

July 12, 2015
Sunday Morning Service
Series: John
Community Baptist Church
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as you prepare to hear from John 13:21-30.

1. What is wrong with Leonardo da Vinci's painting, "The Last Supper"?
2. Why didn't the other disciples stop Judas from betraying Jesus?
3. What kind of traits should the other disciples have observed in Judas that would alert them that he was a fraud?
4. Why did Jesus tell Judas to go out and quickly do what he was going to do?

JESUS KNOWS WHO WILL BETRAY HIM **John 13:21-30**

Several years ago, I was visiting a man who appeared to be a faithful servant of the Lord. While we were together the servant said and did multiple things that should have appeared as red warning flags to me. But I missed them. About six months later, it was discovered that this professing servant of the Lord was actually living in deep sin. I should have seen it. Looking back, I realize the man dropped enough evidence that I should have asked questions. Why didn't I? This particular servant of the Lord seemed to be so busy serving God that it was very hard for me to imagine that he was not genuine.

The disciples must have felt a similar thing toward Judas Iscariot. Jesus chose the man to be part of the inner circle of twelve

followers. He seemed to be so trustworthy that he was the treasurer of the group. John reveals in this text that Judas was in charge of the moneybag. Apparently, he appeared to be very trustworthy. How shocked were the disciples to learn for certain that it was Judas who betrayed the Master? Even in the process of Jesus identifying the culprit and giving him leave to do his wicked deed, most of the other disciples missed all the clues.

False professors of salvation are not rare in our day. We live among religious, but unsaved, people by the thousands. They are often very nice people, dedicated people, church-sounding kind of people. They are part of some aspect of religion. They would say they are "Christians" for any number of ulterior motives. Maybe they do religion and church because their conscience convicts them in that area. Maybe they are religious because their parents were religious and trained them to see religion as a good thing. Maybe they are trying to coax God into letting them into heaven, or maybe they do what they do for the praise of fellow-man. Any of those motives look a lot like Judas' motivation.

So what? What could be wrong with a person acting religious, being dedicated, as long as it doesn't hurt us? Well that is the point. There has to be some danger with false profession or Jesus would not have warned us about it. Jesus taught: *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits"* (Matthew 7:15-20).

We need to identify false Christians because they will betray our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a serious matter for the false professor. Every person who rejects faith in Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of sins will be sent to eternal punishment no matter how sincere or dedicated they were to any number of religious endeavors. Betrayal of Jesus is also serious because it has ramifications for all true followers of Christ. Judas betrayed Jesus to the authorities and within minutes the other eleven followers of Jesus scattered for their lives and hid out in fear. Professing Christians who betray Jesus bring

a blight on the true followers of Christ. They mar our testimonies of changed lives so that unbelievers lump us all in a category called “religious hypocrites.”

For the betrayer’s sake, we need to uncover them. For the soundness of the true Church’s testimony, we need to uncover betrayers. Peter warned, *But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction (2 Peter 2:1)*. We need to pray for God’s help to see, to understand, to perceive evidence so that we can help these people or avoid them if they refuse to be helped.

Loyal Followers Can’t Imagine Betraying the Lord (vv.21-25).

Our text reveals that the Lord is troubled by betrayal (v.21). That only stands to reason. Because He was one with us, Jesus experienced a troubled soul. John wrote, *After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit (v.21a)*. After saying what things? Jesus had just taught the wonderful lesson of humility and service to others. He showed the disciples and us how to be a servant. He taught that His followers find true happiness in service. The problem was that not everyone was a true follower. The false follower (Judas) never found satisfaction in serving others. He was a critic. Instead of looking for opportunity to be of service to others, Judas stood around and criticized people who did serve (like Mary). Have you ever known anyone like that?

Knowing what Judas was like, therefore, Jesus confessed that He was troubled in His spirit. The word translated *trouble* means to stir up, to cause commotion. We carefully considered the meaning of the word a few weeks ago as we came across it in 12:27 where John recorded Jesus saying, *“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour” (John 12:27)*. Again we are reminded that this is the agitation of soul that Herod felt when he heard about the new born

king (Mt. 2:3). It is how the disciples’ felt in their soul when they saw Jesus walking on water (Mt. 14:26).

But when the word is applied to Jesus, we cannot imagine the depth of the troubling, the agitation of His soul. It was not sin for Him to experience such unrest of the soul. In fact, God the Son was destined for this. Isaiah promised that when God the Son came to earth, *He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not (Isaiah 53:3)*. Of course! How could perfect God come into a sin-cursed world, under the influence of Satan, and not be grieved?

His spirit was troubled and He was acquainted with grief because He faced the temptation of Satan the arch enemy. He was troubled in spirit because He was the special object of the religious hierarchy’s hatred. Because He saw the spiritual condition of the people like sheep scattered without a shepherd, He was troubled. Agitation welled up because He worked with disciples whose faith was small and, therefore, who kept failing. To guys like this He would leave the ministry of the Good News of salvation. No wonder He was troubled.

Do we not sympathize with His trouble in that we too being human are troubled in our souls? Is your spirit not troubled when wickedness seems to prosper? Are you not grieved when leaders call good evil and evil good? Doesn’t anti-God sentiment and actions cause agitation in your spirit?

But the trouble we read about here is particularly personal and grievous. Because He was one with God, Jesus understood what would take place. He said that His spirit was troubled, *and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.”* The words, *Truly, truly* affirm absolute certainty. Someone from among that intimate group of followers was going to betray the Master. This was not a hunch based on circumstantial evidence. Often we draw conclusions on that basis because we have no more certain knowledge. God the Son who knew that He came to earth to offer Himself as the sacrifice for sin, also knew the process to that point of suffering.

Therefore, Jesus could authoritatively address the twelve most faithful followers, telling them in detail that one of them would betray

Him. The news should have shocked them. Like Jesus, the disciples should be troubled by betrayal (vv.22-25). Who would do such a thing? John said, *The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke (v.22)*. We can only imagine what raced through the disciples' minds at this news. Did they look at each other wondering, "What does Jesus mean by betray?" Or "What does **you** mean?" Surely Jesus could not mean one of them! It must be that Jesus referred to someone outside the inner circle of twelve followers.

Were the disciples keeping track of what Jesus had been saying, and were they connecting the dots? Already Jesus has warned the disciples that He would be turned over to the authorities to be killed. Just a few days earlier, as Jesus led the disciples toward Jerusalem, He took them aside and told them, "*See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death*" (Matthew 20:18). How did the disciples think Jesus was going to be delivered? Actually, they never understood the multiple times Jesus promised He was going to suffer, die, and rise again. So, too, this idea of betrayal seemed to pass over their heads.

We must admit that we are not much more perceptive than they were. We have a tendency to interpret God's Word in light of our experiences in the Western culture. As a result, there are some important lessons that we miss because in our culture Christians go to Church, sing songs, give an offering, pray, read and preach the Bible, and go home. In relational cultures "church" goes on all week as fellow believers edify each other frequently.

We live in an inconsistent culture. On the one hand, we interpret "church" as a once a week kind of thing where we gather together with other religious people who would never, ever under any circumstances admit that they struggle with sin. Then, on the other hand, these same folks go home and spill the details of their lives on social media and think it is perfectly acceptable.

The other day I received an enlightening email about this common practice. The person said that she couldn't quite grasp the purpose of social media like Facebook and Twitter. Therefore, she decided to make friends using the same principles in life. Every day she walks down the street and tells passersby what she has eaten, how she feels, what she did the night before, and what she will do after.

She gives them pictures of her family and her dog as well as pictures of her gardening and spending time in her pool. She also listens to their conversations and tells them she loves them. She is convinced it works because already she has three persons following her: Two police officers and a psychiatrist.

So in the disciples' culture, they interpreted Jesus in light of the popular belief that Messiah was going to be a warrior/king who would raise an army in rebellion against Rome to deliver Israel. Nothing could be further from the truth in God's plan. That is why words like deliver over, betray, arrest, suffer, die, lifted up, rise again didn't register with them. Therefore, the idea of betrayal as they understood it could not effect this unique teacher who calmed the storms, healed the sick, raised the dead, and created food.

And as they looked at each other, what was Judas thinking? Someone needs to ask the hard question (vv.23-25). Peter thought that sounded like a job for someone who is close to Jesus. *One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table close to Jesus (v.23)*. This is the first of four times that John used the description, *the disciple whom Jesus loved*. (see also John 19:26; 20:7,20) It looks like John identifies himself as that disciple in the last two verses of the book (John 21:24-25).

Oh! Doesn't that sound arrogant? Not at all. Like Lazarus, John knew he was the object of Jesus' love. Not that he alone, or among the few, was loved by Jesus. Rather the description, ***whom Jesus loved*** is a confession of profound gratitude for the grace of our Lord in loving him. In that sense, we all should have the same kind of gratitude because we are objects of the Savior's love.

John, the beloved disciple, reclined next to Jesus. The word recline stands contrary to the view of the Last Supper popularized by Leonardo da Vinci. Again da Vinci interpreted the picture of the supper through the experience of western culture. This was not the way that culture sat especially at a significant meal like the Passover. The literal text is clear—they reclined.

John was reclining closest to Jesus when Jesus warned about the betrayer in their midst. What did he think? What did he hear? What should he do? Sometimes the person close to Jesus needs a nudge. John was the person, *so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking (v.24)*. This was probably not an awkward,

bold signal, but maybe a subtle nodding of the head that John would understand. Peter and John had fished together for years and understood each others unspoken statements. At this point, it is clear that at least two of the twelve picked up on something important. Here two or three were agreed on one thing.

There is a lesson for us here. It is okay and good for us to nudge each other on occasion if we have questions or doubts. “What do you think about _____?” is not always gossip, though it can quickly degenerate into gossip or slander. But, sincere Christian brothers ought to be able to discuss questions, doubts, or even what they perceive to be red flags for the purpose of helping a faltering brother or exposing a false teacher.

But we are left to wonder why bother to ask who the perpetrator is in such a situation. *So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, “Lord, who is it?” (v.25).* Why did John and Peter and maybe some of the others want to know? Certainly they were not interested in gossiping about the perpetrator. Would they attack? It seems that John sitting so closely whispered the question. Sometimes when evidence seems to indicate there is a problem, but we are not sure, our best response is to go to our Lord in prayer and whisper our question, “Do I see correctly? Is there a problem?”

Loyal Followers Have Difficulty Sensing the Significance of Night (vv.26-30).

The Lord revealed that Judas was the betrayer. Notice how He identified the betrayer with a general clue. John ask who and *Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it” (v.26).* It seems quite certain at this point that Jesus’ response to John’s question was also a whisper. Obviously, no one else picked up the answer. Is this an example of Jesus’ kindness and mercy? Judas is in deep sin as he contemplated betraying the Master. The Master knows, but He did not publicly call attention to Judas’ sin. He could have said, “Yes, Judas is going to betray Me because he is a dirty-rotten scoundrel!” But He didn’t embarrass Judas even as He does not embarrass us when we fall into sin. We like to embarrass sinners because it makes us feel superior to them. Jesus didn’t need to feel superior because He knows that He is.

Our Lord identified the betrayer with a specific action. *So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot (v.26b).* It was fortunate for Judas that Jesus had not declared this sign for all the disciples to hear. They probably would have jumped on Judas, tied him up, and refused to allow him to betray Jesus to the authorities. In all our human wisdom, we would declare victory in that the betrayer was stopped. Who then would continue the plan of God to get Jesus crucified?

John and Jesus were the only two in the room who knew what Judas was up to. Why didn’t John blurt it out or jump on Judas? Maybe he was wise enough to conclude, if the host of the meal, Jesus, God in the flesh, did not stop the man, why should John take it upon himself? Maybe he thought it was not the right time. Maybe John trusted Jesus.

The sign itself revealed the astonishing character of Jesus. The host giving the sop to a person at the table was generally an intentional sign of friendship. Maybe we could interpret this as Jesus’ last act of kindness and love to the man who betrays Him.

“And that final act of love becomes, with a terrible immediacy, the decisive movement of judgment. At this moment we are witnessing the climax of that action of sifting, of separation, of judgment which has been the central theme in John’s account of the public ministry of Jesus. . . . So the final gesture of affection precipitates the final surrender of Judas to the power of darkness, and the darkness has neither understood it or mastered it.” (Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light has Come, An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel*, Handsel/Eerdmans, 1984, p.173)

Jesus gave John the answer to His question, then sent Judas out. The disciples did not catch the significance of Judas going out into the night (vv.27-30). Do we wonder why Jesus’ followers are often slow to grasp spiritual need? Satan loves to blind people to truth.

Judas illustrated how Satan does serious work in lives of people. *Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him (v.27a).* Judas took the symbol of friendship from Jesus and Satan entered the betrayer’s heart. That was not something totally new to Judas. Satan had controlled or influenced Judas all along because he did not have faith in Jesus. But now Satan took complete control. Judas kept messing around with sin and Satan for years and left the door cracked

open too long. Bishop Ryle observed, “First he suggests; then he commands. First he knocks at the door and asks permission to come in; then once admitted he takes complete possession, and rules the whole inward man like a tyrant. . . . He that allows Satan to sow wicked thoughts will soon find within his heart a crop of wicked habits” (J.C. Ryle, p.31).

Humans playing with sin is like Poland inviting Hitler’s army to take up residence in order to help, or Ukrainians in the west to ask Putin to lend them a little aid. Quicker than people can imagine the invited dictator becomes the ruthless tyrant. And no tyrant is more ruthless than Satan.

This is way God warns His people to avoid Satan and never fool around with his temptations. Paul warned God’s people to be alert, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant *of his designs. (2 Corinthians 2:11)* Peter told us to *be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8)*. James wrote that we must *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you (James 4:7)*.

The story before us illustrates how the Lord allows Satan much freedom to work. *Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly” (v.27b)*. Obviously, the King could have stopped the process in its tracks. But then how would we be saved? This was virtually a command. According to the Bible record, it was the last command Jesus ever gave to Judas. Yet it was more than a command; it is encouragement to get on with the process. Jesus knew what the process was. No doubt He had worked to change Judas and, yet, He knew that Judas was not going to be changed.

Therefore, Jesus’ words convey, “I am ready to move on with the sacrifice for redemption. You can go out now and do your part Judas. There is no sense in delaying. Go do what you will do.” The next words Jesus will speak will be in response to Judas’ greeting, “Greetings Rabbi” (Matthew 26:49) to which Jesus will ask, “Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?” (Luke 22:46). The final words Judas will hear from the lips of Jesus will be, “I never knew you, depart from me you who work lawlessness” (Matthew 7:23).

When sin festers in a sinner’s life, disciples too often miss it. John revealed *(28) Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. (29) Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor.* Only John knew that Judas was the betrayer. Still he was so subtle and deceptive that the other disciples concluded Jesus told Judas to go give money to the poor.

Why do Jesus’ disciples miss when a person takes the most direct steps into apostasy? *So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night (v.30)*. The words, “It was night” are intentional and full of meaning. When Judas took the final step out that door, away from the presence of Jesus, he stepped into eternal night. There was no hope for the man now because he had completely rejected faith in Jesus.

Who is a pretender? Who is content to be only religious? Who is walking a path of rejecting faith in Jesus once and for all? We need to see the warning signs. We need to ask questions. We need to confront. But through it all, we need to trust Jesus because He knows and He is in control.