

4.30.23 Sermon

Me Too... | John 18:19-24; 28-40

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

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Today, I'm finishing off John chapter 18. John 18 basically is like Jesus's last day on earth, like pre-resurrection. It was not a great day. Some people say, "Hey, how would you spend your last day on earth?" Right? Usually, mine starts with eating fried chicken, which I did last night. So hopefully, I won't die today. But, you know, I think about all these things that I would want to do. Jesus's last day on earth was disgusting and beautiful.

In order to help me today, sometimes with church and preaching, you just kind of get bored. I get bored a lot and of myself. So, today, I was thinking about this sermon. There's so much in this text that I could dissect for you, theologically, and do what I usually do and give you the Greek language and all of that, which I love to do. But today, I'm not going to do that.

I'm going to bring up Piper. Come on up, Piper, let's give her a round of applause. Piper is an artist and a beautiful human being, a beautiful woman. I wanted her – she does rapid-fire art. That's why I picked her to come up here today because I didn't want just a line that was drawn in an hour; I wanted a whole image. So, Piper, while I preach and read the text, she is going to work some sketching. She will sketch what she senses from the passage, and then

we're going to engage together. Try and pay attention to me. If you get bored, though, you can just look at her. Piper, do your thing, fly with magic.

I do want to invite all of us to participate today, though, because all of our words and essence are also going to go on that canvas. We're going to join in what she is doing in a little bit. So, if you want to join along, open your Bibles or your apps up to John 18. As you hear these words, think about what this day might have been like for Jesus. He knew what was coming, right? He knew what was coming, and he went through it.

Let's read the text together. John 18, starting at verse 19:

"Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. 'I have spoken openly to the world,' Jesus replied. 'I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said.' When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby slapped him in the face. 'Is this the way you answer the high priest?' he demanded. 'If I said something wrong,' Jesus replied, 'testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?' Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas, the high priest."

Meanwhile, Simon Peter was standing there, still warming himself. They asked him, "You aren't one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it again, saying, "I am not."

One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the garden?" Again, Peter denied it. And at that moment, the rooster began to crow.

Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness, they did not enter the palace because they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. So, Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?"

"If he were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed him over to you." Pilate said, "Take him for yourselves and judge him by your own laws."

"But we have no right to execute anyone," they objected. This took place to fulfill what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die.

Pilate then went back into the palace, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

"Is that your own idea?" Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

"Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it that you have done?"

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."

"You are a king then?" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into this world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

Pilate said, "What is truth?" With this, he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him. But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of Passover. Do you want me to release this 'King of the Jews'?"

They shouted back, "No, not him! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising and was also a revolutionary.

So, what did you notice in this passage? Just call out some things. What is happening to Jesus here? Suffering? Yes. He doesn't answer the questions, right? He kind of does a little back and forth. What else?

Yes, his friends are really failing him right now. What else? He's betrayed, right? Lots of accusations, identity, and religious setup. Has anybody ever been set up by the religious community? Okay, we'll talk about that later.

He's going through a lot. Can you imagine all this happening right before you're about to die? In this passage, so many things fulfill prophecies from the First Testament. Jesus fulfilled not just 48 specific Messianic prophecies but, in his total life, 324 prophecies. Some mathematician said that the chances of that happening are one in 10 zeros. It's unbelievable.

Knowing that, and realizing that through these passages, is never going to help us when we're going through hard times. It's cool to know that Jesus is who He says He is, but how does that help us in difficult moments?

And like these texts that were written, like, made, yeah, they, they say that they happen. And then he came and like, that's important, right? Because it backs it up. But ultimately, how does it help my life? How does it help me live a different life? How does Jesus's last day and how he lives his last day of his life affect us today? That's what I want to know. Because ultimately, otherwise, when I read the Bible, and if I just take it in, I'm like, Oh, that's so cool, right? And it affects nothing, then what's the point? Right.

So, as I'm reading through all these things, I'm thinking of the verse Hebrews 4:14-16. And it says, since we have a great high priest, who passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to this confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with us and our weaknesses, and everything that we go through. But one who in every respect has been tested and gone through what we have, yet without sin. Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness so that we may receive mercy and find grace, for our help in time of need.

So, let's look at this through the lens of what did Jesus show us that he endured through this week? So that when we go through something, it's like Jesus saying, Yeah, me too. How's the art coming? Oh, yeah, it's coming. Okay, it's looking

really beautiful. You see what I mean? She can like, just do magic. So, keep going, we'll come back to you in a minute.

So, starting with John 18, Jesus gets hit with betrayal. So, the one place, one of the places where he would go to pray and have quiet and alone time. And Judas knew he would go there. Judas told them, that's where he's going to be. So, he took him to get hit in his most vulnerable place. Have you ever been hit in a vulnerable place? Have you ever been betrayed by somebody, and by something?

When Peter cut the ear off the guard, and he made a mistake because he thought he was trying to do right, but he made a mistake. He acted in haste. Jesus came in and rescued him. He shows us that when we make mistakes, when we act in haste, when we think we're trying to do something for justice, he shows us that actually, that wasn't the best way. But he fixes it.

Even though Jesus knew Peter would deny him three times, he still put the whole thing on him. It didn't disqualify him. Jesus didn't give up on people when they made mistakes. Jesus shows us that through this last day of his life, that when my people gave up on me, when everything went to heck, hell, I can say hell, when everything went to hell. When everything went to hell, Jesus is like, Yeah, I'm not back. And he didn't like send a note and say, you know, forget Peter, he's not going to be able to do it, because he just failed me.

He kept going. He didn't take it back. Have you ever tried to use violence instead of trusting the process? Have you ever tried to use anger instead of listening and taking care? Have you ever spoken your truth and not been believed? Jesus is saying in these passages, "Me too. Me too." Have you ever been wronged? Have you ever been falsely accused of something? Jesus is saying, "me too."

Did you know that in the United States alone, at least 4% of inmates on death row are innocent, and they will be executed wrongly, even though they have done nothing? Like Jesus? And Jesus can look at them in that moment before execution and say, "Me too." And I don't know why we don't see the full redemption yet. But I trust that we'll see the full redemption one day.

Have you ever been misunderstood? Someone questioning your identity? Thinking you're something that you're not been challenged for your beliefs challenged by your identity? Have you ever been put on trial unfairly? All you need to do these days is look up a black person and a white person and the same crime and see the injustice about what punishment they get. So, if you're upset about that, I'm not sorry. But that is the reality of what we see. Over and over and over again. And Jesus can say, "Me too."

Have you ever been ousted by the religious elite? Jesus can say, "me too." Have you ever been left alone and felt abandoned by every single person who you ever counted on, entrusted me to? Right? Jesus doesn't live his last day for the glory and the honor of indulging his own ego. He lives it showing us probably some of the most gut-wrenching and important "me too" moments for us.

And in the ultimate "me too" act, Jesus gets chosen over Barabas. Barabas was an everyday revolutionary. His name actually means son of the Father. So, Jesus, the son of the big God parent, gets picked over the little God, the Son of the Father. And in this great act of redemption, it's Jesus saying, in the beginning, Adam, as the story goes, took the first sin, made the first mistake, went out of the best direction. He was the first son of the Father. And in this moment, this exchange, Jesus steps in not willingly but was forced unfairly and murdered, but takes the place of. And instead of letting another person die.

Hold on, an act of injustice for Jesus became an act of justice for us all. It allowed all of us to be able to look at Jesus and say, "Have you ever been through this? Or I am being wrongly accused right now. And I'm surrounded by the religious and I feel like a failure. And I feel like this and all my people left me." And Jesus can say, "Yeah, I know. I've been there." Because he spent his time on his walk to death and to being murdered. By some grace and love giving us these examples, to say you're not alone. I'll show you the way. I'll show you the way.

Jesus doesn't swerve. He stays the course. Yes, he fulfills every prophecy. But he also shows us his humanity. He also lets his humanity be on display so that we can have one more moment and understanding to know that we can connect

in a great high priest, a human God, who went through death and all of life's miseries.

And I wonder maybe, do we get all these details just to have a relatable God to cry to? Just to have a relatable God to look to, to yell to? A relatable God who is not some pie in the sky deity, but a God who says, "me too." I understand. I've been there. I know what it's like. I'll help you. A relatable God who is not just a distant figure but one who walks alongside us in our struggles, sharing our pain and offering a helping hand. This is the message of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection – to show us that we are never alone, and that there is hope, even in the darkest moments.

One who gets us, one who went through suffering as we do? One who was able to understand and offer us a tangible "I've been there, I'm with you." So, you know, anytime I think about Jesus and the Bible and religion and church and why we're here, I want it to matter. I want it to mean something when you're not here.

So, I don't know what your relationship is like to God or whatever you call it, right? Maybe you call God Jesus. Maybe you're not even there yet. Maybe you're like there's just this presence of love that I need or a divine something. I guess today I'm here to tell you that that thing, that presence, I believe it's real and I will believe that it's human. And it's understanding that recognizes grief and love and anger and fear and betrayal. Jesus gives us an example to see and to grab a hold of, a name to call out to when we're lost at sea.

So, I just want us to take a minute and I'm going to actually invite Joni up to play a song; I think she knows which one, wink wink. Okay. And I want you to just, as Piper keeps going, I want you to just take a minute, just think, and just open your heart to this presence of love, Jesus, and whatever way you pray and whatever way you ask. You know, if today was your last day, right? If today was my last day, I'd want to know and sense that love, that human-God love, and have peace and know that there was somebody up there who could say "me too" for whatever it is I got going on.

So, as she sings this song, I just invite you to open your heart, to ask God to reveal God's own self to you. Sometimes I just say, "God, can you just relate yourself to me? Who are you? Speak to me. I'm listening. I'm listening. Let's listen."

[Song performance]

God, thank you that we don't have a high priest, have a God who is unable to sympathize or commiserate, be with us, but one who in every way understands what we've been through and gets us and is with us. Thank you for that kind of love and witness. Amen. So, I want to just take a minute and open up if you felt something, if you sensed something, if you heard "me too" from God on something that you want to share, or if you want to, I would love to. First, I'd love to hear from Piper. Let's thank you, Piper, for being so incredible. So, let's hear from Piper first, and then we'll open it up.

Hello. Sophia tasked me with this idea yesterday morning. So, I really had no idea what I was going to draw this morning. So, it just came as everybody was talking, saying, I started sketching, this is what came out. If you get closer, you might be able to see, or I don't know how far back you can see, but I did Jesus on trial, of course. And then, in the midst, he's not alone. He's surrounded by his angels. Like I said, if he wanted to call down and just annihilate everybody, like it was not, because he didn't, it was not first, they chose to put him there, chose to put him there for us. And that just hit me. Hard there. So that was the piece. Thank you.

Sophia Foutres:

Anybody else want to, of course, afterwards, you can come up and, but if you'd like to share, like to go ahead.

Ash (Congregant):

Hi, I'm Ash. I know Kristine Vuocolo, I used to work with her. And my friend Susan invited me here; we came this morning together. I, when I first got saved,

it was in prison. And when Jesus Christ came into my life, and tell fire, Brimstone preaching, and I ended up going to Independent Baptist Church for a number of years after I got out of prison. And what led me to leave that church was one of the things was that they were anti-gay, definitely. And I have an uncle that's gay, and it cost a lot of animosity with my family. And my feeling was still lost and stuff like that, you know, but you know, they're kind of people and stuff, and I need to be a better testimony to them.

Because after I left that church, I was backslid for a while. And, you know, I've been ever since I got right with God, very recently, I've been praying, you know, of what God would have me to do and everything. And I'm just grateful for this church and their understanding and stuff. And I'm glad to be here. And thank you, everybody, for their testimony and faithfulness. And I definitely feel very welcome here. And thank you, everybody, for being here and being so kind to me. So, thank you.

Pippa Howard (Congregant):

Morning. One of the things through the Scripture, it's I noticed was that Jesus was confident like, he was just moving through knowing that he had this connection. And I was sharing with Cindy, that I had an issue. I'm a homeowner and had an issue with a repair in my home. And trusted source that I reached out to, you know, kind of was letting me know, the road ahead wasn't clear. You know, trying to find a contractor can be difficult, this can happen, that can happen. Anyway, my response was, it'll be okay. I mean, I've had a million repairs, and God has always been there. And so, a few days later, I'm cleaning. And I have this epiphany, like, Wait a minute. God is always there. Like even if you're not sure, even if you don't feel qualified, no matter what it is. He's always there. And I thought, Wow, if I can have that response more often, just the knowing and the confidence of it. And sure, that's one layer. But on another layer, it was my soul knows I'm connected. That was really a beautiful thing. Powerful. Thank you.

Sophia Foutres:

We'll take one more if anybody has one more.

James Bady:

Okay, thank you. One thing that as I was listening to the sermon and then watching the picture develop, the things that stood out to me as I, as the story goes, the depth and the detail also grows, if we slow down and sense the moment that Jesus is going through and the pain that he experiences in this moment and how it relates to our lives, and as Sophia was calling out me to the depths of the experience of Christ grows just as the initial lines on the paper first just had subtle images here and there. And I think that's how we enter Christianity in the beginning, some lines here and there, some images here and there. But as we dig deeper into the details, the depth grows.

Sophia Foutres:

Thank you, that's really good. Thank you. Well, my hope and my prayer this week is that whatever story you've got about God, it would grow and become a more beautiful picture. As you hear those "me toos" and let go of the shuns or the religious rhetoric, the story would grow and develop and become deeper and beautiful, and your awareness of Jesus would grow and become more and more real. That through your every moment, we would all know we have a God who is with us and like us and likes us. Amen.

Pastor Tracy Saletta:

I just want to pause and, as part of saying yes, to take in what everybody has said today. Can we close our eyes for a moment? And if you're uncomfortable with closing your eyes, just soft focus. And can we all together in this room? Breathe in what we need to take away today from the call to worship, to the worship, to the sermon, to the image that Piper drew, even to the words that James spoke during the offering. Whatever it was today, can we consent to that

truth? Can we say yes to that truth? Can we create that open space that that song is talking about? My heart is an open space for you to come and have your way. I'm open.

Let's take a deep breath together in through our nose, as deep as we can go, and out through our mouth. What do you need to take with you today?

Lord, we thank you that you're the originator of the "me too" movement. We thank you for the testimony of Brian. We thank you, Lord, for every testimony in this room. That you see us, you know us, and it is simply about saying yes to you. And we thank you that there is nothing that we go through that you have not paved the way. We say yes, Lord.

You know, there's one observation I had of Piper's drawing, and it was Jesus standing alone. And I think sometimes in our lives when we're facing those "me too" moments where we feel like we're completely alone. What I keep hearing is just God's whisper: you are never alone. You are never alone. Never alone. When every emotion is screaming that you're alone, we are never alone.

Even as Piper said, though, Jesus looked like he was alone. There were legions of angels. He went through the experience, yes. But he was always surrounded, and so are we.