Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

It has been a while since we did an overview of John’s Gospel. So by way of reminder, in ch. 20:31 John tells us that he wrote his Gospel that readers might “*believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name*.” And the two major parts of his Gospel are ch’s 1-12 and Jesus’ ***public*** ministry – the seven major miracles and the seven major discourses or talks – and ch’s 13-21, which are His ***private*** conversation with the disciples and then the record of His crucifixion and resurrection.

And we have just finished our tour through Jesus’ private conversation with His disciples. It began in the Upper Room with the Passover Supper and then Jesus washed the feet of the disciples. In ch’s 14-16 Jesus sought to prepare the disciples for what was about to happen, with Him repeatedly promising to send the Holy Spirit. And in ch. 17 we have His prayer for the disciples and all believers. So now we come to the last part of John’s Gospel – his record of the arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus.

And our focus today is His arrest. And because John wrote his gospel so that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, we want to see how **even** **the arrest of Jesus reveals Him to be the Son of God**. Today we have heard four people tell us that they believe that Jesus is the Son of God and their Saviour. But I think I can confidently say that this passage is not the first passage that they or any of us would turn to to demonstrate that Jesus is the Son of God! In fact, there are probably many people who view Jesus as a kind of victim here, ie, He had kept the Jewish leaders at bay up till now but they finally gained the upper hand and got Him! But we shall see that this is not the case at all.

And we are going to consider the arrest of Jesus over two Sundays. And we do that because much of what we will see today is relevant to everything that will unfold in the next few chapters. So today we will consider the **events that led up to His arrest** and next time we will look at the arrest itself. But all along the way the main point will be that **Jesus is the Son of God because He is in complete control**.And may it be that as we see this we are led to adoration and thankfulness for His glory and love!

1. So today we begin with **the events that led up to Jesus’ arrest**. We want to think about *why* this moment came about? What brought Jesus and the disciples and Judas and the soldiers together? Why were they in the garden? And why was Jesus able to be arrested now when thus far He has been unarrestable? Well, the words that help us answer all these questions are these words in v4: “*Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to Him*…” But to see how they help us we have to go back to several passages in John’s Gospel. And that will pretty much be the rest of the sermon. We will simply walk through the relevant parts of John’s Gospel to see how this moment came about and what all this reveals about Jesus:
   1. So turn first of all to **7:30**. Jesus had healed a lame man on the Sabbath, fed a crowd from a few bits of bread, and walked on water – the 3rd, 4th, and 5th miracles of John’s Gospel. And ch. 7 opens with Jesus’ 5th discourse, delivered during the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles. And the Jewish leaders did not like what Jesus was saying. So we read in v30, “*They were seeking to arrest Him, but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.*” So just hold that thought for a moment: They could not arrest Him then because “His hour had not yet come.” Let’s continue, “*Yet many of the people believed in Him. They said, "When the Christ appears, will He do more signs than this man has done?" The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about Him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest Him*.” And then Jesus talked some more and we drop down to **verse 43**, “*Some of them wanted to arrest Him, but no one laid hands on Him. The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why did you not bring Him?" The officers answered, "No one ever spoke like this man!"*”
      1. So the key phrase here is that His hour had not yet come. The hour of Jesus’ arrest was a divinely appointed hour. It could not happen a minute before or a minute after the moment that God had appointed for it to happen. So Jesus was unarrestable at that time because His hour had not yet come.
      2. But we also see a human reason for why Jesus was unarrestable back then, which was that He was very popular with many of the people.
   2. So turn next to **8:20**. This chapter begins with Jesus’ 6th discourse. And half way through it, John says, “*These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; but no one arrested Him, because His hour had not yet come*.” So again, Jesus was unarrestable then because it was not yet the moment appointed by God. And Jesus continued His discourse and had a confrontation with the Jewish leaders. And look at **verse 59**, “*So they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple*.”
      1. So avoiding stoning or arrest was easy for Jesus; He just hid or left and there was nothing they could do about it. The point is that He will only be arrested when He is ready to be arrested.
      2. But we can also imagine the mounting frustration of the Jewish leaders – they can’t arrest Him and they can’t stone Him. Arggh!
   3. Turn over now to **10:17-18**. This is part of the 7th discourse. Jesus said, “*For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father*.” So here we see Jesus telling us that He will be in charge of His death; He will not be some helpless victim of circumstances that He cannot control.
      1. And look next at **verse 39**. After that discourse, we read, “*Again they sought to arrest Him, but He escaped from their hands*.” So He was still unarrestable!
   4. So now turn over to **11:45**. Jesus had just raised Lazarus from the dead – the 7th and last miracle recorded by John. And it is the pinnacle miracle – a resurrection! And we read that “*many of the people believed in Him*.” But in **v47**, we read that the Jewish leaders were greatly troubled by Jesus and His signs. They just did not know what to do! And that is when Caiaphas the High Priest made the suggestion that it would be better for Jesus to die than for the whole nation to perish. Look at **v53**, “*From that day on they made plans to put Him to death. Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there He stayed with the disciples.*” So Jesus withdrew from Jerusalem. Again, because He was in control of the unfolding of these events, He withdrew so that He could not be arrested then.But some time later, **v56** continues, “*The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That He will not come to the feast at all?" Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest Him*.”
      1. So the Jewish leaders expected that Jesus would come to Jerusalem during this very important national feast. They probably suspected that He might choose this feast as the time that He seized control and set Himself up as a King. But they would be ready for Him!
   5. So now turn to **12:19**. Jesus had come to Jerusalem and He had ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey with the people receiving Him as a king! And so we read, “*The Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him*.” You can see their shoulders slouching and you can hear them sighing in resignation; there just does not seem to be anything they can do to stop Him now.
      1. And His entry into Jerusalem happened on Sunday, and then on Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday He travelled back and forth to Jerusalem from nearby Bethany. And now it was Thursday evening and the Jewish leaders faced **three massive obstacles** to their quest to arrest Jesus – 1, the people loved Him and He was in Jerusalem; arresting Him now would lead to a riot, 2, according to Jewish law you could not hold a trial on a death penalty case at night and 3, the next day, Friday, was Passover Day, so not a day when the Roman Governor would hold usually trials. So from their perspective, Jesus was utterly unarrestable.
   6. But now turn to **13:1**. It’s Thursday evening and we read, “*Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end*.”
      1. Do you see the change here? Again and again we have been told, it was not the hour, but now the hour had come. There have been many moments before this, when it was humanly *possible* to arrest Jesus and it did not happen. But now when it appears to be humanly *impossible* to arrest Jesus, it will happen.
   7. And it is Jesus who sets His arrest in motion in **13:21**. Having shared the Last Supper with the disciples and washed their feet, we read, “*After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in His spirit, and testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom He spoke. One of His disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table close to Jesus, so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom He was speaking. So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to Him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it." So when He had dipped the morsel, He gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly." Now no one at the table knew why He said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night. When He had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him*.”
   8. And so now, here we are, in the Garden of Gethsemane, late at night, and Judas has come with soldiers from the Jewish leaders to arrest Jesus.

Do you see then how all this reveals Jesus as the Son of God who is in complete control?

* + 1. It is because of *Jesus* that up till now the Jewish leaders thought He was unarrestable.
    2. But He has changed this by *sending* Judas to do his work and by heading out to the Garden. You see, Jesus knew that the Jewish leaders would act because of *who* Judas was and his *message*. Think about it! Judas was one of Jesus’ disciples! And even though we are not told what Judas said to the Jewish leaders, we know what his message would have been because *Jesus gave him the words*! It would have been something like this:

*Guys! Jesus is thinking and talking about death. He has been talking about it for some time, but He is now talking as if He will die any day. It is like He is ready to surrender. If you act now, without delay, I think He will go with you and your worst fears would be resolved. And guess what, He is going to Gethsemane … and He will wait there ‘til I come. Get a move on and make your arrangements. I can lead you to Him!*

Do you see? It’s the *perfect* message from the *perfect* messenger! Jesus expects to be arrested and He has left the city for the uninhabited garden *at night time*!

* + 1. But Jesus knew that Judas would say this. And He also knew that the hypocritical, wicked Jewish leaders would ignore their own law and happily hold a capital trial at night-time because it suited their own ends. And He knew that they would be able to convince Pilate to come out early in the morning for the Roman part of the trial.
    2. So it was *Jesus* who changed His status from unarrestable to arrestable! Jesus is in complete control of this moment. And what all this adds up to, congregation, is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God!

You know, when people talk about who is responsible for the death of Jesus, they usually fall into two camps – some say it was the Jewish leaders and the Jewish people who were responsible, while others say it was Pilate and the Roman soldiers, the Gentiles, who were responsible! Which would you pick? Jew or Gentile?

* + 1. But what have we seen today? Jesus said, “*For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life … No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.*” So in actual act, Jesus is responsible for His death! And this is not to excuse the Jewish leaders or the Roman soldiers in any way, but we need to understand that Jesus died because *He* chose to die! He gave up His life!
    2. But we also heard John’s introduction to the whole account of Jesus’ death: “*Jesus knew that His hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end*.” And after Jesus sent Judas away to do his work, He said, “*Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him*.”
       1. The arrest of Jesus and the crucifixion of Jesus happened because of His love for you and to reveal His glory!
       2. This is what we have been talking about in relation to Jesus’ prayer in ch. 17:
          1. Before the creation of the world, the Father chose to save some people from the mass of fallen humanity to give to the Son to be with Him forever in heaven.
          2. But for this to happen, the Son would have to go to the cross to pay for their sins. And He agreed to do that because of His love for His people.
          3. But now that moment had come. The centuries and decades and years and weeks and hours and seconds of human history had rolled by and now the cold, hard reality of the cross was in front of Jesus. And it would begin with His arrest.
          4. And make no mistake, He could have escaped; He had done that at other times, as we read. And in another of the Gospels, He says to Peter, right at this moment that, He could call upon 12 legions of angels to protect Him with one word. But He did not. He allowed Himself to be arrested *because of His love for you* and *to reveal His glory*!

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ what you have done today is wonderful! Jesus is the Son of God. And just as He was in complete control of His arrest, so He is in complete control of all things now. Your life is guarded and guided by your loving and glorious Saviour! And that does not mean that you will now be healthy and wealthy for the rest of your life, but whether it be health and wealth or whether it be sickness and poverty, or any and every other circumstance that is common to us as human beings, His promise is that He will be with you always and that ALL things will work together for good. And you must continually preach that to yourself because trouble will come! And as you experience His guarding and His guiding, may you be a blessing to us, and as we experience His guarding and guiding, may we be a blessing to you!

And finally, to those of you who have not publicly professed faith in Jesus Christ: You should! He is the Son of God. He is your only hope for salvation. And life with Jesus as Saviour and Lord is the *best* life! Will you receive Him as your Saviour and Lord today? Will you publicly confess your faith in Christ and join His church? Please do! Amen.