

Gospel of John #25
The Victory of Jesus
John 18

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For the last 6 weeks, (the book of) John has been moving along in slow motion...but now we have made it to the action following the 4th-quarter speech about the advocate who will be coming and Jesus's prayer for us (those yet to believe).

John 18 starts out as a disaster: First, Jesus goes into the garden, Judas comes with a band of ruffians, Jesus is arrested, Peter fights and cuts off a guy's ear, Jesus surrenders himself willingly, Jesus is questioned by the Sanhedrin and even though they know he's innocent, they want him dead so they bring him to Pilate, who makes the same conclusion about Jesus's innocence. But the Jews want him crucified and exchange Jesus for the criminal Barabas.

I tend to read this part of the story as the "bad stuff" before the "good stuff." On Resurrection Sunday, we learned that the gospel is all a farce if Jesus didn't rise from the dead. Because of this, we can view John 18 through the lens of the resurrection, the Gospel. Today, I want to look through this lens in order to grasp the greatness of Jesus Christ.

It is helpful to use a metaphor to do this: Let's look at this through the metaphor of superheroes: (If you don't resonate with superheroes, think about what metaphor makes sense to you.)

My children think a skyscraper is as big as they can reach and I can reach even higher because I'm taller...but that is not even close to the reality of a sky-scraper's height. Superheroes also do this: they point us to the greatest superhero, Jesus.

Paul uses another metaphor in Ephesians 6 of a shield of faith which helps us take what we know about physical shields and apply them to resisting the enemy. This is a helpful metaphor to understand our struggle against darkness in the spiritual realm.



Paul continues to say our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the spiritual realm. We must keep this in mind as we compare Jesus to a superhero (who might be big and strong and beat people up): the analogy only goes so far and we could make wrong conclusions.

I was intrigued with superheroes as a 10 year old: I would research wikipedia to learn about their powers and characteristics. In the Bible, we have 66 books which are the stats of Jesus's superpowers.

Psalm 1 is an example of an Old Testament Scripture that speaks of these super powers:

1 Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers,

Jesus does not take counsel from the wicked; I used to picture someone wicked who was easily identified by their evil, gnarly appearance. But wicked here means "guilty:" when I give counsel that is not of the Lord, I am wicked.

Jesus doesn't stand in the path of sinners: maybe I think it's not a big deal not to walk or even go on the road of such people but Jesus doesn't even stand in this path.

As a child with my brothers, we practiced the liturgy of mockery which is actually different from scorning. Scorning diminishes someone's value. However, Jesus elevates the value of all humans. We will see this in John 18.

2 but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.

Jesus delights in the instruction of the Father. We learned from Pastor Mark last week that there aren't really a lot of elements to Jesus ministry; basically he was teaching, preaching, spending time with the Father. He chose to delight in the Father which becomes apparent later in John 18.

3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, and who meditates on his law day and night. 4 Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.

We will see the other people in John 18 blow away like chafe. Peter cannot take root like Jesus.

5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. 6 For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

When Jesus tells Peter he will deny him, it is merciful of him...judgment has to do with victory. The way of the wicked will perish; Jesus's way is lasting.

which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers.

We will start into **John 18** but go **backwards**:

John 18: 28-38

28 Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus from Caiaphas 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. **29** So Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?"

30 "If he were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed him over to you."

31 Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law."

"But we have no right to execute anyone," they objected. **32** This took place to fulfill what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die.

31 Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law."

"But we have no right to execute anyone," they objected. **32** This took place to fulfill what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die.

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

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

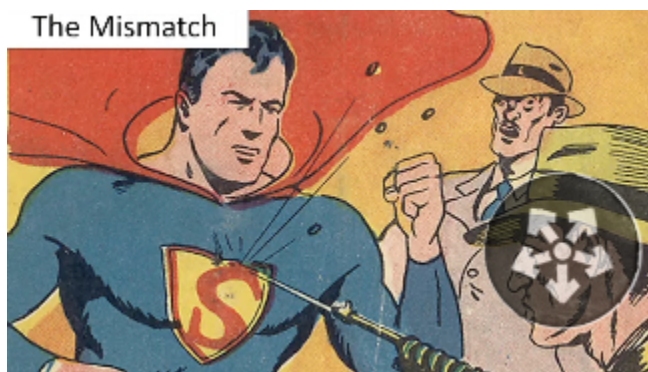
35 "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

36 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."

37 "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 the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

38 "What is truth?" retorted Pilate.



This resembles a classic uprising in movies where the thug meets the superhero and finds out he is bulletproof. Like Superman, Jesus will go on to take care of the supervillain, Death, but first he has to take care of the easier villain, Pilate.

Jesus doesn't play the games Pilate wants to play. Actually, Jesus is merciful to Pilate: he tells him what he needs to hear: that Jesus is truth.

Notice that Pilate could have responded in one of three ways:

1. He could have knelt before Jesus as Lord
2. He could have rejected Jesus and refused to obey him
3. (He chose) the wishy-washy way in between responses (which is what we often do): Pilate asked a question, "What is truth?"

I remember Jim Wroth's sermon a few months ago when he told a story about wrestling with right and wrong in a particular situation. Finally, someone asked him if he wanted to submit himself to Jesus's authority. When he did this, **the cloud of confusion went away.**

Pilate's question wasn't sincere but it is worth asking.



In my mind, basketball players are superheroes. Paul Pierce was a good basketball player whose superpower was scoring in the 4th quarter when it mattered most. His nickname was “The Truth.”

The truth is not a set of equations and laws to agree with. Instead, The Truth is a PERSON that we have to wrestle and reckon with.

John 18: 12-27

12 Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him **13** and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. **14** Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people.

15 Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest’s courtyard, **16** but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in.

17 “You aren’t one of this man’s disciples too, are you?” she asked Peter.

He replied, “I am not.”

18 It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.

19 Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.

20 "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. **21** Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said."

22 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.

23 "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" **24** Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

25 Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they asked him, "You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?"

He denied it, saying, "I am not."

26 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?" **27** Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

One of the coolest things an action hero can do is walk away from explosions because it shows the superhero is in control. This describes Jesus as well.

Jesus's control is connected to Self-Control, a fruit of the Spirit. ***God gives us a realm of things that we ARE supposed to be in control of: when we go outside of this, things go wrong.***

The person walking away from the explosion, violence, and chaos understands the score, what is really going on. Even though he is being mistreated, Jesus knows the score. Peter, meanwhile, has forgotten the score. Jesus lets his actions speak for themselves. He is able to say this because he has complete integrity. But when he presents his integrity to his accusers, they slap him in the face.

I want you to consider how we might do something similar: the ways we strike out against Jesus in violence when we are presented with his righteousness. Fortunately, Jesus doesn't do what is "fair" in this situation which would be annihilating those who slapped him. Instead, he is the tree firmly planted and asks a piercing question: "If I

spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" I wonder if this question will become a splinter in the guy-who-asked-the-question's mind? Jesus presents us with truth and we lash out at him.

We will finish by going back to the beginning of John 18:

John 18: 1-11

1 When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it.

2 Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. **3** So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.

4 Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"

5 "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

"I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) **6** When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

7 Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?"

"Jesus of Nazareth," they said.

8 Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go." **9** This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me."

10 Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)

11 Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"



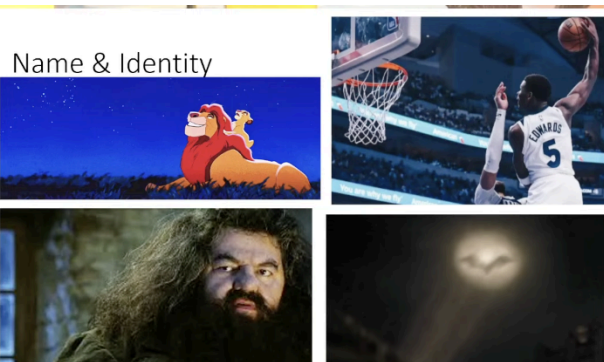
This photo is from Superman 2 where Clark Kent loses his superpowers in the middle of the movie when he meets a bully in a diner. When he confronts the bully, he is beaten up and bleeding. Viewers are struck by Superman's humanity and vulnerability. However, at the end, he comes back and destroys the bully to set things right.

To compare with Jesus, let's go back to Genesis to compare Adam's response to Jesus's response when they face the enemy. The serpent tricks Adam into taking the fruit, leading to the Fall of Man. Both Jesus and Adam are afraid but handle their situations differently:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adam in Eden <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silent • Afraid & hides • Blames others • Trusts the enemy's word 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus in Gethsemane <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive • Afraid & steps forward • Protects others • Trusts God's word
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Jesus not only trusts but delights in the Father.

Let's talk about the names of superheroes: names are just sounds unless there is a meaning and identity tied to the name. The stronger the identity, the stronger the name. Some examples:



(top L) **Mufasa** is the good hero from Lion King. Scar, the villain, forbids Mufasa's name to be used because of the power it calls forth.

(Bottom L) Harry Potter's evil **Lord Voldemort** is so fearsome that people won't even say his name.

(Bottom R) **Bat signal**: Batman's superpower is that he is rich and has a lot of gadgets and he also uses his identity: The bat signal calls him

to fight injustice and reminds people that Batman is active.

(Top R) Anthony Edwards of Timberwolves is exciting to watch and you frequently hear that he reminds people of **Michael Jordan**. But this is blasphemous because Michael Jordan's name is **hallowed** (very, very special).

Every other Sunday, we talk about HALLOWED, or very very special. God's name is hallowed and we see this in **John 18:6** When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

The name of God: When Jesus is arrested, his first reply is "I AM," the same name that the voice in the burning bush uses to tell Moses who will deliver the Israelites. This means these people are face-to-face with God. ***This name is capable of creating a physical shockwave.***



This is the best photo of a shockwave that I could find.

Peter's famous failures are highlighted in this chapter: his sword cutting off an ear and his denial. Historically, my response to these has been to conclude that Peter was terrible and that I'm like Peter and I need to be less unrighteous. I forget that this passage is about the **victories of Jesus**, not the failures of Peter.



In this chapter, Peter and Judas failed to use their **shield of faith**: faith is also about **allegiance** or FAITHFULNESS.

Peter neglects to trust in the **power** of God and instead is blown about like chaff when he denies him. But when people fell to the ground when Jesus spoke his name (God was clearly imminent!) and

Peter missed it. I doubt Peter intended to

mistrust God's power when he drew his sword and cut off the man's ear. The real mistake he made was that he lost sight of who was really in control, the tree of righteousness.

We also miss this: we are not expecting it and we do things like pull out a sword and cut someone's ear off, as if this will really DO something.

It is profound that Jesus tells Peter ahead of time that he will fail. This is not to shame him, it is to highlight that even though Peter is not enough, Jesus IS.