

The Word Became Flesh
Week 40
John 13:18-38 (CSB)
“Yet Not I But Through Christ In Me”

Introduction

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; in all your ways know Him, and He will make your paths straight. Don't be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil. This will be healing for your body and strengthening for your bones.
Proverbs 3:5-8

As we have studied previously in this chapter, Jesus declared that the way to lasting happiness is humility in combination with holiness. Those who belong to Christ must take on the mindset of Christ. Or as the Apostle Paul has so eloquently stated:

Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, Who existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when He had come as a man, He humbled Himself, by becoming obedient to the point of death — even to death on a cross.
Philippians 2:5-8

The Savior was both holy and humble. And in order to follow Him and be “blessed”, which means “happy” in the Greek, we must also do the same. Jesus demonstrated this attitude when He washed the feet of His disciples in the upper room. And He completed His example of humble service by laying down His life upon the cross. To be a Christian is to be like Christ. It is to completely abandon self, for the good of others and the glory of God.

As soon as Jesus explained this concept to His disciples in the upper room, The Scripture tells us that His heart became troubled (**vs. 18**), for He knew then, and had always known, that one of those with whom He had shared so much of His very presence was going to betray Him. Judas had, by this point in time, already made a pact with The Pharisees. He was planning to hand Jesus over to them as soon as he found the right opportunity. The LORD was not grieved, because He knew this betrayal would lead to His death. For His death was why He came. Rather, He was grieved because the soul of Judas was to be lost for eternity.

Tell them, “As I live — this is the declaration of The LORD GOD — I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked person should turn from his way and live. Repent, repent of your evil ways! Why will you die, house of Israel?”
Ezekiel 33:11

When Christ informed His followers that one of them would ultimately betray Him, the same old argument began to raise its ugly head amongst their ranks, as to which of them were the most loyal and best. Around the table it went, one by one the suspicious glances, accompanied by the question, **“Surely not I, LORD?” (Matthew 26:22)**. There was so much more that these men had to learn, and the time was growing short. For their great Teacher was about to depart from them.

When we look at the discourse of the upper room, there is much for us to learn as well. I believe that every verse of Scripture has been given to instruct not only those who were there in the moment, but for all generations that would follow. In the upper room there was a **Betrayer**. This fact is quite clear. But there was also a **Boastful** one, who would receive strong rebuke. Christ reminded them all of the true nature of **The Beloved**. And this is the lesson that we must take to heart. We must each look within our own hearts today and ask ourselves: *What kind of follower am I?*

The Betrayer (vs.18-30))

"I'm not speaking about all of you; I know those I have chosen. But the Scripture must be fulfilled: The one who eats My bread has raised his heel against Me. I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He. Truly I tell you, whoever receives anyone I send receives Me, and the one who receives Me receives Him Who sent Me." When Jesus had said this, He was troubled in His spirit and testified, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray Me." The disciples started looking at one another — uncertain which one He was speaking about. One of His disciples, the one Jesus loved, was reclining close beside Jesus. Simon Peter motioned to him to find out who it was he was talking about. So he leaned back against Jesus and asked him, "Lord, who is it?"

Jesus replied, "He's the one I give the piece of bread to after I have dipped it." When he had dipped the bread, he gave it to Judas, Simon Iscariot's son. After Judas ate the piece of bread, Satan entered him. So Jesus told him, "What you're doing, do quickly."

None of those reclining at the table knew why he said this to him. Since Judas kept the money-bag, some thought that Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the festival," or that he should give something to the poor. After receiving the piece of bread, he immediately left. And it was night.

As He washed their feet He explained to them (for Peter's sake) that because they had believed on Him, they were all declared "clean" meaning righteous. For to place one's faith in Christ is to be clothed in the righteousness of Christ (**2 Corinthians 5:21**). But Jesus also knew that not all of them had believed in Him. Judas, whose very name means "praise", did not have a saving faith in Christ. In fact, he had become very disillusioned with Him. When Jesus began to speak of His atoning death, rather than a revolution to overthrow the Roman oppression of Israel, Judas lost interest. Jesus wasn't the kind of Savior that he had hoped for, and therefore, he was willing to hand him over to the Pharisees.

This corrupt treasurer had heard Jesus' teaching for three years. He had seen Him perform countless miracles and had even experienced Christ's genuine love for him over and over again, and yet, he had hardened his heart, refusing to submit to the Lordship of The Son of God. And Christ's heart was broken for him. The word in the Greek used to describe Jesus' "troubled" spirit, means to stir or agitate, like the waves of a stormy sea. Jesus was heartsick that Judas had refused His love and offer of saving grace. But the betrayer had no one to blame but himself.

Jesus wanted the rest of the disciples to know that He was, and had always been, completely aware of His coming betrayal. Nothing ever catches God by surprise. And He wanted the disciples to know this. He told them:

"I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I AM (He)" **John 13:19**

The word "he" is not in the original text. Jesus was telling them that after everything had come to pass as He had said it would, then the disciples would completely understand that Christ is God, the Great "I Am" in the flesh! Even Judas, who must have been trembling with fear in this moment, knowing that his supposedly "secret plan" was not hidden from Christ in the slightest, should have repented on the spot. But his blackened heart was far too impenetrable by this point.

So how does a person who has been exposed to so much of the truth of God become a betrayer? It happens when they are unwilling to forsake their own fleshly desires in order to follow after God! Judas had every chance to submit himself, but in the end, Judas loved Judas more than he loved Christ. This world is filled with people just like him. In fact, many of those people are sitting in church pews every

Sunday! Just as Judas followed Jesus as a trusted member of His inner circle, many “betrayers” are faithful churchgoers. But their true nature will reveal itself when they are called upon to choose between self-sacrifice and self-advancement. Betrayers will always put their own desires ahead of everything else in the world. They can pretend to be Christian, but in their hearts they worship at the altar of “self”.

A careful reading of John’s account will reveal the scene around the table. John was seated (actually reclining) next to Jesus on one side, and Judas was seated on the other side of The Savior. Peter motioned to John (the Greek word actually means to “give a nod) to get him to ask Jesus who the betrayer was. Jesus then whispered to John that it would be the one to receive the matzah dipped in bitter herbs from Christ’s own hand. It is clear that no one else heard this conversation. In fact, the other disciples would have thought that Judas was being given a special honor by receiving the dipped Matzah from The LORD.

As quickly as Jesus handed the bread to Judas, He could see Satan glaring back at Him through Judas’ eyes. And then, we find one of the most troubling verses in all of Scripture:

After receiving the piece of bread, he immediately left. And it was night. John 13:30

Judas’ opportunity for redemption had come and gone. He had sinned away his own moment of grace. It is a sad day, when we elect to renounce Christ, and then God seconds the motion. This is the point at which the darkness can never be overcome. We bring the wrath of God down upon ourselves, when we betray the Son. Judas had his chance, and he chose self over sacrifice.

I find it absolutely astounding that NONE of the disciples at the table that day suspected Judas as the betrayer! A reading of the other gospels will reveal that even Judas said to Jesus, “Surely not I LORD?”, as the discussion swirled around the table. What an incredible hypocrite he was. And he had them all fooled. For even when Jesus sent him from the room, the other disciples were still trying to discern which one of them would be the betrayer!

The Beloved (vs. 31-35)

When he had left, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself and will glorify Him at once. Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will look for Me, and just as I told the Jews, so now I tell you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’

“I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Every person seated at that table had a different personality. James and John, whom Jesus called “the sons of thunder” were very dogmatic and judgmental in their religious views. Impetuous Peter could not keep his mouth shut to save his life. Thomas was timid and fearful. Andrew was bold and daring. Matthew had been a crooked tax collector, the kind of person that everyone in Israel despised. And Philip was humble and unassertive. This was indeed a diverse group. No wonder, they struggled to get along at times. And yet, Jesus had commanded them to love one another as He had loved them.

He called it “a new command”, but even *The Old Testament* speaks of love for God and our neighbors (**Exodus 20:1-17**). What made this command “new” was that through The Holy Spirit, those who are in Christ would now be given a supernatural ability to love one another. If you truly want to be like Christ, then you must let Christ love others ***through you!*** This is the new command that He has given to us. We tend to love those naturally with which we have the most in common. As the old saying goes, “Birds of a feather, flock together.” But I am here to tell you, as a matter of course, that if Jesus has full control of your heart, then you will love people who are nothing like you in the slightest. It is a miraculous agape love that comes directly from God that compels you to “wash the feet” of others with which you have nothing else in common, save the risen Christ living within you, and them. And what

exactly does it mean to “wash the feet” of our brothers and sisters in Christ? Simply put, it means to help them overcome when they stumble into sin. It means to help them to get back on the right path. In other words, we don’t look down upon them, we lift them up!

Jesus told His disciples that He would soon be leaving them, but if they allowed Him to love through them in this way, everyone would know to Whom they belonged, and Whose representatives they were. And get this. Let’s back up a few lines and pick up the verse that we had previously passed over. Because I LOVE this truth!

“Truly I tell you, whoever receives anyone I send receives Me, and the one who receives Me receives The One who sent Me.” **John 13:20**

For you see, when we love as He loves, He sends us out into this world with His message of redeeming love. And when people receive our message, then they too will receive **Him** and be reconciled with God! Now, what on this earth could be more important than this?! Folks, if you wish to become a part of the beloved, then you have got to learn how to love as Christ loves. And you can only do this by letting Him love **through you**. This doesn’t come “naturally”. It comes supernaturally. And it is a supernatural love that demands to be shared.

The Boastful (vs.36-38)

“Lord,” Simon Peter said to him, “where are you going?” Jesus answered, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow later.”

“Lord,” Peter asked, “why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” Jesus replied, “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly I tell you, a rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times.

Once again in this chapter, we are witness to “Peter, being Peter”. First of all, no one can legitimately question Peter’s love for his LORD. And I actually believe that at the time when he said this to Jesus, he sincerely believed that it was true. He was so convinced of his devotion and loyalty that he really believed that he would lay down his life for Jesus. There is just one simple problem with his reasoning. And it is an indisputable truth that will be made ever clearer in the upcoming chapters. The fact is that we do not hold onto Christ, but rather, it is Christ who holds onto us! And apart from Him, we can do nothing.

I see a lot of believers making this same mistake as Peter today. They too are convinced that they are somehow special in their devotion to Christ. Churches are filled with these self-righteous types, who think that they are superior in their faith to their fellow Christians. What Peter was really saying in that moment of tension was, “I may not know who the traitor is, but you can be certain that it is not me! You can rest assured that I am the most loyal follower that You have in this room, LORD.”

Jesus responded, making it very clear to him that he too would betray the very One he claimed to adore. In fact, he would deny his LORD three times, before the following morning! It is important to notice that Peter remains silent after this. In fact, many around the room may very well have thought that Peter was the betrayer that Jesus had been speaking of earlier! The rebuke from Christ must have broken the rough fisherman’s heart. But it was to be broken all the more, when he heard the rooster crow the next morning, after thrice denying his beloved Master.

So, *what* is the difference between Peter’s boastful proclamation, and subsequent denial, and the act of Judas? Simply put, Peter was truly repentant, while Judas was just remorseful. Just listen to what *The Bible* says about the difference between the two.

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, but worldly grief produces death. **2 Corinthians 7:10**

Judas realized that he had done wrong, and he hanged himself. Peter realized that he too had done wrong, was convicted, and threw himself upon the mercy of Christ. The first was forever lost, and the latter was forgiven. Jesus never let go of Peter, even as Peter had attempted to let go of Him! *Why* the difference? Because Peter believed, and Judas did not.

There is so much that we must learn from these men. First of all, do not be a Christ denier. Do not live to serve your own selfish desires, but rather, offer yourself to God as a living sacrifice. Become one of the beloved, who are filled to the brim with agape for the Savior, as well as, for those that He loves. And when you have been cleansed (saved by grace) as Peter was, don't ever allow the enemy to convince you that you are somehow more "beloved" than your brethren around you. For the one who walks ever closer with Christ will come to realize that it is only by His grace that we are kept safely in His hands. The Apostle Paul knew full well this reality. And he acknowledged how fortunate he was not only to be chosen, but to be held fast by the Savior in spite himself.

I give thanks to Christ Jesus our LORD Who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, appointing me to the ministry — even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an arrogant man. But I received mercy because I acted out of unbelief, and the grace of our LORD overflowed, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" — and I am the worst of them."
1 Timothy 1:12-15

Now those words were penned by a man who is responsible for writing nearly a third of your *Bible*! And he was fully aware that apart from Christ, he was nothing. So tell me, what do any of us have to boast about... besides Christ in us, and the hope of glory? So do not deny Him, my friends, and do not think more highly of yourselves than you ought. For it is only through Christ in us that we can accomplish any good thing. So let us go in His strength today and love as He loves.

And let the ***beloved*** say... TRUTH!!!