

John 18 v 1 - 14

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] If you have the Gospel of John and Chapter 18 open in your Bible, then that will be a help to you, I think, as we just think about these things and think about as we prepare for Easter.

Some of you may remember the night of the 8th of August, 1963. I'm sure some of you were alive then. But on that night, if you don't remember what happened, a Royal Mail train carrying £2.6 million was robbed by a gang of 15 men.

It became known as the Great Train Robbery. Within a short time, the police had rounded up and tracked down nearly all of the thieves and some of the money. The main leaders and participants in the robbery were tried and sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment.

However, soon after being sentenced, two of them escaped. The first was Charlie Wilson. He fled to Canada with his family and remained there free until 1968, before he was recaptured and imprisoned.

The second was the more famous, in one sense, infamous Ronnie Biggs, who after plastic surgery in Paris, travelled to Australia and later to Brazil. Because Brazil has no extradition treaty with the UK, he was able to stay there for over 30 years.

[1 : 26] There he lived a celebrity lifestyle, married, had children. Until in 2001, he finally returned voluntarily to the UK and served a further eight years in prison.

For Ronnie Biggs, Charlie Wilson and all those criminal types, remaining, evading arrest was the most important part of any robbery.

It's good to plan it and carry it out, but if you got caught, then it was pointless. Evading arrest, getting away with it was the most important thing you could do. Now, in chapter 18 of John, we have the events which describe the arrest of Jesus.

And there's something very striking about this arrest, which is so very different from anything that I've been talking about or anything else that we may have read about.

Because in this story, in these events of the arrest of Jesus, it's very clear that Jesus doesn't try to escape. He doesn't try to get away.

[2 : 28] In fact, if we read through, and as we will read through and think about, it seems as if Jesus wanted to be arrested. As if his very purpose was that he should be arrested by these officials, these soldiers, and so on.

Just look for a moment with me at the several opportunities he had to get away with it. Several things that, in the world's thinking and in the criminal's thinking, he did wrong, which could have secured his freedom from what ultimately was not merely imprisonment, but ultimately suffering and being crucified in the most terrible way and dying.

First thing that Jesus did wrong, if we can put it that way, is this. He followed his normal pattern of life. He frequented a place that he often went to, the Olive Grove there.

On the other side, we're told, of the Kidron Valley was on Olive Grove. He and his disciples went there. And we're told that Jesus often met there, verse 2, with his disciples, and Judas knew this. Now, the first thing you do when you're a criminal and you've done a great big heist or robbery or a job, is you avoid your old haunts. You don't go back home. You don't go to those places that you often frequented because you can be sure there'll be a police stakeout waiting for you there.

[3 : 45] Past friends, past relationships, and so on. So that was wrong. Jesus went directly to the place where he always went to, where Judas' betrayer knew he would be, to lead him, lead the soldiers there.

The second thing is this, that when the soldiers approached, he just gave himself up. Look at verse 4. Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out, that's to the crowd of soldiers and officials who were coming towards him, went out to them and said, who is it you want?

Jesus of Nazareth. I'm he. I'm he. He just gives himself up. He doesn't wait for them to make inquiries. He doesn't sort of blend with the crowd of the others in the crowd there or hide himself behind his friends.

He stands up before them. You just don't do that. You don't hand yourself over. You don't give yourself up. And then, of course, he gives them his real name. Who are you looking for?

Jesus of Nazareth. That's me. I'm Jesus of Nazareth. He gives them his real name. He should have used an alias. He should have pretended he was somebody else, perhaps. Pretended that his was a different name.

[4 : 52] Well, we don't know anybody called that name around here. He gives himself up. Uses his real name. He doesn't even run away when he gets the chance when the arresting group are distracted.

Look at verse 6. Something incredible happens, and we'll come back to it a bit later. When Jesus said, I am he, they, that's all these soldiers and those who are with them, drew back and then fell down on the ground before him.

Well, there's the chance, isn't it? There's the chance to run away while they're on the ground, now scarpers, now leg it. But he doesn't. Just stands there.

Waits for them to get up again. What's happening here? And then finally, of course, there's another incident, another opportunity. He's had all these opportunities to get away, all these opportunities to either lie his way out or to pretend he was somebody else.

But then, of course, he has one more opportunity afforded to him by Peter. Peter, as you know, Simon Peter was a bit of a hothead. He was somebody who acted first and then dealt with the consequences and repercussions afterwards.

[6 : 00] And so what does he do? He's got a sword. What he's doing with a sword, nobody knows. And it's very clear he doesn't know how to use it. You know, give a fisherman a sword. What's he going to do? Cut somebody's ear off.

You know, not really, not really what, you know, it's not Zorro, is it, really? So there he is. But here's the opportunity. While Peter's cutting off the servant's ear, while he's waving a sword around, now's the chance to get away.

You know, this is the criminal, sadly. We see if all else fails and you're stuck in a corner, resort to violence. Resort to violence. Fight your way out.

Shoot your way out. Carve your way out, in Peter's case. But at the very least, he could have sort of slipped away in the commotion. He could have let the others be arrested and he could have got away.

But no. Instead of using the opportunity, he rebukes Peter. Put your sword away. Stop it. So when we consider all these things, consider just these very natural things about Jesus and his arrest, it's obvious, isn't it?

[7 : 04] We can only come to one conclusion. Not just that he didn't try to evade arrest. It wasn't just that he sort of said, well, that's it, you know, games up, you know, fair cop.

He wanted to be arrested. He wanted to be arrested. He went to the garden purposefully that he might be arrested. And so at the very end of the story, when we read about them binding him and tying him up in verse 12, it's clear that as far as Jesus was concerned, it wasn't the ropes that bound him there.

It was his own will, his own purpose, his own determination that he should go with them. They didn't need to tie him because there was no way he was going to run away. He had already bound himself in his heart to go with them and face whatever was in store for him.

But why? Who would do such a thing? Why would he want to do such a thing? Why would he want to be arrested? Why would he, far from resisting arrest, help his enemies arrest him?

By, when they ask for somebody, forwarding himself. By stopping his friends from doing violence against them. From giving them every opportunity to take him easily into custody.

[8 : 15] Why would he be willing to be taken into custody and to suffer as he was going to suffer before the hands of a kangaroo court? Well, in answering those questions here, and they're very clear the answers are here before us, we answer even greater questions about Jesus.

We answer greater questions about who this Jesus is and what he came to do and why he was willing to be arrested. The first thing that we see, I think, is quite obvious, isn't it?

And we're meant to recognize is this, that Jesus was innocent of any crime. See, only a guiltless person doesn't seek to evade arrest. You know, when there's a film, they say, You running, Mickey, just makes you look guilty.

You say, yeah, I'm innocent. But you running away makes you, he doesn't run away because he's innocent. A guilty person always runs away from the police. I'm sure we've seen things like police camera action and those other documentaries where there's a car thief.

And they'll just keep going and going and going. They'll run all the tires off their cars. They'll be on the rims. They'll keep going until, at last, there's no way for them to go. They'll evade arrest as long as possible because they're guilty.

[9 : 28] And even ourselves, there's that sense, isn't there? Maybe it's happened to you once or twice or maybe never at all. You've been stopped by the police. Or the police car behind you flashes their lights and pulls.

What am I? And it's you. Then you go, what have I done? Did they catch me speeding down Castle Road the other day? Sorry. Did they? That's not.

Did they? Is my MOT up to date? Is my tax up to date? And you start to worry, don't you? You start to feel guilty about the things you've done in the past that were wrong or things they've caught up with me at last.

And actually they just say, do you realise one of your brake lights isn't working? Just get it checked out. But you feel guilty, don't you? And a guilty person runs away. But Jesus' conscience is completely clear.

He had nothing to be worried about as far as the law was concerned. He knew he'd done nothing wrong. He knew that he was completely innocent of any crime. In fact, as we go on and he goes to trial, there's those very famous words of Pilate, the Roman governor who judges Jesus and questions him and interrogates him just later in this chapter.

[10 : 39] And he turns to the crowd and he turns to the people and he says this, I find no basis for a charge against him. So even the judge, the Roman judge who they bring him before, recognises that Jesus is innocent.

So first thing, here is somebody, this person, this one person, the only person who's ever lived who was sinless.

Here's one person, one only person who is innocent. We often use the word innocence in a, well not in a foolish way, but in a wrong way. We talk about innocent victims.

And in one sense they're innocent in the criminal situation, but none of us are innocent. From the youngest of us to the oldest of us, we are sinners. Within our very nature there is that selfishness, that rebelliousness against God.

Within our very nature there is that turning over God's law and doing what we want. Whoever we are, we are sinners. But here is this man who is the only person who's ever lived who is sinless, who is innocent in a proper and full sense of the word.

[11 : 43] Who committed no crime, who did nothing wrong, who fulfilled all of God's commandments and all of God's laws, who in every step of his life, in every way, fulfilled all that was right.

We see that here. Who is this man then? Who is this person? Well the second thing that we see reveals to us what he is like and who he is.

Because the second thing that we see coming out from this story so strongly is that Jesus is in charge of the situation. Jesus is in complete control of the situation. He's the one being arrested, but it's not the commander of the detachments of soldiers who's got authority over him, or the officials from the chief priests.

It's Jesus who's clearly calling the shots. It's, you know, when somebody's arrested, you get the policeman or the officer asking the questions. They don't ask any questions.

Jesus asks all the questions. Who do you want? You know. He's the one who gives them commands. Let these men go. And fulfills his promise to them.

[12 : 48] He's the one who in every way is giving the orders and calling the shots. What is it you want? I told you I am he.

You can see this. He's not worried. He's not scared. He's not frightened. He's not intimidated. He intimidates them. Even when Peter waves his sword around, it's not the soldiers that disarm Peter and jump on him.

It's Jesus that disarms Peter. No. Stop it. Put it down. And we're meant to understand clearly from this, that this person, this innocent, sinless person, is none other than the Lord God. This is his deity. This is his godness that's being displayed to us. We see that as well because of what John tells us about Jesus there in verse 4. Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked, who is it you want? Knowing all that was going to happen to him. How could he know what was going to happen to him? None of us know what's going to happen to us. None of us know what's going to happen tomorrow. We can plan and we can prepare. None of us knows what's going to happen after this service.

[13 : 59] We can say, well, I'm going to go and have a lovely roast dinner. We go back and find it's charred remains. None of us know what's going to happen. Jesus knew what was going to happen to him. He told his disciples several times before about the reality of what would happen to him.

On many occasions he warned them that he would go to die. Here's just one incident. Back in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus took the twelve aside and told them, we're going to Jerusalem. And everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man, that's himself, everything that's written in the Old Testament about me, will be fulfilled. He'll be handed over to the Gentiles, that's the Romans. They'll mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. And on the Thursday he'll rise again. How could he know all that? Well, because he's God. God knows the future. Only God knows the future. The dear lady who's got a cabin down on the harbour side, she doesn't know your future when she looks into her glass ball. She doesn't know your future when she reads your cards.

[14 : 57] The shop down in the little lane that has ruin readings, those stones, they don't know your future. Horoscopes don't know your future. Only God knows the future.

Because God is the one who has neither beginning nor end. He is the God who sees all of time, all of your life and mine, stand out before him and he sees all things. He knows all things. But there's something else that backs up my claim, as it were, to Jesus being God. And it's this event where these soldiers come to arrest Jesus and how he deals with them. This exchange between him and the soldiers in verses 4 to 8. First of all, of course, we have Jesus replying to them. He says, who do you want? Jesus Nazareth. I am. That's really what he's saying. I am he. I am. Now, those of you who know the Gospel of John will know that Jesus used that phrase often. There's a seven I am sayings.

[15 : 55] I am the resurrection and the life. I am the bread of life. I am the gate. I am the good shepherd. And so on. But you see, I am meant much more than just that.

It wasn't just the way of saying, it's me. It was the Lord God's name that he gave to Moses those thousands of years ago. Back in Exodus in chapter 3 in verse 14, Moses is commissioned by God to go to Egypt and to set free the people. And Moses says, well, if I go to them and say, who am I to say has sent me? And God simply says, tell them I am has sent you. I am has sent you. And Jesus himself declared that truth earlier on in the Gospel of John. And the religious leaders and the Jews and so on were so angry with him, they tried to stone him and kill him. Jesus says to them in John chapter 8, I tell you the truth. Before Abraham was born, I am. He didn't say before Abraham was born, I was.

[16 : 59] Abraham was, I am. He took God's name. At this, they picked up stones to stone him because they knew that he was claiming to be God. He was saying, I am one with God.

I am God who's come into this world. I'm not just a man. And they were furious because they couldn't comprehend and understand. They thought he was blaspheming. And so Jesus is in control. Why? He's in control because he's God. And it's clear he's God because he says he's God. Let nobody make any mistake about Jesus. Jesus didn't leave it for people to sort of discuss and debate as it did. Was Jesus really just a good man? Was he the son of God? Was he an angel? Was he the... Jesus doesn't give us the choice to think for ourselves what he is or who he was. He makes it perfectly clear here and again and again. He is God come into this world. And we either accept that or we reject it. Because that's the plain truth.

[17 : 58] And there's only black or white. But there's another instance as well that again verifies and declares that here is God. Because as he says, I am, those words of God, those words of life, those words of power.

What happens to the great number of soldiers? We don't know how many there were. But there were dozens of soldiers. What did they do? They fall down before him. They don't fall backwards. They fall forwards. It says they stepped backwards and frustrated themselves before him. And that's... Whether they wanted to or not, they were worshipping the son of God. Do you see? To fall down before somebody is to acknowledge and to worship them. That's exactly what they were doing. It's the same sort of thing that happened to Joshua. Do you remember? Where Joshua meets with the angel of the Lord who is, again, God. He's a commander of the hosts of God's army around the walls of Jericho. What does Joshua do? Falls down before him. And again and again we see this in the Old Testament.

[19 : 01] That when God came into the world and showed himself, people could not help but fall before him. So here we have again. Just a glimpse of the very power of Jesus.

Again we see how he must have wanted to be arrested. Because here he's got the power to... In one sense by the wave of his hand. Though he doesn't even have to wave his hand. By the voice of his mouth.

Simply just put all those soldiers down in their place. Isn't that incredible? Because he has all power. He has all authority.

Because he does rule over all things. Because there is coming a day when people will recognize and must acknowledge that to be true. Paul, as he speaks about the Lord Jesus in Philippians 2, speaks about his humbling himself.

And suffering on the cross. But he says this. Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name. Listen. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and earth and under the earth.

[20 : 02] Let me say this to you. If you have not received and trusted Jesus as your saviour. If you still think of him as just a man. If you still have no time for him in your life. Then there must come a day and will come a day that like these soldiers you will bow before him.

And prostrate yourself before him and say yes you are the son of God. And you are the one who came into this world. And though I don't want to acknowledge it. I can't help but accept the fact. But then it's too late you see.

Because unless we do that willingly now. Unless we humble ourselves before him now. And accept him as our saviour now. Dear friends. When he comes again in power and glory. It will be too late. We will have to acknowledge him as the Lord. We will have to bow before him. But it will be too late for us to be saved. We will bow before him as our judge. We will bow before him as our prosecutor. We will bow before him as our executor.

As he executes judgment and punishment upon us. For our sins and our wicked acts. And so we see here is Jesus. He is truly innocent man.

[21 : 03] Holy man. And he is truly fully God. And then we have to again ask. Well then why? If he is in control. And if he is truly innocent of this crime.

Why does he give himself to be arrested? And the third thing we see here. He does it because he is obeying his father's will. He is obeying his father's will. Look at verse 11.

Jesus commanded Peter. Put your sword away. Shall I not drink the cup the father has given me? See his arrest was the very beginning of his sufferings.

That would end up with the cross. And this cup of which he speaks. Is the cup that the father has given him to drink. It's a cup of suffering. It's a bitter cup. It's a cup of hardship and pain.

And separation and sacrifice. We've heard of this cup before haven't we? If we know those events just before his arrest. Just moments before his arrest.

[22 : 02] Luke records them for us in chapter 2. Mark and Matthew as well. But it's where Jesus prays. Here's how he prays. He withdrew from about a stone's throw beyond his disciples.

Knelt down and prayed. Father if you are willing. Take this cup from me. Yet not my will but yours be done. And so he's saying to Peter.

I've got to drink of this bitter cup. The bitter cup of God's anger against sin. I've got to drink of this suffering. I've got to take it on to myself. And it doesn't matter how much you want to wield a sword.

Or how much you think I shouldn't die. I'm going to. Because this is the father's will for me. This is the very reason I came into the world. This is why I've lived this life. Because I'm doing everything to please God the father.

That's been the truth of Jesus all the way through. All through his life. Everything he did. He did because he wanted to. But because he also was obedient to his father.

[23 : 00] Not obedient in fear. Not obedient because he was somehow constrained to be. And under duress. But because he wanted to please God the father. Because God's will was his will.

Because he and the father are one. In John chapter 6 and verse 38. Jesus says to those who were there with him. I've come down from heaven. Not to do my own will.

But to do the will of him who sent me. There's this willing submission of Jesus to the father. Though equal with God the father.

Equal with God the spirit. Yet when Jesus humbled himself. To come into this world. He came as a servant. Humbled himself as a servant. A servant of those people.

For whom he would die. But a servant of God the father. Who was always his equal. Willingly submitted. There's one last thing then.

[23 : 56] That we need to see here. All that was happening. According to God's purpose. According to God's will. According to Jesus' will and plan. Him coming and being that man of innocence.

Coming and being that powerful God. Coming in obedience to serve. It all had one purpose. Because in his arrest and in his death. He was fulfilling one thing.

He was coming in our place. Dying in our place. Look at verse 14. The end of the passage. Caiaphas. He's the high priest for that year.

Earlier on. In chapter 11. When he and the other religious leaders. Had been having a bit of an argument. About what they were going to do with this Jesus. Caiaphas said.

Don't you realize. It's much better for one man to die. Than the whole nation. And it's brought to our remembrance again by John. Caiaphas was the one who advised the Jews.

[24 : 50] Be good if one man died. For the people. It was a cynical statement. On the high priest's part. It was him saying. That this life is disposable. Dispensable.

But actually. He didn't realize it. But he was actually speaking. The very truth. Of God. He and the other religious leaders. Were worried. Jesus was popular. The crowds were following him. It seemed perhaps. That Jesus had come. To lead a rebellion. Against the Roman government. Now at that moment in time. The Roman government. Put up with the Jews. And religious leaders. Let them have a little bit of power.

Kept them at peace. But they thought. If Jesus leads rebellion. Then everything's going to be destroyed. We're going to lose our place. In society. Our place of prestige.

And power. And wealth. We're going to be. We're going to be. Probably killed. And the whole of our country. Is going to be destroyed. If Jesus leads rebellion. So it's better. That we actually get Jesus killed.

[25 : 46] And out the way. Rather than the whole of the country. And all the people die. And we lose our way of life. But you see. What he was saying. Echoes with truth.

Not that Jesus had come to lead rebellion. But that it was necessary for one to die. In the place of many. Not just for the Jews. Or for Israel. But for the world.

The Bible says very clearly. For God so loved the world. That he gave his one and only son. That whoever believes in him. Should not perish. But have everlasting life. The very heart of the suffering of Jesus.

The very heart of what begins here. With his arrest. And leads to his judgment. And his punishment. And his crucifixion. And his death. The very heart is this. That he. This innocent. Sinless son of God.

Was going to die. In the place of sinful. And wicked men and women. You and I. He. The immortal God. Would die for mortal.

[26 : 44] Men and women. He. This holy God. Would die in the place. Of sinful lawbreakers. He. Who was bound. And tied. Was. Did so.

So that he might set us free. He was counted wicked. Was counted wicked. So that we might be. Declared righteous. And justified. That's the only conclusion.

We can come to. That all that was going on here. Was in our place. Your place and mine. In your stead and mine. For your sake and mine. You see. Unless. Sin is dealt with. Unless your sin and mine. Is justly dealt with. By God at the cross. Then your sin and mine. Must be justly dealt with. By God. On the day of judgment. When we stand before God. And we receive. What our sins deserve. Either Jesus took. What our sins deserve. And we put our faith. And trust in him. And thank him. For doing it for us. Or we must face. [27 : 39] What our sins deserve. And spend an everlasting. Eternity. In hell. And in punishment. And suffering. Why should Jesus do this? Why should he be arrested?

Why should he be willing to die? Why should he be willing to go in our place? Because of love. Remember the very first words of John 13. Having loved his own or in the world. He showed them the full extent of his love.

Here's the full extent of the love of God for you. Dear friends. Whoever you are. That he was willing to die for you. Greater love he says in John 15. Has no one than this. Than he lay down his life for his friends.

And you are my friends. It is love. That makes him willing to be arrested. Love that chooses to go to the way of suffering. While we were still sinners.

Romans chapter 5. Christ died for us. So as we close. I've got to ask you this. Do you love him who loved you so much?

[28 : 36] Do you love him who loved you so much? Do you count his death and his suffering for you as something to be despised and ignored and rejected? Or do you love him?

Does your heart burn with warmth towards him who went to such a length? Such suffering for you? Will you submit yourself into his hands?

Or will you continue to run away from him? Because that's exactly what you're doing. If you aren't trusting him and coming to him and submitting to him. And saying Lord Jesus forgive me.

And come into my life and be the Lord of my life. Then you're running from him. You're just like one of those criminals. Those convicts. Running away from the arresting force.

But you see Jesus doesn't want to arrest you. So that you might be tried and punished. He wants to arrest you. That he might declare your pardon. That he might declare your freedom. That he might declare your liberty.

[29 : 31] Stop running. Stand still. Do what Jesus did and said I'm here Lord. Take me. Save me. Change me.

Forgive me. Let's pray together. Thank you Lord Jesus that you were willing to be arrested. And to bear all the suffering that followed. Because of your love for us. Not because we deserve. Or earn. Any of it. And Lord we confess that we have run from you.

That we have tried to get away. We've ignored you. We've rejected you. When people have spoken to us about Jesus. Even as we're listening now. Then our hearts is that. I don't want this.

He won't have me. Oh Lord. Stop us in our tracks. Put out your stinger. Or whatever you need to do. To stop us from fleeing.

[30 : 49] From your grace. And love. And salvation. Make us oh Lord to be those who. Willingly and gladly submit to you.

And call you Lord and God. Saviour and friend. We ask these things now. Lord Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Jesus says. Come to me. All you who are weary and burdened. And I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.

For I am gentle and humble in heart. And you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy. And my burden is light.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.