

John 13:18-30 – Betrayal

Intro

- In most cultures, betrayal is regarded as one of the worst things someone can do.
 - In Dante's *Inferno* he imagines traitors being punished in the lowest circle of hell (cf. Jack Sparrow: "the deepest circle of hell is reserved for betrayers and mutineers.").
 - Traitors' names often live in infamy long after they are gone.
 - Brutus: joined in the assassination of his mentor Julius Caesar (*et tu Brute?*)
 - Guy Fawkes: led a plot against his own government & every year England celebrates the failure of the gunpowder plot by burning him in effigy.
 - Benedict Arnold: a Revolutionary War hero until he was caught trying to betray West Point to the British – today his name is used to mean *traitor*.
 - Vidkun Quisling – Norwegian politician who collaborated with the Nazis & headed their puppet government – his name is also synonymous with *traitor*.
 - Possibly the most infamous traitor of all time: Judas Iscariot
 - In a few chapters he will betray Jesus, handing him over with a kiss in exchange for thirty pieces of silver.
 - In today's passage we see Jesus giving him every chance to change his mind.
- When we look at what Scripture records about Judas Iscariot, it should do more than cause us to grieve or be shocked or sneer at his wickedness.
 - His actions and attitude can serve as a warning to us.
 - Back in July I challenged us to evaluate whether we were more like Jesus or his religious enemies (the hypocritical Pharisees).
 - This passage comes with some similar uncomfortable applications.
 - Unlike the Pharisees, Judas had all the other disciples convinced that he was a true follower of Jesus...right up until that final betrayal.
 - It is possible to have more in common with him than we would like to think, but we can heed the warning of his example and not follow his path.
- Quick review: In the first part of the chapter (last week), Jesus washed his disciples' feet (including Judas).
 - It was an illustration of the need for spiritual cleansing.
 - It was an example of how we should humbly serve one another.
 - The section ended with Jesus pronouncing a blessing on those who know and apply what they have just heard and seen.

(18-20) Fulfilled Prophecy

- (18) Jesus makes it very clear that this teaching does not apply to all of them because he knows (as he has already said) that one of them is his betrayer.

- This betrayal was foretold various places in the Old Testament (e.g. Psalm 41:9).
- God's perfect plan includes using even the wicked actions of wicked people to bring about good for his children.
- This does not excuse people from the moral responsibility and guilt for choosing to sin for their own personal reasons.
 - Jesus warns of this in Matthew's 26:24 – the betrayal *is* going to happen, but you do not want to be the one who chooses to be the betrayer.
 - This is a way of warning Judas, "I know what you're planning. This action comes with eternal consequences...don't do it!"
- (19-20) The main reason Jesus brings up this prophecy is to strengthen their faith and their relationship with God the Father.
 - They are going to see what was prophesied first in the OT and now by Jesus himself take place just as he said.
 - Fulfilled prophecy contributes to their (and our) faith that Jesus is exactly who he claims to be (even using a phrase that can be understood as the name of God: I Am).
 - The one who accepts Jesus on his own terms, through this testimony or the teaching of those whom he sends out, is the one who has a right relationship with God.
- One of the 12 is about to do commit a horrible traitorous act, but those who trust in Jesus are nonetheless secure in their relationship with God. This should be an encouragement.
 - There are times when spiritual leaders fail (sometimes in a ways that shows they probably never knew Jesus), but our faith is not based on their faithfulness.
 - Our relationship with God is about Jesus whose great love and sovereign power can use even the worst of things for the good of his children just as he has promised.

(21-26) Opportunity to Repent

- (21-22) This upcoming betrayal clearly hurts & saddens Jesus (as it would anyone).
 - Rather than lashing out at Judas, Jesus seems to be giving him every opportunity to repent as privately as possible...to turn away from this great sin.
 - He says enough to make Judas really think about his plan, but not so much that he is publicly humiliating Judas for what is, so far, a private sin.
 - Judas is given the chance to decide, "I'm not going through with this."
 - None of the rest of the disciples have any idea who Jesus is talking about.
 - Sometimes in artwork Judas looks sinister and crafty (the classic mustache-twirling villain), but I think we can confidently say that wasn't the case.
 - Around the other disciples Judas said and did all the right things to fit in... he probably even thought of himself as a follower of Jesus on some level.
 - When Jesus says, "one of you will betray me," Peter doesn't go, "Oh, it's Judas, isn't it? I never did trust that guy!"

- (23-25) In fact, Peter gestures to John to ask Jesus who he's talking about.
 - This probably indicates that John is at Jesus' right side, in one of the places of honor as Jesus is serving as host of the meal.
 - Since they are reclining (as people sometimes did at fancy feasts), when John leans back his head rests against Jesus, allowing for a close private conversation.
 - Jesus' answer appears to be given only to John with the others unaware of it.
 - Somehow all of them (including John) miss it.
- (26) Dipping a morsel in the sauce (usually fruit and sour wine) and handing it to someone was the way the person hosting the feast showed special honor.
 - Judas has every reason to feel loved and honored by Jesus – first the foot-washing and now a special mark of respect/love.
 - This might even indicate that Judas is reclining immediately to Jesus' left – the other place of honor.
 - Judas rejects Jesus' love, favor, and mercy and acts in open rebellion against him.

(27-30) Consequences

- The other disciples fail to grasp what is going on (not sure how John doesn't catch it, but it was customary to go out on Passover night and give alms to the poor).
- Jesus allows Judas to continue in his chosen path and face its consequences.
 - For Judas the consequences are direct Satanic possession followed by remorse (but not repentance), suicide, and eternity in hell (cf. "son of destruction" in 17:12).
 - All that Judas gets out of this is 30 pieces of silver – 30 days' wages (less than \$3,000 at current Michigan minimum wage).
- Why would Judas make this decision? Why abandon the source of true life?
 - He probably had one or more personal reasons/excuse for what he did. Here are some common speculations:
 - Maybe he thought Jesus would use his power to save himself and make everything all right...that he would just take away the bad consequences.
 - Maybe he thought he was giving Jesus one last chance to be the kind of military/political Messiah he wanted.
 - Maybe he was getting back at Jesus for rebuking him when he criticized Mary's act of worship with the costly perfume (chapter 12).
 - Maybe he decided it wasn't worth it to continue siding with Jesus ...this wasn't getting him the kind of prestige he hoped, so it's time to cash out and gain acceptance/approval of the powerful people who oppose Jesus.
 - Maybe he just valued money so much that he didn't really think much beyond getting his 30 pieces of silver...this was a way to profit off Jesus.

- Whatever his exact reasoning might have been, his actions show that he valued the things of this world more highly than eternal life.
 - He obviously valued money.
 - He was quite possibly also motivated by things like acceptance, power, fame, vengeance, self-righteousness, etc.
- His actions show that he did not trust Jesus.
 - Jesus repeatedly claimed that he alone is the source of true life.
 - Judas clearly didn't believe it – In pursuit of a different life, he leaves the group of disciples and goes out into the night (literal and metaphorical).
- We are amazed and disgusted at his foolishness and wickedness.
 - Jesus gives him every opportunity to do what is right and warns of the consequences, but he commits this great sin anyway.
 - We must recognize that we can display the same attitude toward sin that Judas did.
 - Some people refuse Jesus' offer of salvation – don't let that be you.
 - If you are truly saved, you cannot go so far as to completely turn your back on Jesus, but we can commit the betrayal of deliberate rebellious sin.
- Hebrews 10:26-31 – Deliberate sin against God (“I'll just do it now even though I know it's wrong...I can always ask for forgiveness later”) is much the same as betrayal.
 - (26-28) Under the OT Law, there was no sacrifice for this kind of sin...just punishment (including capital punishment) if there were enough witnesses.
 - (29-31) When we deliberately sin, it is even worse because we know what sin cost
 - It is as if we were stomping on Jesus, treating his sacrifice as worthless, and insulting the Holy Spirit.
 - When we take that attitude, we do not have a strong, close relationship with God, but rather a fear of punishment.
 - Not necessarily a fear of eternal damnation (though a person who wallows in sin long enough may begin to doubt their salvation).
 - Fear of the serious discipline of a loving parent for the rebellious child (“man, my dad is gonna kill me when he finds out!”).
 - Even this shows God's love in the face of our rebellion (cf. Hebrews 12:8-10).
- Rebellious sin takes many forms:
 - Rebellion against the value of human life that is made in God's image (abortion, racism, prejudice, insults, euthanasia...)
 - Rebellion against godly self-control (drunkenness, laziness, angry outbursts...)
 - Rebellion against God's guidelines for marriage & sexuality (premarital sex, adultery, homosexuality, divorce, pornography...)
 - Rebellion against Christlike love (gossip, grudges, complaining, ignoring the poor & needy...)

- Why would we do this? Why would we trample on the one we call Lord & Savior, treat his blood as worthless, and insult the Holy Spirit he has given us?
 - We can always come up with excuses for deliberate sin.
 - It would make me feel so happy...
 - Resisting temptation is so hard...
 - I have the right to do this...
 - It accomplishes something good...
 - They did it first...
 - Everyone is doing it...
 - It's not hurting anybody...
 - Ultimately, we have decided to value something else more highly than our relationship with God.
 - Pleasure
 - Wealth / Leisure
 - Acceptance / Popularity
 - Safety
 - Influence
 - We do this because we don't trust Jesus.
 - We are not trusting Jesus to give us the true and better life that he promised.
 - We are not trusting that his commands and principles are given for our good because he loves us.
 - We have fallen for the oldest lie in the book where Satan says that God is holding us back from something that would make our life better
 - Let's not fall for that lie...our Savior loves us with a perfect love.

Conclusion

- The actions of Judas Iscariot are looked on as being absolutely disgusting (as they should be).
- Let us take care not to have the same attitude that he did: an attitude that said, "I'm going to do what I feel like even if I know it is a sin against the Holy, Almighty God of the universe."
- If you have never trusted in Jesus to forgive your sins and transform your life, please do so today.
 - Don't make the fatal mistake of Judas who had close association with Jesus and his followers, but never actually believed in him.
 - True life is found only in him, and anything in this world that we have to give up to follow him is more than worth it.

- Take care of any deliberate sin in your life (whether in daily habits, your sexual/marital relationship, your treatment of others, or anything else).
 - o Deliberately breaking God's standards, no matter what the excuse, is an act of contempt against the Lord Jesus Christ, and God does not take that lightly.
 - o If you are truly a Christian, saved through faith in Jesus Christ, you will not have peace until you get that taken care of.
 - Acknowledge it as sin to God and ask his forgiveness (confession).
 - Ask for forgiveness from anyone you have mistreated and do what you can to make it right (restitution).
 - Turn away from sin (repentance) – kill that attitude that says, "I'll just do it this one more time and ask for forgiveness afterwards."
 - Get help (advice and/or accountability) from a mature brother or sister in Christ if this is something you continually struggle with.
- Take comfort in God's infinite grace that forgives our sins through the shed blood of Jesus Christ who speaks on our behalf before the Father according to the Father's will (1 John 1:9-2:2)