

LIFE IN HIS NAME

CONFIDENCE, BROKENNESS, AND HOPE

John 18:15-27

Are you familiar with the phrase: “Et tu, Brute?” I don’t know what you think of when you hear that. I actually first think of Aladdin, because there is a very small moment where the genie is about to turn Aladdin into the prince, and a knife comes out of a book and he is wearing a toga. It has reference to Julius Caesar. They are the famous supposed last words of Julius Caesar, the Roman dictator who was betrayed by his countrymen, by the senate, and specifically, at least as far as the Shakespeare play Julius Caesar is concerned, he was betrayed by his friend and protégé, Brutus. That phrase in Latin means: “Even you, Brutus?”

Betrayal. As much as we don’t like personally being a part of betrayal, we do love watching it. We love seeing it. It makes great movies. It makes for a great story. It makes for great books. We can think of some of our favorite stories or movies that have that as such an integral part. You are probably thinking of some right now. One of the first ones that came to my mind - I think I have a Disney problem - but it was Lion King. Scar is the horrible brother of Mufasa and totally betrays him. It was funny to watch Lion King again as a Dad. When they released it again in the movies, I was going, “Man, this is rough! This is hard to watch!”

The reality is that most of us have probably experienced this in one way or another - either being betrayed or being the betrayer. We know the pain that betrayal can cause, especially when it’s a close friend or someone that you love. When it’s someone closest to you and something like that happens, it is rough. It’s painful.

So, as we continue through our study of John, we are slowing down a little bit here in John 18, because these moments are so important in the final days and hours of Jesus’ life, and really, in the disciples’ lives. It’s important for us, I think, to take a harder look at what’s happening here. Last week we looked at the garden experience. We saw betrayal. We saw Judas bringing the soldiers and the officers and the officials in to find Jesus, to arrest him, and ultimately to kill him. And we look in on this night and see betrayal, not just there, not just once, but actually twice.

After Judas, it wasn’t the end of betrayal for Jesus. It actually happens again later that same night. It comes from who I think would be the most unexpected person. We all know the story. We’ve

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heard it over and over and over again. Part of Peter’s legacy, unfortunately, is this moment. If you imagine for a minute that you didn’t know how the story goes, you didn’t know what was coming next, and you are just reading the gospels for the first time, you might see it coming with Judas. You probably could. There are issues with Judas throughout the story in all the gospels, where he is a shady type of character. So, if you were just reading through, you would be like, “I’m not so sure about this guy.”

Peter – if you didn’t know how the story would go, if you didn’t know how the story would end, I don’t think you would ever imagine that Peter would do what he did. This man is one of Jesus’ best friends. He is part of the inner circle. This is the guy that Jesus calls the rock. He says, “Peter, you are the rock. I am going to build my church on you. You are going to be foundational to what comes next in the thousands of years of history. I am going to give you the keys to the kingdom. What you bind on earth is going to be bound in heaven, what you loose on earth is going to be loosed in heaven.” This is big stuff. He revealed things to Peter that he didn’t reveal to everybody.

And not only that -- Peter was himself one of the most enthusiastic supporters of Jesus. He made so many promises of his loyalty -- not all with the best endings, but his heart seemed to be for Jesus. So a reader who doesn’t know how the story unfolds... We see Jesus arrested in the garden. That’s what happened last week. And all the disciples run away and go into hiding, except for one; really two, because there is another disciple here, but he is not named. Who stays? It’s Peter. We can’t forget that.

All the disciples run away, go into hiding, but Peter follows Jesus closely. He follows him to the trial. He stands outside. And rightfully, if you are reading the story fresh, you’d be like, “Yeah, there’s Peter. That’s right. You are the one who is so loud and loyal and boasts of great things about what you will do for Jesus. That’s where you should be. You should be following him.” And he is right there outside. He is in the courtyard while Jesus is inside. He is supporting him. He is ready to prove his loyalty.

Then this happens. Peter is confronted, but not by a soldier, not by some big, giant man in armor with a sword in one hand and the other hand around Peter’s throat. It’s not one of the religious leaders. It’s a servant girl. And nothing against girls, nothing against women, but the point of John and the other gospel writers pointing out that this is a servant girl is that this is a non-intimidating figure. This should not have caused the response in Peter that it did. She probably was tending the

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fire, making sure that the courtyard was in order. And she asks him in a very contentious way, not like: “Hey, are you one of his...?” No: “You’re not also with this guy, right?” That’s what she says. “You’re not one of his disciples, are you?”

In that moment, Peter does something I don’t think he ever imagined doing. He says, “No.” Peter! He says, “No.” The rock, the foundation of the future church denies ever knowing Jesus. What makes this really interesting is how John captures the story. Right after Peter’s first denial, the scene cuts; it’s like a movie. The camera is on Peter, he says no, he goes up to the fire, starts warming himself, and that’s where we leave him.

Then the camera turns to another scene. What’s the scene? It’s a religious court. Jesus is in court. He is on trial before someone called the high priest. You may be a little confused about why there seems to be two high priests. You might have caught that, because it says Annas is the high priest, then it says, “Now I’m going to send him to Caiaphas, the high priest.” You are like, “How many high priests are there?” It’s not that confusing if you understand the political situation at the time. Annas was the high priest for a long time and kept that influence over the Jewish people in that season. But Rome came in and actually appointed one or other high priests, and one of them happened to be his son-in-law, Caiaphas. Caiaphas was the political high priest, but Annas really had the clout as the high priest, so that’s why he goes to Annas first.

So, Jesus is on trial before the high priest. It says that he is being questioned about his disciples and his teaching. He is being questioned about theology and who he has been hanging out with. That’s what you would expect if you think this man is some kind of terrorist leader. You want to know, “Okay, what are you teaching and who are your associates?” That’s what they are doing. They are trying to figure out what they are going to do with Jesus.

Jesus answers by basically saying, “Look, everything I’ve taught was out in the open. I have not done anything in secret. Everyone could hear it.” Then he says something that gets him smacked. He says, “Why do you ask me?” He says, “Ask those who heard what I said to them.” Then he gets hit. You might say, “Why would you hit him for that?”

Here is what’s happening. This is a fake trial. This is not a legal trial. It’s an illegal trial. It’s illegal for a couple reasons, first of all because you were not supposed to hold trial at night. We know that this is night because what happens when they come to get Jesus? They’ve got lanterns and torches, so it’s dark -- it’s at night. Then Peter is in front of the fire, warming himself -- it’s at night.

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It is very important that we understand that, because it's an illegal trial. You can't do this at night. It was totally against the law.

The second reason is because in that system you did not question the defendant. The person who was on trial actually didn't get questioned. The witnesses got questioned. That's who was supposed to be answering the questions -- the ones who were bringing the charges, who would say, "Yeah, I saw him doing this and this." Then they were supposed to be questioned to see if they were telling the truth. It was very unusual for a defendant to have to defend himself. So Jesus is calling them out. He is calling them on this illegal trial. He is asking for a fair trial. He is saying, "Look, ask the witnesses. That's what you are supposed to do. They'll tell you what I said." So he gets hit.

Then what happens? The scene changes again. He gets smacked in the face, then it cuts back to who? Peter, back at the fire, warming himself, was asked two more times if he knew Jesus. In a moment, when he could have changed his tune, he could have changed his story, he could have thought, "Ugh, why did I say that? We all do this. I said something I shouldn't have. Here is another opportunity to make it right." "No." Final opportunity: "Do you know him?" "No."

John is painting a picture for us. The writer of this narrative, the way he tells it, he is painting a picture. Peter, confronted by a servant girl, no threat to him, no courtroom, and he cowers and he lies. Then there is Jesus in the courtroom, with people who hold his life and death in their hands. They have power over what happens to him, and he denies nothing. He is cool. He is calm. He is resolved to do what is right. He stands for truth in the midst of injustice.

So, what do we learn from this account? I think we learn a lot. We could spend time picking this apart in so many different ways. I was praying through how we could look at this in a way that will be helpful, and I think the passage teaches us three things. It could teach us more, but I'm going to highlight three things. It teaches us something about confidence, about brokenness, and about hope. Let's talk about confidence for a minute.

1. Confidence.

Confidence can be a great thing. There are many in here who have high levels of confidence in one area or another. Confident people make great sports fans. They make great leaders at times. They make great politicians at times. There are some good qualities in being confident. But confidence can also be destructive, especially if you are overconfident.

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We see overconfident people all the time. YouTube has made overconfident people become famous, and not in a good way -- for falling, for getting hit, for crashing. Reality TV has really helped this some. We have seen those people who have been told their whole lives that they are wonderful singers. They are so overconfident that they walk into that audition room with spotlights just like this, and they, with gusto, sing horribly. It makes for good TV. You've got the judges: "Oh, that's terrible." Overconfidence can lead to some embarrassment. It can lead to some problems.

But in the right place, confidence is wonderful. Put in the right place, it can lead to all kinds of great things. Confidence can bring life. It can bring peace. It can bring security. It can bring hope. But on the other side, when it's put in the wrong place, it will bring pain. It will bring disorientation. It will bring insecurity, disappointment, emotional damage, hopelessness. I think one thing we can learn from this passage, and really, the theme of scripture constantly pushes us to the spot of saying, "If your confidence is in anything but Jesus Christ, it is in the wrong place."

If we want to boil it down to the absolute foundation, the only place in which we can put our confidence is God. I'm not saying that we never trust people. Of course, we have relationships. We trust each other. We build a church based on the foundation and the cornerstone of Christ and we build community with each other. We are supposed to trust each other and live in that kind of relationship with one another. But at the end, if that person or persons become the ultimate source of your confidence, you are in trouble.

Have you ever put your full confidence in anything on this earth that didn't fail you on some level? Even in the deepest relationships we fail. We hurt each other. In two weeks I'm going to be married for 17 years. 17 years. If we tried to keep track of how many times we failed each other or hurt each other - and I don't mean severely. Thank God, by his grace, nothing horrific has ever happened in our marriage. We trust each other. We do place a level of confidence, but it is not that ultimate level of confidence that says, "Well, if she fails me at any point, my life is done."

Sometimes we do this in relationships, where we try to put that kind of confidence in other people, in other things. When we have that expectation, that that person or persons becomes the source of our confidence, we are setting ourselves up for failure, and we are setting them up for failure.

Peter had a misplaced confidence. It was in himself. His self-confidence led him to the current problem that we just talked about. There is this constant war going on within Peter. We see it

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throughout the whole story of the gospel and all the gospels. He so wants to trust Jesus, but he is constantly finding himself reverting to his self-confidence. He does it over and over and over again.

I'm just going to rehearse a few things that happened with Peter over his life with Jesus. It was only a few years. Look at Mark 8:31-32. This is where he actually rebukes Jesus. This is one of the first accounts. "He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders,..." (Jesus is teaching: "Look, I am going to suffer and die.") "...the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly." Mark makes an effort to say that there was no mystery here. And one of the great sentences in all of scripture: "And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him." Like, "Jesus, come here. Listen, you don't know what you are talking about."

Then Jesus rebuked him and says one of the most troubling statements that you ever want to hear from God. He says, "Get behind me Satan! You are setting your mind on things of man, not on God, and that's the spirit of the devil. So if you really want to stay in that camp..." That wasn't enough for Peter. No, because later on in Mark 14:29-31, he actually corrects Jesus.

Jesus is telling his disciples that they are all going to fall away -- the very thing that we read about last week. He says,

"You are all going to fall away..." Peter said to him, "Look, even though they all fall away, I will not." "And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." But he said emphatically, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you." And they all said the same.

Then in John 13 we read a couple months ago where Jesus wants to wash the disciples' feet. He is getting ready to do it and Peter is like, "No, no, no, no. You are never going to wash my feet." Over and over again -- he loves Jesus so much, he wants to be close to him, he wants to protect Jesus, and he shows that he just doesn't get it. He doesn't understand what's happening. He wants to do things his way. He has a better way.

Then in the garden last week we looked at Jesus. He was like, "Alright, it's time. The hour has come. Everything I told you about is about to happen." And Peter is like: "No!" Sword swinging: "I can do this. I can help you, Jesus. I can fix it. They are not taking you." He cuts a man's ear off. He just keeps thinking he has a better way. Then all it takes is a question from this servant girl to reveal the

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deficiency in his confidence. In a moment the smallest things, my friends, can reveal what we are putting our hope in, what we are putting our confidence in.

You would understand it if it was one of the guards. You would understand it if it was some moment where he was hanging on the precipice of life and death, but it's not. It's this girl! She just says: "You with him?" And he feels he can't admit it. So what does he do? He denies, and it reveals what he puts his hope in, what his confidence is in.

And I'm not being too hard on Peter! Because let's all just take a cursory view of our own lives and say, "Yep. I am as fickle as Peter, often." It's us. It's me. We live every day like this, wrestling with who to trust, who to put our confidence in, and it's usually between ourselves or it's between us and God.

Then you contrast that with Jesus, who is in the courtroom, who is in the face of death. He is answering questions in such a secure, common, resolved manner. Why? Because over and over again, Jesus said it: "I will do what my Father has told me to do. I trust the Father's plan for my life. My confidence is in his plan and in his purpose."

The simple message for us to remind ourselves is that we don't put our confidence in ourselves or in other people. We put it in God. You are like, "Yeah, that's great, Adam. That's very simple and well put. I know. How do I do it?" How do we even know if we are putting our confidence in the wrong thing? Because sometimes we say it: "Oh yeah, I trust in God. My confidence is in the Lord." I'm sure Peter would have answered that also. That's why God brings servant girls into our lives to help reveal what we are about.

Do you want to know? If you are asking, "Well, how do I know if I am putting my confidence in myself or other people?" we don't have Jesus to say, "Get behind me, Satan -- you are doing it again." But you do have other people in your life to help you, to help point those things out. If you don't have those people in your life, you need to get those people in your life. And I would add this to it: Do you want to know a good test to see what you are putting your trust in? I would just ask you: How are you doing? How is your emotional state? How is your emotional well-being? Are you sad? Anxious? Depressed? Angry? Discontented constantly? Bitter? Mean? I'm not saying if you're those things you are definitely putting your hope in something else, that you are putting your confidence in something else. But it absolutely could be a sign that your confidence is misplaced.

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God gave us a very helpful measure to know if we are trusting in him. It comes in Galatians 5. It's this wonderful little list. This is Paul talking. It's a list of what we call the fruit of the Spirit. We have this amazing list: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Let those help diagnose your soul.

Right now we are all looking at it, going: "Nope, nope, nope, nope, no, maybe a little. I was yesterday, not so much today." Guys, this is a great tool. It's a measuring rod. We look and say, "Okay, am I joyful, or am I always complaining, always upset about what's not going right, always bitter and mean or sad or angry? This could be a really good indicator that you are giving God lip service. With your lips you are saying, "Yeah, I put my confidence in Him," but you are functionally not putting your confidence in the Lord. If those things are not happening, go to the Lord. Pray. Read. Give yourself to God with a new intensity. Find a friend who will speak the truth to you.

This just happened to me. Literally, the other day I was finding myself in a funk. I was down, based on just external things happening. Someone's opinion of me was affecting the way I was thinking and breathing. I had a friend who I was talking to about it. He didn't coddle me and say, "Oh, no, no. You're so good. You really are awesome. Don't listen to what other people say. You're special." No, no, he said, "The only thing that matters is what God thinks. Put your confidence in the Lord." I was like, "I'm preaching that! I should have known that!" The reality is that if Peter forgot -- he's better than us, guys, let's just face it -- if Peter forgot, we forget. We need reminding.

Andrew Murray says it a little better than I do. He says, "Don't strive in your own strength; cast yourself at the feet of the Lord Jesus, and wait upon Him in the sure confidence that He is with you, and works in you. Strive in prayer; let faith fill your heart so you will be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." Rest in God. Care about what he thinks more than what other people think. Put your confidence in his power in your life. Go to him and pray. Say, "God, I am just tempted to believe every lie right now. Help me. Help me. Help me." And God will meet you. Confidence.

2. Brokenness.

We learn about brokenness. This is a hard one, because it's something that we all experience. You know what I mean when I say brokenness. When something happens to you, to us, that just crushes us, it breaks us inside. Do you know that God uses brokenness? This event breaks Peter. We learn from some of the other gospel writers that he cried after that. When he heard the rooster, he remembered. The rooster crows and it says he weeps. He is broken.

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But it's because of his brokenness that he becomes the great Peter that we get to see and read about in the book of Acts, where he is preaching to thousands and they are getting saved. And he does go to jail, and he does end up losing his life for the sake of Christ. This event leads to that. God uses broken people to accomplish his purposes. This brokenness leads to Peter's usefulness, and that will happen with you and with me. Our brokenness will lead to a greater fulfillment of God using us for his purposes.

Why? Because in our brokenness we lean on him more. We are not just so focused on how good we are, how strong we are, how amazing we are. Brokenness leads to humility. It forces us to take our eyes off of ourselves and our own little problems and turn outward and upward and say, "Oh wow, God, you are big and you are amazing. Oh, and there are other people hurting as well. Maybe I should stop focusing on all my issues and help others and turn to you."

That's when God works most. He opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. Paul said, "I boast all the more in my weaknesses, because when I am weak..." What? "He is strong?" You want God strong. You don't want to be strong. You want God to be strong in your life, so that's why brokenness is a means to that strength shining in our lives.

We are afraid to be broken. I get it. I am afraid to be broken. We want to run from discomfort at all costs. We don't want to be uncomfortable. It's so easy now, because there is very little that makes us uncomfortable. We don't have to be uncomfortable. We live in luxury. Even the poorest of us have so much comfort at our fingertips. This is why we don't commit to things, because we don't want to engage in something that's going to stretch us a little. That's why we don't exercise. That's why we don't eat right. It means denying ourselves of some joy that promises us a fulfillment that, really, it can't ever deliver. So we don't deny ourselves that because we don't have to.

This is why we don't foster. We put this before us constantly – the need in our county and in our world – orphans who need homes. I get it. We are in the thick of it. I get it, because I hear it. "We could never do that because it would just hurt too much if the child goes." I would ask you to rethink that logic, because when we stop thinking about our own hurt and think about the hurt of the orphan, of the family that's broken, this is why God strengthens us to do work like that. We rarely deny ourselves for the sake of something greater.

But you look in the courtroom. You see Jesus. He is enduring this phony trial. He is making his way to the cross. He is laying down his life so that others will benefit. You and I will benefit. Isaiah tells

us that he was crushed for our sin, broken for us, and he did that so we would never have to be crushed like that. We don't have to go to the cross. We will never endure the most crushing blow from the wrath of God.

But we follow him daily, and he tells us daily we are to take up our cross. Do you see that that's a call to daily be broken? It doesn't mean we pray: "Oh God, would you hurt me? Would you please?" This is different. It's understanding that there are greater purposes out there and we can give ourselves to those purposes because it's not about us. It's about building up the kingdom, laying down our lives by saying no to sin and yes to living the way that God wants us to live. Don't be afraid of being broken. It brings life and usefulness. Peter is an example of that and we all have our own testimonies of how our brokenness led to greater strength in the future.

Elisabeth Elliot was no stranger to brokenness. If you don't know who she is, look her up; I don't have time to talk about her. She says this: "We want to avoid suffering, death, sin, ashes. But we live in a world crushed and broken and torn, a world God himself visited to redeem. We receive his poured-out life, and being allowed the high privilege of suffering with him, may then pour ourselves out for others." Our brokenness allows us to give more, to serve more, and that's our hope – that all of this will be used for a greater purpose.

3. Hope.

You know, I started off by talking about betrayal and what a great story it creates and makes. Usually, we hope that the betrayer gets what he deserves -- like at the end of Lion King, Scar gets his, right? Or, we hope that the betrayer is redeemed, finds redemption, finds life -- that he is able to turn and become the good guy.

In this story, we see redemption. We don't see it right here; we will see it in a few chapters from now. But in a few days, Jesus is going to rise from the grave and he is going to have a conversation with Peter again. And in that conversation, he restores Peter, he forgives Peter, and he gives Peter his mission to go forward and be bold for him. That's why Jesus went to the cross.

Listen, if you don't know what I am talking about, the simple message of the gospel is this: Christ came to die for sinners. You say, "Adam, how can I hope that he is going to forgive me? You don't know what I have done." I would just say it doesn't matter what you've done. All we have to do is go to him and say, "God, would you forgive me? I am a sinner. I need your forgiveness." And we can think, "Is it any worse than what Peter did?" He walked with Jesus, he loved Jesus, and in a

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moment of weakness said, "I don't know who he is." Yet God says, "I love you, Peter. I forgive you. Go be used for me."

Biblical hope is a confident expectation in a beneficial future. You have a beneficial future in Christ. And in the midst of the brokenness that happens now, in the midst of the misplaced confidence, there is hope that God will redeem it and will save and restore all that we have done. Put your confidence in God. Find comfort and joy in brokenness.