

The Heart of Christ – the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

“...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end”(John 13:1.)

The Sympathetic Savior

John 13:21-30

21 When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.” 22 The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking. 23 There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. 24 So Simon Peter gestured to him, and said to him, “Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking.” 25 He, leaning back thus on Jesus' bosom, said to Him, “Lord, who is it?” 26 Jesus then answered, “That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.” So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. 27 After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, “What you do, do quickly.” 28 Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him. 29 For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, “Buy the things we have need of for the feast”; or else, that he should give something to the poor. 30 So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.

Thus far in our study of this Upper Room Discourse, these final words of our Lord Jesus Christ prior to His betrayal, arrest, trial and crucifixion, we have noted here in chapter 13 a variety of characteristics of our Savior, characteristics through which we are to gain a greater appreciation as well as a greater gratitude for what it is that Jesus has accomplished for us in His life as our example, in His death on the cross as our expiation for sin and finally His resurrection from the dead as our expectation and hope of eternal life. To this end we have seen Jesus as the splendid Savior; one who manifested great love and devotion to “His own” (13:1-4); the serving Savior; one who humbly and sacrificially serves His disciples as an expression of His love, picturing His service on the cross for all who believe (13:5-11). We have seen Jesus as the soliciting Savior, calling “His own” to follow His example of loving service (13:12-17). And then last week we noted Jesus as the sovereign Savior, who, even with the announcement of great trouble revealed to “His own” that He was in control, that what was about to happen was not a surprise to Him and that what might appear to them as the unraveling of their lives was in reality the unfolding of God’s perfect plan for His glory and their good.

This morning I wish to present to you another characteristic by which you might marvel at Jesus, namely that He is also our Sympathetic Savior. Even as we sang Hebrews 4:14-16, we have a great high priest, who has passed through the heavens, the one who is the Son of God, indeed very God of God in the flesh and yet being God, because He also became man, is able to sympathize with our weaknesses. We have a sympathetic high priest. Sympathetic means “to feel with.” Jesus is not detached or disconnected from your reality. Jesus is not like so many of our politicians today who don’t know what it is like to live on a budget or how much a gallon of milk costs at the store and therefore are not able to relate or identify with us. Jesus truly is the Man of sorrows, one acquainted with grief, one who knows what it is we struggle with; what causes us fear, concern. Jesus knows what weighs you down, and as the hymn writer has penned, “No one understands me like Jesus.”

In our text this morning we see the sympathetic nature of our Savior. We come to see that as He continues to reveal to the disciples the identity of the betrayer, His words to “His own” and

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what the gospel writer tells us about the actions of both Judas and the rest of the disciples, reveals to us no less than three facets of our Savior sympathy; first, His concern for souls (13:21); second, His compassion for His disciples (13:22-26); and third, His conduct in the presence of adversity (13:27-30). We will consider these as we work through the text and then I would have you consider how we who are “His own” ought to apply such things to our own lives.

I. His concern for souls (13:21)

When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.”

Our text begins with what should be seen in context as another shocking or astonishing statement. [Read Text] Jesus has been informing His disciples that not all was well among the Twelve. In verses 10-11 we are told that not all of the disciples were clean, that is “made right” or justified before God by their belief in the pending work of Jesus on the cross because someone did not believe. And if that was not enough, again in verse 18 Jesus says, **“I do not speak of all of you,”** announcing the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy found in Psalm 41:9, “He who eats my bread has lifted up his heel against me.” Not only is Jesus then revealing to His disciples the veracity of God’s Word from the past, but He is also reminding them of His own words. Consider what Jesus had said to the Twelve in Matthew 10:32-36;

32 Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. 33 But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven. 34 Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; 36 and A MAN’S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD.

What would make the revelation of the betrayer so shocking is that this betrayer was one from Christ’s own household, one so close to Him. Again, may I remind you that we know that Christ is speaking of Judas, yet the disciples did not know this at this time. Remember then that Judas, just like the rest of the disciples, had enjoyed both the teachings of Christ as well as the very presence of Christ. For three years, few had been more intimate, more blessed, more favored than Judas. Judas saw firsthand the multitude and magnitude of the miracles of Jesus. He had heard with his own ears repeatedly the marvelous message of Jesus. And, unlike anyone of us and most of the people at the time of Christ, Judas was able to privately gaze upon the perfections of Jesus in way unimaginable. And yet, with all this, the heart of Judas remained unmoved, unchanged and unyielding to the Lordship of Christ. How does this remind us beloved of the words of Christ recorded earlier in this gospel saying, **“Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of heaven”** (John 3:3). Let this serve to us as a reminder that one can be so close to Christ, so near to Jesus and yet remain unsaved.

So then, when our text informs us that upon completion of calling His disciples to trust in His sovereignty, to respond to His solicitation to follow His example, to marvel at the service He both had done and would do for them, something came to the very spirit of Jesus that “troubled”

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Him. Can you imagine? What is it that would trouble Jesus? This word “troubled” means “stirred or extremely agitated.” What is it that would so vex His spirit that at this moment it became apparent? Some would suggest, and I believe to a degree rightfully so, that Jesus was troubled by the prospects of what lies before Him, by the horrors that awaited Him at the cross. But with that said, I believe the true trouble for the spirit of Jesus is found in what He says next, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.”**

Here Jesus identifies that one of the twelve was a traitor. And it is my thought that what most troubled the spirit of Jesus was not simply His own pending crucifixion, but rather the pending judgment that the treachery of Judas was about to bring upon his own head. We are reminded that God takes no delight in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11). As H.A. Ironside noted, *“No soul will ever be lost without filling His soul with grief.”* Jesus certainly knew the destiny of Judas that was both appointed by God as well as chosen by Judas, and yet, without malice but rather with great concern for his soul, Jesus is troubled by the fact that the choice Judas was about to take would forever seal his doom.

What is it that troubled the spirit of Jesus? Might I suggest that it was in part the bitter sorrow of seeing one of His apostles deliberately becoming an apostate. Here we see that the heartbreak of our Lord is a deep wound caused by the revealed ingratitude of one who had been a constant companion for three years. In all of the previous statements of Jesus calling for the disciples to follow His example we see the heart of the Savior moved with such concern that they should be clean, that they should be washed, that they should believe in Him and be saved. And yet Judas was unmoved. Judas saw no beauty in Christ. Judas was unaffected by the grace revealed by Christ. Judas was concerned for himself, for his own monetary gain. Judas sold out the Savior for 30 pieces of silver. And as Jesus considered the heart of Judas, He was troubled for his soul for Judas made no indication whatsoever that he might repent.

Jesus declares here in verse 21 that **“one of you will betray Me.”** And yet there is no anger here, only the deep concern, a deep sympathy for the condition of the soul so steeped in sin that it is unmoved by grace. It is as if Jesus is pleading for the one to consider carefully all that has just happened. He is saying that one of you here at the table with Me; one of you whose feet I have just washed; one of you who have had the great privilege of going out in My name; one of you who has had the benefit of My intimacy and presence is now going to lead the enemy to My quiet place of prayer and deliver Me into the hands of those who seek My life. Someone has said that Judas, the “familiar friend” had become the *familiar fiend*. And by this the prophetic words of Psalm 55:12-14 had come to pass:

12 For it is not an enemy who reproaches me, then I could bear it; nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me, then I could hide myself from him. 13 But it is you, a man my equal, my companion and my familiar friend; 14 we who had sweet fellowship together walked in the house of God in the throng.

It certainly was a deep wound that Judas inflicted upon Jesus and yet His spirit was troubled not for Himself, but for Judas. Jesus can sympathize with the feelings of betrayal, of being let down; of being hurt by someone close. Remember that if Jesus had “wanted” to, He could have certainly taken out this betrayer, but rather Jesus continues for three years to call

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Judas to repentance. And now, with time running out, Jesus reveals His sympathetic concern for this lost man.

II. His compassion for His disciples (13:22-26)

22 The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking. 23 There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. 24 So Simon Peter gestured to him, and said to him, "Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking." 25 He, leaning back thus on Jesus' bosom, said to Him, "Lord, who is it?" 26 Jesus then answered, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.

As we move into verses 22-26 we see the sympathy of Jesus expressed in His compassion for “His own” - the disciples. This compassion is most revealed in verse 26, but let us consider first the setting.

It is interesting to note from our text that in verse 22 we have the disciples finally expressing a concern about what Jesus had shared. There is no reference to concern being expressed after verse 10-11, or 18, but now the attention of disciples had been aroused. Before they had seemingly been so dumbfounded by condescension of Jesus to wash their feet that the meaning of “He who eats my bread has lifted up his heel against me” had escaped their thinking. But verse 21 had been straight-forward enough. There was a betrayer and this caused a very interesting response in verse 22, **“The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking.”** Now, for the disciples not to know of whom Jesus was speaking tells us a couple of things worth noting.

First, the disciples not knowing of whom Jesus was referring to tells us keen and stealth hypocrisy of Judas. For three years Judas gave his companions no reason to suspect that he was a betrayer – that’s amazing. When we read of this announcement of a betrayer in the gospel of Matthew we learn something else of the disciples’ response. In Matthew 26:21-22 we read,

21 As they were eating, He said, “Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me.” 22 Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, “Surely not I, Lord?”

I love what Matthew Henry, the great commentator noted about this saying, *“They [the disciples] are to be commended for their charity, in that they are more jealous of themselves than of each other. It is the law of charity to hope the best, because we assuredly know, therefore we may justly expect, more evil of ourselves than of our brethren. They are also to be commended for their acquiescence in what Christ said. They trusted, as we would do well to do, more to His words, than to their own hearts, and therefore do not say, ‘It is not—it cannot be—I’; but ‘Lord, is it I?’ See if there be such a way of wickedness, such a root of bitterness in me, and discover it to me, that I may pluck up the root, and stop up that way.”*

And yet Jesus knows that one of them is lacking this charity and is playing the game of hypocrisy, even to the end, for do you remember the question that Judas dared to asked Jesus, even after setting up the betrayal, as if Jesus was unaware of his plans in Matthew 26:25 saying,

And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, “Surely it is not I, Rabbi?”

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If you want to know why I have labeled these verses the sympathy of the Savior revealed in His compassion - it is because it is hard to fathom how Jesus restrained His righteous wrath in this moment. Have you ever known someone to be lying and wanting them to come clean you ask very pointedly, almost as if you are telling them openly, “I already know the truth” to come clean only for them to use the lifeline of compassion as a rope by which to hang themselves? That was Judas.

Here then is the utter compassion of Christ. For not only do we see the keen hypocrisy of Judas, but also then the infinite patience of Jesus. The disciples are obviously unaware as to whom the betrayer is and this tells us something remarkable about Jesus – namely the way in which His common grace is revealed to all. For throughout His ministry, Jesus evidently treated Judas with the same grace, the same mercy, and the same kindness as He had shown to the other Eleven. At no time did Jesus turn a cold shoulder to Judas for if He had, then the other disciples would have noted it and would have now known exactly of whom He was speaking. What self-control! What mercy! As A.W. Pink noted,

“How this tells of the perfections of our Savior! His kindness ill-requited, His favors unappreciated, His holy soul loathing such a sink of iniquity so near to Him—yet He bowed to the sovereign will and authoritative word of the Father, and patiently bore this trial.”

But the compassion of Jesus is further revealed in verses 23-25 in some rather remarkable ways. For in verse 23 we see a bit of a contrast as we read, **“There was reclining on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.”** For in Judas we have this heart of unequivocal betrayal; but we see here the heart of one who has embraced the beauty of Christ as this unnamed one, presumably the Apostle John himself, recline peacefully upon the bosom of Jesus. Notice how this one identifies himself; not as “one who loved Jesus” although he most assuredly did, but rather how, as “one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.” Here is the mark of the true believer in contrast to Judas – he knows that Jesus loves him.

In verse 24 we read that **“Simon Peter gestured to him [the disciple whom Jesus loved], and said to him, ‘Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking.’”** It is remarkable to me to see Peter already distancing himself to a degree from Jesus. Remember that just a few verses down we will find a betrayal or sorts predicted by Jesus on the part of Peter. Whereas John was at peace lying on the bosom of Jesus, Peter had some measure of reserve and so asked John to ask Jesus to be more specific as to who was the betrayer.

And so, in verse 25 we see John lying back and asking, **“Lord, who is it?”** Oh to be in the state and condition of John. So near to Christ, so sure of his standing before Christ that any question could be asked. Beloved, this is the privilege of everyone believer in Jesus Christ. Here we see such wonderful compassion as Jesus allows John to look Him in the eyes and ask such a pointed question. Why didn’t Peter simply ask Jesus? Why did he feel compelled to go through another before first simply coming to Christ? And yet, do we not do this from time to time. Are we not more like Peter than John, running to a brother first rather than coming first to the Lord? Who do you speak to first in time of difficulty or trial. Beloved, this is a question of intimacy with Christ. If we are filled with any self-confidence, or if we have some other sins in our life, we will tend to keep ourselves at a safe distance from Christ. Let us not linger in the background afraid

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to ask Jesus a question. Come to Jesus now. Beg Him to search your heart and reveal to you anything that would hinder you from being in His presence and keep you from asking him anything that is on your heart. The great compassion of Jesus is seen in that He calls us to come – to draw near to Him with confidence, to come to the throne of grace and plead for mercy and grace in our time of need.

Then, in verse 26, we see another great expression of the sympathetic compassion of Jesus. First we have Jesus' answer to John's question as He says, perhaps whispering it so that only John and perhaps Peter hear, **"That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him."** Truly then the betrayer was about to be revealed. Then we read, **"So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot."** Why did Jesus choose to identify the betrayer in this manner? We need to remember that in this culture it was considered a high honor for a host to give a portion to one of his guests. Back in verse 21 Jesus had appealed to the conscience of Judas, but here Jesus is appealing to his heart. We know that Judas takes this symbol of honor by which he in effect continues in his hypocrisy. The taking of this morsel was a picture of fellowship and friendship and yet Judas was about to reveal just how fiendish he really was.

Can you see the compassion of Jesus here? The one who would soon approach Jesus with the words, "Hail, Rabbi" and give to Jesus the infamous kiss of betrayal was yet again being served by Jesus and was yet again being exhorted by Jesus to repent. Again, Jesus showed no malice, no anger, no longing for Judas's demise. Here was the fulfillment of **"He who eats my bread has lifted up his heel against me."** And here is Jesus, fully in control, fully filled with love and mercy. Yet Judas would have none of it.

III. His conduct in adversity (13:26-30)

27 After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly." 28 Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him. 29 For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, "Buy the things we have need of for the feast"; or else, that he should give something to the poor. 30 So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.

This brings us then to our final point, the final way I suggest to you that we see the sympathetic Savior, and that is found in the conduct of Jesus. We read in verse 27, **"After the morsel [that is after Judas had taken and partaken], Satan then entered into him."** The giving of the morsel to Judas, a sign of friendship, ought to have so pricked the heart of Judas so as to cause him to break down in repentance. But rather than repent, Judas opens himself to become the very tool of Satan. Remember that everything Judas had done up to this point was done out of a sinful, unbelieving heart. Neither God nor Satan had made Judas make these choices, but now his choice would eternally cost him as our text says Satan took full possession of him.

And so, since Judas had crossed the line of salvation – since his fate was sealed as it were, the Lord Jesus says to Him, **"What you do, do quickly."** Jesus was dismissing Judas from His service. The time had come for Jesus to willfully offer Himself up for the sins of His people. Jesus knew that Judas was a part of the divine plan to bring this about. Here, before the presence of the Almighty Incarnate God was the puppet of the serpent. Satan, in entering Judas,

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was face to face before God. And just what do you suppose God could do to Satan if He do desired? He could have obliterated him. To think that Judas had willingly chosen the path of Satan over the path of Christ and yet Jesus resigns Himself, saying in effect, “I am ready to be led as a lamb to the slaughter.” Here we see the loving conduct of the Savior, who knows His people’s need of salvation and so allows Himself to be led by had of Judas and Satan.

Of course our text tells us that this was all missed by the others. I believe that perhaps only John and maybe Peter knew the identity of the betrayer, for we read in verse 28, **“Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him.”** Whether one or two knew the identity, none suspect the coming of the betrayal so quickly and again we see the great charity of the disciples as they simply assume that Judas is running some errands for the Lord.

And that John should record the nature of these presumed errands tells us something again of the conduct of Jesus. We read in verse 29, **“For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, ‘Buy the things we have need of for the feast’; or else, that he should give something to the poor.”**

While we might marvel at how they didn’t know what Judas was about to do, we really ought to marvel at what this tells us about the conduct of both Jesus and His disciples. For while they are certainly wrong about what Judas was doing, they were of the right heart. Judas was a devil, but up to this point he had not revealed himself as such. So, as the treasurer, the disciples simple believed that Judas was going to engage in an act of benevolence, not malevolence. As it has been noted, “It is plain from these words that our Lord and His disciples were in the habit of giving, especially at the time of the great festivals, out of their scanty pittance, something to those more destitute than themselves. Their ‘deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality’: and by His example He has taught us not merely that it is the duty of those who may have but little to spare to give of that little to those who have still less, but that religious observances are gracefully connected with deeds of mercy and alms-giving. He joined humility with piety in His practice as well as in His doctrine; and in this He hath left us an example that we should follow His steps” (Dr. John Brown).

Of course, this was not the purpose of Judas. He was set to betray the Savior. And so we read in verse 30, **“So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately and it was night.”**

There seems to be a more significant meaning intended in this verse than simply time. We already knew it was night. There seems to be a symbolic meaning – a reference to the dark hour that was befalling our Savior. Even the gospel writer Luke makes reference in 22:53 that the hour of Jesus’ betrayal, arrest, trial and crucifixion was by the “power of darkness.” God the Father had sent God the Son for such a time as this, as to allow His enemies to put out the Light of life. But not only had “night” befallen Jesus, but even more so it had befallen upon Judas. His soul had been blackened with the darkness of night. He had neglected the Light and his soul would never again see the beauty of the light of Christ.

So we see the sympathy of our Savior in His concern for the souls of the lost, in His compassion for His disciples and in His conduct, always seeking the good of His people and glory of God. Is there any parallel any application for us? I would simply draw your attention to 1 Peter 3. Remember that Peter was there at this scene and sometimes we can ponder what thoughts he had in mind as he penned the words to his own letter. Let us read 1 Peter 3:13-16 –

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13 Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, 15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; 16 and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

Do you see in essence the same principles from our text in John 13 that applied to Christ here in 1 Peter 3:13-16 applied to us. Remember that Jesus showed His sympathy in His concern for the lost. And in 1 Peter 3:13-15a, we are not to worry about potential suffering, even as Jesus did not worry about His own suffering. Rather, our concern is to give a clear and ready testimony of our hope, a hope secured by what Jesus endured for us on the cross. And the purpose of this hope is to give a defense, an apology, a reason why people should desire life in Jesus. Is this your concern?

We also see the compassion expressed at the end of verse 15, “**yet with gentleness and reverence.**” Our living out our concern for the lost is not to be without compassion, without a controlling of our spirit, particularly if we are mocked, scorned, rejected or ridiculed.

And finally we see in this text our conduct as we read in verse 16, “**and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.**” A part of our testimony is the conduct of our lives. We need to live in such a manner that it is apparent our conduct is from and to the glory of God. Was this not the manner of Jesus? He knows how we ought to live for He lived on this earth too. Let us therefore pray for hearts of sympathy, likened unto that of our Lord, manifesting a concern for the lost, a compassion for one another and conduct that glorifies God.

Soli Deo Gloria

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