

John 13.21-30—The Deceitfulness of Sin

- I. Introduction
 - a. We have to let the text inform us how to see this scene. That's always the case but it's not always easy. I mean one of the most famous paintings in the world puts an image in our mind of what this setting looks like. Indeed, Leonardo De Vinci's work was magnificent but not enough to some who decided to cut a doorway in the bottom of it. If you've ever been to a fancy art museum, the thought of someone even pointing at a painting such as this from 30 feet away will get reprimanded.
 - b. The painting doesn't match the setting in scripture at every point. It was painted in a room that would be something like our fellowship hall. So, it had some limitations to fit that room. It does portray the perplexity among the disciples as they hear that one of them will betray Jesus.
 - c. There are other factors but maybe the long table with them seated or standing makes it hard to understand how some of the details of our text work out. And the three windows show a landscape in which it is still daytime.
 - d. I don't mention this to critique the painting. I love it. But let's allow John to paint the scene for us.
- II. Main Point
 - a. Jesus identifies the one who will betray him
- III. Outline
 - a. The troubled Jesus testifies
 - b. The disciples are perplexed
 - c. The secret conversation
 - d. The betrayer, sin and satan are silent and hidden
 - e. The enemy loves the darkness
- IV. Exposition
 - a. Before we dive into the text, we need to keep in mind that we, the readers, have inside information that the disciples in real time did not have. So, just keep that in mind as we work through the text. While explaining to his disciples how they were to be humble servants and messengers of the gospel, he mentions that he was not talking about all of them. As we now move along in the story, Jesus is troubled and he testifies.
 - i. As you read through the Gospel according to John, Jesus has made general statements that someone would betray him. Of course, as John writes in hindsight, he often tags Judas along the way with this identity. He didn't know that when it was happening.
 1. I really think John did that to say that this was Judas' intent from the beginning.
 2. That makes Jesus' love even more compelling as he loves the enemy to the end as well. It would be hard to obey the command to love our enemies from someone who never did that himself. But Jesus most certainly did. In fact, everyone starts out as God's enemy. This isn't an isolated event with Judas.
 - ii. The end is near and Jesus is "troubled in his spirit."
 1. What does this mean? Well, it's the same word used when Jesus looks at the grave of his friend, Lazarus. It is deep anguish. On the most basic level it is feelings. The source of his suffering must be the thoughts of what he previously said.
 - a. To have someone at your table betray you is painful. Jesus felt pain. We diminish his glory if we fail to speak rightly of Jesus' humanity. To be human is to have feelings. Jesus being fully God and fully man suffered at the thought of being betrayed even though it was part of God's plan.
 - i. I could only guess the particulars of Jesus' thoughts. I know that he has known this from the beginning and he has carried it alone. I know that

he has mentioned it three times in John's account. I know he has been intentionally vague about it.

1. (I'm not saying this is what Jesus did but when someone gives you a vague statement, they might be suggesting that questions be asked).
- ii. An evil thing happened in our family. A family friend, my dad's co-worker, who lived just down the street, went to the same church and also a deacon there, did some things for which he should be in prison for to my brother when he was just a kid...when I was around but I didn't know it was happening. On some level, we know what it feels like to be betrayed and I know some of you know as well.
 1. Even as I sat at my desk and wrote the words, that pain grips me. I rarely think about it but when Jesus speaks of being troubled over being betrayed the memories returned and knocked down the wall I had put them behind.
 2. I know it makes me overly cautious about things but I will never regret being overly cautious.
- iii. Sometimes the feelings of being betrayed cause sinful and wrong actions. But Jesus responds by testifying to the truth.
 1. The word for testify is an interesting word. It's the word we get our English word "martyr" from. Historically and currently in certain parts of the world, those who openly testify to the truth of Jesus and the gospel were and are martyred for their witness to the truth.
 2. I could share countless stories of saints who suffered for their witness. But just know this, if we follow Jesus, the Suffering Savior, then his disciples will suffer. A servant is not great than his master. If the master suffered, the servants will suffer. It's part of the plan.
 3. Jesus testifies, "Truly, truly I say to you, that one from among you will betray me."
 - a. Before, the statements Jesus made could have meant anyone. But now, he has narrowed the pool down to one of the Twelve and Jesus is deeply troubled.
 - b. There is an enemy on the inside. It's like there's an undercover spy among the twelve.
- b. Immediately, the disciples respond by looking at one another because they are uncertain of whom Jesus spoke.
 - i. Of course, this isn't completely true. There's one among them who knows. The silence is eerie.
 1. We are by nature sinners. We naturally love the darkness. We hate being exposed. We didn't need to be taught "you have the right to remain silent." We naturally do that. We didn't need to be taught how to lie.
 - ii. Judas remains silent. However, the Miranda Rights "anything you say can be used against you used against you in a court of law" do not work with God. He knows the truth and it will be used against him in the judgment.
 1. (Lk. 12:2-3) ² Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ³ Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.
 2. Sin says be happy now but sin is deceitful. It never lives up to its promises and the pleasures of sin are always short-lived.

- iii. Maybe the really scary part of the uncertainty of the disciples is the fact that none of them knew it was Judas.
 - 1. He played the part well. He was able to keep it hidden from the rest of the disciples. They are perplexed. They have no clues. It's not even like when someone in the neighborhood who committed a grievous crime is caught and the media talks to the neighbors and friends and they say something like "I always thought something was off about him."
 - 2. These guys have nothing. NOTHING!
 - 3. This isn't meant to make us suspicious of each other. It should however cause us to be intentional about our responsibilities to love one another.
 - a. (Heb. 3:12-13)¹² Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.
 - i. Dear saints of the Lord, let's gladly obey this command to encourage each other every day. We need to be encouraged more than just Sunday.
- c. The troubled Jesus testifies that one of the twelve will betray him. The disciples respond with uncertainty of who it is. Now an attempt to find out who it is with a secret conversation made.
 - i. (Jn. 13:24-25) Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. ²⁵ So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, "Lord, who is it?"
 - 1. Let's try to get the scene in mind here. They are reclining at the table, not sitting in chairs. For these longer feast meals, this was a common posture. The table was very short and each person would lay on their side resting on the left elbow while leaving the right hand free to eat with.
 - a. This is really amazing. The first passover meal was eaten in haste but here they eat resting and reclining. It's a beautiful scene. What Jesus is about to do on the cross makes this possible!
 - 2. When it says, one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side or more accurately, at Jesus' bosom, it means he was lying to the right of Jesus with his back to him. There would have been enough room for each person to move their right arm to the table and eat the food.
 - a. This was a very intimate meal among close friends.
 - b. Who is this disciple whom Jesus loved?
 - i. We understand from the other gospels that it is John, the writer of this Gospel.
 - 1. Why do you think he said this about himself? I suppose if you are like me and others you thought that John was not very humble and a bit arrogant to say or suggest such a thing. Or maybe you have just simply passed over it not knowing what to do with it. I'm sure there are more options but if we were honest, we probably didn't really like what he said too much.
 - 2. Yet, I think John was displaying bold faith. I think we find it easy to say that I love Jesus but knowing who I am, I struggle to say that Jesus loves me."

- a. That's the underlying problem. We think God's love is based on our performance rather than on what Christ has done.
 - b. If you are in Christ, God loves you as he loves his Son.
- 3. Peter who usually speaks up very quickly and boldly takes to more subtle motions or gives John a nod to ask Jesus who it is.
- 4. They are so close that John simply leans back against Jesus' chest and asks him, "who is it?"
- 5. Jesus answers John without anyone else knowing what he said.
 - a. (Jn. 13:26) "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it."
 - i. If you do not understand the setting, the rest of this passage makes no sense. If Jesus makes this public, do you think all the disciples would have done nothing?
 - ii. Jesus has continually revealed and concealed the matter. Revealed enough to guard the disciples' faith and concealed it enough that he fulfills the scriptures and goes to the cross.
 - b. But what did Jesus dip the bread in? I'm conflicted about this sop. There are two possibilities that were common in the passover meal.
 - i. The first sop would have been in the bitter herbs which was usually horseradish. Its sting is meant to remind them of the bitterness of sin and slavery. One would have been expected to eat enough to bring tears.
 - ii. The second sop or dipping would have been a sweet mixture. It's really strange. When we have done the passover meal to learn how it works, I recall my nose and eyes burning from the horseradish but as soon as I ate this sop the burning immediately stopped. This mixture was to remind them of the sweetness of the coming redemption in Messiah.
- d. Jesus reveals who it is by offering Judas the bread. He takes it but he and Satan remain silent.
 - i. Judas is seated close by. Most understand that he is on Jesus' left side. Jesus is in a similar position that John is in with him.
 - 1. (Jn. 13:26-27) So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷ Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him.
 - a. We, the readers, get the answer. It's Judas. Did Judas taste the bitterness of sin from the sop or the sweet promise of redemption before Satan entered him? I will let you be the judge.
 - i. I lean towards the kindness of Jesus. If Jesus gave him the sweet sop it means he already had eaten the bitter herbs.
 - ii. I think Judas tasted the sweetness of salvation...just tasted. I imagine him getting up and spitting it out in the darkness.
 - iii. Whatever happened, we know upon receiving the morsel, Satan entered him to finish what he had suggested earlier.
 - iv. I'm not sure what you think about this scene but Judas has had opportunity after opportunity to respond. He is responsible for his actions. He will never be able to say "the devil made me do it" because he is doing exactly what he wants to do.

- v. The silence is telling. Silence is a way of remaining in the darkness. This is the way Satan works. He seeks to go unnoticed. He wants people to be skeptical of him.
 - 1. So, one application to this in the life of our church goes like this. Someone says something that hits you the wrong way. It wasn't clear what they meant. You aren't sure whether it was directed at you or not. Yet, several unknowns about it begin to gnaw at you. This is the enemy's playground. Suggestion after suggestion comes to mind and before long you have filled in all the blanks yourself. Can you imagine where that will take you?
 - 2. Can I suggest that you not fill in the blanks but rather have a clarifying conversation with the person who said it? Then you can deal with the facts. Those are things you can work with.
 - 3. But silence leads to darkness.
- b. After Satan enters Judas, Jesus says, (Jn. 13:27) "What you are going to do, do quickly."
 - i. Jesus commands him to expedite his plans.
 - ii. If this is Thursday night, Jesus has an appointment with a cross the next morning. He will be THE Slaughtered Lamb for Passover. He ate his meal a few hours early so that he could be THE Lamb for the Passover meal.
- ii. John needs to clarify something for us. The reason I say that Jesus and John's conversation was secret is because of how they were seated around the table AND because of this statement.
 - 1. (Jn. 13:28-29) ²⁸ Now no one at the table knew why he said this (what you are about to do, do quickly) to him. ²⁹ Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor.
- e. The scene ends in darkness. (Jn. 13:30) ³⁰ So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.
 - i. We talked about this Wednesday night. There seems to be a battle going on behind the scenes. The Light is exposing a traitor so he must flee to the darkness. The phrase, "And it was night" is more than a time stamp.
 - ii. Da Vinci's painting attempts to express the varied responses with their facial expressions. One person says of Jesus' face in the painting that it is acceptance.
 - 1. No, Jesus is troubled. When he looks at the bitterness of sin, he knows this is why he came. He came to bring salvation to anyone who would repent and believe in him for eternal life. He came to transfer us from the domain of darkness into his domain of light...his Kingdom!

V. Response

- a. The very one who ought to have been troubled in this story, is Judas and he's not. No sense of the fear of the Lord exists in him. He loves the darkness more than the light. He slips off into the night to finish what he longs to do.
- b. Have you betrayed Jesus? Do you have any sense of fear of the Lord? How long has it been since you confessed specific sins to the Lord and repented, publicly or privately? Do any of your conversations outside of these walls involve biblical truth? Do you tell others about Jesus? Are you on Facebook more than you are in the Word of God? Have you spoken to God lately in prayer? These are just thermometers to help possibly diagnosis a much deeper and serious problem. Is Jesus the ultimate love and treasure of your life?

- c. Jesus says, come. Repent and believe and he will forgive you and count you righteous though you are not.
- d. Can you say without question that you are one of the disciples whom Jesus loves? That is some bold faith. And it is the truth for all who have been washed by the blood of Jesus.