

An Awkward Family Meal

Matthew 26:20-30 (NASB)

Now when evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples. 21 As they were eating, He said, “Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me.” 22 Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, “Surely not I, Lord?” 23 And He answered, “He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me. 24 The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.” 25 And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, “Surely it is not I, Rabbi?” Jesus *said to him, “You have said it yourself.” 26 While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” 27 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; 28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. 29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.” 30 After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

This text is often called “The Last Supper”, as it was Jesus’ final Passover meal on earth.

- There is a lot going on in this text.

The ultimate reason for the incarnation of Jesus is HERE—We’re just hours away from Jesus’ death.

- **We’re reaching the crescendo of God’s redemptive plan— the CLIMAX of all of scripture.**
 - Jesus has publicly confronted, rebuked and SILENCED the religious leaders of Israel.
 - We have seen that they have MURDER in their heart.
 - They are looking for an opportunity to get through the Passover week and SPRING into action.
 - BUT... then along comes Judas!

In the midst of this hatred & plotting & murder, today we see:

- **Jesus’ GENEROUS LOVE.**
- **Jesus’ AMAZING PLAN.**

We are in the midst of the PASSION WEEK of Christ—it’s been a HEAVY week...

There has been a LOT going on.

- We have seen Jesus confront the HYPOCRISY of Israel’s religious system.
- Jesus declared judgment on Israel for it’s hard-heartedness toward God.
- We see the religious leaders plot to kill Jesus.
- We have seen Judas ABANDON his friends and His God and strike a deal to betray Jesus.
- We see a woman WORSHIP EXTRAVAGANTLY by anointing Jesus with expensive oil.

The last 2 weeks we’ve been looking at the VALUE of Jesus:

Is Jesus REALLY WORTH IT?

- Is Jesus REALLY worth living for?
- Is Jesus REALLY worth sacrificing for?
- Is Jesus REALLY better than the plans and goals I have set for myself?

We looked at the story of a woman worshipping Jesus by pouring EXPENSIVE oil on him.

- She literally poured out more than a year’s pay on Jesus!
- And Jesus’ disciples joined in with her in worshipping Jesus, right?
 - No! They thought it was a waste...
 - The disciples thought THEY knew a better way to allocate this valuable resource.
- **Jesus corrects His disciples and receives the sacrifice.**

But there is ONE disciple who didn't take that rebuke from Jesus well...

- Judas sneaks off and strikes up a deal to betray Jesus for a few hundred bucks.

We were left considering Jesus worth:

- Is He worth EVERYTHING as the woman demonstrated by pouring her life savings out on him?
- Or was He worth a few hundred bucks, as Judas thought?

Jesus confirms that HER response is the ONLY right response to the Gospel:

- Here is Jesus—preparing to completely pour Himself out for us on a cross...
- Here is this woman—completely pouring out everything she has to worship Jesus...
 - It is a BEAUTIFUL picture of Christian worship!
 - It is a RIGHT RESPONSE to Jesus!

...and this is why Jesus said that her story will be told everywhere the Gospel is preached.

Today we continue to look at what lies ahead for Jesus:

- Upcoming betrayals...
- Crazy rejection...
- Pre-meditated murder...
- Predicted denials...

This is the red carpet to the single most influential event in human history.

- It's setting everything up.
- It's exposing how all of the pieces come together.
- It exposes God's GNARLY plan to save His BROKEN and REBELLIOUS people.

We must be careful to NOT approach these verses with a sense of "I would have done better."

We hear that sort of prideful bragging from people, don't we?—PETER does this a lot...

- "I'D never betray you, Jesus!"
- "If I was there I would have saved Jesus"
- "If I was there I would have put an end to it"
- "If I was there I would rush in and save EVERYONE!"

This sort of arrogance reveals an ignorance to the reality of our own heart.

Let's not be those people with this text today...

- As I've sat with this text, I have identified myself with the most unsavory people in the story...
- I think we may all find ourselves among the weak and broken in the story...and that's a good thing.
 - **I think that's right where God meets the people that He saves!**
 - **In our weakness—in our brokenness—in our failure—Jesus finds us & saves us.**

So, let's not be a people who demonize Judas.

Judas followed Jesus for 3 years!

- Judas hugged Jesus.
- Judas sat next to Jesus.
- Judas listened to Jesus' words...

We are followers of Jesus as well—most of us probably...

- Think of the times you've been tempted to reject Jesus for the earthly gain...
- Think of how easy it is to "forget" about Jesus when we REALLY REALLY want something...
- Remember how we are tempted to fudge numbers or over estimate figures to our benefit...

There are very REAL WAYS each of us is a moment away from choosing mammon over God.

Judas made a HUGE effort—he CLEARLY demonstrated what he truly worshipped.

- He just did not worship of Jesus.
- I think he worshipped the IDEA of Jesus as a powerful political revolutionary...
- I think Judas worshipped the idea of Jesus HELPING him and HELPING Israel...
- But Judas CLEARLY did not worship Jesus or trust Jesus' plans or timing.

So, after striking his deal, Judas goes BACK—think about that...

- He goes BACK to celebrate the Passover with Jesus.
- He goes BACK to worship Jesus!

He's planning to sit through this SUPER AWKWARD family dinner and PRETEND.

**It's like the first family meal after someone gets an enormous neck/face tattoo...

- Yeah... soooo... what ELSE to we talk about...

That's a funny picture—Judas sits there thinking he can pull off this divided heart.

- Judas might have been a little jumpy...
- Jesus is like —“JUDAS! Hey man, will you pass the sour herbs?”
- Judas' heart is POUNDING...

So there they are... Jesus and His dysfunctional family celebrating a Holiday meal together!

The Passover was a festival and feast that celebrated God's freeing His people from Egypt.

- Jews from ALL OVER would come to Jerusalem to celebrate this.
- They would feast and celebrate all that God has done.

We know the story— Exodus we read the story of Israel enslaved by Egypt, and God rescuing them.

- God asked each household to kill select & kill a perfect lamb.
- Spread blood on doorposts to identify them as God's people.
- And God would RESPOND to their faith and obedience by PASSING OVER their home.
- So, from then on, every family in Israel was to celebrate the Passover feast each year to REMEMBER God's faithfulness.

This is what Jesus & His disciples had prepared to do this evening in Jerusalem.

FAR from the disciples minds would be the reality that THIS would be the FINAL PASSOVER.

- This one Passover meal would FOREVER CHANGE this tradition...
- **This is also, perhaps, the MOST AWKWARD MEAL EVER...**

Matthew 26:20-25 (NASB)

Now when evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples. 21 As they were eating, He said, “Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me.” 22 Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, “Surely not I, Lord?” 23 And He answered, “He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me. 24 The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.” 25 And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, “Surely it is not I, Rabbi?” Jesus *said to him, “You have said it yourself.”

This is SO interesting—each of the disciples wondered if it could be them...

Can you imagine the tension in this room??

It'd be like Jesus sitting in your dining room saying, “Someone here has been BAD”...

- Everyone in the room, KNOWING HIMSELF, would gasp & hold their breath!
- Think of all the things that would flash through your mind!

- “What did Jesus see?” “Did He see THAT??”
- If this happened to us, I think we’d have the same reaction!

Obviously they didn’t put it past themselves here...

NOTICE how the 11 disciples didn’t IMMEDIATELY point the finger at Judas.

- Judas didn’t stick out!
- He probably wasn’t that different from the other disciples.
- That’s SO SNEAKY!!

It’s also SO PAINFUL when someone we think we know turns out to be a fraud.

Initially studying this, I was pretty disappointed in the disciples.

- I expected more of the disciples.
- Like, “REALLY? Every one of you thinks it might be you?!?”
- “I get Judas was evil, but I would hope for more from Jesus’ disciples.”

With us, once we’ve been brought to the table of the Lord, shouldn’t we hope for more?

- I was convicted by this...
- I want to aim higher than Judas!
- I want to raise my kids around people committed to aiming higher!

I believe that Judas didn’t spontaneously up and choose to betray Jesus—not out of the blue.

- NO! I believe there was a long road of doubt and hidden doubt that lead Judas to that point.

Judas may have walked and eaten and lived with Jesus, but his heart was far from Jesus.

Maybe Judas’ expectations were not accurate.

- Maybe he thought Jesus’ kingdom would come MUCH DIFFERENTLY than it did.
- Maybe Judas wanted Jesus to move FASTER.
- Maybe Judas wanted Jesus to be the POLITICAL SAVIOR he hoped for...

I see a lot of these same issues and desires in our current Christian culture!

Whatever it was, it was definitely NOT a heat-of-the-moment mistake!

- That’s how we explain sin, right?
- We want to say, “Oh, that was a heat-of-the-moment mistake!”

But I know in my life that:

Sin is always preceded by a wavering heart for Jesus.

BIG SINS are always preceded by LONG seasons of faithlessness to Jesus.

- These are usually LONG seasons of self-centeredness...

Look how far Judas had fallen from Jesus:

- **The disciples asked, ‘It’s not me is it, Lord?’ — Meaning “master”**
- **When Judas asked, he asks, “It’s not me, is it Rabbi? — Meaning “TEACHER”**

Do you see what was going on in Judas’ heart?

- The other guys maintained their humility AND Jesus’ authority in their asking...
- Judas held Jesus at arm’s length as a mere teacher.

This is an issue of the heart...

Jesus is meant to be LORD of our lives, He’s not merely a good example or teacher...

When we think about Judas and we think about ourselves, we should look at the roads we are traveling in our HEARTS.

- The places where we've set Jesus aside as simply a "teacher" rather than LORD & MASTER.

Paul wrote to Timothy and warned him about dangerous roads in his heart:

2 Timothy 2:22 (NASB)

Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

- Paul would caution us to FLEE from the impure avenues we travel in our heart!
- FLEE!!

Go run with people who call on the Lord from a PURE HEART!

- Jesus is now going to offer TRUE COMMUNION with Him...
- This true communion with Jesus leads to FREEDOM!

Jesus continues leading this Passover dinner by FOREVER CHANGING Passover. Jesus institutes a NEW memorial for a NEW covenant.

Matthew 26:26-29 (NASB)

As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "Take this and eat it, for this is my body."

27 And he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them and said, "Each of you drink from it, 28 for this is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice to forgive the sins of many."

Jesus gives the disciples a chance to find freedom from their doubtful hearts.

Jesus holds up some bread and a cup and offers the chance to experience FREEDOM!

- We have a chance to ADDRESS these things today too.

We are to EXAMINE our hearts as we take communion.

- We ask, "Is there any avenue that I am going down that leads to betrayal of Jesus?"
- "Is there any rebellious road I am heading down?"
- "Is there any path I am blazing for myself apart from God?"
- "In light of what Jesus has done for me, is there anything I need to forsake today?"

1 Corinthians 11:26-28 (NASB)

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

Communion is to be an examination of ourselves and a resetting of our lives.

- We are to ABANDON the roads that lead to betrayal and head on a new trajectory.

We realize that Christ died so we may be FORGIVEN of our sins...

- NOT that we might be given PERMISSION to commit more...

Communion is not only a time of self-reflection and repentance...

- It is also a time to remember and rejoice in what Jesus has done for us!

Communion is WORSHIP

- **We WORSHIP God by remembering and sitting in the brutal reality of the cross.**
- **There is a severity to our sin that made the brutality of the cross necessary.**

It would be easy for us to demonize Judas and blame him for sending Jesus to the cross...

- Listen—Judas' betrayal alone didn't send Jesus to the cross...
- Jesus went to the cross because of MY SIN!

I put Jesus on the cross!

- **Jesus died to forgive ME!!**
- **Jesus dies because He loves ME!!**

And so the cross of Jesus is SUCH good news!

- **And Jesus' timing is amazing.**
- This GOOD NEWS comes right AFTER this whole awkward moment with Judas.
 - And everyone at that table knew that in them was this Judas tendency...
 - Probably they all felt guilty sitting there looking at Jesus.
 - Probably they felt helpless in that moment.

Jesus' responds IMMEDIATELY: "I'll be broken for you & my blood will be spilled for you."

Do you see that?

- Jesus is willing AND able to do something about the heart issues we all have.

The good news about God's love in Christ is BIGGER than the bad news of our sin.

- Right when these disciples were starting to feel the weight of their own sin...
- Jesus steps in and shines the light of deliverance!

At this passover meal Jesus is saying, "I AM THE PASSOVER LAMB WHO WILL BE SLAIN FOR YOUR FREEDOM FROM SIN!"

- In this moment, Jesus FOREVER changes the Passover feast.

Communion is the stake in the ground that reminds us of the MAIN THING—Jesus' death.

- Every Christian is to take communion as an act of worship.

Communion is where we hold the physically broken bread—representing the broken body of Jesus.

- We remember the reality and the actuality of the cross.
 - We remember and choose to linger on His broken body.
 - We remember that Jesus IS the bread of life!

We take the cup and we see the staining redness of it...

- We remember the blood that was spilled for FORGIVENESS of our sin!
 - Our sin isn't merely covered for a while...
- Jesus' blood FORGIVES our sin.

Communion speaks many things to us as Christians.

- It speaks of God's grace and love and PURSUIT of us...

It speaks of God's BINDING covenant with us.

- It is the reminder of who Christ is and who we are in Christ...
- AND It is the guarantee of things to come.

When taking communion we do three things:

- Remembering all Jesus has done.
- Remembering all that Jesus is doing.
- Remembering all that is promised to come.

Communion is intimacy made possible through sacrifice.

- This intimacy with God is possible through Jesus' horrific sacrifice.

May we NEVER take communion lightly!

- It is not some rote ritual or some weird Sunday snack...

It serves as SPIRITUAL nourishment.

- It reminds of the nourishment Christ provided and sustains in us through His death.

This is why we examine ourselves at the Lord's Table.

- We consider ways that we might be hiding betrayal in our hearts.
- **Jesus did not let Judas' heart of betrayal slide—He revealed the heart of sin.**

If you are not a Christian, communion is not yet for you.

- **Consider this offer from Jesus today.**
- **Consider the freedom and forgiveness from sin that Jesus offers.**

Jesus died a death for us that WE deserve.

Jesus defeated death by rising again!

- **The offer is for each of us to put our faith in Jesus for forgiveness and for salvation.**

God doesn't call us to turn off our brain and BLINDLY put trust in God...

God invites us to consider the BLIND MEN who trusted Jesus and were healed.

Jesus is alive and He is calling each of us to Himself this morning—Call out to Him!

- He wants to bear your burdens.
- He wants to bring your heart to a place of rest and peace.

Jesus wants to set you free from slavery to sin and fear and shame and give you NEW LIFE!

Apostle Paul's warning in 1 Corinthians is a STERN warning!

- **We partake of communion AFTER examining our hearts.**
- We don't approach communion with hearts of rebellion!

We receive the broken body and spilled blood of Jesus as a FORGIVEN PEOPLE.

Communion IS worship—it expresses Jesus' INCREDIBLE worth!

- It's just like the woman in Bethany and her priceless perfume...
- She brought something of GREAT WORTH to Jesus.

It serves as our tangible worship of Jesus' INFINITELY more valuable sacrifice!

- **NOTHING is more worthy of declaring than Jesus!**
- JESUS ALONE is the hero of the story.
- We also see that Jesus ALONE is in CONTROL of this story.

Jesus, sitting with His disciples the night before His death prepares them for the next day.

- Jesus went to the cross like a lamb is lead to the slaughter.
- Jesus WILLINGLY gave His life as a ransom...
- Jesus WILLINGLY submitted His body to be broken and blood spilled.

Nobody took Jesus' life—He laid it down!

This morning, Jesus invites you to feast on the bread of life.

- Communion is a time to reflect on God's amazing love.
- Come and receive God's love and forgiveness.
- Come and WORSHIP the Lord!

"As Jesus' death was unique, so also was His anguish. Our best response to it is hushed worship."—D.A. Carson