

# Whom seek ye

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now let's turn to that passage of Scripture we read in John's Gospel, chapter 18. And I would like to consider with you there words we find in verses 4, 5, and 10.

Verse 10.

Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it. Where do you stand in relation to Jesus Christ?

We sometimes get asked the question, where do you stand on some particular issue, whether it's a political issue or moral issue or whatever. But the greatest question of all that we can be asked and the greatest question we have to answer is where do we stand in relation to Jesus Christ?

In this passage we see where three people stood and why they stood where they did. We see where Judas stood.

[ 1 : 37 ] That's the most obvious because we're told here Judas also which betrayed him stood with them. But also we'll see where Jesus stood and where Peter stood in relation to Jesus.

Now this was a great time of crisis. And it is such a time of crisis that very often shows what a person is really like.

We can see this in many areas and walks of life. A soldier may appear a very good soldier, very brave, very expert in the training ground or on the parade ground.

But it will be the battle conditions that will determine or will show if he really is a good soldier.

A student or a pupil may appear very good in the classroom. But it will be the exam that will show whether that student or that pupil really knows what the subject is about.

[ 2 : 49 ] Or a footballer or some other sportsman may appear very good in training. But it will be the big game, the big match that will show whether he really has what it takes.

The time of crisis shows us very often what we really like. Now this was a time of crisis. And for Judas and for Peter, it would show where they really stood in relation to Jesus.

For him or against him. And as far as Jesus is concerned, it will show us what Jesus is really like.

First I would like to set the scene with you. Because we need to look at the events leading up to this to understand really what's going on here.

Jesus and the twelve had met in the upper room on the Thursday evening to celebrate the Passover. Now at some point in that evening, we're not exactly clear when Judas left with the intention of betraying Jesus.

[ 3 : 59 ] Jesus taught his disciples as recorded in chapters 14 to 16 here in John's Gospel. And he prayed that great prayer that's recorded in chapter 17.

By this time it was now late in the evening. And they would out of the city, east, down into the Kidron Valley, and up the other side to Gethsemane.

And there to an olive grove or garden. And there you remember Jesus engaged again in prayer.

But this was a different kind of prayer. The prayer in John chapter 17 is that great prayer where he prays on behalf of his people. And therefore it's called his great high priestly prayer.

But in his wrestling in Gethsemane, we see Jesus as the great high priest wrestling concerning what his great work was to be.

[ 5 : 06 ] Wrestling in all the frailty of his human nature with that great task appointed to him. And you remember the scene where he comes through that great trial.

And he comes and he finds the disciples asleep. And very shortly after that, this group of men led by Judas come there to arrest Jesus.

I want to look with you then first at Judas. Where he stood and why he stood where he did. Judas was standing with the enemies of Jesus.

These men who came, whether they were Jesus' personal enemies or not, they were acting on behalf of those who were most definitely Jesus' sworn enemies.

The Pharisees and religious leaders who hated Jesus and wanted rid of him. And Judas was standing with them. How did Judas come to be standing there?

[ 6 : 15 ] It's a solemn thing to consider the experience of Judas. For we know that Judas started out as one of Jesus' disciples. In the early days in Galilee, we're not told exactly how he came to be a follower of Jesus.

We're told about others. We're told about Simon Peter. We're told about Levi, Matthew the tax collector. But we're not told how Judas came to follow Jesus. But he was amongst his followers from those early days.

So there was something about Jesus that attracted Judas to him. And you see, there is something about Jesus that is attractive. Attractive to all different kinds of people.

And it's amazing that still today people know so much about Jesus. And they still have a regard or respect for Jesus. They may think of him as a great prophet. They may think of him as a great teacher.

They may think of him as a great political revolutionary. Or an ethical revolutionary. And they have some kind of regard for him. Now we don't know exactly what was the regard that Judas had for him.

[ 7 : 17 ] But there was something exciting about Jesus. Jesus was obviously someone who was a great leader. Jesus was someone who had great power. And people who have the powers of leadership are very often people who attract a following for all different kinds of reasons.

If you were attracted to the Lord Jesus Christ, why are you attracted to him? What is it about Jesus that makes him so interesting, so compelling?

That's a question for us to consider as we look at the experience of Judas. For we'll see that that is not enough. It's not enough to be fascinated by Jesus.

Not enough, even we may say, to be fascinated by Jesus. Many people are fascinated by the Bible or religious books or theology. And we know that that certainly is not enough.

But even to be fascinated with Jesus, even to be attracted to him in one way or another, it's not enough because Judas was. And we see he ended up with the enemies of Jesus.

[ 8 : 28 ] But not only that, not only did Judas start out as one of Jesus' disciples, he also became a trusted apostle.

Now, there is something mysterious here, and there's something I'm not going to attempt to answer. Why did Jesus choose Judas as one of the apostles, as one of the twelve?

Jesus, whom we are told, knew all men. He knew what was in them. And yet he chose Judas. The only thing we can think is that he was teaching us a great lesson here.

That someone may not only be interested in Jesus, but someone may even come to a position of service in the church.

And yet still, that is not enough. Because we know that Judas, as one of the twelve, would have been sent out by Jesus into the villages to preach that the kingdom of God was near and to heal the sick and so on.

[ 9 : 36 ] And Judas did that the same as all the other apostles. So here was a man who not only was interested in Jesus, not only interested in the kingdom, but he was apparently part of the work of that kingdom.

He held office. He was an apostle. Not only that, he had a specific responsibility, we're told, because he looked after the money for the group of the apostles. Again, it's an interesting little glimpse we get in that passage we read in John chapter 12.

Because there, we get this glimpse into how things worked with regard to money in the group of disciples or the group of the apostles. Because people, apparently, were giving money to them to use in the work of the kingdom, to give to the poor and so on.

And Judas was the man who looked after that money. So again, here, it's apparent he was a trusted individual. When people thought of someone who would look after the money, they thought of Judas.

So, to all outward appearances, Judas was someone who was a trusted apostle, a follower of Jesus Christ.

[ 10 : 50 ] And that, surely, is the great frightening thing about this, and the thing that I think is recorded in Scripture to really frighten us and to make us examine ourselves.

for whatever Judas had, it was not enough. We know that there was sin in Judas' life.

And when I say that, that, of course, is not telling us, oh well then, that's the explanation of what happened. Because there's sin in the life of every one of us.

the most learned Christian, the most faithful Christian, the most mature Christian here. There is sin in the life of every one of us.

We are very far from perfect. Yes, we trust that, like the Apostle Paul, we are pressing on towards the mark. We are not content with where we are in terms of our spiritual experience and our failure and sin, but nonetheless, there's sin in our lives.

[ 11 : 53 ] But when I talk about there being sin in Judas' life, it was sin that apparently was unconfessed and undealt with.

There was a particular sin in Judas' life, we know this, it was the love of money. Again, in that little cameo we're given in John chapter 12, remember when Mary comes with this very expensive perfume and she anoints Jesus.

perhaps she's doing it because she heard about another woman who had done it earlier in Jesus' ministry, a sinful woman and who came and showed her love for Jesus.

And Mary was saying, Mary who would appear to have been a very respectable lady, she was coming saying she was just the same as that sinful woman and yet she loved the Lord Jesus Christ and she wanted to do something for him as she saw the crisis of his death approaching.

That's how Jesus received it. But we know that Judas did not have the same regard for it.

[ 13 : 07 ] And it's in that context that we're told and this obviously was the disciples or was John looking back on events and he said Judas was the one who looked after the money bag.

He was the treasurer of the group and yet he took the money that was put into it for the use of the poor, he took it for himself. And that's how this all came out because Judas here at this moment where Mary was showing her love for the Lord Jesus and anointing him, Judas was criticizing what she was doing and he was criticizing and saying this money could have been given to the poor, John says, not because he cared for the poor but because that money then at least he would have been able to rake off some of it for himself.

Now how on earth did that happen in Judas' life? I suppose like all sin it began small.

I don't know. It might have been something as a boy he took some money from his mother's purse and he felt good that he could have this money and he could use it for what he wanted. I don't know.

But whatever it was it starts small, doesn't it? And yet it grows. If unconfessed then it grows and develops in our lives.

[ 14 : 32 ] Now I don't know what your besetting sin is. It may not be the love of money. It may be. It may be materialism. It may be something else entirely. But very often as we come near to the Lord Jesus Christ as we read his word we become aware of what our besetting sin is.

Something that we don't have power over we don't have control over. Is that driving you to the foot of the cross? Is it driving you to the Lord Jesus Christ to confess that sin and to plead with him to help you to overcome that sin?

That's a great lesson we must learn here from the experience of Judas. Because if sin is not dealt with is not confessed it grows and it festers and it develops in life.

And it developed in such a stage to such a stage in Judas' life that he was doing the shameful thing of taking money that didn't belong to him that was given for a charitable purpose and he was diverting it to his own uses.

And we don't know what uses these were. But following on from that and involved with that we see that there was also disillusionment with Jesus' ministry.

[ 15 : 55 ] Now this comes about by putting together some things that were told in the different Gospels. Because we're told here in John's Gospel it was Judas who was so critical of Mary and what she did.

And then we're told that he immediately went out to make an arrangement with the enemies of Jesus to betray him. And I believe there's a connection between those two things.

You see it would appear that it was that moment there in Bethany that Judas came to realize for the first time what kind of ministry what kind of work what kind of kingdom Jesus had come to establish.

It would appear that Judas was concerned with the things of this world. Maybe he was amongst those whom we know in Galilee had viewed Jesus as a great new king.

They viewed the Messiahship of Jesus as very much tied up with a this worldly kingdom. He was going to establish a great kingdom like David's. The Romans were going to be got rid of out of the land and it was going to be the kingdom of Israel again.

[ 17 : 12 ] It would appear certainly that Judas' horizon was limited to a this worldly state to material things and maybe he viewed himself as being and becoming a very important part of that new kingdom this worldly kingdom.

He after all would be able to handle the money he would be the Chancellor of the Exchequer of this new kingdom. but there in Bethany where Mary comes in simple love and pours that expensive perfume on Jesus and where Judas sees Jesus' reaction to this he realizes that Jesus' kingdom is an altogether different thing.

He came to see that in the estimation of Jesus the love of this single woman was far far greater than all the money that might be raised that could be used for this or that good purpose or whatever because Jesus' kingdom as he said himself is within you.

it is a kingdom in people's hearts it is a kingdom in changing people's lives and of that change Judas knew nothing and so Judas in complete disillusionment now with Jesus goes out to betray him.

We have got to be careful as we think of the work of Christ's kingdom and as we think of the service in that kingdom of others that we don't have that same kind of critical spirit that Judas had criticizing what people do out of love for the Lord Jesus Christ and if we detect anything like that in our own lives we must examine ourselves and see if something of that spirit of Judas is not in us and flee to the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness and cleansing and so the tragedy evolves Judas goes out and agrees to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver for money that thing that was really at his heart the love of money which is the root of all kinds of evil and even in the betrayal itself where Judas here comes and stands with the enemies of Jesus we're told again in the other gospels that he comes and he marks out

[ 19 : 57 ] Jesus as it were by coming up to him and greeting him with a kiss and Jesus remonstrates with him and says Judas are you betraying the son of man with a kiss now I believe those words were not said in some kind of condemnatory way surely those words would have broken the hardest heart those words surely were a great last appeal of the Lord Jesus Christ to Judas to awake what was left of conscience in him to say what I'm doing is wrong betraying the son of man with a kiss Judas had known nothing but love from the Lord Jesus Christ at this very moment he was knowing nothing but love from him and yet he was betraying him may not be as bad ultimately as Judas all our sin is sinning against love God has shown us nothing but love in Christ

Jesus our Lord if we know him and love him and yet we sin against him how tragic that is and how destructive that is and how it makes the work of the kingdom so much less than it ought to be as we his servants sin against love and so we see where Judas stood he stood with Jesus enemies and he stood there as far as we can judge right to the end yes we know there was some kind of remorse on Judas part he went in and he threw down the money in the temple and so on but then he went out and committed suicide he hanged himself and it appeared as if there was remorse there was regret there was bitterness but it appears there was no real change of heart the scriptures are very careful in what they say about that and it's not for us to judge all these things but as far as we can judge that was where he stood with the enemies of Jesus so you see

Judas' life stands to us as a great warning as we today are examining ourselves yes people may think of us as outwardly respectable they may think of us as Christians but we may know their sin in our hearts the great question is what do you do with that sin how do you deal with it are you driven just to bitterness and despair like Judas or are you driven to the cross are you driven to the Lord Jesus Christ and go on being driven there so that day after day you are confessing sin you are wrestling with sin we're told in the scriptures we've not yet resisted to blood in our struggle against sin we must resist and go on resisting and bringing our sin confessing it to the Lord Jesus Christ and in that way we trust that we will not be in the position of Judas standing with the enemies of Jesus I want to look with you secondly at Jesus and where he stood now you may say in this passage we're well not told exactly where

Jesus stood but I think we are because in verse 4 we're told Jesus therefore knowing all things that should come upon him went forth now what does that mean well I don't know how you conceive of this situation in your mind's eye I don't know if you do this but I always find it helpful to imagine what the scene is like and in my mind's eye I see this scene in this way I didn't always see it this way but I see it this way you see we're told here that Jesus and his disciples went to a garden or an olive grove and I suppose in the past I just thought of that as well just some olive trees growing somewhere but anything like that any precious crop like that and we're told about this in the gospels a vineyard or something like that would have a wall around it and it would have a gate or doorway and that's the picture we are to have in our mind

Jesus was there and when he heard this crowd coming for him he didn't hide he didn't even stay where he was he went out and he stood in the doorway or in the gateway that's the picture we should have in our minds now we're told that Jesus did this knowing all that was going to happen to him there are different kinds of courage in the world many people have done very courageous things we might say on the spur of the moment without thinking maybe you've done that yourself and you think afterwards well if I had thought what I was doing I would never have done but you see here is a different kind of courage the courage that knows the courage that knows all that's involved in what he's going to do knowing all that was going to happen Jesus still stood forth what was going to happen

[ 25 : 19 ] Jesus was going to be taken by this rough band of men and dragged into Jerusalem he was going to be vilified he was going to be spat upon he was going to be despised he was going to be mocked his kingship and his sonship of God were all going to be mocked and reviled he was going to be beaten he was going to have a crown of thorns thrust on his head in mockery of his kingship he was going to be condemned by wicked men and he was going to be condemned in the most unjust way and he was going to be taken out and nailed to a cross and there even in his dying he was going to be mocked and despised but not only that not only did he know all that physical pain he was also going to know all the psychological pain of rejection of his own followers having forsaken him and fled but far more than even that he was going to know what it was to be utterly alone upon the cross when he cried my God my God why hast thou forsaken me

Jesus would know the darkness and the emptiness that is due to our sin Jesus would know the judgment of God upon himself and we're told here Jesus knew all that he knew what was coming and yet he stood where he did that's the great courage of our saviour the Lord Jesus Christ that's what he has done for each one of us who trusts in him that's the great love of God here we see the good shepherd laying down his life as he said himself he would he said it wasn't that people would take it from him he would lay it down of himself he had power he had authority to lay it down and he had authority to take it again and here we see that Jesus willingly going out and saying you're looking for Jesus of Nazareth here I am you see these men had come expecting

Jesus to be the usual kind of fugitive from justice they came with torches and lanterns and weapons and they expected they would have to search for him and drag him out drag him reluctantly there to trial in Jerusalem but no such thing happened because Jesus was coming as the willing victim he was not resisting for he knew that now was the appointed time now was the great day of salvation when he was going to lay down his life for his people but in the midst of this also we see the great majesty of Jesus don't we because far from being the kind of fugitive from justice that they were expecting to discover we see this great majestic person they're coming shouting we want Jesus of Nazareth when he asked them and with just two words he completely demolishes them he says literally he says

I am and it's probably the way in which he said those words and those words themselves emphatic an emphatic statement that reminded many of them of where those words come from in the Old Testament when Moses asked God who will I send to Egypt to liberate his people and he will say tell them I am has sent you and that's where he gives himself the great name Jehovah I am that I am and there was something about the person of Jesus there was something about those words that hit those men like a blow and we're told that they fell backwards they fell to the ground the sheer majesty of Jesus there was another occasion when in his own town of Nazareth they came to destroy him to throw him down the cliff on which the city was built and we're told quite simply

Jesus passed through the midst of them Jesus simply walked through the crowd the sheer majesty of Jesus they could do nothing to stop him and here we see the same thing again we see the deity of Jesus Christ we see that he was not going to be compelled to die he was coming willingly he could at any moment by the sheer majesty of his own person have moved away from that situation and no one would have laid a finger on him but then he says who are you looking for and they say it would appear much more contritely they say Jesus of Nazareth and then we have this interesting thing he says I am he and if it's me you're looking for he says then let these others go and here we see again an amazing aspect of the work of Jesus Christ because here we see

[ 31 : 03 ] Jesus laying down his life for the sheep we see it in this again a little cameo because the people he's talking about are his disciples and he says you've come looking for me take me let them go and you see that is a great example of the great work that Jesus Christ has come to perform he has come to lay down his life for the sheep he stood forth in that doorway not just to defend and to protect his disciples but to defend and protect all of his people who would trust in him down through the ages because he was going through that doorway from that place where he stood he was going to that place of the cross where he would die for the sins of the world we see we see also Jesus at this moment loving his enemy not just his friends his disciples whom he here protects we've already noticed his love towards

Judas but we know from the full account given of this incident as we compare the gospels that he didn't just say to Peter put up your sword when he attacked the high priest servant he healed that man's ear that Peter had sliced off he had a man who had come to arrest him a man who had come to do him harm and Jesus touched him and healed him even at that moment of great crisis showing love for a man who was his enemy so here we see quite clearly where Jesus stood not just physically but figuratively we see where Jesus stood in the place of salvation the place of love the place where he was coming to show the love of God not just to those who were inclined in a godly direction like the disciples but even to his enemy and that's the great news that goes out throughout the whole world it's not just to religious people not just to people who maybe are attracted some way to Jesus but the good news comes to everyone it is good news for you today that

Jesus has died for the sins of the world and you're called you're asked you're invited to come and to believe in Jesus Christ you may be his enemy you are his enemy by sinning against him by rebelling against him but you're called you're invited you're pleaded with even to come and to trust in Jesus Christ thirdly and finally I would like to notice with you Peter and where he stood in verse 10 again the particular word stood or stand is not used but we can work it out Simon Peter having a sword drew it and smote the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear how are we going to describe this where did Peter stand I would describe it like this Peter stood with Jesus but he tried to stand in front of him instead of behind him picture again the scene there in the gateway or doorway of this garden

Jesus has stood forth Jesus stands there as the one who's laying down his life but Peter rushes in Peter draws his sword and he tries to get in front of Jesus to protect him now we're told here of course that Peter had a sword in Luke chapter 22 we're told that the disciples said they had two swords now that seems quite strange to us in one way because there's never any mention of that kind of thing anywhere else in the gospels why was it that they had sword why did Peter have a sword here well I think it's quite clear they realized they were going into a place of great danger in Jerusalem they knew there was great opposition against Jesus from the religious leaders they had swords and they were prepared to defend Jesus with them and particularly here it's clear that's why Peter had his sword that's what he wanted to do he wanted to defend Jesus he wanted to protect him he was prepared to use this sword and he did

Peter was the one who rushed in we're told again in one of the other gospels that some of the disciples asked Lord shall we strike with the sword but Peter didn't even wait to ask or didn't even wait for an answer he rushes in and again this is instructive for us isn't it because often as Christians we find ourselves in the same kind of place as Peter was he tried to stand in front of Jesus not behind him he really didn't have a clear understanding of Jesus mission Jesus had to say to him Peter put your sword into its sheath the cup which my father has given me shall I not drink in again you see Peter's horizons were limited in a this worldly way all he was concerned about was protecting Jesus there and them and in doing that he could have spoiled everything because Jesus was going to say to

[ 36 : 26 ] Pilate my kingdom is not of this world otherwise my servants would fight now if Jesus hadn't stopped everything right there and then he wouldn't be able to say that and there would be great confusion about what kind of kingdom Jesus kingdom was so you see Peter rushes in Peter rushes in not fully understanding things Peter rushes in and nearly spoils things and that's so like us isn't it as Christians we get things wrong so much of the time we misunderstand other people and their motivation and their thinking and we misunderstand the mind of Christ we think we know we've got hold of one part of the truth and we think we know everything and we rush in and we get things wrong and we spoil things that's the way things are in the church it has been so down through the ages read about it in the new testament think of those letters that Paul wrote to all those churches all the trouble there was all the misunderstanding all the confusion we see the same kind of thing today we see the same thing in our own experience and yet

God is at work God is at work in the experience of Peter frail foolish and flawed like he was because you see this is the thought I want to leave with you Peter may have been misguided but what he did he did out of love you see yes he was wrong to rush in to try to get in front of Jesus instead of waiting for Jesus work but what he did he did out of love it was because he loved Jesus that he was standing there you see he wasn't standing where Judas stood he wasn't standing with the enemies of Jesus he was standing with Jesus he was trying to get in front of him instead of waiting behind him to obediently find out what Jesus wanted but he was there he was with him and you see that's the great thing about Peter that's the great thing he can teach us yes he got things wrong he got things desperately wrong tragically wrong when he disowns



Jesus he denies that he knows Jesus and yet he loved Jesus and Jesus knew that for when he restored him he said Peter do you love me and you see that's the great question today isn't it as we examine ourselves as you examine your heart is there love there for Jesus love for who he is love that's prepared to take the rebuke from Jesus and to learn from it love that's prepared to go through that experience where you may weep bitterly at your own foolishness and your own failure after your own pride but love for Jesus and a desire not to leave him or forsake him so where do you stand in relation to Jesus Christ you know where Jesus stands Jesus stands in that place of love and salvation that place where he is offering himself for the sins of the world that place where he has died for sinners where do you stand in relation to him the challenge of the life of Judas that makes us examine ourselves carefully to see that we are not hypocritical that it's not just an outward show but also the example of Peter who shows to us that yes we may be flawed and we may be foolish in many ways but if we love the Lord Jesus Christ and love what he says and what he has done then we know that the Lord Jesus Christ is our Savior and is our friend and is our friend and is our friend and is our friend where do you stand in relation to Jesus let a man examine himself and so let him eat let us pray our gracious and loving heavenly father we have to confess that we find it painful to examine our lives in the light of your own word and we get scared sometimes by what we discover not only in your word but also in our hearts but we pray that in our frailty and in our sense of failure and sin we would turn to you not away from you we pray that you would grant us grace and strength so to do and Lord we praise you that there is forgiveness with you that you may be feared not only is there forgiveness but also there is the work of service to be performed for you that you give to all those who come to you and so we pray that you would help us to be like Peter who failed and who fell yet who was restored and restored to great usefulness and we pray that you would enable each one of us to consider how we may show this love for Jesus Christ not rushing in where angels fear to tread not rushing to be ahead of what Jesus says but rushing to follow Jesus rushing to be obedient to his command and so all these things we ask in Jesus name

Amen