

"Are You One of His Disciples?"

Thomas Robinson, Fathers Day, June 20, 2010

John 18:10-27

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?*"

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**. [11:49-51]

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 charcoal 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 what I said to them. 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.

John 13:36-38

³⁶ Simon Peter asked him, "*Lord, where are you going?*"

Jesus replied, "***Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.***"

³⁷ Peter asked, "*Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.*"

³⁸ Then Jesus answered, "*Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, **before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times!***"

John 18:4-6

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. ...⁶ When Jesus said, "***I am (he),***" they drew back and fell to the ground.

Following Jesus into the Enemy's Lair

In the garden Jesus gave himself up, in spite of Peter's defense. Jesus is bound and led away. Jesus had told Peter he could not follow him now (13:36), but Peter wanted to follow Jesus. He and "another disciple" follow to the house of Annas.

Annas was the first high priest appointed by the Romans in a.d. 6. He served 10 years until a new Roman governor, Valerius Gratus, replaced him. Annas remained patriarch of a powerful high priestly family. All five of his sons served as HP, but most successful was his son-in-law, Caiaphas (HP a.d.18-36). Appointed by Gratus, Caiaphas served through the governorship of Pontius Pilate (a.d.26-36). John refers back to his statement about one man dying for the people—prophesying more than he knew. This Roman-appointed family of priest controlled the temple throughout Jesus' ministry. It was their authority Jesus confronted when he made a whip and drove the animal sellers and money-changers from the temple (2:14-22).

Annas lived in a mansion on the hill west of the temple—courtyard, large rooms. Jesus is taken in before the "High Priest" – a closed area. The "other disciple" (cf. 20:2) is known to the HP(!) and goes in; comes back to get Peter. No apparent danger. But Peter wants to stay "under cover" in hostile territory. The woman who opened the door questioned him. "You're not a disciple too, are you?" Peter says no and he's in! Now he can stand with those who arrested Jesus around a charcoal fire (cf.21:9). He has followed Jesus! But has he? Does he know who he is or what is happening?

Jesus Confronts the High Priest

John describes the questioning by the High Priest in the briefest possible manner. He saves the detailed description for the trial before Pilate. He does not even mention a trial before the Sanhedrin led by Caiaphas, so prominent in Mt. and Mk. Annas asks about Jesus' disciples and teaching, perhaps detecting a hidden conspiracy.

Jesus says nothing about either. His ministry and teaching have been entirely public with no secret messages or training. Call witnesses. Ask people. They know.

Yet there is a deep irony here. Everything is public. People think they have Jesus identified and categorized. But what Jesus is doing right in front of their eyes is so unexpected that no one really grasps what is happening, not even Jesus' closest disciples. Peter thinks like Jesus' opponents, like a human, that this is a struggle of physical power. Jesus is losing. Peter wants to help save Jesus, following under cover. But Jesus is doing something he has explained but they can't yet grasp. He is drinking the cup of God's judgment, giving himself for the life of the world. It is totally public and totally hidden. Peter can't save Jesus. Jesus must save Peter.

The unexpected boldness of Jesus' response brings a slap in the face. Jesus is in no way under cover. He is not cowed. He instructs the policeman about the law. Jesus is too much. Annas sends him to Caiaphas and on to Pilate.

Who are You?

Jesus is gone but Peter is still there, warming himself with Jesus' enemies, trying to learn something that might help (?). When they had come to arrest Jesus, he had stepped forward to identify himself – "I am." Ironically Peter denies Jesus by denying his own true identity – "I am not." But Peter would find himself again in Jesus. When he learned to receive Jesus' self-giving grace and love, dying for him.

Who am I? Are you one of his disciples? Learning to see beyond the obvious?

Receiving his grace? Living openly, boldly, faithfully a life that embodies his love?