

THE FIRST 15

Tuesday, May 14, 2024

Today is Tuesday, May 14 and we are studying the Gospel of John chapter eighteen.

OPENING PRAYER

Holy and Loving God, in the morning I lift my heart to praise you. I pause at the beginning of this upcoming day to seek your presence and put you first. Thank you for always being with me and reminding me that you are working all things together for my good. Help me still my scattered thoughts, calm my breath and focus on your loving kindness. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

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.) Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people.
John 18:10-14

REFLECTION

Peter was his usual self - courageous and impulsive. In this particular instance he misunderstood what Jesus must do and was perhaps somewhat clumsy. He swings the sword he brought and cuts off the ear of a man named Malchus who was the servant of the High Priest Annas. That can't be good. Both Luke and John specify that the ear Peter cut off was the man's right ear. Was there a particular significance to the right ear of a servant being maimed? How does a person wield a sword in that manner if they are right-handed? Was Peter left-handed? Did he strike from behind? Something doesn't make sense here. But somehow an ear was definitely cut off. Ouch.

Luke records a wonderful addition that John omits. Jesus orders the violence to cease and pauses in the turmoil to touch the man's ear and heal him (Luke 22:50-51). That is what Jesus does - heals the enemy who has come to arrest him and escort him to his death. Jesus sets the example. He teaches us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. Jesus did not bring weapons to fight and his hands did not turn into fists. Jesus brought mercy to love others and his hands touched and healed. That is the kind of Savior we have. The one who heals what is wounded, restores what is broken, mends what is torn and goes to the cross to suffer for all who are lost.

Jesus was arrested that night in the darkness surrounded by torches, lanterns and weapons. He was bound and dragged from the Garden of Gethsemane to face his accusers. Two interrogations will follow - the first by the Jewish religious authorities and the second by the Roman civil authorities. Annas was the former high priest who had great power and ruled from 6-15 A.D. As "high priest emeritus" he continued to wield great influence. Caiaphas was his son-

in-law who was the high priest (18-36 A.D.) during the time of Jesus' arrest. John indicates there was a preliminary hearing at Annas' home (John 18:24) followed by a subsequent full scale Sanhedrin interrogation under Caiaphas' leadership at his home. The darkness of the night grows darker.

Ask: How have I witnessed the healing touch of Jesus in the face of hatred and violence? How can I follow the teachings of Jesus and learn to love my enemies?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you for loving me, mending the broken pieces of my heart, restoring what is lost and forgiving what was wrong. You are the one who speaks out against violence, heals the damage people do to each other and seeks the path of love. You teach us that love is stronger than fear, love is stronger than anything. Show me how to grow in my love for God and love others deeply from the heart. Fill me with your spirit of peace and give me a heart of reconciliation. Amen.