

“One Will Betray Me,” John 13:18-30 (March 19, 2017)

¹⁸ I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. 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, 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, 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 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 said this 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. ³⁰ So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

PRAY

We are studying the gospel of John in the weeks before Easter, and in particular we are looking at what happened on the night before Jesus went to the cross, the day we call Maundy Thursday. This meal that we read about is the Last Supper, though John doesn’t include that in his account. He doesn’t record the “words of institution” which figure so prominently in Matthew, Mark, and Luke’s gospels, and that’s confused a lot of Bible scholars over the years.

But I think it’s because John already knows the Last Supper has been recorded by those writers (John wrote his gospel last, after the other three) and because John wants to focus in particular on something else that happened at that meal. He wants to focus in on Judas, and his betrayal.

That’s what we’ll look at this morning. *First, the spirit of Judas (love for the world).*
Second, the spirit of Jesus (love for others, even enemies).

First, the spirit of Judas. Judas is the most famous traitor in human history. His name is synonymous with deceit and betrayal. In Dante’s *Inferno* he is depicted as being consigned to the deepest level of hell, the ninth circle, to be eternally chewed up by the devil himself. So, he doesn’t have a good reputation, to say the least.

And precisely how did Judas betray Jesus? You can read about it in Matthew 26 and Luke 22. The chief priests of Israel, the religious leaders of the Jews, were jealous of Jesus, and his popularity with the people of Israel. They had been repeatedly

embarrassed by Jesus in public debate - they tried to trip him up but could never gain the upper hand. They also feared that Jesus might start a revolution and that the Romans, who had all the military power in Israel, would come in and wipe the Jews out. So they wanted Jesus dead.

Judas knew the chief priests wanted to take Jesus down, and he apparently knew the priests feared arresting Jesus publically at the temple in front of the Passover crowds, because Jesus was so popular at the time the people might riot. So Judas went to the chief priests and told them where they could find Jesus when he was basically alone – in the Garden of Gethsemane, where he went to pray – and there they could arrest Jesus and get him killed before the people could have a chance to intervene.

That's how Judas betrayed Jesus. But *why* did Judas betray Jesus? That's the question. And this isn't just an academic question. Because while obviously we can't betray Jesus in the same way Judas did, the spirit of Judas is alive and well in the world, and it can inhabit our hearts in the same way it was inside of Judas.

In John 12, we read how Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus, poured this very expensive perfume on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. It's a very intimate moment, a very awkward moment for everyone watching. And Judas is livid. He says, ““Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii [approximately \$30,000] and given to the poor?”⁶ He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.” John 12:5-6. And it's in Matthew's gospel we are told that immediately following this Judas goes to the chief priests and sells Jesus out for thirty pieces of silver.

You know, Judas probably started off following Jesus sincerely. There's no indication otherwise in the New Testament. Judas was called like the other disciples, he preached like the other disciples, he performed miracles like the other disciples.

But Judas struggled with something, and friends it's something we all struggle with. Judas began to wonder: “What's in this for me? What will I get out of giving my life to Jesus?”

All of us wrestle with that question, at least subconsciously. It is so easy to be a Christian when things are going well - if things are good with our health and our family and our money and our career, we think following Jesus is great. And it makes sense, doesn't it? We're following Jesus the Lord of the universe. We're doing some good – helping others, giving our money away, telling the gospel. And we may never say this out loud, it may all be unconscious, but at some level we believe: “Of course I'll have a good life. I'm following Jesus.”

Again, we don't say it out loud, we don't think it consciously, but we do all think that. Of course, we think, *some* discomfort will come into my life – maybe my children will only be the salutatorian of their graduating class and not the valedictorian, maybe I'll only be able to rent a beach house each year for vacation instead of ever getting one all

my own – yes, I know there will be some suffering, but if I’ve given my life to Jesus my life will be, on the whole, great. Yes, I’m giving my life to him, but I still have rights. In the exchange Jesus still owes me certain things. That’s what we think.

Then something goes wrong. Maybe it’s because all of the sudden things aren’t good with your marriage, your kids, your health, your career, or maybe it’s you don’t feel like we’re not being recognized enough for all the ways you do serve – but your heart starts to grow cold. And then the subconscious thoughts that have been there all along rise up and turn ugly, and you start getting bitter. You look at your life and say, “Wait a minute – this isn’t supposed to happen. I’m following Jesus and now everything falls apart? Wait a minute: what’s in this for me?”

You know that’s what Judas was thinking – he kept waiting for Jesus to take over Israel as king, and give him some real power and money. After all, that’s what kings do, right? They give their most loyal, most trustworthy, subordinates plum positions in their kingdom. But three years in the subconscious thoughts rise to the surface, turn ugly, and Judas says, “I’ve given my life to Jesus and I don’t have anything to show for it. I don’t have any more money, any more power, any more recognition than when I started. God owes me, and obviously he won’t give it to me because he lets that Mary blow \$30,000 on him. This is ridiculous; I guess I’ll have to go and get it all by myself.”

The way the Bible puts it, and John in particular, is that Judas never really loved Jesus; he was always still in love with the world. “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.” 1 John 2:15-17.

When you love the world, *it’s all about you*: your needs, your desires, your life, how you are perceived. And it pops up in so many ways. It’s so easy to love the world.

Last week one of my children came to me and told me how their class in school was walking through the hallway and some of the kids were really acting up, and when they made it back to their room their teacher let them have it. Their teacher said, “You embarrassed me.” And it really bothered my child. And you know what, it should have. What was going on there? The teacher loved the world; she wasn’t really concerned with her students being rowdy. She was overwhelmingly concerned with how she was perceived by the other teachers, by the principal – that’s why she was upset. When you love the world, it’s all about you.

I’m not picking on teachers, mind you; we all do this. In a hundred ways, every single day, our love for the world bubbles up and when we do *it is the spirit of Judas rising up in us*.

We see it in the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. You remember Adam and Eve from Genesis 3? Adam and Eve live in paradise – they have everything they could

possibly want. There is only one rule: don't eat of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

But the devil comes and tells them, "Did God really say that you can't eat this fruit? Doesn't it look so tasty and delicious? You know, Eve, God says you can't eat the fruit, but I think you can. And, honestly, I think you'll be able to enjoy life more if you eat it, even if God doesn't want you to. I think God doesn't want you to be happy." And David Gooding, in his wonderful commentary on the gospel of John, writes this: "Adam and Eve believed the lie and inevitably it re-oriented mankind's attitude to life, to its resources and relationships. Life's benefits ceased to be regarded as gifts from the gracious hand of God, to be enjoyed in fellowship with God, drawing their hearts into ever closer friendship with God, so that when life on earth ceased and life's temporary gifts were gone, the friendship with God would continue eternally in God's heaven. Now life's benefits became an end in themselves, drawing their hearts away from God instead of to him. Moreover, their alienation from God made them afraid of God. He was someone to hide from, no longer a source of their enjoyment of life, but a threat to that enjoyment. And the poison of this false attitude to God has infiltrated the veins of every human being." Gooding, 53.

He goes on to write this: "Judas' behavior may seem to us extreme; but his attitude of heart is more common than you might think ... [His] heart [is] a microcosm of mankind." Gooding, 52.

Now, I want to give you a diagnostic test so that you can figure out when the spirit of Judas is rising up in you. You ready? Do you find that when you think about your life the feelings that rise up in you are bitter (because you aren't getting what you think you deserve) or are they feelings of gratitude?

Are you thankful for your life? Do you view your life as a gift? **If you do you will inevitably be drawn closer to God.** I think all the rest of the twelve disciples at the Last Supper, as clueless as they were about so many things, as many failures were still ahead of them, especially Peter, still they primarily felt gratitude that they were there. Not Judas – he was bitter because he hadn't gotten his, so ***inevitably he walked further and further away and ultimately he betrayed Jesus.*** Which is it for you? No matter how good things are going for you right now or how bad, underneath it all – is there thanksgiving? Is it drawing you closer to God? If not, that's the spirit of Judas – love for the world. Contrast that love with ...

Second, the spirit of Jesus. 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, 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, 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 had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” John 13:21-27.

Three things about the spirit of Jesus: *first, it is marked by love.* Look here at how Jesus deals with Judas. Jesus is calling him out at the Last Supper, but look how tenderly and quietly he does it. You would think Jesus would say, “Everyone, gather round – Judas is going to betray me tonight! Get him!” But he doesn’t – he rebukes Judas quietly, anonymously. He says, “Judas, I see you. I know what you are doing. I’m not fooled.” He calls Judas out, but quietly, in a way that won’t embarrass him.

Then we read that Jesus hands Judas a morsel. The old King James calls it “the sop.” Maybe Jesus took some bread, and sopped up this special sauce that was made every Passover. But when Jesus as the head of the band handed it to Judas in front of everyone, it was a token of honor, love, and affection.

Finally, we read that the disciples are “reclining at table.” That was the way you ate a formal meal in Israel at that time. You’d lean on cushions on your left side, on your elbow, and eat with your right hand. Just about everyone agrees that the disciple “whom Jesus loved” was John, the author of the gospel. He’s seated at Jesus’ right, and we know this because in verse 25 he has to lean back against Jesus and turn his chin up in order to speak to him.

So, John is on Jesus’ right, and Peter obviously is not nearby because he has to make motions at John to get his attention. Where’s Judas? I think it’s pretty clear: Judas is at Jesus’s left. How else could Jesus hand him the sop otherwise? But here’s what’s remarkable about that: the seat to the left of the head of the table was the place of honor at a meal like this, and Judas has it.

Judas is about to betray Jesus, and Jesus knows this – he’s always known this. Yet Jesus bestows honor after honor on Judas. In other words, Jesus loves Judas.

Does that kind of love mark your life? Maybe, hopefully, you don’t have anyone in your life planning to betray you, so I won’t ask you if you deal gently and tenderly with them. But with your friends, with your children, or your spouse – are you this careful with them? Are you this kind to them when they irritate you? Do you still give them honor and affection when they’ve hurt you, or do you give them the cold shoulder? Do you pay them back? Jesus doesn’t even pay Judas back – that’s the kind of spirit of love he has about him.

Second, Jesus’ spirit is marked by hope. There’s a phrase that’s used in business, in government, in the law, when you write a letter or a note or an email to someone and you don’t really think it’s going to do any good, it’s not going to change anything, but you do it anyway just in case down the road someone asks, “What did you do to try and prevent this?” When I practiced law we called it a “Cover Your Behind” letter. Actually, we used a different word than “Behind,” but you get my drift. You wrote it for purposes of establishing a record, so that you could read it at deposition later if you got sued, but not

because you thought it would actually help change anything on the front end – only to make you look good on the back end.

Is that all Jesus is doing here? Is he just covering himself because Judas won't change and he wants to look good to posterity?

Of course not – Jesus never does anything just for appearances. That's the spirit of Judas, not Jesus. No, this can only mean that it is not yet over for Judas, at least not at the beginning of the passage. Jesus is still hopeful that Judas will repent, he will come to his senses, he will change. Even though he knows Judas will betray him, even though he knows the Scriptures must be fulfilled (like Psalm 41:9, which is quoted in verse 18), Jesus still has hope.

Do you have that kind of hope? Are there people in your life you've given up praying for, because you think there's no way they'll ever change, there's no way they'll ever come to the Lord? Jesus didn't give up on Judas. I don't care who you've been praying for – they are not tougher nuts to crack than Judas! If Jesus wouldn't give up hope when it came to Judas, how could we ever give up praying for someone?

Have you given up praying for yourself? For certain sins to be eradicated in your life. For other things to change about you? Do you feel like The Grinch from Dr. Seuss? Do you feel like your heart is two sizes too small, and you've given up on that ever changing?

Even though he knows Judas will betray him, Jesus still has hope. Maybe some of you are saying, "Jesus knows Judas will betray him, but he hopes Judas will repent. How does that work?" The answer is that no one knows how that works.

We do, however, know this: first, we know that anyone, even Judas, who wants to repent and trust in Jesus, can. That's what we know. Second, we know that whomever Jesus chooses will be saved. That's verse 18: "I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen." That's John 6:39 (NIV 1984): "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day." Jesus is in complete control of the situation.

And that gets us to the third mark of the spirit of Jesus: *it is one of perfect peace*. I love verse 19: "I am telling you this [that Judas will betray me] now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he." Jesus knew the shock his arrest, conviction, and crucifixion would be to the disciples, so he tells them beforehand: "Guys, I will be betrayed. But I know it's coming; in fact, I'm in control of this entire situation." He told them earlier in the gospel of John: "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord." John 10:17-18a.

Even though Jesus is about to be betrayed, even though he's about to die, there is not one iota of panic in him. He's hurting, he's troubled in spirit, but he is not dismayed by what

is happening and he is not afraid. He is at peace, because he is in complete control even over his betrayal and death.

Now when the spirit of Jesus manifests itself in us, it won't be by giving us a sense of control over our lives. Jesus has control, not us. But when the spirit of Jesus is present in us, it will manifest itself in the form of an unshakable conviction that no matter what happens here on earth, Jesus is in control. And that will bring us peace. Isaiah 26:3-4 says, "[God, y]ou will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. ⁴ Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal."

Friends, Jesus is in complete control, and because he is you may not always be smiling, *but you will always be standing*. You will be standing in perfect peace.

Did you know there's only one place that Jesus ever loses his perfect peace? Do you know where it is? On the cross, when Jesus gives the cry of dereliction. When he cries out, "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" He lost all peace there. Why? Because on the cross Jesus took our place. Jesus took the place of the wicked. "But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. ²¹"There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked." Isaiah 57:20-21 (NIV 1984).

That's the spirit of Judas. Judas was a man never at peace. And we are all by nature people with the spirit of Judas in us; that's why we don't have peace. The wicked can't have peace. But Jesus took the spirit of Judas onto himself on the cross, Jesus lost his peace, so he could be our substitute. It was the only way. He had to become sin and wickedness on the cross so that we could become righteousness. But now he is crowned with glory and honor, and he's in complete control. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me," he says at the end of Matthew.

Friends, how many times do you feel like screaming because you feel so out of control in your life? It's ok if you feel that way, because guess what? You're not in control. But if you believe Jesus died on the cross in your place, then that means you belong to Jesus. And he is in control, so you can have peace. And while you won't always be smiling, you will be standing.

Horatio Spafford was a Chicago lawyer, very prosperous in the years following the Civil War, and he knew success. But beginning in 1870 his family experienced a series of tragedies. In that year he and his wife Anna lost their only son to pneumonia.

The next year, 1871, he lost all his wealth in the Great Chicago Fire. Then two years later he put his wife, Anna, and four daughters on a ship for a trip across the Atlantic to England. But on the way, the ship struck another ship and sank. Anna was found unconscious on the sea and rescued, but their four daughters drowned. When Anna got to England she cabled back to Horatio two words: "Saved alone."

So Horatio got onto a ship to sail to England to get his wife, and at one point during the trip the captain came to him and said, "We are over the very spot where your wife's ship

sank.” And Spafford sat down and wrote a hymn, “It Is Well with My Soul.” The first verse goes like this: “When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot thou hast taught me to say it is well, it is well with my soul.”

Now, how could he write that, after all he’d been through? “My sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought – my sin, not in part, but the whole. Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, oh, my soul!” Jesus on the cross became wicked, and took his place, so he knew that while he would not always smile on earth, he could always stand. He had peace.

Do you remember the story Jesus tells at the very end of the Sermon on the Mount? “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” Matthew 7:24-27.

The second man is full of the spirit of Judas, and his house went splat. Remember that? “The rains came down and the floods came up and the foolish man’s house went splat!”

But if you build your life on Jesus, the storms of life can beat against you yet you will stand. Not smiling, but standing. You will be at perfect peace. Amen. Let’s pray together.