**BETRAYAL AND DENIAL**

John 13:18-38

This morning we’re in the last part of John Ch 13 dealing with Jesus’ betrayal and denial by two of His disciples. Betrayal and denial of the Son of God! This is big. The setting – it’s the Thursday evening of Passion week. Jesus is in the upper room eating the Passover supper with His 12 disciples. John Chapters 13 thru 17 all take place during this same time. Jesus knows that His time is at hand. He only has a very short amount of time left before He goes to the cross – it’s all going to happen the very next day – on what we call Good Friday! So Jesus spends what remaining time He has teaching His disciples some very important truths, truths that will have a profound impact on them and shape their theology. In this section of scripture Jesus promises His disciples several things which we will be looking at over the next few weeks. These promises are not for these disciples but they’re for all who will follow Jesus. We know this from Jesus’ prayer to His Father in Ch 17 when He says, “I do not ask for these only [speaking of the disciples who are present in the upper room] but also for those who will believe in me thru Your word” (17:20). So what Jesus promises them applies to us as well, those of us who have believed His word.

Jesus just finished giving His disciples an object lesson in humility. He assumed the lowest position, that of a servant, and performed a menial task that none of the others would do. He washed their feet (last week’s lesson). In v 15 He says, “For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.” By washing their feet Jesus demonstrated a basic kingdom principle, Mark 10:44: “Whoever would be first among you [remember they had been arguing about who would be first in the kingdom] must be slave [or servant] of all.”

If you’ll remember, back in v 10 Jesus made this statement to His disciples: “The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean” – in other words, that person is saved. “And you are clean, but not every one of you.” Not every one of these disciples is clean, saved. Well who’s not? And in the next verse John tells us who Jesus is talking about – the one who would betray Him, Judas. So keep that in mind as we read, v 18 to the end of the chapter…

18 “I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen [He’s talking about when He chose them as His disciples]. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’ 19 I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. 20 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.”

21 After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” 22 The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. 23 One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved [John], was reclining at table at Jesus' side, 24 so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. 25 So that disciple [John], leaning back against Jesus, said to him, “Lord, who is it?” 26 Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.” So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. 27 Then after he [Judas] had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” 28 Now no one at the table knew why he [Jesus] said this to him [Judas]. 29 Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag [Judas was the treasurer for the disciples], Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor. 30 So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he [Judas] immediately went out. And it was night.

[at the end of v 30 Judas exits the upper room. From this point to the end of Ch 16 Jesus will be speaking only to the remaining 11 disciples]

31 When he [Judas] had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. 32 If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once.” 33 “Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’ 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

36 Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.” 37 Peter said to him, “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” 38 Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for me? [Oh, really Peter?] Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.”

[then Jesus continues on teaching in Ch 14 – next week’s lesson]

V 18-30 Jesus unmasks Judas as the one who is going to betray Him. Judas has already met with the chief priests and arranged to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, the price of a slave. He’s just looking for the right opportunity. So here he is, sitting hypocritically with the other disciples, eating the Passover supper with Jesus, pretending to be a loyal disciple when he knows full well what he plans to do. Judas blends right in. At this point none of the disciples suspect Judas of anything. What’s interesting is that even after Jesus unmasks him they don’t know what Judas is going to do. They won’t know what Judas is up to until later that evening in the garden. But Jesus knows what’s in Judas’ heart. Now, some people may ask, “why did Jesus choose Judas to be one of His disciples (v 18 says that he like the others WAS chosen by Jesus) knowing that he was a scoundrel who would later betray Him?” It was all part of God’s foreordained plan. What Judas does is fulfill prophecy, Ps 41:9, which John quotes here as well as Ps 109:8, which Jesus references later in Ch 17. Also Zech 11 which predicted the price being 30 pieces of silver, the throwing of the money down and the potter’s field, etc. which all happens the next morning fulfilling that scripture. This is all part of God’s plan and Judas is the vehicle by which it is carried out. His betrayal sets in motion events that will lead to Jesus’ death on the cross. Is Judas off the hook then? No. He will still be held accountable for the choices he makes and his actions.

Jesus knows exactly what Judas is up to. In fact as far back as John Ch 6 Jesus knew what was going to happen. He told His disciples, “Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.” (6:70) In v 21 Jesus announces the treason – He says, “one of you will betray me.” The disciples are shocked by this and they look around asking “who?” Mark records that “they began to be sorrowful and to say to Him one after another, ‘Is it I?’” (14:19).

V 20 is sandwiched in between verses where Jesus talks about His betrayal. He says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.” So what’s that all about? Here Jesus is re-stating what He told His disciples back when He originally commissioned them in Matt Ch 10. So the point He’s making is that their commission to be His disciples stands even if one of them leaves, defects, fails or whatever. Their mission, our mission hasn’t changed. So here in these verses Jesus is preparing His disciples for what’s about to happen. They shouldn’t be surprised.

V 21 says, “Jesus was troubled in His spirit.” Understandable. He was troubled by what He knew and saw in Judas. He was troubled by the events which were about to happen – not just the physical pain of the crucifixion but the emotional pain of being separated from His Father.

Jesus needs to break the news about His betrayal to His disciples, to this fragile group of men. Rather than call Judas out and embarrass him in front of everybody Jesus shows grace and reveals the identity of His betrayer to just one disciple – the one described here as the “one who Jesus loved” or John. John never refers to himself by name in his gospel. He either calls himself “the one whom Jesus loved” or “the other disciple.” John is reclining next to Jesus on one side, v 23 so he’s able to converse with Jesus. And Peter tells John to ask Jesus who He’s referring to by “one of you will betray me.” And he does. Jesus tells John in a way that only John will know, v 26. So John knows that the betrayer is Judas. But nobody else knows that right now. It doesn’t record that John told anybody. Notice who is the other person reclining next to Jesus at the table that night – it’s Judas. John’s on one side of Jesus. Judas is on the other. That makes sense when you realize that Judas is the treasurer, the business manager. In this passage Jesus actually treats Judas with honor by breaking off and giving him a piece of the bread. It was an honor to be the one chosen by the Master to receive the bread. Even here when Jesus knows what Judas is about to do He treats him with honor and dignity. In the garden later when Judas comes with the band of men to arrest Jesus do you know how Jesus will address Judas? “Friend.” So the last act Jesus does to Judas is to honor him. Interesting.

V 27 says that Satan enters into Judas. This is an indication that Satan, unlike God, cannot be in more than one place at a time. He has returned and entered Judas again. This prompts Jesus to send Judas away. He tells Judas, “what you are going to do (betraying Jesus), do quickly.” And everyone in the room, apparently even John, thinks that Judas is going out to conduct business of some kind on behalf of the group. They don’t think anything of it. And it says that Judas immediately went out. John adds a statement, v 30 “and it was night.” And though he’s obviously referring to the fact that the hour was late and it was dark outside I believe this has some theological implications as well. It was the hour for the powers of darkness to act. In Luke 22:53 Jesus tells the group coming to arrest Him in the garden, “When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.” So this is a literary hint that the forces of darkness are at work against our Lord.

There are a lot of lessons for us from this passage in v 18-30:

We learn from Judas the danger of loving money and ambition more than Jesus. We see the tragedy of the lost opportunity by Judas, spending 3 ½ years with Jesus, hearing His messages and witnessing His miracles and seeing His loving character on display day after day and yet it has no effect on His life. We see the fruitlessness of living a false life. We see that Judas spiritual hypocrisy was the work of Satan.

But here’s the lesson Jesus wanted His disciple and us to learn: Nothing that sinful man can ever do can thwart the promises and the plans of God. Everything that’s about to happen is all part of God’s sovereign plan of redemption. What man views as the tragedy of the cross, a gross miscarriage of justice, is actually the triumph of redemption. What appears on the surface to be a victory for the devil actually leads to his defeat.

Well, with Judas gone, only the true disciples, the genuine believers in Jesus remain. From v 31 to the end of Ch 16 Jesus offers words of love, hope and encouragement. In a real sense, borrowing from Paul’s terminology in Ephesians, Jesus is calling down spiritual blessings from heavenly places for those who are His.

So Jesus tells His disciples, v 31 “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him at once.” What’s about to happen – His death on the cross, resurrection and ascension – all of it will glorify Jesus and His heavenly Father. How? Jesus, the perfect, holy sacrificial Lamb of God will take away the sins of the world. He will provide salvation. He will validate the covenant God made with Abraham. He will defeat sin, death and hell. His death will satisfy God’s wrath against sin, satisfy God’s justice. Jesus will cry out from the cross “It is finished!” Mission complete.

Jesus is about to finish what He came to earth to do. And then He’ll return to the glory of heaven with His Father. Jesus expresses this later in John 17 in His prayer to the Father: “I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.” (17:4-5) So while it’s good news that Jesus’ plan of redemption is about to be accomplished and He will return to heaven, it’s bad news from the disciple’s perspective. They don’t want Jesus to leave. But if He does, then they want to go with Him

The bad news for Jesus’ disciples, from their limited perspective, human reasoning, is that when He’s done He will go back to heaven. So for now, at least the immediate future, Jesus’ disciples will not be able to go with Him. In v 33 He mentions that He told the Jews, the Jewish religious leaders, the same thing earlier in His ministry. In John 7 He told them, “I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come.” (7:33-34) Of course the religious leaders didn’t understand what Jesus was talking about. The disciples understand that He’s talking about going back to heaven but they don’t like it. They’re focusing on the fact that Jesus is talking about going away and they express that they don’t want Him to go. And so Jesus tries to get them to re-focus by showing them all the blessings that will be theirs once He leaves, promises for the future – Ch 14 thru 16.

V 34-35, the commandment to love is not new. Deut 6:5, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” Lev19:18, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Here’s what’s new – “that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” What is the mark of a true believer – LOVE. How do we know we’re really saved? Having the right doctrine is important, believing in Jesus, obeying Him, all important. But the quality that Jesus focuses on is our love for one another. Up until this point the disciples had affirmed their belief in Christ, but this is a lesson they needed to learn. If you want to demonstrate you are a genuine believer in Jesus Christ, love one another the way Christ loves you. By this all people will know that you belong to Christ. Not by your words, but by your love. By the way love is not merely words but it is action. I John 3:18 says, Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”

Which leads us to good old Peter. Jesus is saying all of this and Peter is still thinking about what Jesus said earlier about going away and not being able to go where He’s going. That’s where his focus is. So Peter speaks up, v 36, “Where are you going?” So Jesus very patiently answers Peter – “Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you will follow afterwards” (“when you die then you’ll see Me again,” is the idea). Does Peter leave it at that? No. Not Peter. Again, he argues with Jesus, v 37, “Why can I not follow You now.” Then he goes on to say that he is willing to die right now for Jesus. “If dying is what it takes to follow You, Jesus, I am willing to die right now.” Well first of all God leaves us here because He has work for us to do, a purpose to fulfill before we go to be with Jesus. However, that’s not what Jesus says. He goes somewhere else. He knows Peter’s heart. He knows Peter is not really willing to die for Him. And so Jesus foretells Peter’s denial of Him, v 38, which we know does in fact happen just like Jesus says here. Fact is that had Peter really been bold and admitted to being Jesus’ disciple there in the courtyard of Caiaphas’ house he probably would have been arrested and crucified with Jesus. And Peter knew that which is why he denied knowing Jesus three times. Jesus knows Peter’s faith at this point in his life – and the faith of His disciples – is weak. He know their spiritual condition, their frailties. And so Jesus, who earlier unmasked Judas pretending to be a loyal follower as a betrayer, now unmasks Peter proclaiming to be bold as a coward who would deny Him. Jesus knows who we really are. We might be able to put on a pretty good face to those around us, but Jesus knows our hearts. And that’s where our text leaves it.

But thankfully the story doesn’t end there. We’ve read ahead. After Peter denies Jesus 3 times and the rooster crows, Peter goes out and weeps bitterly. He is broken. He is humbled. He is remorseful for what he has done. After Jesus’ resurrection He and Peter have a conversation on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and 3 times Jesus asks Peter, “Do you love Me?” And 3 times Peter says, “Yes Lord, I love you.” And Jesus tells Peter, “Feed My sheep.” Jesus’ restoration of Peter deepens Peter’s faith. Pentecost comes. The Holy Spirit is poured out and we see a totally different Peter – a Peter with boldness and passion for Jesus who preaches and thousands get saved. God uses Peter in a mighty way as a leader in the early church. But first he needed to be broken.

Ultimately what God wants from us is not our success or happiness but that we become more and more like Christ. So God may have to chisel on us a little, a lot. He may take us thru some tough experiences in order to get us where He wants us to be.