

## **Good Friday Ecumenical Service/April 14, 2017**

### **Reflection on John 18:1-11**

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After the Last Supper, where Jesus had washed the disciple's feet and given them a new commandment, to love one another as he had loved them, he and the disciples go out to a garden. Matthew and Mark call it Gethsemane. Luke refers to it as the Mt. of Olives. It is here that they are confronted by Judas and a band of soldiers and Temple police who have come to arrest Jesus. They come with torches and weapons. They are prepared for violence and will use it if necessary.

In John's gospel, they are a force of the power of the world. They represent the powers of darkness, those antithetical to the Way of Jesus, the kingdom of God. While their numbers and strength appear formidable and intimidating, John shows that they are simply no match for the power within Jesus. They come to him, and when he asks them whom they are looking for, they answer, "Jesus of Nazareth." And as he responds, "I am he", they step backward and fall to the ground. They rise, and with no attempt on Jesus' part to flee, they take hold of him.

It is at that point that Simon Peter makes his move. Good old Simon Peter, the archetypal disciple. The one, especially in John, who seems to represent every follower of Christ, the one we can all relate to in the story. He does some of the best things and he does some of the worst things as one of Jesus' closest followers. And here, once again, it is Peter who steps forward, brandishing his sword and cutting off the ear of the slave of the high priest. He is reacting to the threat. Protecting his master, his teacher, his friend. He is meeting violence with violence.

And so much like Peter are we. Put in his position, would we perhaps not react in the same way? When threatened with violence or danger, whether it be ourselves, our family members, our friends, or our nation, don't we feel we need to stand up, fight back, meet the foe head on?

Jesus' response is different. He reprimands Peter. *"Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?"* In Matthew's gospel he tells Peter, *"those who live by the sword will perish by the sword."* And in Luke he goes even further, saying *"No more of this!"* and then reaches out and in compassion, heals the man's ear.

Tonight, as we consider the world around us, the world in which we live today, so filled with violence, hatred and war, may we ponder the Way of Jesus. May we consider the Way of compassion, of healing, of love.