

“Betrayal and Love”

August 30, 2026

John 13:18-38

I. Introduction

The disciples had gathered in a quiet room to celebrate the Passover meal with their Teacher and Lord. From the time they were children, these Jewish men had celebrated Passover—a celebration filled with symbolism. On the table were items that reminded them of the 1st Passover when Moses and the children of Israel escaped from Egypt. There was saltwater to remind them of the tears shed while they were slaves to the Egyptians. There were bitter herbs, including horseradish, to represent the harshness of being slaves. There was a flat bread, similar to our Matzos, to remind them of the escape and the lack of time to allow the yeast in the dough to rise. The lack of yeast also reminded them of the necessity to remove sin from their lives. There was the meal itself which included the Passover lamb. Throughout the meal, there would be songs of praise to God for His protection and goodness.

Following the uproar of Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and the following anger—even the hatred—of the Pharisees towards Jesus and His disciples, the disciples must have looked forward to the traditional Passover meal—the Seder—as something they could understand. It would be a time they could just lie back and be comfortable in traditional activities. But as we saw last week, Jesus quickly yanked them out of their customary attitudes and actions. Since no one had washed their feet when they came into the room, Jesus **“got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him”** (John 13:4-5). When He had finished, Jesus explained His object lesson as “Love in Action.”

If the disciples thought that after Jesus had finished His lesson, they would get back to the traditional meal and things would get back to normal, they were in for more surprises. It began part way through the meal when Jesus predicted His betrayal.

II. Jesus' Betrayal

Jesus wanted the disciples to understand that when His betrayal and arrest took place, He was not a surprise victim of Judas's treachery. Jesus didn't want His disciples to be surprised. Jesus had already told them that all of them were not clean. Although Judas was the treasurer of the group ([John 12:6](#)) and was held in high regard by his fellow disciples, he was not a true believer; he was a hypocrite. Although Judas had been with Jesus for 3 years, Jesus said in [John 6:70](#), **"Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!"** Judas had never believed in Jesus. As Jesus put it in [John 13:10-11](#), he had never been bathed all over.

Thinking of Judas, Jesus quoted [Psalm 41:9](#) where David wrote, **"Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me."** When David wrote this psalm, he was probably referring to his counselor Ahithophel, who turned traitor and joined David's son Absalom in the rebellion against David ([2 Samuel 15-17](#)). David's betrayal pointed forward to the Messiah's betrayal by one of His disciples; one of the Twelve. Jesus knew Judas would betray Him.

From the beginning, as the sovereign God, Jesus knew what Judas would do but He did not compel or force him to do it. Judas acted by his own choice. In [Luke 22:22](#) Jesus said, **"The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed, but woe to that man who betrays him."** Judas was exposed to the same spiritual privileges and teachings as the other disciples. He had seen the same miracles, yet nothing seemed to touch his heart. In spite of all Jesus had said about money and His warning about covetousness, Judas continued to be a thief. [John 12:6](#) says, **"As keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put in it."** Jesus had just washed Judas' feet along with the rest of the disciples. Judas had just heard Jesus say that not all the disciples were spiritually cleansed. But he refused to repent and instead, Judas hardened his heart.

Jesus wanted to make sure that Judas's betrayal would not shake the others disciples' faith in Him. By telling the disciples about the betrayal before it happened, Jesus knew that in the future when they would look back, they would realize that Jesus knew everything that was going to happen. When the disciples were

scattered and afraid following Jesus' arrest, they would recognize Jesus' omniscience and continue to believe in His deity.

Jesus had hinted earlier about a traitor, when He said, **“Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!”** but the disciples either didn't understand or didn't take it to heart. So now He openly said, **“One of you is going to betray me.”** The disciples were shocked by Jesus' announcement. Since they were alone in the room with Jesus, they knew that one of *them* would do the unthinkable and betray Jesus. But which one? [Matthew 26:22](#) says, **“They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, ‘Surely not I, Lord!’”** Since Judas had been so clever in hiding his hypocrisy and since Jesus had treated him no differently from the other eleven disciples, no one suspected Judas.

[Luke 22:23](#) adds that **“They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this.”** In the midst of all this confusion, Peter signaled to **“the disciple whom Jesus loved,”** i.e., to John, who closer to Jesus at the table—he was **“reclining next to Him,”** **“Ask him which one he means,”** Peter said. In the midst of all the chaos and hubbub, Jesus' reply to John must not have been heard by all the men. While John was reclining at Jesus' right, Judas was reclining at the place of honor at Jesus' left. So, when Jesus gave the bread to Judas, it was interpreted by most of the disciples as an act of love and honor. But Judas rejected Jesus' final offer of friendship and love, just as he had done for the past 3 years. Judas ignored all of Jesus' offers of friendship and love.

John must have been stunned by this revelation, but before he could say or do anything, Jesus sent Judas on his way. Satan may have entered Judas, but it was Jesus who was in charge. Jesus controlled every detail of His death, proving His words from [John 10:18](#), **“No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”** Also, since Jesus was about to institute the Lord's Supper, He wasn't going to have it stained by Judas's and Satan's presence. So, Jesus sent Judas away.

[Luke 22:1-6](#) says that Judas had already met with the Jewish leaders and agreed to lead them to Jesus. And although he had heard Jesus say, **“The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to**

that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born” (Matt. 26:24), Judas continued in his unbelief and treachery.

John’s little phrase **“and it was night”** carries a lot of significance. Light and darkness are important spiritual images throughout John’s Gospel. Jesus is the Light of the world, but Judas rejected Jesus and went out into the darkness. Those who do evil hate the light. Earlier in John 12:25 Jesus warned, **“The man who loves his life will lose it while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”** But Judas ignored this warning, too. And, sadly, there are many people today who also ignore this warning and refuse to repent and trust the Savior.

III. The Sign of a True Disciple

In the days ahead, after the disciples finally got over the shock of Judas’s betrayal, they were going to wonder how they could have been fooled by him. But false disciples are sometimes hard to detect. They have all the outward signs of true disciples. They are good, moral people. They have an intellectual knowledge of the Bible, sometimes better than *true* disciples. They may even be involved in the outward life of the church. Now that Judas was gone, Jesus was going to teach the disciples the sign of a **true** disciple: sincere, selfless, sacrificial love—agape love.

Love’s highest expression is self-sacrifice. In John 15:13 Jesus said, **“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”** Jesus pointed to His imminent crucifixion as an example of such love. From the human viewpoint, the death of Christ was a terrible thing involving horrible suffering and humiliation, but from the divine perspective it was the revelation of the glory of God—the ultimate example of agape love.

By fulfilling the Father’s will that the Son die for lost sinners, be raised from the dead, and then ascend into heaven, the Son glorified the Father, and the Father glorified the Son. As Phil. 2:9 says, **“Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place.”**

But Jesus’ glorification meant that He would have to leave the disciples—something they found hard to understand and harder to accept. They loved Jesus deeply and had come to depend on Him completely.

Knowing that He soon would be leaving them was both painful and frightening. Yet it was the most necessary and the most loving act He could perform on their behalf. He had come to die for them, and for all who would believe in Him.

Jesus' example of selfless, sacrificial love sets the ultimate standard for believers to follow. Christians need to follow Christ's example. In [Ephesians 5:2](#) Paul wrote, **"Live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."** For more characteristics of this love, [turn to 1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#). The *Good News Bible* puts it this way: **"Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up; and its faith, hope, and patience never fail. Love never dies."** Jesus finished by saying, **"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."**

IV. Peter's Boast

Upset by the Lord's statement that He was leaving them, Peter boasted, **"Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."** Speaking for all the disciples, Peter was unable and unwilling to accept the fact that Jesus must leave them. They were all still looking for the establishment of an eternal kingdom under the eternal Messiah.

Peter also wasn't satisfied with Jesus' statement that **"you will follow later."** The impetuous Peter was ready now. Peter's love for and loyalty to Jesus were sincere. He meant every word that he said. When the Lord told Peter, **"I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!"** Peter must have been shocked. In fact, Jesus' rebuke so subdued Peter that he remained unusually silent through the rest of the Lord's farewell address.

V. Conclusion

Judas's actions are a parable and a warning. People complain about the sin outside the church, but that doesn't hurt the church. The pressure from the outside can make us stronger. Some of those sinners even get saved. The hurt comes when Jesus Christ is betrayed on the inside—by a Judas, a wolf in sheep's

clothing. Turn to Paul's warning to Timothy—turn to 1 Timothy 1:3-7; now turn to Acts 20:28-31. In Paul's farewell to the Ephesian church, he warned of those that come into the church and try to destroy it from the inside. Such people say that we need to get with the times; this book is an antique, a relic, a collection of myths which need to be ignored. Others want to add to it or reinterpret it so that God and God's Word are politically correct. *"We need to be progressive."* They say that people don't want to hear words like hell or sin or eternal damnation. Such people say things like: *"Who made you judge and jury."* Others want to make god in their own image—if it feels good, do it. As a church—not just those in leadership, but individual Christians as well—we all need to make sure that we know what this Book says; that we seek to glorify God and not man; that we can identify false disciples.

Finally, Jesus' command in verse 34, **"Love one another"** is given in the strongest possible terms. There are many places one can go to find communities of shared interest; places where you can find people just like yourself, people who live for sports or music or gardening or politics or you name it. But the command to the church—to Christians—is to become a community of love; a love that encompasses all people of all interests. The church is to be a circle of Christ's followers who love one another because Christ has loved them, who exhibit selfless, sacrificial love—agape love—not based on the attractiveness or mutual interests of its members or others, but on the model of Christ, who washed the feet of everyone including Judas, the betrayer. As Jesus loved those in the world, Christians--we must love those in the world. It is this love that is the true evidence that we belong to Jesus Christ. 1 John 3:14 says, **"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death."**

All this sounds good, but no one can do it on his or her own—only through the power of the Holy Spirit. Phil. 4:13 says, **"I can do everything through him who gives me strength."** The only way to have the power of the Spirit, is to be a child of God—a Christian. Contrary to popular teachings—even in some churches today, there is only one way to be a *"Christian."* Romans 10:9 says, **"That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."** Are you a child of God? Do people know that you are a Christian by your love for the world?