

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 10/3/93
John 13:18-30 "The Great Love of the Greatest Servant"

Intro:

This morning we come to week 4 in our series entitled, "Called to be Servants." Our text is John 13. Last week, we asked the question, "What's expected of us as servants?" Jesus told us in vv 12-17. As servants, we have 2 Obligations. First, we need to live in right relationship with Christ Jesus. He's the Master. And secondly, we need to live in right relationship with one another. We are fellow servants.

There is a great need for servants in our day.

Warning: You need to know something. There is, as Chuck Swindoll calls it, a "dark side" to serving. As Americans, we don't like that. We like things to be logical and fair (Swindoll, Improving Your Serve, 174). We expect that if we do good, we'll receive good in return, and if we do what's wrong, bad things will happen to us. We expect to be treated logically and fairly.

Listen friends. If you're serious about living as a servant, you'd better get a handle on this. There is a dark side to serving. There are times when you will wash someone else's feet, and get ripped off. There will be times, though unfair, when you will suffer wrong treatment for doing right things.

Illust: I'd like to read Swindoll's reflections about Elie Wiesel (184-5)

Q: What can motivate us to serve when serving is so costly?

A: One truth--No servant ever suffered more unjustly than did THE Servant.

READ: I Pt 2:21-24

This morning, we want to ponder the Great Love of the Greatest Servant. Our aim is simply this--to see that even in the face of gross injustice and sinister betrayal, the Love of our Savior prevailed. That same love is available to us.

You know the story well. The night before His crucifixion, Jesus ate the Passover meal with His 12 disciples. They were all there. Including Judas.

Proposition: There are 3 scenes in John 13:18-30 that reveal the great love of the Greatest Servant.

I. Scene #1: The Declaration of Jesus (18-21)

II. Scene #2: The Disarray of the Disciples (22-26)

III. Scene #3: The Defiance of Judas (27-30)

I. Scene #1: The Declaration of Jesus (18-21)

Let's set the stage for scene 1. Notice again v 17.

V 17 "If ye know these things, happy are YE if YE do them."

Jesus had just washed the disciples' feet, and then charged them to do likewise. He wanted them to follow in His steps, to serve one another. But there was one in their

midst who did not have the capacity to serve. He was unclean (11). So Jesus qualified His command.

V 18 "I speak not of you all..."

One of the 12 was a black marble, a traitor. Jesus' words were not for him.

Think about the implications of v 18. Apart from God's grace, people cannot do right. Jesus had just given the charge to serve. But unregenerate men can't serve. Lost people are incapable of being servants.

Objection: "Oh yea? I know some pretty decent people who aren't Christians."

To which we must say, thank God for His common grace. Even unregenerate men enjoy the benefits of God's common grace. If it weren't for the common grace of God, this world would be a living hell. There would be no Salvation Armies, no Mother Theresas, no Jamaal Mashburns donating 1/2 million dollars for scholarship funds. Just think of what the tribulation period will be like...

Q: How should you counsel an unsaved person?

Challenge: You really can't. He doesn't have the spiritual antennae to handle biblical counsel. He lacks the power to DO what God's Word says. As Jay Adams says, he needs to be "pre-counselled." He needs to come to know Christ.

Jesus' declaration was indeed a sobering one. One of the 12 would betray Him. But don't get the idea that the betrayal meant the plan of God went haywire. Listen to His words, "I know whom I have chosen." (18) Please note that the Lord chose His own. He knew the ones He had chosen. He also knew, from the beginning, that one of the 12 was a Pretender.

Jesus quoted Ps 41:9, a psalm written by David. You'll recall that David had a close confidant, a dear friend named Ahithophel. David trusted Ahithophel. But what happened? "He that eateth bread with me (a cultural expression of friendship and hospitality) has lifted up his heel against me." To "lift up the heel" is a metaphor derived from the image of a horse lifting his heel in preparation to kick. That's what Ahithophel did. And Jesus declared, that's what one of the 12 would do.

Q: What did Jesus tell His disciples this discouraging news?

V 19 "Now I tell you before it come...that I AM."

If you have a KJV Bible, you'll notice that the last word of v 19, "he," is italicized. That means it's not in the greek text. Literally, Jesus said, "I tell you before it come...so that you may believe that I AM."

I AM. In the OT, God revealed Himself to Moses as the "I AM." God is the eternal One, the all sufficient One, the One without beginning or ending. Jesus applied that title to Himself. It's a title that highlights His Deity.

Listen. The reason Jesus knew that One of the 12 would betray Him was because He is the Sovereign One. He is the I AM.

He didn't want the faith of the other 11 to be shaken by the treacherous deed that would soon happen. The betrayal was no accident. The cross was no accident. It was the fulfillment of the very plan of God.

No doubt the 11 were confused and shaken by this declaration of betrayal. So Jesus reminded them of their high commission as His followers.

V 20 "Verily ... He that receives whomsoever I send receives Me..."

Did you see how closely Jesus identifies with His own? May we never forget that. To serve Jesus means we must take the lowly way, the way of the cross. Yet remember this. We have a high and holy calling as servants of Christ.

Watch what happened next.

V 21 "When Jesus had thus said, He was troubled."

Oh friend, see the Humanity of the God-man! He was "troubled." The word means "to stir up, to agitate." The same word was used of Jesus in Jn 11:33 to describe how Jesus felt at the death of His friend Lazarus. He was troubled.

Why was He so troubled? To this point, Jesus spoke in symbols and somewhat vague language. No longer.

V 21 "Verily I say unto you that one of you shall betray Me."

Let that sink in. One of YOU will betray Me. What a shocking declaration! It seems unthinkable to us, yet it was true. One of the 12 eating with Jesus that night would betray Him. This was a man who had lived with Jesus, listened to Jesus, watched Jesus, for over 3 years. Who was he? We'll see in a moment.

Think about something (Wiersbe). Isn't it amazing how close a person can come to salvation, and yet be lost forever! Hearing the Word of God doesn't save us. We must respond to the Word. How? By faith.

Illust:

Tran: That's scene 1, the Declaration of Jesus. Now scene 2.

II. Scene #2: The Disarray of the Disciples (22-26)

Jesus' declaration sent the disciples into disarray. Let's follow the dialogue:

V 22 "Then the disciples looked one on another..."

The disciples were speechless. There was no doubt what their Master meant this time. One of them would betray Him! The question was WHO?! They stared at each other. According to the parallel account in Mt 26, they asked Jesus, "Lord, is it I?" Every one of the 12 asked the question, even Judas.

Note: It's not surprising that Luke's gospel tells us that right after this, the disciples got into an argument about which of them was the greatest! (Lk 22)

Before reading further, I need to remind you of the way the upper room was arranged that night. Nothing against the artwork of Leonardo DaVinci, but the disciples were not all sitting in chairs on one side of a large table, as depicted in "The Last Supper." In keeping with that Eastern culture, they were reclining around a low

table. That sat in a U-shape, on pallets. They leaned on their left elbow, and ate with their right arm. They reclined with their heads closest to the table, and their legs points away from the table. Jesus, as the host was at the head, with one disciple to His right and another to His left.

Now read on...

V 23 "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom..."

Who is often referred to as "the disciple whom Jesus loved"? John, the author of this gospel. Where was John? KJV--"leaning on Jesus' bosom". Apparently, John was sitting in the position of honor, to Jesus' right, sharing the same pallet.

That statement was rining in the disciples' ears, "One of you shall betray Me." Who did Jesus mean? It drove Peter crazy with curiosity. But the last time Peter opened his mouth, his outburst brought a rebuke from Jesus (7). So he was more cautious this time.

V 24 "Simon Peter beckoned..."

We don't know where Peter was sitting. You get the idea that Peter wanted to deal with that traitor. Don't forget that Luke's account mentions that the disciples had 2 swords, and the incident with Malchus later that night would indicate that Peter was not afraid to use a sword to defend his Lord!

Can't you see Peter, mouthing the question to John, "Ask Him who it is!" So John turned to Jesus...

V 25 "He then, lying on Jesus' breast...Lord, who is it?"

Then Jesus answered.

V 26 "He it is to whom I have given a sop"

Two important questions...

Q: Where was Judas Iscariot sitting at the table?

Matthew's account indicates that Jesus could talk to Judas without being overheard by the other 11. It seems quite likely that Judas was sitting in the position of honor next to Jesus. Remember he was the treasurer for the group, a position which gave him status. So Judas was right there in the honored position.

Q: What was the "sop" that Jesus gave to Judas?

In that culture, you did not use forks and knives and spoons, as we do. There was a common dish in the center of the table. You would tear a piece of bread off of the loaf, and dip it in the dish.

The sop was a small piece of bread or meat. It was custom for the host to give the sop to the guest of honor. In our culture, like lifting a glass and making a toast. It was a sign of friendship. Don't miss that.

Watch what Jesus did with the sop.

V 26 "And when He had dipped the sop, He gave it to Judas"

Friends, I must remind you that nobody suspected Judas. Nobody.

When Jesus extended the sop to Judas, he was bestowing a special honor on him. The other 11 would have interpreted the act as an expression of love.

Oh, the affection of that moment! Our Loving Lord reached out one last time to Judas. He loved Judas, even to the end. From the very beginning, Jesus knew what Judas would do to Him. Still He loved him. Jesus could have exposed Judas openly. And if He had, the other 11 would have no doubt turned on him.

When Jesus extended to Judas the sop, He was giving Judas one last opportunity to turn from his wickedness. To the very end, Jesus kept the door open for Judas.

But what did Judas do? We'll see in scene 3, the climax.

Illust:

Tran: We've seen the Declaration of Jesus, and the Disarray of the Disciples.

III. Scene #3: The Defiance of Judas (27-30)

Jesus offered the sop to Judas. Judas reached out his hand, and took the sop.

One of the most frightful lines in all the Bible is the first line of v 27.

V 27 "And after the sop Satan entered into him."

Q: How did Satan get into Judas? Listen. Judas let him in.

Just think of that! What willful defiance! What presumption! When Jesus offered Judas the sop, He offered Judas friendship and love. By His action, He said to Judas, "The door is still open to come back. I love you." But Judas responded with self-centered defiance. There seems to have been no hesitation. He took the sop.

And Satan was on hand. When Judas yielded, Satan entered. In that moment, Judas sealed his doom. The sop was his last opportunity.

V 27 "Then said Jesus, What thou doest, do quickly."

You say, "Why would Jesus tell Judas to do his wicked deed quickly?"

Because He knew the time had come in the Divine Plan (13:1).

Q: Was Judas an innocent victim, a pawn in the hands of fate?

No! Judas was not an innocent victim. He was a man who wasted countless opportunities to respond to the Love of Christ. Instead of submitting His life to Christ, Judas chose to control his life, a choice that led to his own dreadful destruction.

Illust:

Judas was exposed to the same spiritual privileges as the other 11 disciples. Yet they did him no good. As Warren Wiersbe remarked, "The same sun that melts the ice only hardens the clay." (347)

No one suspected Judas.

Vv 28-29 "Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spoke this unto him..."

The disciples had no idea what was going on. To the very end, the other 11 admired Judas. He was one of them. He had the money bag.

When he left the room, the other disciples thought he was either going to buy more food for the Passover feast, or possibly give a benavalent offering to the poor.

Don't gloss over v 30. It's stacked with implications.

V 30 "He then, having received the sop, went immediately out."

Judas went out. Judas ex-communicated himself from the presence of the Lord.

Quote: G. Campbell Morgan, "God never excludes a man from His heaven. It is the man who excluded himself; and God ratifies his choice...We talk about God sending men to hell. There is a sense in which that is so; but God never sent any man to hell that did not send himself there. He ratifies human decisions." (238)

Judas went out.

V 30 "And it was night."

Please don't miss the symbolism. It was night. Unregenerate men love darkness rather than light. Judas chose to leave the Light and go out into the darkness of sin.

Jn 3:19 "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

Judas cut himself off from the Light of the world.

Conclusion:

This morning, you are standing in the Presence of the Light, the Loving Lord Jesus Christ. You, like Judas, have a choice to make. Are you going to yield your life to the Light, or are you going to go out into the darkness?

Those who do evil hate the Light. If you love sin, Jesus will make you feel uncomfortable. Because the Light exposes.

The most amazing thing about the story is not the treacherous defiance of Judas. The most amazing highlight of the story is the Amazing Love of Jesus Christ!

Oh, I pray that the Love of Christ will melt your heart today. I pray that you will this day make a choice to come to the Light. Before it's too late.