

Main Idea: In John 13:18-30 we discover the truth about the betrayer, and this truth makes it certain that we can and must put our trust in the one betrayed.

- I. The betrayer is predicted (18-20).
  - A. Jesus chose His men (18a).
  - B. Jesus chose to fulfill Scripture (18b).
  - C. Jesus chose to do what He did so we would believe in Him (19-20).
    1. We can trust His message.
    2. We can trust His messengers.
- II. The betrayer is identified (21-26).
  - A. Jesus made the announcement (21).
  - B. Jesus received a question (22-25).
  - C. Jesus answered the question with a Scripture-fulfilling action (26).
- III. The betrayer is sent to work (27-30).
  - A. Satan entered Judas (27a).
  - B. Jesus commanded Judas (27b).
  - C. The disciples misunderstood Judas (28-29).
  - D. His own depravity moved Judas (30).

Implications: What do we learn from this?

1. We see the sovereignty of the Savior.
2. We see the power of the Scriptures.
3. We see the delusion of a depraved heart.
4. We see our own need to repent.
5. We see yet another reason why we can and must trust Jesus Christ.

“If in my lifetime I was to write only one book, this would be the one.”

That’s quite a statement coming from a Nobel Peace prize winning American professor who’s written close to 60 books in his life. It happens to be the opening sentence of Elie Wiesel’s book, *Night*.

Elie Wiesel, a Romanian-born Jew, was a teenager in the 1940s when he was subjected to the horrors of Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps in Nazi Germany. Though he was liberated in 1945, he watched as the Nazis beat his father to death right before his eyes. He writes of the experience in the preface:

I remember that night, the most horrendous of my life:

“ ... Eliezer, my son, come here ... I want to tell you something ... Only to you ... Come, don’t leave me alone ... Eliezer ...”

I heard his voice, grasped the meaning of his words and the tragic dimension of the moment, yet I did not move.

It had been his last wish to have me next to him in his agony, at the moment when his soul was tearing itself from his lacerated body— yet I did not let him have his wish.

I was afraid.

Afraid of the blows.

That was why I remained deaf to his cries.

Instead of sacrificing my miserable life and rushing to his side, taking his hand, reassuring him, showing him that he was not abandoned, that I was near him, that I felt his sorrow, instead of all that, I remained flat on my back, asking God to make my father stop calling my name, to make him stop crying. So afraid was I to incur the wrath of the SS.

In fact, my father was no longer conscious.

Yet his plaintive, harrowing voice went on piercing the silence and calling me, nobody but me.

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\*\*Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

“Well?” The SS had flown into a rage and was striking my father on the head: “Be quiet, old man! Be quiet!”

My father no longer felt the club’s blows; I did. And yet I did not react. I let the SS beat my father, I left him alone in the clutches of death. Worse: I was angry with him for having been noisy, for having cried, for provoking the wrath of the SS.

“Eliezer! Eliezer! Come, don’t leave me alone ...”

His voice had reached me from so far away, from so close. But I had not moved. I shall never forgive myself.

Nor shall I ever forgive the world for having pushed me against the wall, for having turned me into a stranger, for having awakened in me the basest, most primitive instincts.

His last word had been my name. A summons. And I had not responded.<sup>1</sup>

It’s one of the most painful experiences a human being can know. *Betrayal*. To be betrayed, or to be the betrayer, that does something almost irreparable to a person. Wiesel says that what happened in that bunkhouse and throughout the death camps caused him to question everything:

“We believed in God,” he writes, “trusted in man, and lived with the illusion that every one of us has been entrusted with a sacred spark from the Shekhinah’s flame; that every one of us carries in his eyes and in his soul a reflection of God’s image. *That* was the source if not the cause of all our ordeals.”<sup>2</sup>

One of the things I love about Jesus the Savior is how He entered into our painful human experiences, like betrayal. He felt it firsthand, and therefore, truly understands.

I considered entitling this message, “*The Darkest Night*,” based on a couple of phrases that stand out in today’s text. First, in verse 21, “Jesus was troubled in spirit.” And then in verse 30, “And it was night.” Dear friends, while others have endured horrendous nights before, there’s never been a night darker than the one we’re about to consider, the night that the Son of God was betrayed by one of His closest followers.

Now, while this particular night makes it clear we have a Savior who knows all about unjust and unthinkable suffering, it also fuels a line of questioning for critics. It goes like this...

*If Jesus is the Son of God, like you claim, how do you explain His betrayal? Think about it. He chooses twelve men to be His associates, and one of them, one of His closest followers, ends up betraying Him. Seriously? Can you trust someone who picks friends like that? I mean, if He couldn’t prevent this disaster from entering His own life, what makes you think He can do any better with your life and mine?*

So goes the Judas dilemma.

So how should we make sense of Jesus’ betrayal? The answer is, the same way John does in chapter 13.

The apostle John wrote this gospel for a very specific purpose, which he spells out in 20:31, “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

So John says he wrote everything in this 21 chapter account to convince people that they should *believe* that Jesus is the Christ and have life in His name. That includes what He wrote in today’s text.

Why does John tell us the betrayal story? So you and I will *believe* that Jesus is the Christ. If you don’t know the whole truth about this betrayal, you can hide behind it as

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<sup>1</sup> Wiesel, Elie. Night (Kindle Locations 103-116). Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Kindle Edition.

<sup>2</sup> Wiesel, Elie. Night (Kindle Locations 90-92). Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Kindle Edition.

an excuse for *not* believing in Christ. But once you know the truth, there is no place to hide, and therefore no reason you should not put your total trust in Christ.

So in John 13:18-30 we're going to discover the truth about the betrayer, truth that makes it certain that we can and must put our trust in the One betrayed. So let's investigate carefully three things John reveals about the betrayer.

### I. The betrayer is predicted (18-20).

How so? Listen to verses 18-20. Jesus is speaking. "I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: 'He who shares my bread has lifted up 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. I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me."

According to this passage, Jesus made three choices.

**A. Jesus chose His men (18a).** That's verse 18, "'I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen.'"

There's a context to this. Jesus had just washed the disciples' feet, and then charged them to follow His example (15). "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them," He said in verse 17. But there was one in their midst who did not have the capacity to wash feet, not in God-pleasing ways. He couldn't wash others because he himself was still unclean (11). So Jesus qualified His command.

*I am not referring to all of you.* Jesus knows, and He wants His men to know, that while He has chosen them, He's aware there's someone in their midst who isn't capable of handling this assignment.

Did the betrayer catch Jesus off guard? No. *I know those I have chosen.* You mean, the betrayer didn't pull the wool over Jesus' eyes? No. *I know those I have chosen.* Jesus chose His men knowing the whole truth about them.

So why did He chose a man He knew would betray Him? He tells why in the rest of verse 18, "But this is to fulfill the scripture: 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.'" There's why He chose the betrayer, second choice.

**B. Jesus chose to fulfill Scripture (18b).** "This is to fulfill Scripture." Again and again Jesus made that clear. "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them (Matt 5:17)." Jesus doesn't react to situations. He initiates actions intended to fulfill Old Testament prophecies about the promised Messiah.

Here's one of those prophecies, in Psalm 41:9. David wrote Psalm 41 to describe a painful time of trouble in his own life. Verse 1, "Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the LORD delivers him in times of trouble." That's what happened to David. He was in trouble and the Lord delivered him. What kind of trouble? Verses 7-9, "All my enemies whisper together against me; they imagine the worst for me, saying, 'A vile disease has beset him; he will never get up from the place where he lies.' Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me."

That happened to David. He was betrayed by one of his closest confidants, a friend who had shared bread with him. And Jesus likewise entered into that experience, *on purpose*, by choosing a man He knew would betray Him.

Why would Jesus do that? He tells us. *This is to fulfill Scripture*, namely, this Scripture, Psalm 41:9, "He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me."

When the NT says that Jesus fulfilled the OT, sometimes it means direct prophecies, like the virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14), being born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), the crucifixion (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53), and His resurrection (Psalm 16:11). But sometimes fulfilled refers

to experiences. Jesus did that too. He came to enter into the fullest experience of those He would redeem. Like David's experience in Psalm 41, betrayal.

In Psalm 41 David is describing what happened to him, a close friend betrayed him. But when Jesus read that psalm and knew it must happen to Him, too, for He had come to be a substitute for sinners. He came to fulfill the Old Testament Scriptures.

What kind of Savior did God send into the world? One who is distant and detached? No. Listen to Hebrews 4:15, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin." Hebrews 2:17 explains, "He had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people."

So yes, Jesus chose these twelve men, including the one He knew would betray Him. And why would He do that? Because, secondly, He chose to fulfill the Scriptures which foretold what kind of Savior He would be, one who entered into the fullest experience of those He came to save.

By the way, think of what that means for you who have been betrayed, by an unfaithful spouse, or a prodigal child, or a self-protecting boss. There is One who understands.

And this brings us to the why question. Why would Jesus do it this way? Why would He deliberately chose one who would betray Him, and then make the fact of the betrayal known before it happened? Here's why, choice #3.

**C. Jesus chose to do what He did so we would believe in Him (19-20).** That's what He said in verse 19, "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He." Literally, "that *I am*."

Jesus is the I AM, the eternal, self-existent One that Moses met in the burning bush in the Old Testament. He repeatedly pointed this out, saying, "I am the bread of life," "I am the light of the world," "I am the Good Shepherd," "I am the way, the truth, and the life," and now again, "I am."

Why did Jesus do what He did? Here, as always, so we would *believe in Him*.

Then He said in verse 20, "I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me."

At first glance, that sentence seems out of place. It doesn't seem to fit the context. Jesus has just revealed that He's going to be betrayed by one of His men, and He's telling them before it happens so they're believe that He's the I AM. Then He starts talking about those He sends, and how people should treat their message. What's the connection between the two thoughts?

I think it's this, the Judas' dilemma I raised at the outset. How did we hear about Jesus? Through messengers, preachers, who told us. How did those messengers learn about Jesus? They heard it from other messengers, all the way back to the first messengers, right? The men that Jesus selected, the eyewitnesses who saw Him, testified to the world concerning Him, first through preaching, and ultimately in written form by writing the New Testament. Our faith in Jesus depends on those men.

But can we trust those men, those original messengers? After all, one of them actually betrayed Jesus. Since he wasn't trustworthy, and we certainly wouldn't trust his testimony, can we trust them?

That's the issue Jesus addressed head-on with those men in verse 20. He says, "I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me." By saying that Jesus underscores two certainties.

1. *We can trust His message.* And...

2. *We can trust His messengers.* To accept Jesus you must accept the ones He sends, the apostles that He chose. And if you do accept Jesus, you're also accepting the One who sent Him, His Father in heaven.

One of the objections we hear all the time (I heard it two different times last week) is, "But there are hypocrites in the church." By citing the presence of hypocrites, people justify their refusal to put their total trust in Jesus and live as He commands, in a local church, under the authority of His Word.

Friends, think about this. There are no sinless messengers, and Jesus knew that. Judas betrayed Him. Peter will deny Him. The others will abandon Him. Yet still He says, "Whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me." If you're resisting Jesus today because of the shortcomings of His messengers, listen again to Jesus. We can trust His message, and to the degree they get His message right, we can trust His messengers, and must. In fact, I do so right now. I, a sinner myself who has been called by Jesus to be His messenger, call on you to believe in Him and experience life that's abundant and eternal!

That brings us to a second truth about the betrayer. First, the betrayer is predicted.

## II. The betrayer is identified (21-26).

By whom? By Jesus Himself. This revelation came in three steps.

**A. Jesus made the announcement (21).** "After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit." Stop there for a moment. Though Jesus is sovereign over the moment, He's still affected by it. He is *troubled in spirit*, says John. He is visibly affected by the knowledge of the betrayal that's coming, and the results of it, the mock trial, the flogging, His own horrid death on the cross, and worst of all, the spiritual alienation He will experience on that cross as He bears the sins of those He's come to save.

So He's understandably troubled. "...and testified, 'I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me.'" There it is. No more veiled predictions, just a blunt, this is what's going to happen announcement...

*One...of...you...is...going...to...betray...Me.*

The effect of the announcement? Verse 22 says, "His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant." They were speechless. They had no idea. Who was He talking about?

Friends, no one had any idea it was Judas. In fact, as we'll see in a moment, Judas held one of the most important positions in the group. He "had charge of the money," says verse 29. To all appearances, he was a trustworthy, loyal, hardworking servant. And he was a good preacher too, no doubt, and a miracle-worker, a man who used his mouth and hands to bring people to Jesus.

*Who is He talking about?* They had no idea. The silence was broken when...

**B. Jesus received a question (22-25).** Notice verses 23-25, "One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, 'Ask him which one he means.' Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, 'Lord, who is it?'"

Not surprisingly, Peter did the talking. But not to Jesus, for reasons the text doesn't indicate. He got John's attention and mouthed, "Ask Him..."

Why didn't Peter ask? I don't know. He's not been bashful in the past, but this time he asks John to speak.

Of course, the text doesn't say *John*. "For the first time *the disciple whom Jesus loved* is introduced," remarks Carson. "He will reappear at Jesus' cross (19:26-27), at the empty tomb (20:2-9), by the Sea of Tiberias, when the risen Jesus appeared to seven

of his disciples (21:1, 20–23), and in the final two verses that ascribe the authority of this Gospel to him (21:24, 25).”<sup>3</sup>

Why doesn’t John use his name? Why this title? It seems to indicate his humility. *My identity doesn’t matter. What matters is the identity of the One I’m writing about, the One I spent three years with.* It may also indicate the special place John held at the center of the inner circle of Jesus’ men. He is the beloved apostle.

In verse 23 John mentions he was *reclining next to Jesus*. Carson observes, “It is highly unlikely, however, that the Twelve reclined according to rank (especially in light of vv. 12–17), or for that matter that they always reclined in the same order. In any case, the place of highest honour was at the left hand of the host, not the right. Peter was in neither position (*cf.* vv. 24–26). We do not know who was at the left; it may have been Judas Iscariot (*cf.* v. 26).”<sup>4</sup>

*Ask Him which one He means*, says Peter.

*Lord, who is it?* says John, “leaning back against Jesus,” says the text. Literally, “back on the breast of Jesus.”

Sorry, friends, Leonardo daVinci didn’t help us at this point with his painting of the Last Supper. The men aren’t sitting at a table, as he portrays, but reclining, in typical Middle Eastern fashion, with John leaning into the Master’s side.

Watch what Jesus did next...

**C. Jesus answered the question with a Scripture-fulfilling action (26).** Take a look at verse 26, “Jesus answered.” Stop there. I’m encouraged by that. Jesus isn’t offended by John’s question, but answers it. How many of our confusing moments wouldn’t be so confusing if we would just *ask* Him. “If any of you lacks wisdom,” says James 1:5, “let him ask of God who gives to all men liberally.”

Here’s His answer. “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” What did Jesus say in verse 18? “He who shares my *bread* has lifted up his heel against me,” citing Psalm 41:9. What did He tell John in verse 26? “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of...*bread*.”

He’s going to answer John’s question, not with words, but with another of His many Scripture-fulfilling actions. In a first century meal it was common for the host to dip a piece of bread into the common bowl and give the tasty morsel to someone as an expression of friendship.

So does Jesus here. And to whom? Verse 26 says, “Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon.” According to D. A. Carson, “That Jesus could pass it so easily suggests Judas was close by, possibly on his left, the place of honour.”<sup>5</sup>

Apparently Jesus answered John quietly, for his ears alone, for verse 29 indicates the other disciples had no idea why Judas left the room.

Which brings us to third and final thing John revealed about the betrayer. First, the betrayer is predicted. Second, the betrayer is identified. Third...

### III. The betrayer is sent to work (27-30).

There’s a tough question that plagues us at this point. How do you explain Judas? Here’s a man who spent three years with Jesus, saw Him up close and personal, received

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<sup>3</sup> Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 472). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

<sup>4</sup> Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 473). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

<sup>5</sup> Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 474). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

His love, and then, *betrayed* the One who loved him with a perfect love. Why did he do what he did? John answers that question from four perspectives.

First of all, John tells us that...

**A. Satan entered Judas (27a).** Notice the beginning of verse 27, “As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.”

You can’t understand Judas without understanding Satan. Who is Satan? His name means “the adversary.” Back in John 8:44 Jesus said this about Satan, “He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Satan was once a beautiful angelic creature, but became proud and rebelled against God, and was cast out of heaven (Isaiah 14:12-14). He hates God and does everything he can to undermine God and His loving purposes. His primary weapon is deceit. He loves to dangle outlandish promises in front of gullible subjects. In the garden it was Eve and Adam. In the upper room, it is Judas Iscariot.

Judas heard Jesus. *He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.* When Jesus extended the sop in his direction, he had a choice to make. Repent, or move ahead with the plan. And with a brazen face he reached out his hand and took the sop. And the moment he did, Satan entered into him.

In Ephesians 5:18 believers are commanded to be *filled* with, that is, *controlled* by the Holy Spirit. I think that portrays what happened to Judas. He’s been playing with Satan’s tactics for some time now, deceit, subtly, self-promoting scheming. And now, by taking that sop, he yields himself to Satan’s total control.

How do you explain Judas? First of all, Satan. Satan entered Judas. Having said that, we mustn’t give Satan too much power or credit. John won’t let us. He concludes verse 27 by telling us that...

**B. Jesus commanded Judas (27b).** And what did He say? “‘What you are about to do, do quickly,’ Jesus told him.” That’s not a suggestion, but a command. ESV, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” NASB, “What you do, do quickly.”

There’s a balance of responsibility here we must not miss. How are we to explain the betrayal? Start with Satan. He’s behind it. He took control of Judas. But don’t stop there. Satan can do nothing save what he’s permitted to do. He’s a lion on a leash. Jesus, the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, commanded Judas. *Do it quickly.*

Why quickly? Because Jesus has a timetable and He will not miss His assignment by one moment. In less than twelve hours, on this Passover day, He must be nailed to a cross and become the final Passover lamb to be slain.

John gives us a third perspective of Judas. It’s the *disciples*.

**C. The disciples misunderstood Judas (28-29).** Notice verse 28, “But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him.” Jesus’ instructions went right past the other disciples. *Do it quickly? What’s He talking about? What does the Master want Judas to do?*

They didn’t get it. “Since Judas had charge of the money,” says John in verse 29, “some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the Feast, or to give something to the poor.”

Again, nobody suspected Judas. You put your money into the hands of someone you trust, someone you consider to be reliable, not someone you suspect with the potential of being betrayal.

But there’s one more perspective that John presents. Make sense of the betrayal? Start with Satan, for Satan entered Judas. But don’t give him too much power, for Jesus commanded Judas, or the betrayal would have stopped before it happened. And don’t

blame the other disciples for not intervening and stopping Judas. They had no idea it was him. Yet here's the bottom line. Why did Judas do what he did?

**D. His own depravity moved Judas (30).** Verse 30 must be one of the most tragic verses in the Bible. "As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night." Judas took the bread, and Judas went out. Nobody forced him. He was no innocent pawn in this act of sin—no sinner ever is. He did what he did because of his own depraved heart.

*And it was night*, says John. That's not simply a comment regarding the time. John's commenting on the moral and spiritual condition of the world. It doesn't get any darker than this. The Light has come into the world, and the world loved darkness rather the Light.

### Implications: What do we learn from this?

Five important lessons.

1. *We see the sovereignty of the Savior.* Nothing catches the Son of God off guard, nothing. Not His betrayal. And may I say, not yours either? You say, "You don't know what I've done." Or you may say, "You don't know what's been done to me." In both cases, you're right. I don't know. But He does. And He doesn't just know, but He is in total control of everything in your life, and desires to use it all to accomplish God's good purpose for His glory and your eternal good.

2. *We see the power of the Scriptures.* You say, "Why should I value this Book, and read it daily, and gather to hear it preached weekly, and build my life on it moment by moment?" We've just seen why this morning. The Son of God Himself governed His life by this Book, and so must we.

Friends, this Book points us to Jesus. It reveals Jesus, and it shows us how to live for Jesus.

3. *We see the delusion of a depraved heart.* Judas's? Yes. And ours too. You say, "I would never do what Judas did." No, you wouldn't, you *couldn't*, because you're not an apostle, and you haven't been traveling with Jesus for three years. So you don't have the occasion to do the exact same thing Judas did.

But let's not kid ourselves. We all have the capacity to seek to use Jesus for our own selfish ends, and we do it more often than we care to admit. I know I do. And why is that? It's because we too are all depraved sinners, and without Christ, we have the capacity to do precisely what Judas did. "So, if you think you are standing firm," says Paul to the Christians in Corinth, "be careful that you don't fall (1 Cor 10:12)!"

That brings us to a fourth lesson.

4. *We see our own need to repent.* Repent? Yes. To have a change of mind, to do a 180, to turn from living for myself and call out to Jesus to save me, and turn my life into that which pleases Him. If only Judas had stopped the charades that night! If only, when the Savior offered him the sop, he had fell to his knees, and *repented!*

But friends, if we've been ignoring Jesus, or treating Jesus like fire-insurance, or minimizing Jesus in our lives, isn't that in essence what needs to happen in our lives today? Repent.

5. *We see yet another reason why we can and must trust Jesus Christ.* It's not the betrayal of Judas that staggers me most in this story. It's the love of Jesus. He treats as a close friend the one who will betray Him, and with compassion in His eyes, offers one final opportunity to repent before he walks out that door and into the night.

And so the Loving Savior does this morning. Beloved, you've just seen yet another of a millions reasons why you can and must trust Jesus. I plead with you to do so.