

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are
Most Surely Believed Among Us
An Expository Study of the Gospel According to Luke
Chapter 22- Luke 22:24-34
328- Jesus Teaches about True Greatness- Part 1

September 18, 2016

Luke 22:24-34

24 And there arose also a dispute among them *as to* which one of them was regarded to be greatest.

25 And He said to them, "**The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.'**

26 "**But *it is* not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant.**

27 "**For who is greater, the one who reclines *at the table* or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines *at the table*? But I am among you as the one who serves.**

28 "**You are those who have stood by Me in My trials;**

29 **and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you**

30 **that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**

31 "**Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded *permission* to sift you like wheat;**

32 **but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."**

33 But he said to Him, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!"

34 And He said, "**I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me."**

To the Glory of God

Now normally we think of the Lord's Supper as a very sacred and holy time, a time a great introspection and self-examination, as we seek

to partake of the Bread and the Cup rightly and thereby proclaim the Lord's Death till He comes. We pray and we meditate Scripture and we are quiet out of respect for this amazing Sacrament that Jesus Himself instituted.

We know from Scripture that the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper does *not* have the power or ability to wash away sins. So we reject the man-made concept of "Transubstantiation", and we understand that we are *not* initially Justified by partaking of the Lord's Supper, but we also know that it is one of the "Means of Grace" that God has chosen to give to His people whereby He strengthens and encourages those who have already been saved by Grace through Faith alone. And as God the Holy Spirit works in them through them partaking of this precious Sacrament, He brings conviction and repentance and fortitude to His people, and therefore, this Service works *together* with all the other "Means of Grace" to *keep* them saved and to propel them onward toward Biblical Holiness.

And so, at least 13 times every year, we approach this Ordinance carefully and reverently, and we look at the Book to determine just *how* and *how much* and *to what degree* this "Means of Grace" is alive and vibrant and working in our lives. And then, as we leave the Lord's Table, we are better equipped to trust in God, and to resist and overcome the ongoing sinful impulses of our flesh, and to walk this world in white. So there is great benefit to yielding ourselves to this Ordinance, and I look forward to it and I long to engage in it even more than we do.

But, even though all of that is true, this scene of the Last Supper of Jesus as described by Dr. Luke, as he was moved along by God the Spirit to write this account, is one of the most amazing scenes in the entire Bible. This is a very busy scene; in fact, it is quite chaotic. There is a lot is going on in this single Service, both real Good and real Bad.

One of the *best* things that God is doing in this Service, on this particular Thursday evening in the last week of Jesus' earthly Ministry, is using Himself to institute one of the glorious "Means of Grace", one of the gifts that God has given to the Church to help encourage and empower believers, the "Ordinance" or the "Sacrament" of the Lord's Supper that the Christian Church has celebrated now for 2,000 consecutive years. And that is a real Good thing.

Jesus is also confirming that the institution of the glorious New

Covenant will be through His Own Blood rather than through the blood of an animal, as was the Original or the First Covenant. And that is a very Good thing.

But one of the worst things that is happening, at the very same time in this very same Service, is *the* single greatest sin in the history of Mankind is being carried out, the betrayal of Jesus by Judas. And that is a very Bad thing.

And yet, as we have discovered, this betrayal is carried out in such a way that fully and precisely fulfills God's Own pre-ordained Plan of Salvation, that God set in motion before the world was. And so, in the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, we have perhaps the single greatest example in all of the Bible of the profound Mystery between two seemingly divergent forces:

- ✓ God's Sovereignty
- ✓ Human Responsibility

God is absolutely Sovereign over everything, all the time, so that *nothing* that God has determined to do will fail. And yet, at the same time, Man is full accountable to God for what he does, and can and will be judged by God if he doesn't do the "right" thing.

And *both* of these concepts are absolutely true and neither one hinders the other one. And so we must resist the temptation to lean too heavily on the Truth of God's Sovereignty at the expense of Human Responsibility, and we must resist the temptation to lean too heavily on the side of Human Responsibility at the expense of God's Sovereignty. There is a tension between these two Truths that tempt us to become warped or jaded, which will cause us to either try to work to be saved, or to lay back and become unconcerned. And neither one of those are right. And so we must be careful to maintain the tension between both of these Truths so that we hold both to be equally true at all times.

Now both of these Truths are illustrated by the Statement that Jesus made in **Luke 22:21-22** when He said:

21 "But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Mine on the table.

22 "For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!"

So notice that, as we have already studied, Jesus is teaching here that Judas betrayed the Lord because he wanted to. And that makes Judas to be fully culpable and responsible for what he did. And it also makes Judas to be fully evil. Judas didn't have a chemical imbalance in his brain, and Judas wasn't bi-polar and didn't need therapy. Judas was evil, and he so despised the Prince of Life that he betrayed Him. And Jesus condemns him here in verse 22.

And that means that Judas was completely responsible for this conscious act of his will. And that is *why* **The Acts 1:25b** tells us that Judas:

... turned aside to go to his own place.

... so because Judas betrayed the Lord by his own voluntary volition, God could damn him forever in a place in hell that was reserved for him. And that is why Jesus said:

Luke 22:22b

... woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!

So, that is the Human Responsibility side. And yet, at the same time, we also read these Words of Jesus:

Luke 22:22a

For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined...

So, not in opposition to, but in connection with Judas being full accountable, the betrayal of the Son of God by this evil man was absolutely the Will of God and was in full accord with Old Testament Prophecy made hundreds of years earlier.

And this is something that you always have to keep in mind when you are reading about the great opposition against Jesus by the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the Scribes, and now Judas himself. *None* of them acted on their own. They all act within the *framework* of the predestined, predetermined Plan of God. And this is a common mistake.

Many people teach today that atheists and those who are deceived by demonic teachings, like Muslims, operate in some kind of isolation

from any sovereign, Divine Strategy or Plan. The atheist is foolish enough to think he's in complete control of his choices, but we shouldn't be. The atheist is foolish enough to think that he alone determines not only his choices but the *outcome* of his choices and the *effects* of his choices. And it is this false premise that gives credibility to those who say things like, "*I changed my life*", or "*I'm working hard on improving my own life*". This false premise also gives rise to teachings that say things like, "*Lost people are out there doing their own thing.*" As though lost people are in charge of their own lives.

You see, both the "confirmed" atheist and the "practical" atheist, or the "theoretical" atheist, thinks he acts freely on his own will. He is deceived into thinking that he's in charge of his own destiny. And they will mimic the poem "Invictus" that says:

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeoning of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find me, unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.¹

Now I was presented with this poem in my English class in the 11th grade just a few months after I was saved. And this poem frightened me by what it says. It still does. And I refused to see any redeemable value in this poem then and failed the class. This poem is

¹ *Invictus*; William Ernest Henley; 1875

the very *epitome* of the mindset of the unregenerate. It glories in human arrogance and illustrates perfectly the false notion that human beings are somehow in charge of their own lives and gives credibility to the notion of "Human Free Will", which the Bible does not teach, but which has been *deified* as being absolutely sacred by the lost pagan world, and sadly, by many in the modern Church.

But nothing could be further from the Truth. The Bible says that a lost sinner is a slave to his sin and is driven *unmercifully* by his own carnal lusts. And Judas is acting just like an atheist here. He thinks he can make his *own* decision, choose his *own* path, decide his *own* outcome, and therefore, his *own* destiny. And so he is deceived into thinking that he is acting in complete isolation from God.

But *no one* acts apart from God. There is not a single act or choice or decision that lies outside the sovereign Plan of God. Every choice, every act, every decision made by every human in the world, *including* the most evil, heinous behavior against the Truth and against the Lord and against His people. God governs every decision, and He fits all of our choices into His Plan for His Own Ends and to His Own Glory. So there's not one single rebellious molecule in the universe that operates independently of God's Control and Purpose.

Judas' betrayal was *not* some kind of failure of God's Plan of Redemption, it was a very important part of it. It is important to always know that the sovereign Power of God weaves every Good and Evil contingency *together* to *assure* that what God has determined will come to pass, *exactly* as He has willed.

And *this* is one of the reasons *why* we worship God. Because no human, saint or sinner, ever operates for a single second independently of Him. Our God is Sovereign, and so He takes every act, every choice, and every decision made by every sinner and every saint. and He weaves them perfectly into His sovereign Purpose. And when I think about the Wisdom and the Power of God, that's what I think about. That to me is staggering. And so it silences me and it drives me to my knees and it puts my face in the dust.

A miracle like raising Lazarus from the dead, that's a relatively *minor* Act. All God had to do was reverse the laws of nature for a moment and put life into a dead man. But how in the world can God take every single decision, every choice, and every act with the hundreds of millions of implications that those decisions and choices

and acts entail by every human being on the planet every moment of every day and work them all together in such a way that two things are always true:

- A. God's Will is always carried out exactly as he has predetermined.
- B. Man is always fully responsible for what he chooses and loves and does.

That is absolutely breathtaking! And that staggers the imagination and leaves us wondering after this great God.

For example, the phrase **“the hand of the one betraying Me is with Mine on the table.”** is very important because it signifies two things:

- 1. A wicked betrayal of the worst kind.
- 2. A fulfillment of Old Testament Prophecy.

Psalms 41:9

Even my close friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me.

Now keep in mind what Jesus was doing in this Service. He was *instituting* the Lord's Supper. And here at what is supposed to be a very sacred and precious moment, right after Jesus told them that the glorious New Covenant was going to be purchased through His Blood, satan entered into Judas' heart to betray Him.

And this is the *worst kind* of betrayal because when you ate with someone, that was the symbol of friendship. That was the place of security and safety and protection and peace and friendship and loyalty. In the Jewish culture of the 1st Century, it was unthinkable that you would be betrayed by someone who ate bread with you.

Now I want you to try to think about the fact that Judas has been right there with Jesus through all the miracles and all the healings and all the signs and wonders. Judas saw it all. And he was there to hear perfect Teaching from the only perfect Preacher Who ever lived. And the evil, wicked, unsaved traitor, "Judas from Kerioth" (Iscariot), was given Divine Power by Jesus Himself to cast out demons and to heal sick bodies and to perform miracles right along with the other eleven.

And now Judas is with Jesus for the celebration of the Passover as they memorialized God's Redemption of the children of Israel from Egypt's bondage. He has been there to hear that Jesus will go to the Cross, and from now on the Body and Blood of Christ given on the Cross will be the *new* symbol of the *fullness* of Redemption that will be marked out by the bread and the cup in this special Service.

So Judas has been there through all of that. But he is so hard hearted and his hypocrisy is so deep-seeded that he is completely unmoved by any of this. The fallen arch-angel himself, satan, has put it into Judas' heart to do what he is going to do. And Judas has welcomed it with open arms. So Judas' betrayal is an *enthusiastic* betrayal.

And so, when Jesus says, **“Behold the hand of the one betraying Me is with Me on the table,”** it doesn't move Judas at all. It doesn't frighten him at all. It doesn't melt him at all. There is no remorse, no conviction. Judas can look Jesus in the eye and not even blink.

Now even though Judas was resolute in his sin, this Statement by Jesus has a *profound* effect on the others. And just how it affects them is the point of this entire Passage. So I have a question right about now?

Why didn't Jesus identify His betrayer?

Why did Jesus make a *general* statement about “somebody” betraying Him, and yet didn't identify who it was? Why didn't Jesus stand up and point at him and say, “*Judas is going to betray Me?*” All these men would eventually find out anyway, so why the secrecy?

You see, I think Jesus did this on purpose. I think He purposefully did *not* identify His betrayer so that two very powerful sins would be exposed in those men whom God was going to use to establish the Christian Church. And these two sins were so terrible, so imposing, so overbearing, that if Jesus did not expose it right now and deal with it, these sins would stop these men from fulfilling their Divine Calling. And *that* is what is going on in what Dr. Luke is telling us in the Passage that Brother Andy just read to you. And that is what I want us to look at over the next couple of weeks.

Now, for many years, I thought that Jesus was simply giving a Lesson on Spiritual Leadership here in **Luke 22:24-34**, and that this was a standalone teaching. But, with all that is going on in this Passover

Service, that would be completely out of context. What is happening with Judas, in connection with what Jesus is saying, in connection with what God is doing in the other eleven men. is *why* Jesus said what He said about Spiritual Greatness. In fact, it was these events that led to the need to discuss this in the first place.

Now to solve this mystery, I want you to look at a more detailed account of this Last Supper from both the Apostle Levi and the Apostle John, so please turn first to **Matthew 26:20-25:**

20 Now when evening came, Jesus was reclining *at the table* with the twelve disciples.

21 As they were eating, He said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me.**"**

22 Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, "Surely not I, Lord?"

23 And He answered, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me.**"**

24 "The Son of Man *is to go*, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.**"**

25 And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" Jesus said to him, "You have said *it yourself.*"****

So, Dr. Luke's account of this Service is very brief. But here, the Apostle Levi lets us in on a few more details. First of all, we have the quote at the end of verse 24:

It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.

Again, re-enforcing that *this* sin of betrayal by Judas was the most spectacular sin of all. But then, Levi gives us the exchange between Jesus and Judas in verse 25:

And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" Jesus said to him, "You have said *it yourself.*"****

Now the phrase "**who was betraying Him**" means that Judas was in the process of betraying Jesus at that very moment. Even though the

final act had not been carried out yet, Judas was now fully committed to do this wicked sin, and Satan was now fully in his heart. And Levi tells us that Judas, very hypocritically asked:

Surely it is not I, Rabbi?

And the way that Judas said this indicates to us that, in his deception, Judas really did not think that Jesus knew. And this is common with those who willfully and repeatedly sin against God. The deception that Satan gives to them causes them to disbelieve in the Deity of Jesus Christ. You see, Jesus is God, and as God Jesus is fully Omniscient, and so He knows everything about everything, and nothing is hidden from Him. But people who sin willfully and repeatedly against God forget this part and they really think that Jesus doesn't know or that He doesn't see.

But what Judas was right about was that the other eleven had no idea what he was about to do. And so, Judas puts on a deceptive front here as though he was innocent, and he was saying, in effect, "*Surely I could never do such a thing, Rabbi, right?*" But now, notice Jesus' strange response:

You have said *it* yourself.

In other words, Jesus looked Judas right in the eye and said to him, "*Why of course you would never do that, Judas, because to do that would be a betrayal of the worst kind, and you would never do that, would you?*" Now why did Jesus say this? Isn't this kind of statement *misleading* to the others? Doesn't a statement like this give Judas some credibility? I mean, Jesus is publicly *agreeing* with Judas that he would never do such a terrible thing. So why didn't Jesus just come out and say, "*Yea, you're the evil one!*" Why keep the others in the dark?

Now to get even *more* details, let's read from the Apostle John's account of this very same Service from **John 13:21-32**:

21 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.**"

22 The disciples *began* looking at one another, at a loss *to know* of which one He was speaking.

23 There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.

24 So Simon Peter gestured to him, and said to him, "Tell *us* who it is of whom He is speaking."

25 He, leaning back thus on Jesus' bosom, said to Him, "Lord, who is it?"

26 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.

27 After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, "**What you do, do quickly.**"

28 Now no one of those reclining *at the table* knew for what purpose He had said this to him.

29 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.

30 So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.

31 Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, "**Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him;**

32 **if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.**

Now verse 22 lets us know that after Jesus told them that somebody was going to betray Him, that *none* of the disciples understood who it was. And so it was left to Peter to *initiate* the answer.

Now, evidently, when they reclined around the table back then, everybody was talking. And so it must have been a very loud gathering, with many different conversations going on. And periodically, Jesus would say something and, out of respect, everybody would stop and listen to Him, and then resume their conversations.

And so, the one who was the closet to Jesus was the only one who could ask Him something quietly. In verses 23-25 Peter goes to John and tells him to ask the Lord who it was. And I believe with all my heart that the reason Peter did this was because he thought it was himself. And in verse 26- Jesus said:

That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.

.. and then Jesus dipped the morsel and gave it to Judas. So, at *that* point, at least John knew it was Judas. And yet there is no record of John telling Peter. It was at that moment when satan entered into Judas and Jesus recognized that, and so Jesus said something to Judas so loud that everybody could hear it:

What you do, do quickly.

But the Apostle John tells us that at this point the other disciples are not aware of what Jesus meant by this statement.

John 13:28-29

28 Now no one of those reclining *at the table* knew for what purpose He had said this to him.

29 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.

Then the Apostle John gives us a frightening statement in verse 30:

So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.

It was never so dark in the history of the Universe as it was at this moment. This is just another way of describing the horror of Judas' sin. Yet look at how Jesus responded to this manifestation of evil:

31 ... "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him;

32 if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.

This is incredible! Jesus is saying here that this dark act of evil brought forth the Glory of the Son of Man. And the reason such an evil act could bring Jesus Glory was because it *guaranteed* that God's predetermined Plan of Redemption would be carried out. So the betrayal of Judas *assured* the Will of God. While God didn't *cause* this evil, He *used* it to guarantee that His Plan would be fulfilled.

Now the reason I had to go over all of this is to show you how this is all connected to what Jesus said in **Luke 22:24-34**. Look again at **Luke 22:24**:

And there arose also a dispute among them *as to* which one of them was regarded to be greatest.

What? Jesus has just said that somebody is going to betray Him, but He doesn't say who. And at first, everybody is disturbed. Then John asks him, at Peter's initiation, and Jesus reveals to him who it is, but evidently John didn't tell the others. Then Jesus speaks up and tells Judas, "**What you do, do quickly**", and then Judas gets up and leaves while everybody, except John, thinks he is being sent somewhere by Jesus to tend to some business. And it is at this moment that Luke tells us that they begin to discuss which one of them is the greatest? Seriously?

Jesus has just established the first New Covenant Ordinance, which is a Good thing, and then He has just terrified the disciples by telling them that one of them is going to betray Him, which is a Bad thing, and Satan has now entered into Judas' heart, which is a real Bad thing, and yet, God's predetermined Plan of Redemption is right on schedule, which is a very Good thing. The first thing that pops into these guy's minds is to begin a debate about which one of them is the greatest? This makes no sense. This seems to be terribly out of place.

Not really. You see, what Dr. Luke is telling us here is that their discussion about who is the greatest comes on the heels of them first being terrified that they might betray the Lord. Look back at **Luke 22:23**:

And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing.

Matthew 26:22

Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, "Surely not I, Lord?"

So, their *first* reaction to what Jesus said here was to be "**deeply grieved**". This is way beyond simply being concerned, they were literally terrified. And they all asked Jesus, "**Surely not I, Lord?**" Now *why* did

they do this? *Why* ask Jesus *if* it was them rather than make a definitive statement and say, *"I won't do that!"*

These men had been with Jesus now for over three years. They were saved and they had seen things that had radically transformed them. And they knew by this time that when Jesus asked them a question, He didn't need them to answer. They also knew that Jesus knew more about them than they knew about themselves, and so they asked Jesus:

"Surely not I, Lord?"

But notice a strange thing. Jesus doesn't answer them. He doesn't say anything to bring them any comfort at all. He leaves them pondering their own dark thoughts and examining their own wicked hearts. He doesn't identify the traitor to anyone but John. Now why does Jesus do that? These men are scared and deeply grieved and they could really use some encouragement here. They have each one have asked Him if it is them, but He didn't answer them. So what is going on?

This is an example of what is called "Self-Doubt". Self-doubt is when you question your own ability. It means you don't have confidence in yourself, or when you doubt yourself. And Self-Doubt is one of the most important qualities for true Spiritual Greatness. It is the hallmark of a true Spiritual Leader. Leaders out in the pagan world are praised for their Self-Confidence, but here, in the Church, leadership is all about placing all of your confidence in the Lord and none in yourself. And that is why the Apostle Paul said this in **Philippians 3:3**

for we are the *true* circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,

You see, true Spiritual Greatness or true Spiritual Leadership is the epitome of "Self-Doubt" rather than "Self-Confidence". Spiritual Leadership and Spiritual Greatness has to do with abandoning every vestige of human pride and carnal prestige and fleshly ambition and dying to all of that. But none of these men are ready for this yet, and

Jesus knows that. And that is *why* Jesus allowed this conversation to go on without solving the mystery.

Notice that while these men doubt *themselves*, they quickly go to Jesus. *None* of them initially makes a definitive statement about himself to Jesus. They know that Jesus holds the key to their own greatness. And so their *initial* reaction to what Jesus says is to run to Jesus and ask Him.

And that would normally be the end of the matter. But when Jesus remains silent, these men then gather with each other and this is when the discussion gets ugly very quickly. And it is at *this* point when Dr. Luke picks this up in verse 24:

Luke 22:24

And there arose also a dispute among them *as to* which one of them was regarded to be greatest.

Now remember all of this is going on at the Last Supper! All of this betrayal and fleshly confidence is going on in this holy and sacred Service. But how does the discussion go from **“Surely not I, Lord?”** to which one is to be regarded as the greatest? How do you go from being terrified that it is you who might betray the Lord to discussing how great you are? Well, it happened in just a few seconds.

Now keep in mind that Jesus could have solved this problem by simply revealing that it was Judas. But He knew what He was doing. Jesus knew that these men, who would eventually do great and mighty things, were not ready yet. They still had way too much Self-Confidence, too much Personal Ambition, way too much carnal “Self-Righteousness”, and were not ready to lead. And so, in His Mercy, Jesus *allows* the discussion to go on by purposefully keeping them in the dark about who the traitor really was, so He could expose their sinful impulses.

Now if we could just try to listen to their conversation at this point, we would probably hear something like, *“Look, James, I’ve never really had that much confidence in Andrew, anyway.” “Yea, I see what you’re saying. I mean after all when Jesus took me and Peter and John up on that mountain and was transfigured before our eyes, you know He didn’t take Andrew with Him. He left him at the bottom with all you other guys. And that obviously meant something. I mean,*

obviously, by taking us three up there with Him, Jesus was saying that we were, you know, more advanced in our walk with God than you other guys."

So, each one of these men quickly forget all about Jesus, and forget why they were in that room in the first place, and forget what Jesus had just said and done about the New Covenant and His Blood and His Body and His betrayal, and their entire focus was now on themselves and their own individual spiritual merit badges.

And Jesus allowed this sinful display of Self-Righteousness and Pride and Arrogance and Self-Confidence to go on for a while, and then He interrupted them to teach them something that would change them forever. Jesus was now going to teach them about true Spiritual Greatness. Look at **Luke 22:25-27**:

25 And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.'

26 "But *it is* not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant.

27 "For who is greater, the one who reclines *at the table* or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines *at the table*? But I am among you as the one who serves.

This is one of the most magnificent Teachings in the entire Bible, and yet, it is totally counterintuitive to human logic and reasoning. This Teaching is summed up in verse 26 when Jesus said:

... the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant.

Now this is not normal. This is not natural. This is Divine. Only in the Church is this true. Only among God's people is this true. In every other walk of life, whether business or politics, greatness is established exactly the opposite of this way. Out in the lost pagan world greatness must be grasped, it must be conquered, it must be earned, it must be fought for. Respect and Power and Prestige and Fame comes only to the strong, to those who go out and grab it, the movers and the shakers, those who are willing to step over or on anyone

who gets in their way. That is the way of the world. That is the way of Human Ambition. That is the way the pagan world measures Success.

But, listen carefully, dear friends, to the Words of Jesus:

But *it is not this way with you ...*

We must understand that Christianity and the Church are the single most *unique* elements on the face of the earth. Nothing else in all the world is like the Church because nothing else in all the world is like the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ.

In here, the weak are elevated; in here, the poor have a seat at the table. In here, the uneducated are treated with dignity and respect. In here, the one who is humble rises while the one who is arrogant falls.

In here, in the Church, leadership is *not* defined by who can “lord it over” somebody else, but rather who can serve them. And the strong man is not identified by his strength, but through his weakness. In here-, Jesus has the pre-eminence, and that is why Leadership in the Church are not called “bosses”, but Shepherds. The word “Elder” has to do with someone who lovingly leads, and the word “Deacon” means “Servant. And their style is not in giving orders and expecting obedience, but in putting their arms around the sheep and walking with them, and weeping with them, and rejoicing with them. In here, Success is measured not by personal performance, but by how much we value and treasure Jesus Christ.

In the Church, in here, the strong man is not the one who has it all together, but the one who is broken and who is contrite and the one who trembles at God’s Word. In here, Spiritual Greatness is not defined by the balance in the checking account or the model of car you drive or the type of clothes you wear, but in how much you love and treasure Jesus, and how much you love all those that Jesus loves.

Listen to me, Selfish Ambition is a horrific sin that always seems to be “crouching at the door” (**Genesis 4:7**). It contaminates our motives for doing just about anything, even godly and holy things. It shows up even in the most holy moments, like it did right here for Jesus’ disciples in Dr. Luke’s account of the Last Supper. But Jesus died to set us all free from the suicidal slavery of “Self-Worship”.

Jesus’ final meal before the Cross was perhaps the most ironic time for the Twelve to debate over which of them was the greatest.

The greatest Human Being Who would ever walk the earth, the Founder and Perfecter of their faith, was reclining at the table with them. He was the only One in the room without sin. He was the only One there who always did what was pleasing to the Father.

And this Person had just led the Twelve through the last Passover meal before His Death, the Death that would be the propitiating sacrifice for *their* sins. And He had just instituted the new Passover meal which they and all future disciples were to observe regularly until He returned so that they would always remember that their sins were forgiven only through the substitutionary, atoning Death of the true Passover Lamb.

So this was no time for any disciple to assert his own greatness, except maybe the greatness of his sin. But even more ironic is what ignited the debate.

Jesus had just revealed that one of them that very night would willingly participate in the most spectacular sin in history, the slaughter of the Son of God. And yet, somehow, the introspection and inquiry that followed ended up in a competition over who was greatest.

It was a moment that displayed the terrifying blinding power of pride in sinful people. How quickly the brilliance of the Sun of Righteousness can be eclipsed by the moon of selfish ambition.

Jesus was about to die *for their sins*. And he was about to be betrayed to that death by one of them. And the correct response to such horror and glory should have been mourning, repentance, and worship. But instead each disciple was suddenly and absurdly preoccupied with his own place of prominence in God's Plan of Salvation.

But what Grace Jesus displayed in this moment. This sin, too, would be paid in full. Therefore, He did not condemn His disciples for thinking far too highly of themselves at the worst possible time. Instead, He mercifully drew their gaze off of themselves and back to Himself:

25 ... "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.'

26 "But *it is* not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant.

27 "For who is greater, the one who reclines *at the table* or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines *at the table*? But I am among you as the one who serves.

So the secret to freedom from slavery to Selfish Ambition was to keep looking to Jesus. Looking at, comparing, and competing with one another would only lead to a black hole of demonic evil. But to look to Jesus would remind them of the Grace they had received and that loving each other as He had loved them would fill them full of joy.

I am very thankful that the Lord moved Dr. Luke to include this account of the disciples' sin, because the very same sin is frequently exposed in my own heart, even in the most sacred of moments. And I know that I will wage war against Selfish Ambition as long as I live in this life, because it's right at the very core of my own fallen nature, my evil desire to be like God.

Dear friends, we shouldn't be shocked when we see this evil in ourselves, we should be deeply grieved when we don't. And like Jesus we should be patient when we see it in others. The key to walking in freedom is helping each other get our eyes off ourselves and back on to Jesus, because our souls were designed to be satisfied with His Glory, not our own.

Amen. Let's pray

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.