**Livin’ the Life**

**Jesus’ Trial Before the Jews**

**John 18:12-17**

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We are in our series in the Gospel of John, Livin’ the Life, looking at the life of Jesus and the life he promises. We are in chapter 18:12-27, looking at Jesus’ trial before the Jews. John writes his account to contrast Jesus’ response to questioning with Peter’s response to questioning.

**Jesus Before the High Priest (13-14)**

After Jesus is arrested, he is bound and taken to the high priest for questioning. There are two high priests mentioned here. Annas is the unofficial high priest the Romans removed while Caiaphas is the official high priest that they put in place. Still wielded considerable power so Jesus was brought to him first (13). John reminds us that Caiaphas unwittingly prophesized that Jesus would die for his people (14; 11:47-53).

**Peter Denies Jesus the First Time (15-18)**

All the disciples abandoned Jesus when he was arrested but Peter and John followed the arresting party. The high priest knew John so he was allowed to enter the courtyard and watch the proceedings while Peter was outside (15-16). The courtyard was likely a patio attached to Annas’ palace. John was able to get Peter into the courtyard also (16). The servant girl who was letting Peter in questioned him, are you one of this man’s disciples also, which he denied, I am not (17). It was after midnight and cold so some of the high priest’s staff made a fire and were warming themselves around it. Peter stood there with them, keeping himself warm too (18).

**Jesus Questioned by High Priest (19-24)**

Meanwhile, the high priest questions Jesus about his disciples and his teaching (19). They want to know the size of his following and find fault with his teaching. Jesus responds that his teaching is public knowledge, he has spoken openly, in the temple and their synagogues (20). Both Jesus and his teaching were well known in Jerusalem. If he was really on trial, the high priest should have been questioning witnesses rather than Jesus! So, Jesus tells him to go ahead and ask those who heard him (21). One of the temple officers did not like the way he was speaking to the high priest so he struck Jesus (22). Jesus retorts, if what I have said is wrong then prove it but if not, why do you strike me (23)? Jesus does not back down, he is defending the truth. Jesus is God’s faithful witness. He is not going to get a fair trial yet is faithful witness to the truth and knows he is God’s substitute for human sin. This is a spiritual battle (12:31; 14:30; 16:11). These leaders hate him, hate what he stands for, and are seeking to kill him. The religious leaders of Israel are rejecting their king and are tools of Satan to accomplish God’s purposes (Acts 2:22-24; 4:24-28). When Annas realizes that he is not getting anywhere with Jesus, he sends him bound to Caiaphas (24). Jesus is God’s better sacrificial lamb bound and going to his death as a substitute for sin (1:29; 1 Pet 1:18-19). He is the perfect spotless lamb who learned obedience through suffering (Heb 2:10; 4:15-16). He is also the better high priest who offers himself as a sacrifice for our sins.

Meanwhile Peter is standing with the high priest’s staff around the fire. They ask him, are you also his disciple? And Peter denies Jesus for the second time, I am not (25). And finally, a servant who was in the garden of Gethsemane when they arrested Jesus, a relative of the man whose ear Peter cut off, ask him a last time, didn’t I see you in the garden with him and Peter denied it for the third time, and immediately a rooster crowed (26-27). It was just hours before that Peter so confidently said he would die for Jesus (13:37)!

In contrast to Jesus, the faithful witness, Peter is a faithless witness who has aligned himself against Jesus, as he stands with the high priest’s staff. Just a few hours before Peter was willing to fight to the death for Jesus (18:11). But now, apart from Jesus, Peter is unable to muster up any courage. Peter is afraid of what may happen to him for standing up for Jesus in the garden and now afraid of being identified with Jesus. Bottom line, he is afraid of suffering for following Jesus. Yet suffering is the norm for those who follow Jesus.

Peter is a sinful and broken person like all of us who are drowning under the power of our own sin. Apart from Jesus, none of us have it within ourselves to overcome sin and Satan. The gospel tells us that God chose Peter, a broken and sinful and weak man to receive eternal life. And not just to receive eternal life but to influence others, encourage his brothers and have influence in the early church. Peter is not ultimately defined by his failure but by God’s forgiveness and the work of God’s Spirit through him. And so are we.

Questions for Life Groups:

1. What truth(s) in this passage or teaching struck you or that you should think about more?
2. Why did Annas question Jesus rather than bring forth witnesses?
3. Have you experienced in justice or something unfair?
4. Why did the religious leaders want to kill Jesus?
5. Why do you think that Peter denied Jesus?
6. Why is the idea of suffering like sandpaper to western Christians?
7. What forms of suffering does the bible say Christians will face?
8. How would you summarize the main point of the teaching in one sentence?
9. How does this teaching affect my relationship with God?
10. How is God speaking to you from this passage/sermon?
11. How is God asking you to respond and obey him?
12. How does this teaching affect Jesus’ command to make disciples?