

In the Shadow of the Cross - Painful Predictions

by J. Glyn Owen

The sermon explores Jesus' predictions of betrayal and denial, emphasizing the anguish of foreknowledge and its implications for faith.

Duration: 52:01

Scripture: Psalm 41:9, Matthew 6:33, John 13:17-18

Topics: "Predictions"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the moment when Jesus reveals that one of his disciples will betray him. He emphasizes the burden and shame that Jesus must have felt in exposing Judas as an agent of Satan. The preacher highlights how Jesus, despite knowing the future events, willingly serves his disciples by washing their feet. He also emphasizes Jesus' control over the circumstances, as he sets in motion the events leading to his crucifixion.

Transcript

Last Sunday evening we began a new series under the title, In the Shadow of the Cross. These studies will comprise meditations in John 13, chapter 13, over chapter 17, and in the good will of God will occupy us between now and Easter time. We spent last Sunday evening looking at that remarkable episode recorded in the first part of chapter 13, where our Lord, in full consciousness of His glory and His destiny, and of His unrivaled authority, knowing that the Father had put everything into His hands, made Himself the servant of His own disciples and washed their feet, and applied the significance of it to them and through them to us.

Now we turn to another subject in the second half of this chapter, though really we shall not be able to complete it this evening. We have entitled this, Painful Predictions. We move here into the area of prediction, when our Lord foretells, before the events concerned, two of the major, shall I call them tragedies, that are going to transpire in the course of time.

One, He is going to be betrayed by Judas Iscariot. Two, He is going to be denied by Simon Peter. And in this particular part of the passage, we have our Lord disclosing these events as coming before they've arrived.

In other words, He is acting as the prophet, the prophet now taking the curtain back, as it were, and letting His disciples look into the future to see something that is yet to be, but which He knows about, and He only. Now, for those of you who are always eager to see how one passage of Scripture links up with another, it may be wise just to say one word as to the probable link between verse 17 and verse 18. Having washed the disciples' feet, our Lord says in verse 17, as a conclusion to that passage and to that episode, Now that you know these things, He has applied, you remember, applied the whole teaching to them, that He is an example to them and they should do as He has done.

Now that you know these things, He says, you will be blessed if you do them. One commentator links that verse with verse 18 in this way, and I quote, he is actually paraphrasing the two verses as he thinks is helpful in order to bring out the link. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them, he says, but not of all of you am I speaking in holding out this prospect of blessedness.

I know the ones that I have chosen for myself to be my apostles. There is one who, though chosen, is not blessed. But as to the fact that I also chose him, this happened in order that the Scripture may be fulfilled, he who eats my bread has lifted up his heel against me.

So much for that. Now we come right here at the beginning of our consideration of this passage, we come here face to face with one of the unique ingredients in our Lord's suffering. An ingredient found in His suffering that will never be found in yours and mine.

Namely, He foreknew, He knew beforehand what people would do to Him. He knew what was in the hearts of His disciples as well as of His enemies. And because of that knowledge, He had anguish, the nature of which we know nothing at all about.

For example, in this particular section, He could foretell, He could predict, He could announce beforehand that this man Judas Iscariot, who has been a disciple of His for over three years, sat at His table, eaten from His hand, walked with Him, talked with Him, lived with Him, is now going to raise the heel against Him and fulfill the Scriptures. He knew that. And as we shall see in a moment, He's known it for a very long time, if not from the beginning.

I believe from the beginning. But it is said specifically some time ago now that He knew this and He's lived with it. And He has lived with Judas all this time in the knowledge that Judas would betray Him.

Now this is an ingredient in our Lord's anguish and sorrow that we know nothing at all about. The same goes, of course, as far as His knowledge of Peter is concerned. Peter was the first confessor at Caesarea Philippi.

But you see, Jesus knew then that Simon would also deny Him. He knew then. His very knowledge of men, His very knowledge of what was going to happen, was in and of itself an ingredient in His anguish, in His sorrow, in His passion.

We often say that part of our problem and part of our difficulty is that we don't know what's going to happen. My dear friends, I think if we thought a little more seriously, we should be more grateful to God than we are that we don't know. Did we but know what was going to happen in a world of sin and of sinners, we would probably be very miserable.

There is only one who does know. Thanks be to God. And you notice that chapter 14 begins in this way.

In the knowledge of Him and because we believe in God and believe in Him, let not your hearts be troubled, He says. But keep on believing in Me and keep on believing in God, I have the answer for you. We won't go to chapter 14 tonight.

We'll just stay here with this rather dark and dismal thread in the story, but one which nevertheless we must seriously consider. In the passage before us then, this foreknowledge of our Lord's is unequivocally stated and expressed. Jesus knew that Judas would betray Him and that Peter would deny Him.

And in the passage He announced both these events as pending in order, first of all, to forewarn His disciples. They needed to be forewarned of such major issues as these, that Judas would betray his Lord, that Peter would deny him. They needed to be forewarned so that they wouldn't be completely thrown off balance when these events took place.

But more than that, beyond that, our Lord wanted to foster faith in Himself. You see, when these events would eventually take place, they might be tempted to disbelieve in the Lord whom they had trusted to date. By announcing these events beforehand, He shows them that He knows all about it.

And when He had said a little bit earlier, everything has been committed into My hand, knowing that all things had been committed into His hand, that He'd come from God and was going to God and going even to His glory, He'd taken all these things into consideration. Therefore, in the knowledge of that, His disciples may have continued an unbroken faith in Him, because He's the Lord who foreknew everything and had prepared for every conceivable eventuality. Now, I'm afraid we'll have to confine ourselves tonight to the first of these main divisions, to the prediction by our Lord of Judas' betrayal, verses 18 to 30.

It is impossible to read these words without sensing the sheer difficulty which Jesus experienced in having to make this solemn announcement at this point. I don't know how you feel when you read this passage. I can't escape the fact that our Lord was really under a burden, that He was having to do something that He would so much prefer not to do.

I don't quite know how to put it, I don't know quite what words to use, but there is this awful burden, the sense of shame that He has to expose Judas and take the mask off and let His fellows and His friends see that in their midst has been an agent of Satan all along, and one who at the vital moment Satan will completely possess and take him out into the night which is night without a morning. Our Lord's very soul seemed to shrink back as He came to this point. And you notice, it's here, if you just read this again leisurely, you will see that John takes 12 whole verses to record what could have been done in a moment and what could have been represented in one single sentence.

But the thing is so drawn out because our Lord is almost unwilling to go from step to step, to move forward and to come to the last final point, as it were, and clinch the issue and make Judas take off the mask and prove himself to be the man he really was. Now let's look at this as John has recorded it for us by the Holy Spirit, and I guess we can confine it to three main points. First of all, let's look at the pending fulfillment of Scripture to which our Lord referred.

Verse 18. I'm not referring to you all, He says. This is a word of warning right at the beginning.

There's a break in the passage, you see, between this and verse 17. And He says, I'm not speaking to you all. Get this clear before I say what I'm going to say.

I'm not speaking to you all. Now a preacher never says that, or doesn't generally say that. When the preacher is preaching, he's preaching to everybody.

But Jesus had reason here, had good reason here for saying this. I'm not referring to you all. I know those whom I have chosen.

But this is to fulfill the Scripture, He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me. Now you notice He's coming to it indirectly. Jesus doesn't just come straight at it like a bullet again and say, you Judas, you're going to betray me.

He doesn't do that. And I would suggest to you the reason He doesn't do that is this, because He's almost giving Judas yet this final chance of changing his mind and of repenting and of changing. And so with a sense of tremendous compassion for Judas, He is almost unwillingly coming to it.

He's going in a most roundabout way. He's already making it clear that there is something big to be said, that the announcement is a gigantic one, a most significant one. But you notice the way He comes to it.

There's a Scripture about to be fulfilled. And the Scripture says this, He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me. It's the indirect method.

So our Lord's first step forward, His first step towards the making of the clear but tragic prediction of Judas's pending betrayal of Him, was to state in general terms that a Scripture was about to be fulfilled. Now notice the way He reassuringly affirmed that what He is about to say does not refer to the twelve as a group. He says, I know those that I've chosen.

I know them. Paul says exactly the same thing elsewhere. He knows whom He has chosen.

He has sealed those whom He has chosen. He knows them all individually and He knows each one thoroughly. But, says Jesus, what is not true of all of you is tragically true of one of you.

One of you is going to perform a most hideous act of graceless ingratitude. You've eaten with me. You've sat at my table.

You've eaten out of my hand. I've provided for you. And you're going to perform an act which, at the least, is an act of sheer ingratitude.

But more than that, beyond that, it is an act of hurtful violence of which the Scripture speaks in these terms. He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me. Now, here Jesus is quoting from Psalm 41 and verse 9. Whenever I come across a statement like this or a quote like this, I always like to go back to the source and see exactly the circumstances.

Why should Jesus quote that? Well, I want to refer to it now, but I suggest to you that if you want to see the real value and significance of it and let it grip your soul, go and read it when you get home. Jesus is here quoting from Psalm 41 and verse 9, a psalm in which David was probably referring to the treachery of his long and familiar friend and counselor Ahitophel. What a name to call a baby.

Ahitophel. I'm sorry, I mustn't go off on a tangent. Ahitophel, who in a fateful hour in the history of his nation, betrayed David, his friend, his king, and joined the rebel Absalom.

Now, you've got to read the story in 2 Samuel chapters 15 to 17 in order to get the immensity of this. You see, Ahitophel was not just a man who'd come in for an occasion to give David some counsel on this or that. No, no, no.

Ahitophel and David were bound together as friend with friend. He was more than a counselor. He was a friend as well.

He lived, more or less, in the court. And so they were often found together, David and Ahitophel. Ahitophel had probably eaten oftener at David's table than at his own over the years of his counseling of the court.

But Ahitophel, in that fateful hour, turned his back upon his old friend and king, David, the Lord's anointed, and joined the rebel Absalom. There is another point here. I don't know whether Jesus meant to refer to this.

Ahitophel, like Judas, turned traitor of his best friend. Yes, but there's another point. Later on, we read that Ahitophel likewise committed suicide.

When Ahitophel saw that his advice had not been followed, he saddled his donkey and set out for his house in his hometown. He put his house in order and then hanged himself. So he died and was buried in his father's tomb, 2 Samuel 17, 23.

Now, Jesus doesn't refer to that, but that was ahead. The point that Jesus stressed, however, is the sinister form of the treachery exhibited in both cases. Someone is betrayed by a familiar friend.

It's not a pitched battle between known enemies. That would be hurtful, but this is something that is even worse and more callous than that. Our Lord says that someone who has been his guest and shared his bread was about to lift up the heel against him.

Now, most of you, if not all of you, will remember that in Oriental days, in New Testament times, when you had really sat at someone's table and eaten a meal with him, that was tantamount to being a covenant between you. Many other stories that could be told of this kind of thing happen. When once a person had gone into a house and had accepted the hospitality of the house and had eaten bread there, broken bread, as they used to say, that meant that there was a kind of unwritten covenant between them.

I know that I could tell you tales tonight of folk who discovered after they'd eaten meat with someone that that person they'd eaten meat with was a sworn enemy of his family or clan. But he could not even take sides with his own family against the person that he had eaten with. To eat bread with someone was tantamount to saying, I'm your guest and I receive of your gifts and of your hospitality and therefore I will never raise up my hand against you.

That meant much more in New Testament times than it may mean today. Even so, Jesus predicts that one of the twelve will do nothing less than that. And he proceeds to say that he will, in this picturesque word of the psalm, lift up his heel against him.

Now what is that image? Don't gloss over an image like that, it's too precious to do it. Because it's a very significant one. The image comes, again, from the farm, as so many images in the Bible do.

It's the image of a horse about to kick you. Have you ever seen a horse just preparing to give someone a mighty kick? With its hind legs it lifts them up and, my word, how he gets ready. And when those legs are

free, you'll have it.

But he lifts the leg up and then he unleashes all his energy. Says, Jesus, there is one who has sat at my table and he's going to do exactly that. Just as the horse does, he's going to give me a real crash, as far as he's concerned.

There's nothing worse that he could do. Now there are some commentators who say that the image means something different. Of course, you always find commentators disagreeing, don't you? But the other alternative suggestion is this.

That the reference is to what we have in the Gospels of someone leaving a village or leaving a town that has turned against them. And as Jesus said, if people don't receive you, well, just shake off the dust of your feet against them. As a witness against them.

You've got the picture. You go out to the village and the village has turned sour against the Lord and against the message of the Gospel. You take your sandal off and you brush the dust off your feet and you get rid of all the dust in the sandal.

And you're indicating thereby that you are free from the guilt of that city. And you dissociate yourself completely from what they've said and what they've done. You are not one of them.

Yeah, but that's lifting the foot. This is lifting the heel. And it makes a world of difference as far as the metaphor is concerned.

It's the picture of the horse lifting his hind feet to kick. And says, Jesus, someone who sat with me at my table. Someone that's eaten out of my own hand.

Someone that's been oh so near to me for so long. One of you, the twelve, is going to hurt me. Second thing I want you to notice is the purpose of the prior announcement.

We've referred to it, but I must come back to it. Assuming that the prediction was true, as the event clearly proved, why was it necessary to make the announcement beforehand? Jesus has both a negative and a positive reason for so doing. Listen to verse 19.

Negatively, Jesus wanted to make it unnecessary for the rest of the disciples to be overwhelmed by the treachery of Judas, as much as by the denial of Peter. He knew that when the ten would see two of them defecting in this way, though there is a world of difference between Judas and Peter, but when you're in the world of those events, they don't look all that different. And Jesus knew that when the ten would face this, it would be enough to drive them into despair.

And he wants to save them from that. But he puts it positively. Positively, he announced it beforehand, so that they might know that he was fully aware of what had been going on, whilst Judas was with him.

In particular, we are now thinking of Judas. He was fully aware of what had been going on, and that he had taken all this into consideration when he spoke of his going to enter into his glory in chapter 12. Seen in its context, the forecast also helps establish our faith in the Scripture, of course.

But the positive and the main intention of Jesus was this, that when the prediction was ultimately fulfilled, the disciples would remember he knew about it. And he lived with Judas, knowing what he would do. Oh, the grace of our Lord.

Oh, the patience of the Savior. Now, if you notice, there follows a delightfully reassuring note. In reading the passage, you tend to believe that this is out of place.

You wonder, why on earth put this in here? You look at verse 19. I'm telling you now, before it happens, so that when it does happen, you will believe that I am he. Now, verse 20.

I tell you the truth. Whoever accepts anyone I send, accepts me. And whoever accepts me, accepts the one who sent me.

Now, I ask you, what's the connection between those two? May I suggest to you the answer? What our Savior is really doing is this. He's saying at that point that he can foresee beyond the tragedy of Judas' transgression. He can see beyond the misery of Simon Peter's denial.

And what does he see? He sees a group of disciples becoming apostles. Going out into the cold, unbelieving world. And being received.

And their message being received. And as their message is being received, Jesus is being received. And as Jesus is being received, the Father is being received.

You see what he's doing? He's lifting these people up from the despondency into which they would tend to sink. Even before they're in it. And he says, look, look, fellows.

I know this is going to happen, but listen. I can see you going out. And I can see you going into the villages to the north and the south and the east and the west.

And you're being received. And as you are being received, I'm being received. And as I'm being received, the Father is being received.

And so you are going to bear the news of the knowledge of God. And you're going to be received. And God is going to be received.

And the work of the gospel is going to proceed despite Judas, despite Simon, despite everybody. Oh, Lord, there's a wonderful way of doing things. That brings me to the third point.

Now, you see, we're moving right into it. The painful disclosure of the traitor. The shrill announcement that one of them should be the horse's hoof.

To kick him. To kick him whose hand had fed him for three and a half years. Radically affected both Jesus and the disciples.

It was really unbelievable. Faced with their obvious inability to take it in, Jesus was, with conscious anguish of soul, repeated it the second time. Now, there are some preachers that know when their congregation is taking things in.

And know when they're not. And so repeats. Well, here, of course, we are dealing with the perfect preacher.

He knew exactly what was going in, and the first time he said it, they just... Just couldn't take it in. It was like water on a duck's back. One of you is going to betray me.

Said Jesus. One of you, the twelve, betray me. The one whose works and whose grace they have witnessed for three to three and a half years.

You know, the thing just did not make sense. So he repeats it. He said, after he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and he testified.

I tell you the truth, he says. Imagine the Son of God having to put it like this. I want you to know, fellows, he says, I am really talking the truth.

One of you is going to betray me, verse 21. Now, will you please note three features in this final painful disclosure of the traitor among the twelve. First of all, just look at Jesus' reticence.

I've referred to it, but let's look at it. Jesus was unquestionably most reticent to expose Judas now. Necessary though that was.

That 21st verse clinches the matter. Jesus was troubled in spirit. Troubled at the very contemplation of disclosing to his followers that all unknown to them, one among them, the only one that had any signal on her, you see, he carried the bag, he was the treasurer.

That was the only office they had among them. And Judas held that office. One among them, one of them was a traitor.

And he'd been a traitor all the time. He, one of the most highly honored, and I'll come back to that a little later on, even the treasurer of the company was to prove himself to be a servant of Satan, a veritable enemy of Christ, and the son of perdition, to quote Jesus in John 17. Jesus' spirit shuddered at the thought of it, though he had personally known this all the way through, and especially from chapter 6. Now way back in chapter 6, verses 70 and 71, Jesus had said, Have I not chosen you, he says, the twelve, yet one of you is a devil.

And then John tells us, he meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who though one of the twelve was later to betray him. Jesus knew all the time, just as he knew all the time what you are, what I am. He knows us.

It's a tremendous thought, you see. No, not a thought, it's a tremendous truth. Nothing is hid from him with whom we have to do.

And my Lord knows exactly your reaction to his truth every time you read his word, every time the spirit speaks to you and prompts you to do this or not to do that. He knows all about us. He knows me.

He knows you. Our secret thoughts are known to him. And he knew Judas.

Judas was the master of the ignoble art of pretense. If anybody mastered this ignoble art, Judas was the one. Imagine him, we shall come to it in a moment.

Not one of them suspected Judas. When Jesus said, one of you, they said, well, is it me? And Judas said the same, hypocrite that he was. He used the same language as the others.

But not one of them suspected Judas. You see, he appeared to be other than he was. The announcement was delicately and gradually made.

Jesus was evidently reticent. And in actually exposing Judas, he proceeds with this delicate progression, almost unwilling to do what he deemed he must now do. Rather than expose him in one abrupt sentence, he painfully draws out the process as the passage proceeds.

You can look at this at your leisure, but let me read to you three verses, one after another, and you can see the progression. Now in verse 18, where we began, I'm not referring to all of you. He hasn't said yet what he's going to say.

But he's telling them beforehand, I'm not referring to all of you. I know those whom I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture.

He who shared my bread was lifted up the heel against me. Now that's very general. Come to verse 21.

After that, he said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, I tell you the truth. One of you is going to betray me. Now come to verse 26.

Jesus answered, It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish. You notice he's not mentioning Judas yet. Then dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, son of Simon.

Now let's look at this for a moment. With considerable emotional difficulty, Jesus gave that final and open indication as to who the betrayer was. Let's note how he did it.

The disciples all greeted with sheer incredulity the repeated affirmation of verse 21 that one of them was going to betray our Lord. And they looked in two directions. For they were at a loss to know how such a thing could be.

John stresses the fact that they looked at each other. Look at verse 22. His disciples stared at one another at a loss to know which of them he meant.

Now it literally means that. Have you ever found yourself with your mouth open? Now you don't confess that, do you? With your mouth open. And just looking, just staring at something or somebody, you've been stupefied.

The thing is too much to take in, and there you are. Now that's what we've got here. They're looking at one another.

Who could it be? The other Gospels, however, the other Gospels tell us that they also looked inwardly, each into his own soul, and each one questioned whether he himself could be the guilty party. Take Matthew's words. Matthew puts it like this.

They were very sad and began to say to him one after another, Surely not I, Lord? Or as the King James put it, Lord, is it I? In evident anguish of soul at the uncertainty, Peter motioned to the disciple whom Jesus loved, who was sitting next to him at the table. One of those next to him at the table. We don't know quite how this happened.

Peter must have been sitting perhaps opposite him at the table and whispered, or he may have made some motion or other, and indicated to John that it would be a good thing to ask Jesus, bring this suspense to a close. Who is it? Now you see they were reclining at a low table. They didn't sit at a table like ours.

They had a kind of U-shaped table and they kind of squatted, sitting on their left side, with their feet going back behind them. And then they had their right hands free to eat, leaning more or less on their left hands. So you see, the probability is that John was on the right of Jesus.

He was sitting, as the King James puts it, at Jesus' breast or chest. The point is that he had only to look back and he was touching the chest of Jesus, who was facing in the opposite, in the same direction. And so Peter, who was more distant from Jesus, suggested to John, who was sitting next to Jesus, John, ask him and let's bring an end to this suspense.

Who is it? And of course John only needed to turn his face back and say, Master, who is it? Who can it be? But you notice that Jesus didn't even give Judas his name, even then. He's so reticent to give his name and to bring the thing to an issue. He still wants to see Judas acknowledge his constant love, the continuance of his favor, the continuance of his offer of mercy and pardon, if only Judas repents and turns from his sin.

Yes, it is as if the Master, and not as if it is that the Master is reticent, to force Judas even at this late point in time to take the fatal and irreversible step that he was destined to take. Jesus would yet make one gesture of love. Earlier on in the chapter he washed Judas' feet.

Now he will make one other gesture before he forces Judas to come out into the open. He will make Judas, he will offer Judas the toast of the occasion. Now you don't find that in Scripture.

That's my wording for a usage which I cannot properly express in any other way. To give the sop or the morsel, the sop in the King James, the morsel in some of the others, a special morsel of bread or a special morsel of meat, having been first dipped in the common cup, to take this morsel and hand it to somebody in the course of a banquet or a supper, was to treat him as the guest of the occasion. It was to toast him.

It was to show that he had a place of honor. It was to indicate friendship and kindness. And believe it or not, what Jesus did is nothing less than what he did when he washed Judas' feet.

He took the morsel. I don't know whether it was meat or whether it was bread. He dipped it in the common dish, and then he handed it, he handed it, he handed it to Judas Iscariot, knowing he was the traitor.

And he did it, let me repeat, because the significance of the act was, as far as Jesus was concerned, he hated the thought of Judas betraying him, and his heart of love went out to Judas even then. Now, in case you think that I'm exaggerating or I'm saying something wrong, let me quote to you at least one commentator who agrees. And I think I could quote a dozen.

So let me quote this. For the host to offer the guest a special titbit, a special morsel from the dish, was again a sign of special friendship. When Boaz wished to show how much he honored Ruth, he invited her to come and dip her morsel in his wine.

Ruth 2:14. T. E. Lawrence told how, when he sat with the Arabs in their tents, sometimes an Arab chief would tear a choice piece of fat mutton from a whole sheep which was before them and hand it to him, often the most embarrassing favor to a Western palate, for it had to be eaten there and then. So when Jesus handed the morsel to Judas, again it was a mark of special affection.

And we note that even when Jesus did this, the disciples did not gather the import of his words. It was as if he were giving honor to Judas. What for? Because he wants to win him.

He loves him. He's showing Judas, I love you, as I did when I washed your feet. Whether every detail of that quote is right or not, is accurate or not, I'm not sure, but it is unquestionable that to give the morsel into the hand of one of the guests was an indication of continued affection and an offer of continued friendship.

And Jesus did that to Judas now, before he mentioned his name as the traitor. Then you notice what happened. Jesus didn't have to mention his name.

Following the statement that he would favor the traitor with that further token of affection, Jesus proceeded and John says, then dipping the piece of bread he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. Then what happened? No sooner had Jesus done this than Judas deliberately shut his heart to that last appeal of holy love and he clinched his deal, not with the Pharisees, not with the scribes, not with members of the Sanhedrin, he clinched his deal with Satan. The very presence of the Son of God, the very pressure of divine love has not made him lovely but unlovely, has not made him a believer but an unbeliever, has not made him a child of God but a child of Satan doubly so.

And we read that Satan entered into that heart and made it his temple home. The influence of Satan was there a long, long, long, long time ago. But now Satan makes Judas' heart his home.

He'd moved in his furniture ages ago and he was quite comfortable there. Judas' heart was prepared for him but now he moves in and he takes over. Jesus was evidently reticent in disclosing the traitor.

The disclosure was gradually made but now it was eventually decisively affirmed. Now, says Jesus, and apparently nobody realized what Jesus was doing. You see, still they didn't believe that Judas was the traitor.

Jesus turned to Judas and said, now Judas, this is what you're about to do, do quickly. And nobody knew, even now, that Judas was the traitor because they thought that Jesus was giving him honor. They couldn't see that Satan had entered into the heart of Judas.

Only Jesus could see that. Jesus knows the extent to which Satan has control of your heart and mine tonight. And he's the only one that can see and can know.

But he does know. Even then, the disciples could not believe what was actually taking place. You see, they thought that Judas was going out to buy something extra for the feast.

Or perhaps he was going to do as they'd often done before. John says this, to give something to the poor at the time of the feast. They had a bag, Judas had the bag, and they thought that Jesus had told him to go and do something like that.

But you see, what Jesus had done, as the one who was in total control of everything, he had now forced Judas graciously, mercifully, after making every appeal for him to change his mind and turn around and believe and trust. But finally, when Judas irrevocably turned against him, Jesus said, right, Judas, go and do it quickly. And so the whole machinery was set in motion.

And Jesus did it. Jesus set it in motion. He's in charge.

He doesn't let circumstances determine what he's going to do. He determines the circumstances. The Passover has come.

This is the evening when the Lamb must be slain. Tomorrow is the great day. And Jesus sets the whole machinery going.

Judas, we're told, went out. And it was night. If ever there was a cryptic statement, that was it.

That is it. Of course, it was night. But it was night in more senses than one.

Judas stepped out into the night, even if there were stars in the sky. But he went out into a night that can never be illumined by any star. At any time.

For all eternity. It's only once he will meet Jesus again. That'll be in Gethsemane.

Now fixed as a hypocrite, he will salute him as master and kiss him as if he were his friend to betray him. And beyond that, they will separate forever. They will never meet again.

Until the graves are opened and the dead shall be raised and gathered around the great white throne will be men and nations of all time. Jesus will sit upon the throne of judgment and Judas will stand before him. And beyond that, they will never meet again.

My friend, what is your relationship to Jesus Christ? What are you by profession? There's a far more important question than that. What's going on in your heart? What's going on in your heart and mind? Are you hardening into a hypocrite that could betray him? Or are you being transformed into a lover that delights in him? What place does Jesus occupy in your life tonight? It may be that you need a change of heart. It may be that you need to be born again.

It may be that you need to turn right around. Oh, may the spirit of God grant you grace tonight if that is so, to cry from where you are, right in this church tonight, that the God of all grace, whose compassion is so great, whose patience is so unbelievably wonderful, that he would come to you and see that you should never be a Judas who will pick the hand that fed you and crucify the Christ that loved you. Let us pray.

Lord, our God and Father, we are indeed solemnized as we read a passage like this. Frankly, we do not know how to respond to this word because there is a fear in all our hearts that we could sometimes be acting. What we pray for, our Lord, is for the spirit of sheer honesty and transparency.

Pray especially for those of us who minister your word and who are leaders in the church. Make us transparently genuine. Save us from professionalism.

But we also pray the same for everyone that hears the gospel and worships in a sanctuary such as this. Oh, God, save us from being religious on the outside and homes for Satan on the inside. Change our hearts that we may love and love him dearly.

And in loving him, love you and trust you and worship you, our God. Pardon our transgressions. Through Christ our Lord and our Master.

Amen. Amen.

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