

Unmasking the Traitor

Scripture: John 13:18–30

Code: 43-69

Let's open the Word of God now to the 13th chapter of the gospel of John. John chapter 13. This may be a kind of last for me in one sense because the text that we're looking at, John 13:18 to 30 is about Judas Iscariot. When I say it's the last, I can't foresee in the future, but it's unlikely that we'll ever go through the account of Judas again. I've done it in going through the gospel of Matthew, the gospel of Mark, the gospel of Luke, twice through the gospel of John. And when we get past this section here, Judas will have disappeared into the past as far as preaching from this pulpit is concerned.

I have been to Bible conferences and seminars all over the planet for, obviously, many, many, many years. I've never heard anybody preach on Judas at a Bible conference or any other isolated special event. He's not the subject that people want to deal with. So, it's not likely that anybody would ask me to come somewhere and preach on Judas. So, this may be a farewell to the textual accounts of Judas. That is enough for me. I am satisfied with that, not only having preached on it through the preaching of these gospels, but then having gone back. Of course, preparing to preach means many more hours of studying this. Even this week, many hours of studying Judas to bring you one hour of this text. And not only the preparation, having studied his life as intently as I have, then going back and writing commentaries on the same thing, he has occupied a huge, huge place in my life.

And it all really started when I was a seminary student because I was very fascinated by Judas, fascinated that he could develop in that environment, that anybody as monstrous as Judas could arise in the fellowship of Jesus seemed to me inconceivable. And so, when I was given the responsibility to write my graduate dissertation in seminary, I chose to write on Judas.

There were a couple of other reasons. There was literature coming out from more liberal theologians saying Judas was a good guy and he was doing what he was doing to try to push Jesus into setting up His kingdom and he had noble motives and all of that. And then of course, there were gnostic teachings about Judas being a noble person. There was even a "gospel of Judas," pseudopigraphic, false gospel of Judas. And so, I wanted to answer some of the critics and some of the liberals – and at the same time, satisfy my own mind, to understand how this man could arise in such an environment. I started very early to think about Judas, and maybe all of that, in some fashion, kind of gets wrapped up in our final discussion about him today.

And that's fine. Enough is enough of this man. But nonetheless, he is a critical player in redemptive history, and he has some very, very important warning lessons to teach us.

Judas Iscariot, who betrayed the Son of God, with a kiss. His name was Judas, a very familiar name from Judah. Iscariot simply means he was from the town of Kerioth. He's the only one of the twelve who was not a Galilean. He is not known for his location, however. He is known for betraying the Son of God, and doing it in the most despicable form, with a kiss. He is the most despised traitor in human history. And rightly so. His personality has to be as dark as any human ever.

Judas bears a name that is stigmatized to the degree that no one would use it. Even in the New Testament lists of apostles, he's always mentioned last and always with a qualifying statement: the betrayer. In medieval art and literature, he was commonly portrayed in the most grotesque depictions and with very hideous features.

Way back in the 2nd century, it was written about Judas that he was so vile, that his body filled up with bile and maggots and erupted, splattering all of this everywhere. Always, and rightly so, Judas is regarded as the most thoroughly despicable and contemptible of persons who ever lived. Treacherous, wicked, maybe the most crafty, artful hypocrite. Judas emerges from the background of the gospel story to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.

And then, before the crucifixion narratives can even begin to be told, before even Jesus' trial at the throne of Pilate, Judas is dead. Dead, driven to suicide by monstrous guilt. He has been a deft hypocrite, but he's not very deft at handling his own suicide. Tortured in the throes of his own self-execution, he can't even hang himself effectively. Either the rope broke or the branch broke, and Acts 1 says he was smashed on the rocks beneath the precipice from which he had hanged himself.

We are hours before that horrendous suicide that cast him into eternal hell. We are hours before that. That will happen before another day dawns. We are still Thursday night at the Passover. And in John 13:18 to 30, Judas and Jesus come face to face and Jesus unmask the betrayer. Up to this point, He has referred to Judas, but obliquely. He has said things like, in chapter 6, "One of you is a devil," without identifying who.

But here, the identification becomes unmistakable. As they have gathered on Thursday night of passion week, the disciples and Jesus in the Passover room, the upper room, as it's often called, Jesus knows, chapter 13:1, "that His hour had come that He would depart out of the world." He knows the next day; He's going to be slain as the true Passover lamb. His death will take place the day that the Passover is celebrated and the animals are slaughtered, and He will die as the true lamb. He is very aware of what is going on. In chapter 13 verse 2, the devil has already put it "into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him." He has already begun the machinations to bring about the betrayal of Christ. He protested earlier in the week because perfume was wasted on Jesus. He said that it could've been sold, and the money given to the poor. He didn't want to give money to the poor, but he was the treasurer and held the money box, and he was always stealing from it. So he wanted the money in the box so he could steal from it and make a getaway with as much as he could salvage out of what he saw as three wasted years. And to add to the amount that he could get, he wanted more than what the meager box might've held, and so he concocted a plan to sell Jesus out, to betray His presence, to the Pharisees who wanted Him dead. And he would sell Him for the price of a slave, 30 pieces of silver.

Our Lord is aware of all of this. He knows that the devil is commiserating with Judas. He knows that. Verse 11 of chapter 13 says "He knew the one who was betraying Him." He knew the betrayal was in motion – present tense. It was ongoing. "For this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean." He had just told the disciples they were clean. They were redeemed, they were saved, they were regenerated, they had been fully washed. But not all of them. Not all of them.

We pick up the account in verse 18:

“I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.’ From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.”

When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.” The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking. There was reclining near Jesus – essentially saying near Jesus – next to Jesus one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. So Simon Peter gestured to him, and said to him, “Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking.” He, leaning back thus closer to Jesus, said to Him, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus then answered, “That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.” So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, “What you do, do quickly.” Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him. For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, “Buy the things we have need of for the feast;” or else, that he should give something to the poor. So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.

Judas never saw another day. Jesus and Judas, the extreme opposites. The perfectly holy one; the utterly wretched one. The king of heaven, and the hell bound reprobate. The sinless Son of God, and the singular sinning son of Simon. The great lover of sinners, and the sinner who hated the Lord. Judas is the greatest example of lost opportunity that ever existed. He had, like the rest, left all to follow Jesus into the kingdom. His motives were all wrong. He was motivated, as it turns out, by greed, and avarice, and ambition, and material things, and money. He developed into the most competent and clever and artful hypocrite. Under the daily influence of the Lord Jesus Christ, he became the opposite of the other eleven. They became saints; he became a son of hell, a conniving tool of Satan.

For him, the days became more and more frustrating, and then they became virtually intolerable. Three years passing by, and they were all going in the wrong direction. All in the wrong direction. He wanted out, and so he began stealing the money out of the box. And then, he crafted this plot to get 30 pieces of silver, compensation for wasted years. Compensation for wasted years.

The presence of Jesus every day was an intolerable rebuke to him. The purity of Jesus must’ve been unbearable for his wretched soul. And surely, he must’ve had the sense, the fear for certain, the dread for certain that Jesus knew everything he was. After all, in three years, he had seen Jesus read the hearts and minds of men. He knew that Jesus said, way back at the beginning of the ministry in John 2, that He knew what was in the heart of men, and nobody needed to tell Him anything about that. He had heard that Jesus declared, John 5:42, that He knew the people who didn’t love Him. It says that. The torture of knowing at any moment that it could all be over and Jesus could expose him must’ve made holding onto the hidden secrets of his heart an unbearable, brutal burden.

But that didn’t work to convict him to do the right thing. It just pressed him deeper and deeper into his hypocrisy until he could pull off his ultimate crime and get out with the best that could be made. Sell the master of all things with money as his reward.

As we arrive at our text, then, we are in the upper room, at the last Passover with the disciples. Judas has already made the bargain to betray Him for 30 pieces. He's just looking for a place to do it. He might've done it on Thursday night, but he didn't know where the Passover would be held. Jesus hid it from him and all the rest. He only sent two disciples to find the room. They didn't know where it was until they arrived there that night, and that was so that Judas couldn't, having come there, leave again and go find the chief priests and bring them back, couldn't pre-arrange it because he didn't know where it would be. Jesus set it up so that this night would be for His disciples and Him. Judas needed to look for a place. And well, he found a place, eventually, didn't he? The Garden of Gethsemane. But it wouldn't be in this place.

On this Thursday night, Jesus, however, unmask the betrayer and begins the first step, really, in activating His own death.

But as we begin the scene for our text, the wretched hypocrite sits among the twelve, so far undiscovered by them, without even a hint. He will be dead before another day dawns. He will murder himself in the night, even before Jesus can get to trial with Pilate. Let's pick up the scene.

Jesus has been giving an example to His disciples about humility and telling them that they need to humble themselves and offer selfless service to each other. In verse 15, He says: I gave you an example. I want you to do this because you as My slaves are not greater than Me, and you as the ones I've sent are not greater than the one who sent you. You need to do what I did, and you know what He did. He had just humbled Himself to the place of a servant and washed their dirty feet. And He says to them then in verse 17, "If you know these things – since you know these things, you're blessed if you do them." Do this: love one another, serve one another, humble yourselves to one another.

And then He's turning from talking to them in verse 18. He says, "I do not speak of all of you." I'm not promising blessing to all of you. I can't promise blessing to all of you. And then He says, "I know the ones I have chosen." That is a very important statement, a very important statement. "I know the ones that I have chosen."

This leads to unfolding the text on the unmasking of the betrayer. I want to break it into four points. First, the treason anticipated. Okay? The treason anticipated, or the traitor anticipated. This is very, very important, because the disciples could think – I mean, understand their faith is fragile to start with. They are weak in faith. They are about to be shattered and scattered, right? They're full of doubt. Peter ends up a denier. They all flee. This is a very fragile group of men. And to all of a sudden discover that there is, in the middle of them, a heinous criminal, a betrayer, a traitor who is going to literally turn over their master to the enemy to be killed, and to have that appear as if it's a shock and a surprise to Jesus could literally unravel whatever is there of spiritual confidence and strength.

So, it's important that what is about to break loose not be a surprise to them. It's important to tell them that: I know every detail of this. This could devastate the sense of integrity, solidarity. This could shatter their confidence that our Lord is in control of everything and that this plan is working out the way it is supposed to. This could turn Jesus into some kind of victim of this hidden hypocrite.

So, the transition is very important to focus on what is about to happen and take a look at Judas. And He starts by saying this simple statement: "I know the ones I have chosen." I didn't make a mistake. I know every one of you, and I have chosen every one of you, and I know every one of you. This is to say: I know what you are, who you are, and what's going on in your heart. I know you.

When He talks about having chosen, He's not talking as John Calvin liked to think about this passage, about their eternal election. No, He's talking about them being chosen as apostles. And that's validated by John chapter 6 and verse 70 where, in the same gospel, and in the discussion about the same man, Judas, Jesus says, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?" And He meant Judas. It's the choosing of the apostles that He's talking about. "I know the ones I have chosen." I know every one of you. I am not a victim of any of you. No one is outside the purposes that God has ordained. Even in this, even in this betrayal, I know the man. I know the purpose. I know the reason. I know the timing. I know.

And furthermore, "but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled." When Judas does what he does, this will not shock God. This will not somehow provide some kind of detour in the plan. This will not put up a barrier in the purposes of God. When he does what he chooses to do, he will fulfill Scripture. And He quotes Psalm 41:9: "He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me." Psalm 41:9. He knows that. He knows Judas is a traitor. He's always known that. He chose him knowing that. He chose him in order that when he did what he chose to do, it would fulfill Scripture.

Listen to what He prays in the prayer at the end of this section. John 17:12. "While I was with them," He says to the Father, "I was keeping them in Your name which You gave Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition," Judas, "so that the Scripture would be fulfilled." Judas, treachery was his own. Judas did what he did by his own will and by his own choice. And when he did what he did, it fulfilled Scripture. God knew, God planned His rebellion, apostasy and hypocrisy, into His divine purpose.

And it wasn't just Psalm 41 that looked forward to Judas. The New Testament also points back to Psalm 55. Listen to verse 12: "For it is not an enemy who reproaches me, then I could bear it; nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me, then I could hide myself from him." In other words, if it was an enemy, I could protect myself. But it is you, a man my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. We who had sweet fellowship together, walked in the house of God, in the throng. It's you. And in verse 20, it says, "He has put forth his hand against those who were at peace with him; he has violated his covenant. His speech was smoother than butter, but his heart was war; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords." Judas is pictured there as a betraying friend.

And then, he also is clearly depicted in Zechariah's prophecy. Zechariah chapter 11. Very vivid prophecy in chapter 11, verses 12 and 13. Listen to what it says: "Then I said, 'If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; if not, never mind!' So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages. Then the Lord said to me, 'Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them.' So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the Lord." That's exactly what Judas did. He betrayed Christ for 30 pieces of silver. Under guilt, took the 30 pieces of silver back, threw them down on the temple floor, and then went out – the Jews – he went out and hanged himself. The Jews took the money, went out, and purchased a potter's field, fulfilling in detail Zechariah's prophecy.

Judas is not a surprise to Jesus. It's really critical that the disciples knew that so that they literally don't have to reassess everything they've ever believed about Jesus. This does not undermine His authority. It validates Scripture. Judas was necessary to the plan. Judas was not fatalistically driven by God to do what he did. He did what he did because he was a devil. He did what he did because he spiraled down until Satan took control of his life, totally. He did what he did, wretched man that he was, and he spurned every winsome appeal of Christ along the way. When he did what he did, he fulfilled what Scripture said he would do. He was, then, chosen, because he would do this, and because it would fulfill Scripture.

This is so important that the disciples know this, that they anticipate this, because I want you, He says, down in verse 19, to know this "before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He." I don't want you having any doubts that when you see this unfold, all of a sudden you question whether I am actually God. The opposite should be true, since I told you every detail. All in God's plan.

So, the traitor is anticipated. The treason is announced. Second point: the treason is announced. He is going to announce it, verse 20. "'Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.' When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.'" There's the announcement.

But what is verse 20 about? What is verse 20 about? It sounds familiar. It sounds very familiar. It sounds like things He said when He was commissioning the disciples. You find statements like that back in Matthew 10 and Mark 9 and Luke 9 and Luke 10. That sounds like commission language. "Truly, truly, I say to you." Meaning, I say this with firmness. There's a genuine, glorious truth in this, that he who receives whomever I send receives Me. That would be you. When I send you and someone receives you, they're receiving Me. And when they receive Me that way, they receive the one who sent Me. So He's saying: we remember that early in the ministry commissioning them, the Father sent Christ; Christ sends them. Whoever receives them receives Christ and the Father.

Why does He say this here? Why does He say this? Because HE wants the disciples to know that even with this incredibly devastating rupture in the solidarity of the twelve, even with this massive defection, the integrity of their commission is not compromised. It's still true. The commission stands. Whoever receives whomever I send, meaning you, receives Me. And he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. The commission stands. It is not invalidated. It is not nullified. It stands.

This is so very important. You have a commission. I want you to love each other. I want you to wash each others' feet. I want you to humble each other and care for each other. But you have a commission beyond that. That's kind of an internal behavior. You're always arguing about who's the greatest, who's going to sit on the right, who's going to sit on the left. I want you to be humble, selfless, sacrificial, loving toward each other. I want you to get beyond all that pride. That's internal. But the external commission still exists. The Father sent Me. I send you. And whoever receives you receives Me and the Father. This is the loftiness of your calling. You are the instruments of God and the agents of Christ. And even though you have a vile defector, that does not alter the commission. You have been commanded to preach the gospel, the message of Christ. You are still my ambassadors, even with a horrendous defector. The calling stands. This is so important for them.

This could unravel their confidence as if this collective commission had been breached in some fatal way. You're still My representatives, and all that I have promised to you, I do not promise to him. The commission stands. That's very important, very important.

People always pick out the hypocrites, don't they? Look, whenever the world can find phony Christians, they will parade that far and wide. Far and wide as they can parade it. Whenever ministers who profess Christ bring reproach on the name of Christ, scandalize the church – when missionaries do that, Christian leaders do that – the world loves that because they love any justification for their unbelief. That doesn't change the commission of the faithful and the true.

We all feel reproach falling on us. We all get splattered by the defections of those false and unfaithful and hypocritical representatives of Christ. But listen to what Paul wrote to the Galatians in 4:14. He says, "Even in my bodily condition, you didn't despise, you didn't loathe me." And he was struggling with physical issues. "But you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself." Bless those Galatians. The world was full of false teachers, false representatives. But they could sort out the true one. And even in his weakness and frailties, they treated him like an angel of God or like Christ Himself. When the minister comes to you in the name of Christ, Christ comes in the minister. And God comes. That's the commission. And just because there may be weakness or there may be frailty doesn't change the calling on the commission, and it doesn't change the fact that that when you receive Him, you receive Christ and God. And just because there are some false and deceptive and corrupt people, there are some Judases, some traitors and betrayers, it doesn't change the commission, and it doesn't change the truth about those who are genuine.

People, still, can always pick out a hypocrite. That doesn't lower the great high calling. So this is to strengthen the disciples before all of this happens. Don't think this alters your commission at all. Don't think that somehow this has violated this thing and it's now in fragments. Not so. I haven't been, and I'm not about to say the things that I say to you, to him, anyway. They don't apply. You, as a believer, you have a great commission, too, don't you? I mean, you're part of the great commission, to go into all the world and proclaim the glories of Christ. Just because there are lots of hypocrites all over the place doesn't change that. Be faithful.

So, our Lord anticipates what's coming, and this is one of the ways in which He shows His love – 13:1. "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to no end." This is one way He shows love. He prepares them for this, prepares them for what's coming, tells them He knows about it. It's all part of the plan. It fulfills Scripture. It doesn't change the commission. Stay on course. And having made that announcement, John tells us, verse 21, "When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit." Yeah, I imagine. I imagine He was troubled in spirit. He must've been troubled in spirit on a regular basis, day in and day out in the presence of Judas. How many thousands of times had He sat in the presence of Judas, knowing what he was from the very beginning?

Troubled in His own soul about the eternal damnation of Judas, the unrequited love in Judas, the ingratitude in Judas. Troubled by the deep hatred of sin that He saw in Judas, so near to Him all the time, and He so holy and so absolutely pure, having to live in a small group of men, one of whom is as wretched as wretched gets. Troubled in spirit with a shrinking from contact with a hell bound son of Satan who was about to betray Him, like a martyr shrinking away from a torture instrument. Troubled because He knew Satan was coming, troubled because He knew He was heading to the

cross to engage the heinousness of sin on a personal level and feel the fury of God and isolation from His Father. The inward awareness of Judas, that guilty, miserable wretch – simply one out of millions who would betray Jesus in other ways. A sort of paragon of depravity, the very kind of sin for which Jesus would die.

These were undoubtedly some of the ingredients in the Lord's troubled spirit. He was in deep sorrow earlier at the grave of Lazarus, and He was in deep sorrow over the situation with people that were on their way to heaven. How deep was His sorrow over a man who was on his way to the hottest hell imaginable? And in that profound agony, it says He testified. He uses the word "testified" in verse 21. That's an important word. It only appears three times in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. 33 times in John. 33 times. Why? Because there are so many declarations made in John. Matthew, Mark, and Luke tend to be narrative story; John is declaration after declaration after declaration. Jesus testified: "I am, I am, I am, I am." And many other statements.

So, John uses it 33 times. It is a public declaration, an open declaration. He openly says, really clearly so, they could not mistake it, "Truly, truly," because this is so unbelievable, He continually emphasizes the truthfulness of it. "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me." Having said, I know you. I know whom I've chosen. I see this all in fulfilling Scripture. This doesn't change your commission, out of the torture of His own soul, which of course reached a pinnacle in the garden when He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. He says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me." That's treason announced.

Well, the apostles are stunned. I guess we could say the next point, number three, is the twelve, astonished. The twelve, astonished. Verse 22. So simple. "The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking." Silence. I don't know how long that silence last, but just complete confusion, shock. Matthew says that they all began to say, "Is it I? Is it I?" Judas was the artful hypocrite. Masterful. Aided and abetted by the master of all deception, the one who disguises himself as an angel of light, Satan himself.

There was a hypocrite – hmmm – among the twelve. There are always hypocrites in the church. There are hypocrites in the ministry. There are hypocrites on the mission field. Satan makes certain of that. Christ knows, and it's all in the plan, and God will judge.

But the disciples don't know all of that history yet. I don't think they understood the wheat and the tares parable of Matthew 13, and how they would grow together fully. They just don't know what to make of it. So they just look at each other outwards until something might register as they glance around the room, and they can't land on anybody. Nobody they know.

So there was leaning on Jesus. Now remember, they're at a U-shaped table. It's not a kind of a table that we have, you slide a chair under, okay? Just in case you were wondering, Leonardo Da Vinci's "Last Supper" was not a photograph taken at this event. There were not 12 people sitting on one side of a table, looking at the camera. Okay? So that is not the pattern. The pattern is a very low table on the ground, and some small couches that they would recline at, and they would reach out and gather their food that way. So they were leaning toward one another, and Jesus, as you reconstruct the scene, is in one place. John is on the right, and Judas is on the left. Well, you know how important it was to be on the right and the left hand of Jesus. That's what they were all arguing about.

Judas had managed to kind of put himself in that place on the left hand, and John was on the right hand. John was close to Jesus. Peter wasn't, which is something you want to maybe remind our Roman Catholic friends of, that Peter had to have John intercede for him to get to Jesus. But anyway, John was near the head of Jesus, near His chest and head. I like the way John identifies himself. There was reclining on Jesus one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. John never identifies himself by name in his gospel. Never. He refers to himself as that other disciple. But here, he refers to himself as the "disciple whom Jesus loved." And look, if you had a title you could choose, why not that one? Right? It's good. It works for me. I'm the one Jesus loves, and so are you, right? It doesn't mean that He loved John only, or loved John uniquely. He just said He loved His own which were in the world to the max. He loved them all the same. But it struck John as so wonderful, he began to identify himself that way. And this is the first time he does it, and then he does it four more times. Chapter 19, 20, 21. Once he got saying it, he just couldn't stop saying it. How wonderful.

So he's there near Jesus. So Simon Peter gestures to John and says to him, "Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking." Ask him. And there's conversation, there's food, and all of this going on. So they don't all hear this. There's a private moment. So John, in verse 25, leans back closer to the face of Jesus and said to Him, "Lord, who is it?" Who is it? They have no clue. No clue. And again, this is the amazing dexterity of hypocrisy. They're mystified.

That brings us to the final point: the traitor is addressed. Jesus then answered in verse 26, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot." Not the other Judas, but the one who was the son of Simon Iscariot. This is the unmasking of the betrayer. But, only Peter and John may have known. The rest don't seem to know what's going on, as we will see.

What is the morsel? Common meal in those days was a large bowl of kind of a paste. It was made up of things like raisins and figs and dates, and all mashed together or somehow cut up. Then they would put in some vinegar and some salt and some herbs, and they had unleavened bread which they would eat at Passover, and they would dip that – it was part of it, before they ate the actual Passover lamb – and so they would be dipping the bread in and eating this, and you would give the first piece of bread to the honored guest. And hey, Judas had been allowed by our Lord to be in the position on His side where the honored guest would sit, and so our Lord, in a gesture of amazing honor to Judas, gives him the morsel, as if he were some honored guest, a mark of special affection, a place of honor, a place of an intimate friend.

And then hell arrived. Verse 27. "After the morsel, Satan then entered into him." Who would know that? Only Jesus. He would know that. "Therefore Jesus said to him, 'What you do, do quickly.'" I'm done with you. Now you go do what you must do, because time is short. As I said, Judas would never see another day. And by the dawning of the next day, Jesus' trial would be essentially over, and He'd be on His way to death. Jesus would come out the other side of the grave to eternal glory. Judas would be damned to hell forever.

The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas to do this, and now he takes full possession of Judas.

Jesus then said, "What you do, do quickly." That's a command. He wanted him out. He wanted him gone. He wanted him away. He needed these hours to make promises, glorious promises that will begin to unfold immediately in verse 31, and all the way through the rest of the time together, and will be captured and offered as prayer in the 17th chapter. But he had to be out, gone. He wanted him gone. Not only that, for that reason, but he wanted him gone to go and do what he needed to do. Satan had entered him to carry out the greatest efforts of hell. But he was actually going to carry out the greatest effort heaven ever made to rescue sinners.

Well, Jesus said, "What you do, do quickly." The rest of them, sitting around, reclining at the table, knew – no one of the rest that were reclining at the table "knew for what purpose He had said this to him." They didn't know why He sent Judas away. They didn't hear the private conversation. They didn't know why they sent him away. Some were supposing "because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, 'Buy the things we have need of for the feast.'" Maybe more food. "Or else, that he should give something to the poor." They had no idea.

But with the statement of Jesus, "What you do, do quickly," He activated His own death. That is step one in the activation of His own execution, because nothing will be happening until the trigger is pulled, and Judas is the trigger.

Judas acted, verse 30. He had no choice. Sovereign Lord. And I'm sure he was glad to get out, now that he was exposed. So after receiving the morsel, he went out immediately, and it was night. It was night. Was it ever night? It was night forever, and Judas would never see another daylight, and has never seen light since. He is in outer darkness forever. The day is gone. The night has come. Eternal night fell on Judas. Just an incalculable disaster. It was over. His life in this world. But it will never be over in the world that he went to. Weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth, forever. If there's anybody in hell who has extreme remorse, it has to be him. What is hell? It is a place. It is a place of regret, and the more you have to regret, the more torturous it would be. And he has more to regret than anybody.

What are the lessons of this story? Well, we could say the lesson of the folly of lost opportunity, wasted privilege to know the truth of Christ, to see His beauty, to understand His glory, and to turn against Him. The lesson of the danger of loving money, and power, and ambition, and temporal things. The vileness of betrayal – that's certainly an element of the story. There's an element here of seeing the demonstration of seeing the loving patience and mercy of Christ. You know, when the mob came to arrest Jesus, and Judas came up to kiss Him, do you remember how Jesus addressed Judas? What did He say to him? "Friend." That's the last time he ever saw the face of the Son of God. Separated from Him forever.

I suppose the story also teaches us a frightening example of how engaged the devil can be in spiritual hypocrisy, how people can literally descend into the control of Satan. Can't avoid the deadliness of hypocrisy, the fruitlessness of living a false life.

But I want to draw a lesson out of this that on top of that is the overarching lesson that our Lord wanted the disciples to learn, and it is this: nothing that sinful men will ever do can thwart the purposes of God. Nothing. Absolutely nothing. Throw all you want at Jesus Christ, and you will not alter the plan of God one iota.

The seeming tragedy of the cross was actually the triumph of redemption. What looked like Satan's victory was his defeat. Genesis 50:20 sums it up. "You meant it for evil. God meant it for," what? "For good." And what good? We shall see.

Father, we thank You for Your generosity to us in giving us Your truth. We need this. We need the warning of it and the encouragement of it. We need to fear false faith, hypocrisy. We also need to have great hope and trust that the worst that all the forces of hell can throw at You cannot alter Your sovereign, redemptive plan. Thank You that You've made us a part of it as we read in Ephesians, and we end up where we started. We thank You, Lord, that when we were under the power of the prince of the air, the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, and when we were by nature the children of wrath, You were merciful. And because of the great love with which You have loved us, by grace, You saved us, and You saved us unto good works that You ordained, that we should walk in them. You made us into one body, a holy temple in which Your Spirit dwells, growing together into Christ's likeness. Thank You for the redemptive work. Thank You for all that You have done. Give us boldness and faithfulness in our commission in spite of the hypocrites who bring reproach on Your name. May we know the commission stands to proclaim Your gospel faithfully in the world. We know that You'll bless it and it'll never return void, but always accomplish Your purpose. We thank You for such a calling. May we be faithful to it. In our Savior's name. Amen.

END

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