

This has been a really difficult week. For the eighth time in nine years, I spent two days at the end of summer doing something I have loved. I attended the Willow Creek Leadership Summit. But this year's Summit was different. It was different because a dark cloud was hanging over it, and I went, not only to learn, but to see if and how this organization would address it.

As many of you have heard by now, the founder of the Willow Creek Summit, and the founder of Willow Creek Church, Bill Hybels, has been accused by a number of women of sexual misconduct perpetrated over the last several decades. The last few months have been full of back-and-forth, accusations and denials, good people taking sides, and decades-old relationships being destroyed. The latest development came this past week as the front page of Sunday's *New York Times* included a story entitled "He's a Superstar Pastor. She Worked for Him and Says He Repeatedly Groped Her". The article gave the account of Bill's former personal assistant who says he acted deplorably towards her over many years. It was the straw that broke the camel's back. Since this latest revelation, both Lead Pastors and the entire elder board of Willow Creek have resigned. And I stand before you this morning angry and grieving.

I'm grieving because of another example of a man in power abusing women he should be caring for. I'm angry because the Sunday edition of the "paper of record" included a story that maligns the reputation of our Savior and the Church he has built. I grieve because there's a very large congregation left broken, confused, and leaderless. And I'm angry because this hits me personally. There are few people I respected more than Bill Hybels. I saw him as a man of great character, passion, and drive. He and his Summit had a huge impact on me over the years and were highly influential in my decision to move into vocational ministry. I looked up to him and modeled my leadership after his in many ways. Now I'm left wondering if it was all a lie. And if I saw him today I don't know if I'd want to hug his neck or choke it.

But there's another reason this is difficult. If it can happen to him, it can happen to me. If it can happen to him, it can happen to any of us. While the details may be different, all of us have the capacity to act in ways far from godliness. Thank God we have this passage this week. It is a passage of warning, but it is also a passage of hope. It is a passage that includes a profound, selfish, and faithless rejection of God and his will, and a profound, selfless, and faithful acceptance of God and his will. It is a passage that presents us two choices in how we will live our lives, and the choices as distinct as night and day.

We're continuing in our series called *Changes* and taking some time as a church to consider Jesus' final instructions to his followers before a time of significant transition. Like the disciples, we too are in a time of significant transition, and while there are plenty of things we don't know, there are some things we can know.

None of us are immune to the deception of sin. All of us are at risk of being ensnared by temptation and the influence of the devil.

[John 13:18-20] 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.”

If you remember last week, Jesus washed the disciples’ feet and told them to do the same. If they do these things, they will be blessed. Obedience leads to blessing. But Jesus knew that one among them was not obedient and, in fact, was about to betray him. Jesus quotes Psalm 41:9, a Psalm of David who laments that one of his counselors betrayed him by joining a rebellion. Jesus said this to prepare his disciples for what was about to happen. Jesus knew who Judas was when he chose him. He knew what was coming. He was not caught off guard. And the events that were about to take place were no accident. They were God’s plan of redemption. Judas’ treachery fulfilled Scripture that pointed to Jesus as Messiah. Jesus made sure his disciples knew so that not only would their faith not be rocked by the coming events, it would actually be strengthened, because it would confirm Jesus as Messiah. They were to stay the course and hold onto hope.

[John 13:21-30] 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.

For us to understand the warning and hope of this passage, we need to get into the head of Judas. The Gospels say little about him, but there are some things we can infer from the narrative. Judas was one of the twelve. He was selected by Jesus to join them and was all in on the mission he thought Jesus came to fulfill. It appeared Judas had fruit in his ministry. Jesus sent out his followers and they cast out demons in his name. Judas was with Jesus’ for his entire ministry, he was entrusted as the treasurer of the group, and it’s very likely he has a place of honor at this meal, sitting at the side of Jesus.

Fruitful ministry does not make us bulletproof. Bill Hybels is one of the most influential church leaders of the last 100 years. He is one of the founding fathers of the megachurch movement, he had one of the largest congregations in the country, he was a spiritual leader to presidents, he wrote dozens of books, and Willow Creek had a significant impact for Christ, both in the Chicagoland area and around the world. Success in ministry may lead us to a false sense of security or, worse yet, puff us up to think we are the ones making it happen, that God should listen to how we want things to go, or that we are above the boundaries his Word puts in place.

While it appeared Judas was a thriving disciple of Jesus, the Gospels tell us he was, in fact, a hypocrite. John 6 tells us that Judas was to betray Jesus, John 12 says that Judas was stealing the money he was entrusted to care for, and Luke 22 tells us Judas made a deal with the priest and

scribes to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. A member of Jesus' inner circle became a traitor. How did this happen?

I believe, at some point, Judas became disappointed with Jesus. Judas, like many who were captivated by him, was looking forward to Jesus establishing the Kingdom of Israel and overthrowing their Roman oppressors. But the longer he was with Jesus, the more he realized that wasn't the plan Jesus had in mind. He heard Jesus says things like, "love your enemies", "pick up your cross", "whoever would be first must be a slave". Where's the revolution? Judas eventually understood Jesus' agenda was not aligned with his own, and that disappointment exposed him as a phony disciple and became a barrier to a true relationship with him.

Where, in your life, are you disappointed with God? I'm serious. Look, we know God's will is perfect. We know his ways are not our ways. We know that any disappointment we have is really about us and not about God, but it doesn't change the fact that many of us are disappointed. Get real about that today. Admit to God that things aren't working out the way we thought they would. Tell him that you don't have the family you were hoping for. Tell him you feel stuck in your career. Tell him you're tired of struggling in this life. Get it out there. He can handle it. If you sit on disappointment with God, it's going to fester. It's going to eat you alive, and it's going to become a barrier in your relationship with him. **If we remain dissatisfied with God, we will begin to look for our satisfaction elsewhere.** And that opens us to influences who oppose God.

The Bible says the devil comes to steal, kill, and destroy. After Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. We see that same phrase in Luke 22:3, when Judas is making the deal with the priests. As Judas became dissatisfied with Jesus and his heart turned away from him, he came under the influence of Satan more and more until he ultimately allowed Satan to take control.

When we are disappointed with the person and plan of God, we will seek fulfillment in another way. Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden tree. Abraham and Sarah took God's promise into their own hands. Israel worshipped other gods. When we take our eyes off of God and begin to look around, the devil is happy to offer us counterfeit goods with the false claim of satisfaction. When we accept the offer, we damage our relationship with the Lord and stifle the impact we can have for him. It is a path that leads to destruction and will still leave us wanting.

This section closes with something that we may just blow right past. John says he took the morsel and immediately left the room, "And it was night." We may read that and just think he's letting us know what time of day it was. But there's more to it.

[John 11:9b-10] If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. ¹⁰ But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.

Throughout his Gospel, John uses the imagery of light/dark and night/day. Of Jesus he said, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." But Judas rejected that light. And while he lived his life in close proximity to Jesus, he chose a path far from God. It was the path of sin and in the company of the devil. It wasn't just night because the sun had gone down. It was night because Judas had rejected Jesus and been overtaken by darkness. And we know that what he

experienced after left him wanting. He tried to return the money he was given to betray Jesus and then he hung himself.

How much light is in your life? Is the path you're on illuminated or dark? All of us will stumble. None are immune. If you find yourself stumbling, turn around and walk the other way and see if it begins to get brighter.

The relentless pursuit of God's glory is the antidote to sin. When temptation comes, we have to decide to love our Savior more than we love our sin.

[John 13:31-35] ³¹ When he 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."

The treachery and sin of Judas was no match for the power and glory of God. Though this moment triggered the final act of Jesus' life, though he would be arrested, tortured, and crucified in a matter of hours and all hope would appear to be lost, Jesus knew what was to come. He and his Father would be glorified in his death, resurrection, and ascension, and sin and death would be defeated once and for all. Each of us is called to glorify God and Jesus shows us how this is done: obedience and love.

If there was anyone who could be tempted to be disappointed by the plan of God, it was Jesus. He was sent to die a death he did not deserve on the Cross. We know that Jesus asked the Father to change his plan when he asked him to take the cup given to him. But he finished that request by saying "Not my will by thy will." Jesus loved the Father, was fully satisfied in his Father, and was obedient to the Father, willing to accomplish whatever the Father asked of him so that the Father would be glorified. The same is asked of us.

Now, as good, Bible-believing, evangelical Christians who know we are saved by grace through faith, we often bristle at anything that sounds like legalism. But that has nothing to do with what we see here. Jesus said, "If you love me you will obey my commands." Christ-like obedience is a beautiful response to a loving God who wants to work in you and through you. **Obedience is the willing access we give God to use our lives for his purpose and his glory.** God can be glorified through us even if we are unwilling. Just ask Pharaoh. Just ask Judas. But wouldn't you rather live in the light? **Obedience is the faithful cooperation of a heart satisfied in God, eager to see him revealed and his will fulfilled.** A life lived in obedience to God is one full of the glory of God. What are you holding back from him? It's time to let it go.

And if we are to be obedient, maybe the best place to start is by following Jesus' new commandment. The command to love isn't new. God told Israel to love their neighbor as themselves. But Jesus added something in his new commandment that differentiates it. The standard for how we are to love one another is how Jesus loves us. The substance of Christ's

love is service and sacrifice. He just showed us service by washing the disciple's feet, and he's about to show us sacrifice, as he gives his life on the cross as payment for our sins. That's the kind of love Jesus is calling us to.

His disciples are about to get rocked with his arrest and crucifixion, and it's only their love for one another that will get them through the next three days. And when the church begins on the day of Pentecost, it is their love for one another that an unbelieving world will take note of as the Gospel spreads to the ends of the earth.

Each and every one of us is called to a ministry of love. If glorifying God is showing who he is to the world, there's no better way for us to do that than to love. When we love one another, we express the heart of God. That means you can show someone Jesus before ever mentioning his name. When we love, we live in the light, and shine it for all the world to see.

I'm confident God will be glorified in the days and months and years to come at Willow Creek. God will be glorified when those in the wrong repent. God will be glorified when the leaders obediently live out their call to shepherd the flock. God will be glorified when the people of that body persevere through this time of trial by loving one another.

If you have walked in the night and stumbled and made poor choices because of a dissatisfaction or disappointment with God, he can be glorified in that too. At the bottom of the pit is found the God of redemption. And when we choose to live in the light, when we love Jesus more than we love our sin, our lives will become characterized by love and beacons of God's glory.

Baptism