiming for the ear? What do you think Peter was aiming for? The head! The problem was he was pretty inept and got the guy's ear. Peter's plan was not to run through the crowd chopping off ears. Now we have Malchus screaming in pain with blood spurting out the side of his head. You can just hear 600 soldiers getting ready to jump Peter, but they were afraid of Jesus because he was the human Taser. John doesn't tell us this but Luke 22:51 tells us Jesus then healed Malchus' ear. All the soldiers witnessed a miracle by moonlight. This is why when Jesus told the soldiers to arrest him and let the disciples go, they were willing to listen to Jesus. Jesus was in control.

Look how Jesus described what was about to happen next, "Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" Why was Jesus going to the cross? It was the will of God the Father. Nothing was out of control. It was a hard cup

God the Father planned for Jesus to drink. There was a reason for it being hard. This was the way God the Father would save us from our sins. Life was not out of control.

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. John 18:12–14 (ESV)

It is a little confusing at this point. For the Jews, a high priest was a high priest for life. Annas, who was the legitimate high priest, was supposed to be reigning for life but the Romans removed him from power. He held the status of high priest in the eyes of the Jews. Caiaphas was the high priest installed by the Romans. He was the guy who sat in the big chair and had the marble desk and his name on the wall.

In this scene, we see God the Father's complete control of everything. In John 11:49-52, we have Jesus coming to Jerusalem less than a week before this betrayal. The crowds were stoked for Jesus and the religious leaders were shaking in their boots about what they could do about their loss of public power. They expected a rumble. If there was a fight, the Romans would come in and kill thousands of people. They were good at mass murder. Caiaphas, the high priest installed by Rome, came up with the idea that Jesus should die rather than there being a rebellion that was squashed by Rome killing thousands of people. Caiaphas thought he had a great idea. Have Jesus die at the Passover so the people don't die.

That is exactly what Jesus came to do, die in our places. According to the Bible, who put this idea in Caiaphas' head? God the Father, because he was in complete control.

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 this 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. John 18:15–18 (ESV)

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 the 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 18:25–27 (ESV)

This is a classic part of the story that many of us already know. I want to put these verses with what Jesus said to Peter in John 13, which was approximately two-three hours before John 18.

Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times." John 13:37–38 (ESV)

Jesus told Peter he would not play the role of the courageous but of the cowardly. Peter would deny Christ three times before the sun came up. What happened to Peter? Everything unfolded exactly the way Jesus said it would. Who had everything under control? God the Father and Jesus.

I can just picture this. Peter had his promise to not deny Jesus at the front of his mind. First, he was poked at by a junior high girl. He caved and denied Christ. I am sure he promised himself he would never do that again. A few

minutes later, there were others around the same campfire making the same accusations. Under peer pressure, he caved again. At that point, I am sure he was swearing to himself he would not cave that third and final time. Finally, it was Malchus' relative who was recognized him as a disciple. I picture him polishing his sword as he talked to Peter. With a gulp, Peter swallowed and denied Jesus that third and final time. At that moment, the rooster crowed, just like Jesus said would happen. God had everything under control. It happened just the way Jesus said it would.

Incidentally, this doesn't mean we have a license to fail Jesus. The point of Peter's story is that even our greatest failures do not put our lives out of being redeemed and used by God. Jesus ultimately forgave and restored Peter. He became the leader of the early church. That was an amazing turnaround after these crushing moments.

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 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 is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?" Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. John 18:19–24 (ESV)

Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover. So Pilate went outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" They answered him, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you." Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." The Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death." This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die. John 18:28–32 (ESV)

Here are a few things you need to know. First, this trial before Annas was illegal. According to Jewish law, you needed to start with people vouching for the character of the accused before you brought forward witnesses who had an accusation against the accused. There were no witnesses in this trial whatsoever. I think Annas was looking for a bribe from Jesus rather than justice. The tension in these verses is Jesus got slapped for supposedly being disrespectful to the high priest when in reality, Annas, the high priest, was committing a complete travesty of justice by ignoring the rules of the judicial system.

Next, they shipped Jesus to Caiaphas. Ironically, they were worried about ritual defilement so they could eat the big Passover meal. They had no problem with framing and murdering an innocent man. Remember, God was still in complete control. While they were still responsible for their actions, nothing they were doing was beyond God's control. God the Father twisted their heinous crime against the Son of God into the greatest victory the world has ever seen. That is what I love about God's sovereignty.

The way the Jews put people to death was by stoning. They did that to Stephen in the book of Acts a few months later. The Jews typically used mob justice so they couldn't be blamed for a death. Only the Romans could crucify. Caiaphas didn't want Jesus stoned, he wanted Jesus crucified. The reason he wanted this was because Deuteronomy 21:23 says everyone who dies on a tree is cursed. Caiaphas' plan was if he could kill Jesus on a cross, Caiaphas could say Jesus was not the Son of God because Deuteronomy says that everybody



who dies on a tree is cursed by God. Caiaphas thought he was really smart and had a bright idea. Notice what was happening, Caiaphas was unwittingly doing exactly what God wanted him to do. Jesus told his followers many times that he would die on a cross in Jerusalem.

“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. John 12:32–33 (ESV)

“See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day.” Matthew 20:18–19 (ESV) (see also Matthew 26:2; Mark 10:33)

While it looked like everything was out of control, the truth is everything was very much in control. Even Caiaphas’ bright ideas were not his ideas.

Things were unfolding just the way God the Father planned. The actors on the stage thought they were foiling God’s plan when, in reality, they were serving God’s plan.

So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?” Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” Pilate said to him, “What is truth?” After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in him. But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” They cried out again, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a robber. John 18:33–40 (ESV)

Pilate didn’t want to be involved. Three times he tried to set Jesus free. Pilate had a bright idea. The tradition of the day is that every year, at Passover,

the Romans released one Jewish prisoner. It was a way the Romans helped the Jews commemorate the Passover when God set the Jews free from bondage and death in Egypt. The Romans would release one Jewish prisoner from bondage and death.

Barabbas was the Ariel Castro of his day. He was everybody's nightmare. He was a murderer. He was a trouble maker. If Barabbas was on the street, nobody was safe. Lock your car and protect your daughter, Charles Manson was back and more demented than ever. Barabbas deserved to die. Jesus had done nothing to deserve to die. At the Passover, the Jews remembered when the angel of death passed over them because the perfect lamb was slain and the lamb's blood was put on their door posts. Here is what happened, Jesus metaphorically died in Barabbas' place. Barabbas was set free and Jesus, the innocent one, died the death Barabbas deserved to die.. In John 1, when John the Baptist met Jesus, he said Jesus was the lamb who who takes away the sin of the world. We are all Barabbases. We all deserve to die. Jesus died in our places. Nothing was happening by chance. You see the metaphor very clearly. God had this all under control. This is a picture of Jesus dying in our places.

The Jews thought they had it under control. The Romans thought they had it under control. In reality, only God the Father had it under control, and they were doing God's bidding for him.

Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. They came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands. John 19:1–3 (ESV)

Pilate was trying to release him. Pilate first tried to release him with the Passover tradition of a get-out-of-jail-free card for one Jewish prisoner. That backfired because the Jews chose the ancient version of Ariel Castro instead of Jesus. Then Pilate was going to try pity. He would have Jesus flogged and brought before the people in hopes that they would take pity on him.

A flogging was brutal. A man was stripped naked and his hands were either tied in front of him or over him. He was whipped across his back, buttocks and legs with a whip called a cat-o-nine-tails. It is a whip made of leather cords with metal hooks, bone fragments and stones to tenderize the flesh. When whipped, the cords wrapped themselves around the body and the hooks sunk into the flesh. The whip was then torn across the body. The result was unspeakable agony as the hooks tore chunks of flesh off the body. Greater than 40 lashes with that whip was enough to kill a man from sheer sensory overload on the nervous system because of the intensity of the pain. This week, I learned something new about flogging. It wasn't uncommon to have so much flesh ripped off the body that the bones and organs were visible. As I thought about this, I remembered Psalm 22. It is a messianic Psalm that describes the crucifixion of Jesus.

**I can count all my bones— they stare and gloat over me... Psalm 22:17 (ESV)**

This week, it struck me that the reason they could count Jesus' bones was not because he was skinny. The flesh was gone. They could see his rib cage. Do you know why the soldiers gave him a purple robe? To mock him as a King. In addition, the robe would be drenched in the blood of his skinless torso. The

blood would coagulate with the fabric, then they could rib the robe off, tearing open his wounds. God the Father had all of it under control. Nothing of Christ's agony was beyond what God the Father planned. This all happened because God loves us. Jesus was tortured in our places for our sins to bring us to God.

As many were astonished at you— his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind— Isaiah 52:14 (ESV)

Years before Jesus' flogging took place, it was prophesied what Jesus would look like after that beating. He would be so badly beaten that he would be unrecognizable as a man. God had it all under control.

Interestingly, the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and pressed it into Jesus' head. This week, I thought about that. In Genesis 3, do you remember what it says happened to the ground after Adam and Eve sinned? Genesis 3:20 says the ground would produce thorns as a result of sin. What a perfect picture of what Jesus was doing for us. The crown of thorns was a visual picture of Jesus taking sin upon himself for us. It was a picture of Jesus becoming sin for us. None of this happened by chance.

Pilate went out again and said to them, "See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!" When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God." When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid. He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin." John 19:4–11 (ESV)

Pilate was aiming for pity. He brought the disfigured Jesus before them. Rather than having pity, they wanted him crucified. Was God still in control? Nobody had authority over Jesus unless God the Father gave it to them. They were like dogs on leashes. They could only go as far as the Father allowed.

...this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. Acts 2:23 (ESV)

Notice, the Jews, Pilate, and the religious leaders were held responsible for their sins, but God was still in control of the whole thing. This is one of the great tensions in the Scripture. God's sovereignty does not absolve us from our responsibility. We can't say "God made me sin." I chose to sin. I am responsible for my sin. I need to repent of my sin. Just remember that God is bigger than my sin and can bend it to use for his glory.

From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar." So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." So he delivered him over to them to be crucified... John 19:12–16 (ESV)

Jesus headed to the cross. I want you to notice something about when Jesus headed to the cross. John said it was the sixth hour. In the temple, do you know what happened on the sixth hour during Passover? That is the hour the priests began slaughtering the Passover lambs.

Remember what John the Baptist said about Jesus in John 1:29? Jesus is the lamb of God slain for the sins of the world.

Nothing in Jesus' life happened by chance. the greatest travesty of justice in the history of the world, the framing, betrayal, and crucifixion of Christ did not happen by chance. It all went down exactly the way God said it would. Because God is in control of everything, that changes the way we look at life.

**Never look at life the same.**

**1. If you are here this morning, it is not by chance.** You are here because God brought you here. God has you here for a reason. It may be to hear that God loves you. If you are in the middle of a tough time in your life, you are not there by accident. God has you there for a reason. It may be to get your attention and to knock you to your knees so you call out to him. Remember, nothing is out of God's control. God does things for a reason. We may not understand God's reasons but nothing is random and pointless.

**2. God is in control of our personal Gethsemanes.** All of us will face tough times where the wheels fall off of life. We will face times of cancer, tragedy, loss of a child and suffering. It is in those moments, when we are overwhelmed by grief, that we wonder if God lost control. He hasn't. I don't know why God gives some of us particularly difficult cups to drink. I do know that God chooses what we will face in our lives to glorify him. Sometimes we will never understand God's reasons for allowing hard times into our lives until we see him face to face. I tend to think that it is some of God's greatest saints that he lets suffer the most.

**And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Romans 8:28–29 (ESV)**

God promises to take everything we face and, like a tool, use it to shape us to become more like Jesus.

**3. God can take our sins, mistakes and pain then bend them for our good and his glory.** Some of you were taught very bad theology. Some of you spend lots of time trying to find God's will for your future. When you make a choice and everything falls apart, you think life is ruined forever. Maybe you are like Peter and you fail three times in a row in a huge way and then think your future for Christ is completely ruined. That is not true. God is bigger than our sins. He is bigger than our failures. No matter how much your life is messed up, God can take the whole mess and bend it into something for his glory, just like he did for Peter.

**4. Don't worry about the future.** I know some of you let worry eat you alive. What if I don't get in the right school? What if my grades are not good enough? What if my girlfriend breaks up with me? What if I lose my job? I lost my job, where am I going to get another job? Don't worry. Life is not out of control. Work hard. Plan hard. Pray hard. *Don't worry hard.* The future may be hard but God loves you. His son died for you. He won't let you down.

[Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6–7 \(ESV\)](#)

Give your concerns to God. Leave them there. Know he loves you. He will give you peace in your heart as you realize how much he cares for you.



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