

## **John Chapters 18-19: Sacrifice for Others**

### **From the Theology of Work Bible Commentary on John**

As Jesus draws near to Jerusalem for the last time, he does his greatest sign—the raising of Lazarus at Bethany. Jesus’ opponents, who have already tried to stone him, decide that both Jesus and Lazarus must go.

Jesus’ self-sacrifice would extract many forms of cost. It would cost him his death, of course, but also excruciating pain. It cost him the heartbreak of seeing his disciples (except John) desert him and his mother bereft of him. It cost him the shame of being misunderstood and wrongly blamed. These costs were unavoidable if he was to do the work God set before him. The world could not come into being without the work of Christ in the beginning. The world could not be restored to God’s intention without the work of Christ on the cross.

Our work may also call for costs that are not fair to us, but which cannot be avoided if we are to complete our work. Jesus worked to bring true life to others. To the extent that we use our work as a forum for self-glorification, we depart from the pattern set for us by the Lord Jesus. Is Jesus acknowledging that work performed for others has an unavoidable cost? Perhaps so. Doctors earn a good salary from healing people, yet suffer an unavoidable burden of pain from witnessing their patients’ suffering. Plumbers get an enviable hourly rate, but also get covered with excrement from time to time. Elected officials work for justice and prosperity for their citizens, but like Jesus, bear the sorrow of knowing, “you always have the poor with you” (John 12:8). In each of these professions, there might be ways to avoid suffering alongside others—minimizing interaction with unседated patients; plumbing only in new, unsoiled houses; or hardening our hearts to the most vulnerable people in society. Would doing so be following the pattern of Jesus?

Although we often speak of work as how you make your living, any compassionate worker also experiences work as how you break your heart. In this way, we work like Jesus.