

LIFE IN HIS NAME TROUBLE IN THE GARDEN

John 18:1-11

When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley, 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. 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." 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?"

This is God's word. Let's pray. Lord, teach us from your word this morning. Show us who you are. Change us. Affect us. We need you, God. I pray that you would give us ears to hear what you would have to say this morning and that we would be forever changed by it. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

The series we are in is through the book of John and we are calling it "Life In His Name." We didn't come up with that title out of thin air. Actually, one of the great things about the book of John is that he tells us why he wrote the book, why he wrote this gospel. In the next couple chapters, in John chapter 20, verse 31, John tells us. He says, "But these things were written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

This is why we are here. This is why this church exists. This is why you are sitting here. **We want you to understand that life is found in Jesus - only found in Jesus. True life, the best life imaginable is found in Jesus Christ.** John does an amazing job of highlighting the life of Christ to

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show that to us, to prove it to us, so that we would find life in Jesus, that we would know him, that we would know the Lord Jesus Christ, and that we would grow in him.

Sometimes, though, we either have been taught or we think, "If I go to Christ I'll have a great life. That's what everybody tells me, so I'm going to do it." We sometimes think that means the end of trouble, or the end of challenge in life. Of course, anyone who has any life experience understands that that can't be true. That's *not* true. We experience trouble in this life.

Sometimes when that trouble comes, we don't know what to do. We don't know how to handle it. We say, "I came to Christ, and now trouble has come. What do I do with that?" We know that trouble will come. The world is a troubled place. It is troublesome. There is hardship. It's a turbulent place.

Just this last week an iceberg broke off of its ice shelf in Antarctica. I don't know if you saw this. It wasn't big news, but it stuck out to me. This isn't your everyday iceberg. This thing is *enormous*. It is ridiculously big. Hear this: It weighs over one trillion tons. Yeah, let that sink in. If you're trying to figure out how many pounds that is, don't. You can't, okay? Calculators don't go that high. It's crazy. I don't even know how they measure that. Is there a scale out there? It is enormous. It is 1,200 feet thick and over 2,300 square miles wide. It's huge! This is a new landmass floating around out there that's over half the size of Jamaica. It's huge -- crazy big, and it just broke off. Don't worry -- it's not dangerous. No one's going to get hurt. They knew it was coming, but it finally did, so it's just kind of floating off out there in the ocean. I mean, the world is falling apart! It's breaking!

Maybe something a little closer to home. We don't have to worry about Antarctica icebergs, but what about here? A few months ago we gave you a survey. We wanted to take a survey and get a pulse on how you are doing, how you think we are doing, how you feel about the church, what's going on in your life. One of the questions we asked was: "What life challenges are you experiencing? What are the troubles in life that you are dealing with?" We gave you some responses to choose from. I wanted to show you that again, just to see where we are as a church. These are just the percentages that responded. Look: Anxiety 44%. Financial pressure: 35%. Fear: 29%. Health problems: 24%. Depression: 23%. Other challenges: addiction, unemployment, legal problems. These are real troubles that we are going through. And what's amazing is that if you add up all the percentages, it's over 100%. It's more like 190%. What does that mean? It means that we are dealing with more than one of these at a time.

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These are real problems and it shows us that life is hard. So, if you are wondering as you sit in church week after week: “Man, am I the only one experiencing trouble?” You’re not. We all are in one way or another. The question is: What do we do? What do we do with this? What do we do when we are experiencing life’s troubles in such unique and real, tangible ways?

Well, it does remind me of what Jesus says back in John 16:33. Brian preached this several weeks ago. He says, “I say these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have...” What? “...tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

So, “In the world there is trouble. In me there is peace.” There is this battle that we engage in every day. It’s like: “Okay, I have Christ. If I have Christ, I have peace. But then, man, I’m really struggling with anxiety, fear, depression --all these things. I am fighting this battle and it’s real. It’s tribulation.” So we have to then come to that last part and say, “But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

“What does that mean, God? How do I take heart?” Yes, you have overcome the world. And you know what? We are going to see that in the chapters to come in John when he goes to the cross and he dies for us, then he is raised from the dead and ascends to heaven. That’s the overcoming. But what do we do? How do we turn to God in these moments when we are struggling? Because I want us to take heart. We need to take heart.

You see, if we have the wrong perspective on trouble, or the wrong perspective on how we handle trouble in life, then we are going to respond poorly. We might run away from him. We are like, “Okay this is not what I signed up for. I thought it was going to be better than this.” Or maybe we try to fix the problems with silly or superstitious things. You get those emails: “Hey, forward to seven people and you’ll have seven years of good luck.” I can’t believe how many times I get those emails coming to me from friends or whoever. I’m like, no. But what do we do? We’re like, “Why not? It can’t hurt, right?” Or maybe we go and buy the trinket from the preacher on TV who has a rag that has blessing on it. We’re like, “Aw, why not? I’ll just buy that. Maybe that can help.” Or we do something like essential oils or something like that. Just kidding. We had our diffuser going last night. I know it’s going to be a great message today.

Or we just fall into despair. The challenges of life get on us and we can fall into despair and be like, “Man, I can’t do it. I can’t handle it. I can’t fight anymore.” We think that God maybe has just abandoned us. What we need is a healthy approach to dealing with trouble. I think our text helps us. It helps us because it gives us a picture, not so much of how to handle crisis, but it gives us a

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picture of Jesus in a unique way. **In the midst of trouble we need to turn to Jesus. That is our hope. That's our *only* hope. There might be other things in this world that help and that can be useful for us, but if we don't turn to Christ, then we are in trouble.**

So our text helps us. Jesus takes his disciples and they go for a walk. They head to a place that they love to go to. It's described as a garden. It's interesting that Jesus picks this spot for the troublesome encounter with the mob of people coming to get him. Really, the path to the cross begins here. A garden isn't a place where you expect to find trouble. What do you think of when you think of a garden? You think of peaceful, tranquil, sweet-smelling, floral place. And it probably was those things because it's at the foot of the Mount of Olives, so olive trees were everywhere. I'm sure it smelled wonderful. It was peaceful. It was pleasant. And because they used to go there, it was a significant place for Jesus and his disciples. They would pray there. Significant ministry happened right there.

So it's not a surprise that Jesus wants to go there, kind of for the beginning of the end, because this is such a significant encounter that takes place. What happens is, we get a chance to look in. We get a glimpse and see how Jesus responds in the face of serious trouble. But more than looking at what he does, we learn more about who he is and why we turn to him in our trouble.

And maybe we learn a little bit of what *not* to do, because there is another guy in the garden, swinging swords, cutting off people's ears. Alright, it's the way we want to respond. The mob is coming and he's like: "Get your gun. We've got to fight." This is why we don't turn to Peter for our help. This is why Peter is not our savior. Peter is more like us than we probably want to admit. Thank God we have a savior to save us from ourselves.

We don't turn to Peter, we turn to Jesus. Jesus brings a different response. We can look at his garden experience and learn from him. When trouble comes to us, we have to look to Jesus and trust Jesus because in the garden Jesus proves three things. This is how we are going to walk through this passage today. **In the garden Jesus proves: 1) that he is God, 2) that he is good, and 3) that he is trustworthy.** We need to trust Christ with everything, with our whole lives, and we can do that because in the garden he proves these three things, as we are going to see. So let's jump in.

I. Jesus is God.

This is important. I know this is foundational. Maybe you're like, "Yeah, yeah, we know. We know Jesus is God." But this is so crucial to our faith, and not just to our faith, but to how we know we can

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turn to Christ in our need. Jesus is not just another good teacher. He's not just a good guy. He's not just a helpful example in anger management, where you see Peter swinging swords, and here's Jesus: "Put your sword away" -- be more like Jesus. It's not just that. He's God. And he proves it again here in the garden.

You see, John, the author of this book, goes to great lengths throughout the whole book to show that Jesus is not just a man. He is God himself. He is one with the Father. Right in the beginning of this gospel, John 1, verse 1 -- what does it say? It says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." We have this kind of chain here. The Word was with God and it was God. So the Word is God. Who is the Word? Well, jump to verse 14: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." So, the Word was with God, the Word was God. Who is the Word? Well, the Word came and dwelt among us, became flesh. It's Jesus. He is the Word. He is, as verse 1 said, with God and was God.

Also in this book, in the gospel of John, Jesus makes these big statements. We call them the "I am" statements. There are eight of them. Jesus is declaring in very amazing imagery who he is. We see that starting in John 6, all the way through John 15: "I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world. Before Abraham was, I am. 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. I am the true vine." Boom, boom, boom, boom. Jesus isn't just a version of these things. He is *the* version of these things. He *is* these things. He is not just a way, a truth, and a life. He is *the* way. He is *the* door, not a door. He is *the* door. This is very unpopular with our 21st century American culture, because it seems narrow. It seems exclusive, and we are all about inclusivity and many options. Jesus comes and says, "I love you, but understand that there is no way to the Father except through me. And *I am* the true vine. *I am*."

So, we come to this garden experience and get this unique encounter where Jesus sort of culminates all of these "I am" statements. This big group comes up to him, probably about 200 soldiers plus high-ranking officials. When it says Judas got a "band" of soldiers, that "band" is actually a very specific word that means a portion of the army. So this is not just a few trinkets walking up. These are soldiers. This group of about 200 comes and Jesus says, "Who do you want?" They say, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus says, "I am he." Then what happens? They all fall down. Whoa! Why? What's that about? These are trained professional soldiers. These are high ranking religious officials. This

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isn't Monty Python, where they are just stumbling over each other, trying to gather themselves to figure out how to get this meek carpenter.

No, something else happened. We can't really see it in the English as much, because the English translators helped us out and added that word "he" in, because it helps us to understand what's happening. But in the original Greek, when Jesus comes and says, "Who do you want?" then they say, "Jesus," he says, **"I am."** Amazing. He just says, "I am." The translators put in "he" so that it makes a little more sense, but he says, "I am" and they all fall. Why? It's an echo.

It's an echo of something that happened in the Old Testament, when God had a conversation with who? Moses! Moses and God have this conversation. This is the first time Moses is being called by God, and God is taking form in this burning bush, so to speak. That's the conversation that's happening. God is telling Moses, "I'm calling you to do something big. I need you to go to Pharaoh. I need you to go to the King of Egypt and tell him to let my people go. Let the Israelites go free." Moses is troubled by the thought of this. He has run away from there. He is in hiding. He says, "Well, okay. I don't really want to do this, but if I do go, they are going to ask me, 'You said this is the God of our fathers -- what is his name?' Who am I going to say sent me?"

What does God say? God says, "I am who I am. Tell them I am sent you." This word is big, especially there in the Old Testament. This I am statement, this revealed name of God -- this is the precious holy name of the Lord, how he reveals himself to Moses. It carries significant weight all throughout the scriptures.

Maybe you are like, "Oh Adam, this is a bit of a stretch here when Jesus says this." I don't think it is, because I think Jesus is putting an exclamation point on his whole ministry up to this point. "I have been doing these things only God can do. I am healing people. I'm performing miracles, forgiving sins. I have told you that I'm one with the Father. Who are you looking for? Jesus? I am." And wow, they fall.

He doesn't only say it, but there is a release of power that comes at the sound of his name, and they fall. Jesus is God. He is showing it. Not only that, but he is in control. That's what we would expect from God himself. If there's one thing we learn from this passage, and really a prominent theme that carries through the end of the book, is that **Jesus is in control.** These are not random events happening to him. Even in verse 4 it says: "Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him..." he steps forward. He knows everything that's happening. Jesus chose this spot where he could easily

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be found – the garden. He initiates the conversation with the soldiers. He comes up and says, “Who are you looking for?” He identifies himself, then he says, “Let these people go free.” They don’t take him; he gives himself up.

It reminds us of something he said back in John 10, speaking to a group of Pharisees. Jesus said, “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.” Isn’t that awesome? He is in such control.

But not just of himself, and of what’s happening to him. **It’s a picture for us to be encouraged, that God is in control of your life. He is in control of your trouble.** Isn’t that what we want? Isn’t that what we need? When we are in trouble we need to turn to someone who can actually do something about it. We need God himself to intervene, so we need to go to him. We need to go to him first. He is the one who has the power to really change our lives. So when we turn to Jesus, which is what I am declaring that we are to do, we are turning to God himself. And if he is really God, then we need him to be a God that’s in control.

Why does that matter? Because when our own trouble hits, we need to know that it’s not random, that there is purpose in it, that there is a plan around it, that God isn’t just going, “Oh goodness, what am I going to do about what’s happening to Adam? I’ve got to figure something out.” No, no, no. God is moving and orchestrating. If you read the bible, I could spend the whole time talking about how God is in control. We see story after story after story, illustrations in scripture of how he leads through his control. God has it. Not only are we needing him to be God and in control, we need him to be good, and he proves it here, that he’s good.

II. Jesus is good.

Often we take God’s goodness and turn it into: “God is good all the time, all the time...” and it becomes something that just rolls off our lips. We don’t think necessarily deeply about it, but the fact that he is good is so important. Because if we have a God that is some deity far off, way out there, who is in total control, all-knowing, all-powerful, but we know nothing of his character, and we think that maybe he is malicious or vindictive or mean, then it’s terrifying. Then you don’t want that God in control, because you don’t know how it’s going to turn out.

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No, we need a God who is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good, a God that cares for you, a God that cares for your condition, to alleviate suffering, to sustain us in the midst of suffering, and we see it here. The mob comes to get him. He knows it's going to lead to his death. And what does he do? What's the first thing he says after he reveals himself? He says, "These are my friends. Let them go." It's so interesting, that phrase: "Let them go." Actually the word is the same as "forgive them." He says, "Take me. Don't count their wrongs against them. Take me. I am who you want."

Then Peter is swinging his sword around. He picks it up, cuts this man's ear off, and Jesus stops him! He doesn't join in like, "Yeah Peter, go get him! It's time!" He says, "No. Stop." And we learn from the other gospels that Jesus does something amazing. He actually heals the man's ear. This group is coming out to get him, to kill him, and here he is. He cares for his friends. He is even caring for his enemy. He is good. Don't you want a God that's good? Don't you need a God that is good?

His mission, his life was to give it up for others, even his enemy, and he is resolved to accomplish his purpose. After he stops Peter's tirade he says, "Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?" What does he mean by that? He means, "No matter what, I will do what the Father has sent me to do." What did the Father send him to do? To give his life for his people, even his enemies. This is what God has done for you. This is what God has done for us. **In our trouble we can be at ease, because we have a God, yes, who is God, who is sovereign, who is in control, but who also is good and compassionate, and not only cares about our needs, but can deliver us from our needs, from the trouble that we experience, and sustain us in the midst of trouble. He is good -- therefore, what does that mean? It means his purposes are good.**

Here's a little, quick, practical, how-to tip. You are in the midst of trouble. You are dealing with your fear, anxiety -- whatever the things are that you are dealing with: addiction, relational issues... You have to fight. I'm saying turn to Jesus, engage in the battle. What do you do?

Well, with regards to this point, I would say appeal to God's goodness. Remind him of how good he is in your prayer life. In your dealings with God, speak of his goodness. Here are a few examples, just a snapshot of a few texts of scripture that you can use.

*Oh, how abundant is your goodness,
which you have stored up for those who fear you
and worked for those who take refuge in you,
in the sight of the children of mankind! -- Psalm 31:19*

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*Answer me, O LORD, for your steadfast love is good;
according to your abundant mercy, turn to me. – Psalm 69:16*

*For the LORD is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations. – Psalm 100:5*

These are your weapons. This is how you turn to Jesus. This is how you turn to God. You are like, “Adam, I don’t know where to find these scriptures. How do I do this?” Listen, there is an amazing website called Google. It does so many amazing things. You’ve just got to try it, okay? It will find any of these for you. All you have to do is type in scripture passages dealing with God’s goodness and you will get more than you can handle. Guys, this is not hard. We have to engage in the fight. We have to. So when we go to God, we lean into scriptures like this and we pray them back. “God, you are good. Your steadfast love endures forever, your faithfulness to generations. I believe that applies to me as well, so I don’t understand what you are doing. It seems strange. It seems out of my control, but you are doing something and I trust you because you are good.”

Guys, I promise you this helps. How does it help? Let me tell you why. **First, there is power in prayer and there is power in the Word. These things work. It’s not some superstition. This is what God has promised us. Secondly, our souls get nourished when we speak his word.**

Hopefully, even just looking at that right now you are saying, “Oh yes. I needed that. I need those words.” When we speak it to ourselves, there is power in that, because when we hear it, it impacts us. When we hear these things it changes us, it nourishes us. We need to fill our tanks with good stuff. Why? Because there’s just so much bad stuff coming in – all the time, every day. And if we’re not careful we will just be focused on the 200 soldiers with weapons, lanterns, and torches standing in front of us, versus keeping our eyes on that man, that God-Man Jesus, in the midst of them, who with a word puts them on their backs.

We are prone to focus on what is going wrong, so we need to constantly be reminding ourselves of the goodness of the Lord so that we can fight. It’s because of these things that he can be trusted. He is not only God, he is not only good, he is trustworthy.

III. Jesus is trustworthy.

He proves it here in the garden. I keep saying it: **In our trouble we must put our trust in Jesus.** Every day you and I are tempted to put our hope and trust into other things. It’s just our nature. We

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run toward other saviors. We run toward money, power, fame, beauty, relational status, drink... whatever. We think we can't live or cope without some of these things in our lives. Or we just look to ourselves to fix the problems. When you look at Peter, when you look at the disciples, Peter is pulling swords out: "This is not happening! I know what to do, God!" He is chopping away -- it's terrible. Jesus tells the disciples, "Guys, we are going to pray here tonight." It's not in this gospel, but we see in other gospels what they do -- they run away. In the next section of scripture, Peter is lying about his relationship with Jesus. Everything else that we put our hope in, that we run towards, fails. **We need to trust in Jesus because he is trustworthy.**

I would ask: What makes you trust someone? Usually, it's someone who understands you, someone who has been there, someone who is a part of your suffering, a part of your condition. This is what Jesus is. How do you feel when trouble comes? Do you feel lonely? Do you feel outnumbered? Do you feel fearful? We know Jesus experienced all these things. There are 200 people out to get him. He tells his best friends: Guys, I need you tonight. Stay awake and pray. They just fall asleep. They leave him there. Then, when it starts going bad they run away. We know from other gospels that when Jesus was praying in the garden that night he was so troubled that his sweat turned to blood.

He identifies with our need. He has been there. He can be trusted. Put your trust in him.

I know it can be scary. It's out of our control; we like to be in control. We like to know how it's all going to work out. When situations come, we have go-to things that we fall back on, whether it's our own strength, our own intellect, or someone else. But when things happen that we just can't figure out, we have to remember all these points. **We have to remember that yes, he is good, that he is in control, but most of all that he is God.**

That's the beginning: that he is God. We need to expect God to act and think a little bit differently than us, that he will do things differently than we would. Our problem too often is thinking that God is just like us, because we like to create him in our image. We think, "Well, I'm like this, so God must be like this." It's just not the way. We are made in his image and we are to be conformed to his image, so we need to remember that God may do things a little bit differently than we do.

This is what Tim Keller says. I think this is helpful. He says, "You might think if I go to Jesus he is not under my control. He lets things happen that I don't understand. He doesn't do things according to my plan, or in a way that makes sense to me. But if Jesus is God..." (listen) "...then he has got to be great enough to have some reasons to let you go through things you don't understand. His power is

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unbounded, but so are his wisdom and love. **If you have a God great enough and powerful enough to stop your suffering, you also have a God who is great enough and powerful enough to have reasons you don't understand.** You can't have it both ways."

Don't run when you don't understand. Lean in to Jesus. Lean in to our God. Remember who he is. Look, no one would have thought all this trouble in the garden would lead to the redemption of mankind. No one. But it did. And maybe your trial, your trouble is leading to something unimaginably good and redemptive. So trust him.

Let me finish with this quick thought. If you are experiencing a season of trouble-less life, blessing, and good things, that is awesome. Be thankful for it. Be an agent of encouragement to someone else, because 190% of us are struggling. Be an encouragement. Be the person to help take their eyes off of the 200 soldiers and on to Jesus, to turn their gaze and say, "Listen, I know you are going through a lot. Maybe you are not even able to lean into his goodness and to think about scriptures. Let me give you some scriptures you can meditate on. Here, I'm going to write them out for you. You take them. Put them around your house." "How are you doing today?" Send a text. Send an email. Talk. Be there. Be someone who can encourage other people for the glory of God so that they might be strengthened. In doing so, you are going to be strengthened for that next trial that comes.

Let's pray.