

John 13:18-30

I am telling you now before it happens

Tim Anderson 25/2/2018

11/12 is not bad is it?

I mean it's 91.7% on a test at school.

Most students would be happy with that.

If you went to the races and there were 12 races that day,
and you picked 11 winners out of the 12,
your buddies would think you were a legend.

But if you are the Son of God choosing disciples,
then it's a trifle unsettling.

Jesus could see into people's hearts.

He knows exactly what people are thinking.

How come he chose a turncoat like Judas?

What went wrong?

The answer is that nothing went wrong.

It had been part of God's plan from the beginning.

Jesus begins our reading today with these words.

"I am not referring to all of you;

I know those I have chosen."

Well it's clear that we've picked up our reading
in the middle of a conversation.

What is he not referring to all of them about?

Well we are still at the meal where Jesus washed his disciples' feet.

Jesus had washed their feet for two reasons.

Firstly because his disciples need to know
that they must be served by Jesus.

"Unless I wash you,
you have no part with me."

And secondly,

because he is leaving them an example to serve each other.

"Now that I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet,
you also should wash one another's feet."

And in the context of serving one another he says,

"Now that you know these things,
you will be blessed if you do them."
And he continues on,
"I am not referring to all of you;
I know those I have chosen."
In other words,
not all of you will be blessed by serving one another.
I know the hearts of those disciples I have chosen,
and one of you will not be blessed.
In fact, Jesus has already referred to the betrayer at that meal.
back in verse 10 he said,
"Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet;
their whole body is clean.
And you are clean,
though not every one of you."
He's not talking about physical cleanliness,
he's talking about spiritual cleanliness.
He's saying that Judas' heart is not clean.
And that's not the first time that Jesus has said that about Judas.
Back in chapter 6,
straight after the feeding of the five thousand,
and a couple of years earlier in Jesus' ministry,
this is what he said about Judas,
"Have I not chosen you, the Twelve?
Yet one of you is a devil."
So Jesus had known from the beginning,
the blackness of Judas' heart.
And Jesus chose Judas knowing the blackness of his heart.
Jesus chose Judas because that was God's plan.
It was a piece of the bigger picture.
A part of the situation
that God used to bring about the salvation of the world.

In fact, Jesus says, not only did he know about it beforehand,
Scripture spoke about it beforehand.
"But this is to fulfil the passage of Scripture,

"He who shared my bread has turned against me.""

The verse is from Psalm 41.

The full verse reads like this.

"Even my close friend,
someone I trusted,
one who shared my bread,
has turned against me."

What does it mean to share bread?

It means enjoy one another's company over a meal.

Who do you invite to your place for a meal?

Many times it's people who are close to your heart.

And if one of those turns against you,
it is a cruel betrayal.

Well it would be difficult to know in advance
that this verse would refer to the messiah.

The Psalm in its original setting
is King David talking about his own life.

Another verse in the psalm says,

"Have mercy on me Lord;
heal me for I have sinned against you."

That certainly doesn't refer to Jesus.

Jesus was without sin.

But Jesus was the great King descended from David.

And as the great Davidic king,

he experienced the trials and hardships David experienced.

God's chosen leaders never had an easy ride.

But why?

Why did Jesus have to experience betrayal?

Couldn't the Pharisees and the Romans crucify him without help?

Why did one of his disciples have to be a traitor?

I don't know how you feel.

But if an enemy attacks me,

I sort of expect it.

What they do may hurt.

But it doesn't cut to the heart like betrayal.
When a friend betrays you,
that really pierces your heart.
Why did that need to happen to Jesus?
Because in many ways we betray Jesus.
Jesus is our steadfast friend.
He is the one who is always there for us.
And yet often we leave him high and dry
and choose to go our own way.
And then when we think better of it,
we come back with our tails between our legs.
Jesus please forgive me?
How do we know that Jesus will forgive such betrayal?
It's one thing to forgive the things we did when we were ignorant.
But once we have known his love.
Once we have enjoyed the comfort of his friendship.
We go out and betray him then.
Will he still forgive us?
Well he went to the cross
knowing that one of the twelve would betray him.
He knew it all along.
And he willingly continued on that path.
Whatever you have done,
even if it feels like the greatest betrayal of Jesus,
you can come to him for forgiveness.
He will not drive you away.

We've talked about why Jesus was betrayed.
It was so that we would know that our betrayal could be forgiven.
But why did he need to tell the other disciples about it
before it happened?
Jesus answers that question in the next verse.
"I am telling you now before it happens,
so that when it does happen
you will believe that I am who I am."
Jesus knew Judas would betray him

before Judas knew Judas would betray him.

Jesus is not a mind reader,

he is the Lord of all.

And he makes this clear to his disciples

so that they will know that he is Lord of all.

Our translations say,

"So that when it does happen

you will believe that I am who I am."

This is how the Greek actually reads.

"So that when it does happen,

you will know that I AM."

Which doesn't make heaps of sense in English.

But if you know the story of the burning bush,

you will know what Jesus is driving at.

Moses said to the Lord,

"Who will I tell the Israelites has sent me?"

And God's reply,

"I am who I am.

This is what you are to say to the Israelites.

I AM has sent me to you."

Jesus tells his disciples what is going to happen,

so that they will know that he is the same God

who spoke to his people Israel from the burning bush.

This is one of those passages that C.S. Lewis famously referred to.

There are many of them.

But this is one.

Jesus clearly claims to be one with the Father.

I mean he has already said it in chapter 10 explicitly.

"I and the Father are one."

Here he says it by taking God's words from the burning bush

and speaking them about himself.

Many people claim that Jesus was a good moral teacher

and nothing more.

But he can't be that.

As CS Lewis said,

he can be a liar, he can be a lunatic or he can be Lord.
Those are the only three options.
When a person claims to be the same
as the God who spoke to Israel from the burning bush.
Either he knows he is not the same as God and is telling lies.
That would make him a liar.
Or he's mentally deluded,
even more cuckoo
than the guy who stood on my doorstep the other night
and said if I let him preach in my church,
then there would be a thousand people coming along
because God speaks to him and he knows the future.
But if he's not a liar and he's not a lunatic,
then the only other option is that he's the Lord.
A good moral teacher wouldn't claim to one with God.

Well that's not just something nice to know about Jesus.
That's a great help to the disciples.
They are about to go through the trauma
of having their hopes for the future dashed
as they see Jesus crucified.
It helps them to know that Jesus is Lord.
But it also helps us.
In the next verse, Jesus says,
"Very truly I tell you,
whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me;
and whoever accepts me
accepts the one who sent me."

It's not always easy to bear an unpopular message.
A lady said to me this week,
"Surely God will forgive everyone and take us all to heaven."
I had to tell her that no, he wouldn't.
He would only forgive those whose faith is in Jesus.
The Bible clearly says there's a heaven and a hell.
It clearly says that the basis for going to heaven is faith in Jesus.

Well that provoked an outraged response.
"Most of the people in our community don't have faith.
Are you really saying
that God is going to send most people alive in Australia to hell?
That doesn't sound like a loving God!"
It makes you feel like the most appallingly arrogant sod.
But the truth is that woman is not accepting or rejecting me,
she is accepting or rejecting Jesus.
I didn't make stuff up about needing to have faith in Jesus
because I wanted to give that message.
I just relay to someone what Jesus has told me.
And Jesus told me because the Father told him.
And I know it's true because it's written in the Bible.

If you are a Christian person,
then Jesus is sending you.
He is sending you with a message that is not popular.
But it's his message, it's not your message.
If they accept it, they accept him.
If they reject it, they reject him.
You are not responsible for that.
You are only responsible for relaying the message he gave you.

Now you might not feel adequately equipped to relay the message.
There are some things you can do about that.
You could invite your friend or family member
along to Christianity Explored.
Someone else will relay the message.
You might not feel passionate enough
about the importance of the message.
There are some things you can do about that.
You could read through a gospel
and reflect on what it cost Jesus to forgive your sins.
You could read Jesus' words about hell
and reflect on the danger your friend or family member is in.
Jesus said,

"It's better to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell where the worms that eat them do not die and the fire is not quenched."

Have a heart.

Surely that's not what you want for your loved one.

Next time we start a Christianity Explored course, I'd love to see a bunch of not yet Christians working through the material.

It's good for Christians to do it, it refreshes the gospel message in our minds.

But we need to have a heart for the lost.

The only way they are going to accept Jesus is if they accept our message about Jesus.

And the only way they are going to accept our message about Jesus is if we have the courage to give it to them.

Jesus is Lord.

He knows beforehand who will betray him.

He chose Judas with that in mind.

In chapter 17, this is what Jesus says about Judas,

"None of my disciples has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that the Scripture would be fulfilled."

It was all part of God's plan,

But does that mean Jesus faces betrayal unperturbed?

Not at all.

In verse 21 it says,

"Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified,

'Very truly I tell you,

one of you is going to betray me.'"

Jesus was fully God.

He knew about it beforehand.

But Jesus is also fully man.

He feels the rejection just like you would.

Imagine sitting at a meal with your friends,
knowing that one of them has it in his heart
to get up from that meal and go to organise your death.
How would that feel?
Wouldn't you feel awful?
Jesus felt the pain,
but he didn't resist the betrayal.
He exposed the betrayer.
He told all of his disciples,
"one of you will betray me."
It was important they knew that he knew it would happen.
That way there could be no question that he was Lord of the situation.
But he did nothing to stop Judas.
He doesn't plead with him.
He doesn't try to reason with him.
In fact, giving him the piece of bread
was a sign that hardened Judas' resolve.

It says as soon as Judas took the bread,
Satan entered into him.
That's not to say Judas was a faithful follower to that point.
We are told in another place
that Judas had been stealing from the disciples common purse
for some time.
But it was at that moment that he decided
"Yep, I'm going to do this.
I'm going to betray Jesus."
No doubt he'd been feeling disillusioned for some time.
Jesus wasn't the conquering messiah he'd been hoping for.
Maybe Jesus washing the disciples feet was the last straw.
This his leader,
choosing such a servile action.
He couldn't come to terms with it.
And now his resolve hardened.
He wasn't going to change his picture
of what the messiah should look like,

he was going to cut his losses and move on.
It says that Satan entered him.
Does that mean it was outside of his control?
Not in the slightest.
Satan only enters a person who willingly invites him in.

Well it's a warning, isn't it?
Many times I've heard people tell me,
"That's not my picture of what God should be like."
Do we really think we can tell the one who made us how he can be?
Does Judas really think he can tell Jesus
what kind of Messiah he should be?
Jesus is the messiah.
He gets to decide what it means to be the Messiah.

Next time someone tells me,
"That's not my picture of what God should be like."
I'm going to try to remember to say -
"Do you really think you can tell the one who made you
how to do his job?"

3 things we can learn from this passage.
#1 However you have betrayed Jesus,
if you come to him he will forgive you.
He went to the cross knowing he would be betrayed.
#2 Jesus is Lord of his betrayal.
He knew it would happen before Judas knew.
And the message for us in this is,
our message is his message.
If people reject you because of what you tell them about Jesus,
they are rejecting him not you.
#3 You can't tell God how to do his job.
Judas didn't like the kind of messiah Jesus was.
He needed to adjust the kind of messiah he wanted.
When someone tells you,
"That's not my picture of what God should be like."

Sorry. You can't tell your maker how to do his job.
If the picture of what God is like is not shaped by the Scriptures,
it's not reality.