

The Lord's Message: Journey to the Cross: Who Is It You Want?

Date: February 22, 2026

Where: Tilghman Methodist Church

Scripture Reference: John 14:1-14

If I were to ask you this morning to give me a physical description of Jesus, what would you say. Many artists, Renaissance masters such as Leonardo de Vinci (The Last Supper), Michelangelo (The Last Judgment, Crucifix), and Rembrandt (The Storm on the Sea of Galilee), have given their idea of what Jesus looked like. Modern artists such as Henrich Hofman (Christ in the Temple), Carl Bloch (Sermon on the Mount), William Holman Hunt (The Light of the World), and even Salvador Dali (Christ of Saint John of the Cross) has painted their depiction of Jesus. Jesus is depicted on stained glass windows of churches, such as we have in this church, Jesus as the Good Shepherd. If you were to ask my wife who does Jesus look like, she might say, Jonathan Roumie, the actor who plays Jesus in The Chosen. Jesus has been depicted by so many people in so many ways, but the truth of the matter is that we do not know what Jesus looks like. The Bible says this about Jesus, **Isaiah 53:2**.

In the shadows at the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus stepped out and asked this poignant question, "Who is it you want?" Today, that question still needs to be answered.

Let us pray.

Please turn in your Bibles to John 18:1. Just to give you some background of where we are in the life of Jesus, He has had His last meal with His disciples. Jesus has washed the feet of all His disciples, including Judas Iscariot, who would betray Jesus and all the other disciples who would abandon Jesus in just a few minutes from that point. While in the Upper Room, Jesus tries to comfort His disciples by offering a series of three prayers. First, Jesus prayed for Himself. This is recorded in **John 17:1-5**. "the time has come." This time is the time for Jesus to complete the mission for which God sent Him, to redeem us for our sins. Jesus also prays for His disciples, **John 17:6-12**. Lastly, Jesus prays for you and me, believers in Him, **John 17:20-23**.

Now let us get into **John 18:1**. After the Last Supper, Jesus and His disciples, except for Judas Iscariot, journey to the Garden of Gethsemane. They have to cross the Kidron Valley to reach the Garden of Gethsemane. When Jesus was in Jerusalem, Jesus often went to the garden to be alone to pray. Kidron Valley was a very important place. It is the path that David used to flee from his son, Absalom, who wanted to take over David's kingdom. It is also the place where the blood from the Temple's sacrificial lambs flowed. Jesus and His disciples cross over the Kidron Valley and enter the olive grove, the Garden of Gethsemane.

In verse 2, Judas knew this place very well. In verse 3, Judas does not come alone, but with *a detachment of soldiers*. According to Biblical scholars, a detachment of soldiers could be anywhere from 200 to 600 soldiers. Notice they did not come unarmed, but with weapons, lanterns, and torches. Also present are officials of the Chief Priest and Pharisees.

Who did they think they were apprehending? In verse 4, I imagine Jesus stepping out of the shadows and into the light of the lanterns and torches and saying, “Who is it you want?” They replied in verse 5, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus simply replies, “I am He.”

Notice their reaction in verse 6, “they drew back and fell to the ground.” The reason for their reaction was that Jesus used the phrase “I Am.” This was a phrase that only God used, when God was talking with Moses from the burning bush. In **Exodus 3:13**, Moses asked what I should tell them the name of this God is that I am speaking to and telling me to go to Egypt to release them from their bondage of slavery. God responds in **Exodus 3:14**.

Their reaction was because of Jesus using the phrase “I Am” was proof the Jesus was not some radical rabbi or rogue religious scholar. Jesus was declaring His divinity, and they were overpowered by His authority. They were helpless to arrest Him. In **John 10:17-18**, says that Jesus has the power to lay His life down or take it up. These 200 or 600 soldiers along with the officials of the Chief Priest and Pharisees have no power over Jesus. Jesus freely surrenders His life.

In verse 7, Jesus has to ask them again, “Who is it you want?” They reply again, “Jesus of Nazareth. In verse 8, Jesus surrenders His life for two reasons. The first is to complete the mission that God sent Him for, **John 3:16-17**. The second is to protect His disciples. This second takes us back to **John 17:12**. The act of this surrender is when Jesus allows Judas to kiss Him on the cheek, **Luke 22:47-48**.

The natural human reaction to seeing your leader, your rabbi, your friend being arrested is to attack the people doing the arresting. That is what Peter does in **John 18:10**. This action upsets Jesus. Jesus has just surrendered His life to hands of those in authority and knows His disciples are willing to fight for Him. He has been telling them over and over again that He is going to be arrested by the authorities. Even there in the Upper Room, Jesus repeated this to them. I think that Jesus is thinking about His disciples in this way that “You do not know who you want.” Jesus commands Peter in **Matthew 26:52** to put away the sword. Jesus goes on to tell His disciples in **Matthew 26:53**, that He could call down twelve legions of angels to protect Him, instead of one sword. In **Matthew 26:54**, but this was done to fulfill God’s plan.

Jesus shows compassion for the one that came to arrest Him and had their ear cut off by His disciple in **Luke 22:51**. Then in **Matthew 26:55**, Jesus speaks to the crowd and all his disciples flee.

Back to John 18, verse 12, they arrest Jesus and take Him to the home of the father-in-law of the chief priest, Annas. His son-in-law, the chief priest Caiaphas, has previously made this statement in verse 14 concerning Jesus.

Jesus said, “Who is it you want?” The soldiers were looking for someone who was going to fight them tooth and nail. They had no idea who Jesus was or what He looked like. I believe that Judas thought that if Jesus was the Messiah, he would force Jesus’ hand. Jesus would overthrow the Romans. I do not believe that He was alone in His belief. That is why after witnessing Jesus’ Transfiguration, Jesus told Peter, James, and John not to tell others about what they had witnessed. The disciples did not want to believe what Jesus had been telling them about the betrayal of one of them and that He would be arrested. They were willing to fight with a sword for one who could have called down twelve legions of angels to defend Him. The bottom line is who was in control of Jesus’ arrest? Jesus. He willingly allowed the soldiers to arrest Him. Even though, Caiaphas had made this bold statement that it would be good for one man to die for the people, even Caiaphas did not know that God had put that thought in his mind.

So, who is it you want Jesus to be? A man. A religious scholar. A prophet. A miracle worker. A great moral teacher. C.S. Lewis in his book, *Mere Christianity*, answers this question. “I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

Regardless of Jesus’ physical appearance, Jesus is the Son of God who gave His life willingly to die on the cross for my sins and your sins, so that we would have eternal life with God the Father.

Let us continue to listen to God, so that we can do His will. Amen.

