

8 March 2023
Lent 2 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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“One Man. Alone.”

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

They would all be offended and scattered. The Shepherd would be one man. Alone.

Peter thought he could be one faithful man. ***Even if all the others deny you, I never will,*** he said. But he would. He could not be what he wanted to be.

Peter, James, and John would all fall asleep. Jesus would pray, one man. Alone.

He alone would drink the cup His Father gave Him. He alone could.

Judas was one man, but not really. He came with a ***detachment and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees.*** He could not be one man. Alone.

Jesus was one man against the power arrayed against Him. One man from whom a simple spoken word conquered all the might of man. Until He *gave* Himself into their hands. To fulfill the word that ***of those you gave me I have lost none.*** He would not lose even one man.

Peter again tried to be one faithful man, not this time with his words but with his sword. But in drawing the sword he was not being one man, alone, but acting as all men do.

Then the disciples fled, every one of them, as prophesied. Leaving Jesus one man. Alone.

A certain young man followed along, but ran away, leaving Jesus one man. Alone.

So Caiaphas had it right, more right than he knew - ***that it would be expedient that one man - one man,*** alone - ***should die for the people.*** But not just expedient, more than that: God's will. That Jesus should die for us. One man. Alone.

And that one man is enough. That one man who is more than just one man, but the one and only Son of God in human flesh. One man for all, that all men might be saved in Him, in the one man. Alone.

Alone is one of the great words of the Reformation. By grace alone, by faith alone, by Scripture alone, by Christ alone. But all of those *alones*, grounded in this one man, alone,

on the cross. God's grace by Christ alone, our faith from and in Christ alone, and Christ revealed to us by Scripture alone. Everything that came before this flowing to the cross, and everything that comes after flowing from it. This is the turning point not just for Jesus, and not just for Scripture, but for all of history. Many might deny that today, but it's true nonetheless.

Tonight we see all the weakness of men, and the strength of the one, of Jesus. Peter talks a good game, but can't back it up. Peter, James, and John succumb to the tiredness of their bodies. The weakness in Judas was his greed, of the chief priests and Pharisees their hatred and fear. Peter is weak a third time, the weakness of relying on the power of the sword when the word of Jesus is far more powerful. The word of Jesus that can call down from heaven twelve legions of angels. And Annas and Caiaphas show just how weak people in power truly are.

And in all that you probably heard yourself. For we are the weak ones, too. We talk a good game, but when it comes time to stand up for Jesus, to confess Jesus in the face of persecution, opposition, or oppression, do we? Or does fear get the better of us? Tiredness is commonplace in our busy and getting-ever-busier world. How often do greed, hatred, or fear make us do what we ordinarily wouldn't do, exerting their strength over us. Do we rely on things of worldly strength rather than God's all-powerful word? And if you have to keep worrying about your power, are you really powerful or weak? Even a strong steel beam becomes weak when corrupted and corroded over time, like what the corruption and corrosion of sin has done to us.

But over against all the weakness of men is the strength of the one man, alone, Jesus. The one strong enough to stand alone. The one strong enough to pray. The one strong enough to believe His Father's will is good. The one strong enough to cause all the might of men to fall down to the ground like drunken dominos, and the one strong enough not to, but allow Himself to be arrested. The one strong enough to love and heal His enemy and not hate him. The one strong enough to die for all people, for all the world, **for you**. For as we will hear later this Lenten season, He is the one strong enough *to forgive*.

Tonight we see all the weakness of men, and the strength of the one, of Jesus. It doesn't look that way, of course. Jesus looked weak and men looked strong. But the same word of Jesus which could call down from heaven twelve legions of angels calls us to repent. And for the same reason. Jesus would not save Himself and calls us to repent that we might be saved.

For that's the other thing going on in the story tonight - people trying to save themselves. Trying to save their pride, trying to save their position and power, trying to save their bank account, trying to save their lives. But they're going about it all wrong. For as Jesus said, he who saves his life will lose it, but he who loses his life and instead relies on Christ, will save it.

So this Lenten season bids us, as we sang, to *Go to Dark Gethsemane* (LSB #436), and to Go to Dark Calvary, too. To see our Saviour, to hear our Saviour, to see and hear the one man, alone. The one who is strong to save.

And this Lenten season bids us to go to the Font, to go to the Altar, and to go to the Table, and see and hear and taste our Saviour. To hear the forgiveness of our sins and to taste and see that the Lord is good. For this one man, alone, is good. And has come to make us good.

And so we have hope. And we begin to fear, love, and trust in God above all things. We begin to rely on His Name, not ours. We begin to treasure and keep His Word in our hearts. And we begin to love our neighbor - not because of who our neighbor is, but because of who we are. In Jesus. Because He took our weakness and gave us His strength. And gave us *Himself* to dwell in us. That we never be alone. No matter who you are or where you are, as a baptized child of God, you never go alone, for the strong one dwells in you and you in Him. So we confess, not run. We pray, not sleep. And we love, not strike. Because we are not one man, one woman, alone. We are one in Him, and so *never* alone.

Never alone. Which sounds pretty good.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.