

Who Should Defend Jesus? (26:45-56)

Turn with me in your bibles, once again, to **Matthew 26**. So full disclosure: I'm a relative **newcomer to the world of TikTok**. I know some of you are pros at it; I'm what the industry calls a "late adopter." I created an account about a year ago. I've *posted* absolutely nothing. I think I told myself that I was getting an account for *vocational* reasons. I was thinking, "I'm a pastor at a church with a lot of twenty and thirty somethings, a lot of *them* are on TikTok, so I'll get on TikTok to know how to better lead and shepherd *them*." You know how you lie to yourself sometimes about your motivations? And I do think at least part of it was that. The other part, though, was just genuine *curiosity*: I wanted to know what the fuss was all about. So long story short, I created an account.

And I gotta say: it's **quite interesting**—some of it at least. Not *all* of it—some of it is just utterly useless. But if you get your feed dialed in right, just like with many other social media outlets, you can actually come across some interesting stuff. And I was really enjoying it for a while, until one day, TikTok figured out that I was a *Christian*. And then my feed started getting quite weird. Some of it was okay—just bible verses, worship music video clips—things along those lines. But some of it was pretty cringe.

One of the things it decided I would like is what I only know to call **snarky apologist** videos. The videos go something like this. There's a Christian apologist who has shown up at a college campus, either in a lecture hall or just somewhere outside on campus. And a crowd of people have gathered to hear him. And at some point during this gathering, someone who is *opposed* to the Christian faith will try to *stump* him with a question in front of the crowd. And then, without fail—at least in *these videos*—the apologist will retort back and win the argument/debate. They'd use the other person's own words against them, they'd point out their flawed logic—they'd argue them into submission and "win."

And because it's on TikTok, **the moment the apologist would do this** in a decisive way, the background goes gray, the video pauses on that frame, and some type of dramatic walk-off music plays. In one video, cartoon sunglasses actually dropped down onto the apologist's face as the music played, as if to indicate he was the champion. That's how these videos go. / And here's the thing: maybe, if we saw the *longer* form of the video, we'd see a genuine dialogue between two people discussing their beliefs. But the way TikTok is set up, the videos are framed **more like a face-off than they are a conversation**. **They're more like a rap battle where the point is for one contestant to embarrass and defeat the other one in front of everybody**. And at least in the videos TikTok shows *me*, the Christian apologist *always* wins the rap battle.

Now, TikTok obviously keeps showing me these videos **because I keep watching them**—I understand that’s how the algorithm works. But here’s the *problem* with the algorithm: it can’t distinguish between what I’m watching because I *like* it and *agree* with it...and what videos I’m watching because I’m fiercely *judging* the very premise of the videos and therefore can’t look away. And at least *most* of the time, with these snarky apologist videos, it’s the *latter*. I just can’t believe that this is a thing that happens. So I keep watching the videos, a little bit like you watch a trainwreck happen—not because you’re *rooting* for it, but because you can’t look away. And therefore, TikTok keeps showing them to me. Such is life.

But **here’s the thing**. Apologists like that wouldn’t exist unless there was a felt need *for* them. And videos wouldn’t exist of them on *TikTok* unless there were people posting, watching, liking, and sharing them. There are Christians out there who think that stuff is really, really effective. Or bare minimum, who think that those videos are very *satisfying* to watch. And **while I might not love the apologists’ methods** in those videos, I do at least understand the *draw* towards it. I think there’s something in us (or at least, in a *lot* of us) that is just *drawn* towards a *fight*.

Maybe that’s a *physical* fight, or maybe it’s **just a verbal sparring**, like in those videos. We are *drawn* towards the idea of arguing someone into submission, and we love *watching* when someone does that well. *Get the popcorn*—right? That’s how we often feel. And I think, **specifically, when it comes to our faith, there’s part of us that is drawn towards defending what we believe—specifically when it feels to us like it’s under attack by the outside world**. And let’s face it: with every day that our surrounding culture moves *further* from a biblical worldview, many of us feel like those attacks *on* our faith are more and more common.

But I do **wonder if there’s something we’re missing** when we gravitate towards that **sort of defensive posture**. I wonder if we’re missing something about who Jesus is, and what *our* role is as a *follower* of Jesus. And on a deeper level, I wonder if we’re actually missing something about the radical, upside-down nature of God’s kingdom—and about how it works in very *different* ways than that.

That, in essence, is **what our passage today is about**. We’re about to read the story of Jesus’ arrest, at the hands of an *armed mob*. Jesus and his kingdom, at least by all *appearances*, is under *attack*. And *because* it’s under attack, one of Jesus’ disciples is going to respond like you would *expect* someone to respond if they were under attack: by *defending* what they hold dear. But Jesus’ *response* to that disciple, I think, tells us a lot about what our role is and isn’t in the kingdom of God. So pick it up with me in chapter 26, v. 45:

[45] Then he (Jesus) returned to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still **sleeping and resting?** (So remember: Jesus and the disciples are still in the garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus has been praying and has asked his disciples to keep watch. They’ve *failed* a few times now to do that (by falling asleep), and now it’s too late. Second half of v. 45...) **Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. [46] Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!**” [47] While he was still speaking, **Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people.**

So just as a reminder: Judas, who was one of the twelve disciples, has decided to team up with the chief priests to capture and murder Jesus. Judas leverages his relational proximity to Jesus in order to help the chief priests *locate* him, in exchange for some money. So here, Judas directs a large crowd to Jesus, “armed with swords and clubs.” Verse 48:

[48] Now the betrayer had arranged a **signal** with them: “The one I **kiss** is the **man; arrest him.**” [49] Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him.

So keep in mind that as well-known as Jesus is at this point in time, this all happened in a time before photographs. So while likely a lot of people had *heard* of Jesus, the vast majority of people still had no idea what he *looked* like. Which is why Judas has to have this prearranged signal to indicate who Jesus is to the ones making the arrest. So he approaches Jesus in the garden, and greets him with a kiss—a common greeting in that culture, much like us shaking hands today. And *that* indicates to the crowd which one to arrest. Verse 50:

[50] Jesus replied, “Do what you came for, friend.” Then the men stepped forward, **seized Jesus and arrested him. [51] With that, one of Jesus’ companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.**

Now, we find out elsewhere in the gospels that this “companion” is *Peter*.¹ Although honestly, if you’re familiar at all with Peter’s character, you probably could’ve guessed that pretty easily, based on what he does here. Peter’s got a bit of a *reputation* for this sort of thing. Peter immediately draws his weapon, and **slices a guy’s ear clean off.** Now,

¹ John 18:10

most likely, slicing off the ear wasn't his *intent*. Peter was most likely aiming for his head or *neck*—in order to *kill* him. But I don't know if you've ever had a sword swung at your head—I sincerely hope you *haven't*—but I would imagine you tend to move in order to dodge it. So instead of taking off the guy's *head*, Peter just gets his *ear*.

Now, **as aggressive as Peter's actions may sound** here, I do want you put yourself in Peter's situation for a moment. Jesus has just told *all* the disciples that they're going to fail him.² Peter responds by saying *he won't*. Then, Peter can't even stay awake and keep watch as Jesus prays in the garden. Then, as soon as he awakes, likely feeling guilty about having fallen *asleep*, this whole arrest situation is going down in front of him. Do you see what's happening? Peter's got something to *prove* here. He's thinking, *this is my moment to show Jesus and everybody else that I've got what it takes. This is my opportunity to show Jesus that I'm not going to fail him*. In fact, I'll *fight for him*. So **the moment** Jesus is taken into custody, Peter goes straight Quentin Tarantino on a guy's ear.

Peter, it would seem, has still not learned his lesson about what his role is within God's kingdom. Or at least hasn't called any of what he's learned *to mind* in this moment. Jesus has told him, time and time again, that the *plan* is for Jesus to be captured, arrested, and then to *die*. That *is* the plan. And simultaneously, Peter has assumed, time and time again, that *his* mission is to *stop* the plan. So once *again* here, Peter is going to get a **dose of correction** from Jesus. Verse 52:

[52] "Put your **sword** back in its **place**," Jesus said to him, "for all who **draw** the sword will **die** by the sword. [53] Do you think I cannot call on my **Father**, and he will at once put at my disposal more than **twelve legions** of angels? [54] But how **then**, Peter, would the **Scriptures** be fulfilled that say it **must** happen in **this way**?"

Jesus says yet again: '**Peter, what is happening in this moment isn't an interruption to the plan; it is the plan**. As difficult as it is to fathom, this *is* the way it was always supposed to go down. Which is why I've told you, repeatedly, that *this is how it would go down*.' Jesus has said that quite a few times at this point in the story, *precisely because* he doesn't want his disciples to be caught off-guard by it—or try to *stop* it from happening. But once again, that hasn't fully clicked in Peter's mind.

Which is why he gets an **even more focused rebuke** this time from Jesus for what he does. '**One thing I don't need you to do**,' Jesus says, '**is defend me**.' He says, 'if

² See v. 31

what I needed was *defending*, don't you think I could ask the *Father*, and he would've sent twelve *legions* of angels (a "legion" is a thousand soldiers)—don't you think I could have asked for that and it would've *happened*?' But Jesus doesn't *need* defending. He doesn't need *Peter* to defend him. **There have been things that Jesus has wanted Peter to do throughout the storyline of Matthew's gospel. Jesus has wanted Peter to pray for him. Keep watch with him. Listen to him. Obey him. Follow him. But nowhere in that list of things is a desire for Peter to defend him.**

And **here, Jesus reiterates** that idea. He tells Peter: '...put your *sword* back in its place. For all who *draw* the sword, will *die* by the sword.' So **Jesus is specifically taking aim at Peter's inclination towards physical violence as a means of defending Jesus and preserving God's kingdom.** Over in **John 18:36**, *after* he is arrested, Jesus makes his opposition to this posture even *clearer*, when he says *this*:

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight (as in, with weapons and violence) to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders (I've gotta think Peter felt just a little singled out by that statement, since that's pretty much an exact description to what he just did in the garden). But now, Jesus says, my kingdom is from another place.

What Jesus seems to be implying here is that **his kingdom works very differently than worldly kingdoms do.** *Worldly* kingdoms go forward on the heels of violence, power, and force and coercion—*that's* how they conquer. *That's* how they advance. *That's* how they accomplish their purposes. 'But my kingdom,' Jesus says, 'doesn't work like that.' / Which he emphasizes *next*, in what he says to the crowd—v. 55:

[55] In that hour Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me.

Jesus points out that there must be a misunderstanding of **who he is**, if they think they need weapons to capture him. "I was in the temple every day," he says, "teaching. Why didn't you arrest me *then*?" / So what's fascinating to me is that this is the closest thing we get to a *protest* from Jesus about his arrest. And it's not even *really* a *protest*—he's more exposing **how odd it is for the chief priests to send all this firepower to arrest someone who has zero history of violence or violent resistance.** Jesus is saying, "do you really need an armed mob to arrest a rabbi?" He's also pointing out the shadiness of arresting someone under the cover of *night*, rather than in plain sight during the day in the temple. He's hinting that they *know* what they're doing is shady—otherwise, they wouldn't have done it this way. "But," Jesus says, v. 56:

[56] *But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.*” ‘Again,’ Jesus says, ‘this is always how it was going to happen.’ *Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.*

So here we arrive at **the moment that Jesus predicted** in last week’s passage: **the moment when all the disciples scatter.**³ Upon seeing that Jesus has been arrested, the disciples, *all*, run for their life. They know that people, from this point forward, will recognize them as people who are associated with Jesus. So likely fearing for their safety, their freedom, and their families—they *retreat*. As the Old Testament prophet predicted, the shepherd was struck and the sheep scatter.⁴ They run, as Jesus is hauled off to be crucified. **Despite the disciples’ best intentions, and despite Peter’s best efforts, everything goes precisely as Jesus and the Scriptures said it would go.** On the evening of the Passover (or likely, the early morning hours after the evening of Passover), Jesus is arrested by the chief priests, who will eventually see to it that he is killed. //

So...**what can we take away** from this passage? What is this passage *about*, exactly? Here’s my shot at it. **This passage shows us a particular kind of misunderstanding about God’s kingdom—and specifically, a misunderstanding of our own role in God’s kingdom.** One that is embodied *vividly* by *Peter’s* actions in the story. The crowd shows up with Judas, armed to the teeth with swords and clubs, and Peter sees it as *his* job to fight *back*. To break out his sword, and go to battle, to *defend* Jesus. To *prevent* Jesus from being taken into custody. *Sword versus sword. Violence versus violence. Power versus power.* Peter thinks he’s been put there to *be* Jesus’ *defender*. He thinks his job is to *defend* Jesus and God’s kingdom.

And my guess is that in a way, **many of us have also felt** that was *our* responsibility: to *defend* Jesus. Sure, maybe not *literally*, with a weapon (**although this is east Tennessee, so maybe I shouldn’t rule that out. Some people, here and elsewhere, do have that specific misunderstanding about God’s kingdom**). But maybe we *don’t* feel the need to defend Jesus with literal *violence*. Maybe we just feel the need to defend him with our *words*. So moments arise in life where we feel like Jesus or our belief system is under attack. **Maybe it’s because of something a coworker or a classmate said** about the Christian faith. **Maybe it was something you saw on the news** or read online that people said about Christianity.

³ See Matthew 26:31

⁴ See Zechariah 13:7

Maybe it was a TikTok theologian or deconstructionist you came across on social media. Maybe it's when people raise questions or objections in a LifeGroup setting. Maybe it's when your friends make you feel weird for not partying on the weekends. Maybe it's when your coworker or professor finds out you're a Christian and starts to poke fun at you occasionally for it. Could be a variety of different settings. But one way or another, something happens that makes you feel like your belief system, your faith, your values, are under *attack*.

In those *moments*, what is your *gut response*? I think there are at least *times* where we respond by thinking our job is to *defend* Jesus. Or at least *defend* our worldview, our belief system. This thing rises up in us where we go "I'm not gonna let people talk about Jesus that way!" "I'm not going to let them talk about Christianity, the bible, that way!" And so we brace to debate, argue, or *fight* with whoever or whatever it is. "I'm gonna write into this news outlet that published that disparaging story about Christians and tell them that I'm canceling my subscription." "I'm gonna hop into this person's comment section and let them know how offended I am by their post." "I'm gonna attend this school board meeting and publicly *humiliate* the people on it." What all of those postures have in common is that they are attempts to *defend* Jesus. Or at least defend *our* belief in Jesus.

But I think we're *assuming* a couple things when we take that posture. **One, is that God needs and/or wants us to defend him and his kingdom.** That one of our *roles*, as followers of Jesus, is to *defend*. To *refute*. To *debate* and *argue*. To *win the "rap battle," so to speak*. To *defend* all that is good and right. And I *will* say, **there is a balance to be struck here.** There are *places* in the New Testament that talk about *defending* the faith. But mostly, those are instructions written to *leaders* of the church, to defend the faith against *false teaching* and *teachers within* the Church. *They're not really talking about defending the faith against any person on the news or social media that doesn't like us.* And even *then*, those passages that talk about defending the faith—talk about doing so "...gently," and "graciously." They talk about doing it without being "quarrelsome," and without engaging in "foolish controversies and arguments."⁵

One of the main passages I've heard used to justify "defending Jesus" is 1 Peter 3:15-16, which reads as follows:

...but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you (to which some people say, "see—there it is! We're supposed to make a *defense* for

⁵ See specifically Colossians 4:5-6, 2 Timothy 2:14-26, Titus 3:9-11, and others.

our faith!” But keep reading...); **yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.**

So according to that passage, **there is a particular way** we are to “give a defense” for our faith. And ironically, it doesn’t really look much at all like being defensive. It looks like “gentleness and respect.” **And you know what’s interesting? Peter, who wrote what we just read, is the same Peter who mistakenly defended Jesus this day in the garden. It would seem that he learned something over the years about what Jesus does and doesn’t want from his people.**

So listen: **don’t hear what I’m not saying.** I think there is *wisdom* in reading and learning how to talk about your faith in a well-informed, rational, thoughtful, sorts of way. There’s *value* in learning how to respond intelligently to objections people have to the way of Jesus. All that is *great*. I think *often*, followers of Jesus could spend a lot *more* time doing stuff like that. **One of my all-time favorite authors and speakers is a guy named Tim Keller. And if you know anything about him and his ministry, you know he spent a lot of time reasoning with people about faith in Jesus. Helping them discover that rational, well-educated, thoughtful people can have compelling reasons to believe in Jesus. I’m a fan of all of that.**

But **if you ever watched Tim Keller** interact with someone who didn’t share his beliefs—if you ever watched him “debate” with someone—you’ll note it doesn’t really sound much like a *debate* at all. It sounds like a *dialogue*. It sounds like a compassionate, gracious, *conversation*. It sounds like Tim really *loved* those people and wanted to communicate with them on their level, in language they understand. **I think Tim Keller knew that if a person could be argued into faith in Jesus, it would only be a matter of time before someone came along and argued them out of it. But he also knew if he could just gently offer compelling reasons to believe, what people already wanted to believe, it might create the space for the Holy Spirit to do something profound.**

I think *that’s* what 1 Peter is saying we should do: “always be prepared to give a *defense* for the *reason* for the hope that is in you...yet, do it with gentleness and respect.” **There is a difference between reasoning with someone, and trying to argue them into submission. There is a difference between appealing to someone, and trying to defeat or humiliate them.** I would argue that Jesus invites us to do the *first* one, *not* the second.

/ But **we also need to acknowledge** here that a defensive, antagonistic posture isn’t the *only* misguided way to respond when our faith feels under attack. It *is* the one

that Jesus specifically confronts in this passage, but it's not the *only* one there is. Some people, when Jesus or their faith feels attacked, go the *other* direction with it. Instead of "fight," they go "*flight*." If people don't like Christianity because of what Christianity teaches about sex, let's just not talk about it. Or better yet, let's *change* it. If people don't like what the bible teaches about gender, let's just decide that the bible actually doesn't say *anything* about it. Or that it's not *clear* (when it actually *is*). If people don't like what Jesus said about forgiveness and letting go of bitterness and resentment, well I'm sure there are *caveats* to that—we'll just say that's not what he really *meant*.

I think there's a **tendency in others of us**—I would say especially my generation and younger—to just **bail on clear teachings of the Scripture because we don't want to be looked down on for believing those things**. So instead of *arguing* people into *believing* in Jesus, we just *withdraw* anything *controversial* he has to say from the conversation. We functionally edit Jesus down so that maybe people won't actually take *issue* with him in the first place. Figuratively speaking, **if some of us are Peter, ready to fight to the death to defend Jesus, others of us are the rest of the disciples, cutting and running at the first sign of conflict or difficulty. We just go flight, instead of fight.**

Which **brings up the second faulty assumption** Peter seems to make in this story. **I think there's part of Peter that assumes violently defending Jesus is the only way to ensure he doesn't abandon Jesus**. He's so hyperfocused on what Jesus keeps saying about how he and the others are going to fail, that he ends up swinging the pendulum *all the way in the opposite* direction. The crowd comes to arrest Jesus, and Peter goes, "I'll show *them who's not going to fail Jesus! Watcha!*" Peter is convinced that if the *worst* thing is *failing* Jesus, then that must mean the *best* thing is to violently *defend* him. With one swing of the sword, Peter is convinced that he just proved everybody (including Jesus) wrong about him.

But see, I think **this shows us something**. It *reveals* something we absolutely *must* realize about all of this. It reveals that **often, this defensive posture we take isn't actually about Jesus at all; it's more about us**. It's about *our* pride. It's about *our* insecurity. It's about our *fear*, *our* perceived inadequacy, *our* weaknesses. I think, in these types of moments, **we're actually not defending Jesus; we're really defending us**. / Because here's the thing: when someone attacks the Christian faith in some way, I don't think they're hurting *Jesus*. Jesus is *good*. They very well might be *grieving* Jesus by what they say and do, but they aren't *harming* him. Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father. The Scriptures tell us that one day every knee will bow, every tongue confess,

that he is Lord.⁶ Jesus is *good*. He's not wringing his hands in the heavens worried about what people are saying about him. What they say isn't hurting *him*.

But **who is it hurting?** *Us*. It hurts *us*. It makes *us* feel insecure. It makes *us* feel belittled and rejected and dismissed. So **the reason we respond**, in those moments, **with defensiveness or abandonment often has very little to do with our love for the gospel; it has everything to do with our love for comfort, approval, control, and power**. And with the crazy things we tend to do when we think those things are in jeopardy. And maybe there's part of us that thinks if we "stand up" for Jesus (or just protect his *reputation* from the things people don't like), we can *keep* people from dismissing him. Or from dismissing *us*. Or that, bare minimum, we can keep other people we *know* from falling away from the faith. If we *argue* with the people raising objections and doubts, we can prevent them from leading *other* people astray with what they're saying. If we remove some of the *difficult* things Jesus says, maybe we can keep people interested in him and keep people from writing him off.

And **to that I say maybe**. But tell me this: in Matthew 26, does Peter defending Jesus *keep* Jesus from being arrested? *Nope*. Does Peter defending Jesus keep the other disciples from falling away from Jesus? *Nope*. Does Peter's defense even keep *Peter* from falling away from Jesus? *Also nope*. Does Peter's defense keep him and the other disciples from eventually *suffering* and *dying* for the sake of the gospel? Does it keep people from *hating* and *dismissing them*? Once again, *nope*. So hear me out here: **is it possible that we could be overestimating what our defending Jesus can accomplish?** Is it possible that we think we're capable of controlling things, that we actually *can't control*? Is it possible that we think we can prevent things, that we actually cannot *prevent*? I think all of that is *very possible*. *Probable, even*.

And **I've got to wonder** if that's some of what Jesus is trying to teach Peter in this passage. He says to Peter, "how else would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"⁷ He says to the armed crowd who has come to capture him, "this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled."⁸ All of this is exactly how it was supposed to go down. And *because* this is how it was supposed to go down, there's truly nothing Peter or anyone else can do to stop it.

But **that all leaves the question**, at least for many of us: **okay—then who should defend Jesus?** If it's not Peter, if it's not *us*—if *we're* not the ones to do it, who's going to do the

⁶ Isaiah 45:23, Romans 14:11, Philippians 2:10-11

⁷ v. 54

⁸ v. 56

defending? Like, surely the answer isn't just for the gospel message to look *weak* to the watching world; that *can't* be what God intended—right? Well, if that's what you're wondering, I've got good news and bad news for you. **Bad news first, yeah? I'm a bad-news-first kind of guy.**

Here's the bad news, at least from the perspective of someone who wants the gospel to look "*strong*" to the world at large. **The bad news is there is truly no way to make the message of a crucified Messiah look strong by the standards of this world.** That's actually precisely what Paul says in **1 Corinthians 1**. There, he puts it this way:

*For the message of the cross is **foolishness** to those who are perishing* (Utter foolishness, Paul says. *Silliness. Weakness. It's bizarre to them. But* (in other words, here's the good news...) *but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*⁹

He goes on a little later, in v. 27:

*But God chose the **foolish** things of the world to **shame the wise**; God chose the **weak** things of the world to **shame the strong**. God chose the **lowly** things of this world and the **despised** things—and the things that are **not**—to nullify the things that **are**, so that **no one** may **boast** before him.*¹⁰

The bad news is that if you follow Jesus, impressiveness is somewhat off the table for you—at least in the world's eyes. But the *good* news is that in God's kingdom, it's never been about impressiveness. It's never been about being *noble*, being culturally savvy and *revered* by your peers. It's never been about *power*—physical, mental, or otherwise. **It's never been about impressive debate skills and owning people in arguments on social media. It's never been about defending Jesus in the eyes of the world and making him appear impressive or unoffensive to them.** It's *always* been about *weakness*.

But as we've said often these past few weeks, **when we are weak, he is strong.** Our goal as followers of Jesus isn't to "win"—at least not in any of the traditional or typical ways. *Jesus* wins in the end, and we get to reign forever *with* him. Which means we can be okay with losing now. **So let's stop pursuing strength the world's way, and start accepting strength the Jesus way: which is through weakness. Through "foolishness."** Through Christ and him crucified. As Paul continues in **1 Corinthians 2:**

⁹ 1 Corinthians 1:18

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 1:27-29

For I resolved to know **nothing** while I was with you except **Jesus Christ** and him **crucified**. I came to you in **weakness** with great **fear** and **trembling**. My message and my preaching were not with **wise** and **persuasive** words, but with a **demonstration** of the **Spirit's power**, so that **your faith** might not rest on **human wisdom**, but on **God's power**.¹¹

God *help* us if we think we possess something *better* than the Spirit's power. Than *God's* power. Look at me: **we are not God's defenders. He's our defender. And that's such better news than the other way around.** When we are *weak*, he is strong. So this morning, those of us who know and follow Jesus are invited to go to the tables and celebrate the king who *conquers* through death. The God who demonstrates his *power* by laying it all down.¹² The Jesus who *wins* by first *losing*. And as we take the bread and the cup—which represent the broken body and spilled blood of Jesus—we ask him to instill that same mindset in us, his people, by his Spirit.

Let's pray.

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 2:2-5

¹² See Philippians 2:5-11