

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

Grace 'Til the End John 13:18-30

Intro: We are working through John's eye-witness account of the Last Supper. This is the last full night that Jesus will spend with these men; the last opportunity He will have to impart to them the critical information they will need to know after He has been taken away from them. He needs to strengthen them for the upcoming trial of faith they are about to experience. But, as we saw last week, the disciples were in no frame of mind to receive that instruction. So, Jesus must get their attention and He does so by performing 2 startling and significant acts. The 1st was washing the disciple's feet. The physical act itself was startling to the disciples but the spiritual ramifications of the act are what make it so significant. It's a beautiful picture of the constant need for repentance on the part of Christ's people and the reality that He is always there to reward that repentance with the intimate fellowship of His immediate presence.

The 2nd significant act was the offering of the "sop" (the bread) to Judas. The act itself would not be that startling to the 12 despite their propensity for arguing over who would be the greatest in Christ's kingdom. Here, Judas has been given the place of honor to the left of Jesus and he is also given the sop, the bread of honor. While this act may not have surprised the disciples, the announcement Jesus makes just prior to the act certainly does. Before His shocking announcement, Jesus delivers a prophecy. This prophecy has 3 parts: the prophecy itself; an explanation of why the prophecy is given and an encouragement for those who were disheartened by it.

18-20- Jesus gives this prophecy here to qualify what has been said previously (**10b**). Jesus has just spoken about how a person can find true happy by knowing and obeying His commandments. He now qualifies His statement by adding that He wasn't speaking about each one of them. Jesus, once again, mentions that each of the disciples was not only chosen by Him but they were known to Him as well. This choosing was the decisive thing. It implies the divine initiative. If Jesus knew Judas was a traitor, why did He choose him? He appeals to Scripture (**Ps 41:9**).

Nowhere in this Psalm does David identify the person of whom he is speaking but most scholars agree this is a reference to Ahithophel, David's most trusted advisor, who defected from David and sided with Absalom during his rebellion. We saw this tragedy unfold when we studied through **II Sam 15-17**. Absalom's rebellion and coup caught David off guard and he and his mighty men had to flee Jerusalem with their families. But, Ahithophel stayed behind. When David learned that Ahithophel was with Absalom, he was very concerned because Ahithophel always gave wise counsel. What did David do? He prayed (**II Sam 15:31**). What did God do? He answered David's prayer, not by causing Ahithophel to give bad counsel (he still spoke wisely) but by causing his good counsel to be ignored. His story ends in **II Sam 17:23**.

The fact that Ahithophel hanged himself is good evidence that it's probably him Jesus is referring to in **Ps 41** for Judas also went and hanged himself. But the point of the story is not in Ahithophel's or Judas's ignominious end but in the fact that one who had been so close to Jesus would betray Him. Ahithophel had eaten at David's own table. So had Judas eaten with Jesus. Ahithophel had betrayed David. So Judas would betray the Lord of glory.

A quick look at ancient near east culture reveals the sheer cruelty of Judas' betrayal. In that culture, to eat bread with a person was a sign of friendship and an act of loyalty. That's why the Pharisees refused to eat with publicans and sinners and were so shocked when Jesus did. **2 Sam 9:7-13** tells how David granted Mephibosheth to eat bread at his table, when he could have just eliminated him as a descendant of Saul. **1 Kings 18:19** tells how the prophets of Baal ate bread at the table of Jezebel. For one who'd eaten bread at someone's table to then turn against the very person to whom he had pledged his loyal friendship was a bitter thing. The disloyalty of friends is the most painful of all hurts for David (**Ps 55:12-14**).

In our text, Jesus is prophesying that one who'd been with Him the entire 3.5 years of His earthly ministry would betray Him, and that's a sobering truth. It is sobering because if someone could've been part of the Twelve for all those years, during which time they not only heard Jesus teach but also witnessed the miracles He did, if one who had experienced all that could betray Him, then it is certainly possible for a person to be in the company of God's people today, in an environment where the Word of God is faithfully preached, and still not actually be a child of God.

This is a good place to stop and ask yourself: Am I really a child of God or am I just in the company of God's people? If the latter is true of you, if you're just in the company of Christians, then this passage should have a special urgency for you, and you should not rest until you have actually come to believe in Jesus to the point of full salvation

Next, Jesus gives the reason for offering this prophecy (19). The prophecy was given so that when it comes to pass, it will be received by the disciples as further evidence that Jesus is who He claims to be – the unique Son of God. In fact, this is the main reason offered for the giving of all prophecy in the OT. You might think prophecy was given to satisfy our curiosity or to warn us and allow us to prepare for what's coming. But the biblical reason for prophecy is that, when the prophecy comes to pass, we can know that the God who gives the prophecy is the true God, because only He can see the future and guarantee its outcome.

In the OT, God is constantly contrasting Himself with the false idols of the pagans that Israel was so susceptible to worshipping. These idols had nothing to offer Israel – they couldn't even stand upright by themselves, let alone move around. God challenged these idols to tell Israel what would happen in the future. He challenged them to do anything – good or bad – to prove they could operate independently of their worshippers but they never rose to the challenge.

By contrast, God can tell the future and thus, should be believed (Isa 48:3).

This is the same argument used by Jesus in vs19. Just as God argues from the logic of prophecy in the OT, so Jesus argues in ch13. The logical conclusion of both arguments is the same. Jehovah is the true God. Jesus is the true God. Jesus is Jehovah. Jesus argues that He is not just a spokesman for God, though He is that also. He argues that He is God. Whatever He has prophesied He will bring to pass.

The final thing Jesus offers to the disciples is a word of encouragement (20). This statement may seem disconnected from what has been said previously but there is a connection. Jesus had been encouraging the disciples to follow the example He'd just given them in the foot washing, but as He had done that, He began speaking of Judas and the fact that he would betray Him. Were they discouraged now? We don't know. If they

were, we'd certainly understand why. They may have thought that if it was true, then none of them were capable of serving Jesus. They may have thought that they were all scoundrels and any possibility of future usefulness to Jesus was over.

But that was not the case. Yes, one of them would betray Him. But despite that, Jesus had chosen them, the other 11, to be His representatives to an ungodly world. And they would be His representatives, so much so that whoever received them would be accounted as having received Jesus, and whoever received Jesus would receive God.

This is a great encouragement, for us as much as the apostles. There's a lot of discouragement in the Christian life. There are real betrayals. We see it in churches; in seminaries; in pastors and professors who deny the very God who bought them. But Jesus knows all that. It's nothing new. It's always been that way. Still, in the midst of betrayals He still has ambassadors He will use to be a blessing to the lost world around them. We are those ambassadors, if we believe on Jesus and speak for Him as we are instructed to do.

21-26- Now we've come to the 2nd significant act of **ch13**: the giving of the bread to Judas; an act that identified him as the traitor. Here, Jesus has an opportunity to show love to Judas one last time. This act was seen by everyone but unlike the foot washing, it was not made clear to all of them. The way the act was performed, only John (maybe Peter) understood it but neither realized the betrayal was imminent. This scene ends with Judas leaving the gathering to carry out his betrayal, an act that would eventually lead to the death of His Master and to himself.

John gives a very human description of Jesus in **vs21**: He was deeply disturbed. Though John pictures Jesus in complete control of the situation, he doesn't want us to think Jesus was unmoved by all that occurred around Him. Judas' betrayal troubled Jesus. He loved Judas and was troubled for the sake of his eternal soul. Sometimes looking at the deity of Jesus, we forget His humanity. We assume He was unbothered by the things that bother us. That's not what the Bible teaches. It says He "was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (**Heb 4:15b**). If we experience discouragement, distress and sorrow, we can know that He experienced all those things too. Here in the upper room, during these last hours with His

disciples, Jesus was increasingly troubled by all that was coming. Not the least of which was the fact that one who had lived with Him in closest communion for 3.5 years was now ready to sell out his Master for the price of a slave.

In the midst of this great treachery, there are some important theological lessons to be learned by the church today.

1) The lost need more than just examples to be saved. What better example could Judas have had than Jesus Himself? Judas had been present for most, if not all of Jesus' teachings. He heard the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, the parables, the condemnation of covetousness and self-seeking. On top of this, Judas saw in Jesus the perfect example of all he was taught. He saw perfect meekness in Jesus, perfect holiness, perfect love because Jesus was filled with the love of God. Judas heard and saw all of this and yet, was unmoved by it, and unsaved.

Examples are not enough. That's why we must pray and ask the Holy Spirit to do the work of regeneration in the lives of the unsaved. Living right is necessary, a bad example won't save people either; but good examples are not enough. What is required is regeneration and that's the exclusive work of the Holy Spirit whereby He brings new life into an individual's heart so that spiritual things become real and they can respond to Jesus Christ as their Savior.

2) It's impossible to discern the heart. Christians often operate as though that were not the case but it always is. We like to think we can know who is saved and who isn't but testimony of Judas tells us it is impossible to really know. Appearances are important, but they're not incontrovertible evidence of eternal life. Judas lived among the 12 for 3.5 years and his true character was completely unknown to them. Of course, this says something about Judas too. He wasn't a hapless imbecile. He was a deceiver, a devil, a hypocrite of the highest order. Judas lived with the others and pretended to be one of them, while deep in his heart he rebelled against everything that Jesus taught. Judas was certainly a hypocrite. But the point is: the disciples were unaware of it. Even when Jesus pointed out that one of them would betray him, not one of them had the first clue who it could be until Jesus revealed it to John.

That's the whole point of the parable of the wheat and the tares: some of

God's people are so much like weeds and some of the devil's people are so much like wheat, we often can't tell the difference. The lesson for us in this is to not worry too much about having a pure church. We should strive to be as pure in doctrine as we can be and let the Lord deal with the unsaved in our midst through the power of His Word and the working of His Holy Spirit.

3) The patience of Jesus. Jesus knew when He called Judas that he would betray Him. How did He ever tolerate the scoundrel for those 3.5 years? Despite the fact that Jesus knew his scoundrel heart, his mercenary motivations and his murderous future, He not only was patient with Judas, He was so patient that not one of the other disciples ever noticed any slight differences in His dealings with Judas that would cause them to be suspicious of him. That's the wonderful grace and marvelous patience of our Lord. It's the same patience He extends to all who are truly His, as He sees us disobey Him, persist in our own selfish ways and offend Him constantly in thought, word and action.

Our text also presents another great contrast – between Judas and John. This was a special meal so they would have eaten it in a reclining position; each man stretched out, leaning on the left elbow, eating with the right hand. The place of honor would be to the left of Jesus; this was where Judas was positioned. The 2nd place was to the right of Jesus, this was where John was. This layout meant that each man's head would be against the chest of the man to his left. John just had to lean back a little to talk while Jesus had to reach around to give Judas the sop.

Now, both men were near Jesus but notice, John was closer to His heart. Where would you rather be? John was in a good place to ask questions. Being close to the Lord's heart is the best place in the world to ask questions. But, we're not always close to His heart, are we. Often we're far away. Many times we don't even realize it. Sin is what keeps us far from the Lord because sin is an offense to Him. It's what sent Him to the cross! But, we find something we "can't live without" and we turn our backs on Him, move away and try to keep Him out of our sight. So, either we catch a glimpse of Him, repent and return to the place of blessing or we persist in it and suffer the consequences.

But, not only was John in the best place to ask questions, he was in the best place to get answers. Some answers we always have because the Bible

gives them. But, some answers aren't made public, the Lord won't shout them. We must be close to Him to receive them. These only come as we look into His face; reflect on His Word and listen for the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit as He whispers to us.

27-30- This was the critical moment, crunch time. Jesus was honoring Judas right up to the very end. He had given Judas the place of honor at the table and surely He spoke graciously to him throughout the meal, showing His love in every gesture and tone of voice. The offering of the sop was also an honor, like a toast at a banquet. It was a mark of courtesy and esteem. To receive it was to make a pledge of loyalty. This act showed the height of the Lord's love for His enemies and it showed the depths of Judas' treachery towards his best friend.

There were actually 2 appeals to Judas in this scene. From the other Gospel accounts we learn Jesus has already told Judas he was the traitor. When Jesus offered him the sop, Judas knew that Jesus knew he was the one. So, there was the appeal of conviction that he was discovered combined with the wonderful knowledge that he was still loved, the offer of the bread being a token of friendliness. Judas shut his heart against both of these appeals. He received the bread, in effect saying, "Thank you, Master. I am yours." He lied. He played a role. As he closed his heart to the grace of Jesus, he opened it to hatred of Satan.

Jesus knew Judas was now past any appeal to conscience or heart. Set firmly on his course of betrayal, it was best to get on with it. As Judas left, John ominously notes that it was night. Light and darkness are important symbols in John's Gospel and he makes it abundantly clear that Jesus is the Light. Thus, to leave His presence is to go into darkness; not just the physical darkness of night but spiritual darkness that leads to death and damnation. Now, the other 11 will have some dark times in their lives, but that darkness will only be temporary for their Light will live on. But Judas went his own way. He turned from Jesus and found the darkness that endures forever.

Jesus is holiness, love, truth, grace, patience, mercy, peace, and everything else good that we could ever imagine. Not only is He all of these qualities; He's the source of them for all believers. How foolish it is to turn away from Him to the complete absence of all these good things! You can't betray

Jesus with your unbelief like Judas did. You can reject Him but if you persist in your rejection of Jesus and His salvation, the only person you will betray is yourself. 😊