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Series: The Gospel of John
Message: Into the Night

Transcribed Message
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John 13:18-30

It was Gregory the Great who once said, Scripture is like a river wherein both the lamb may find a footing and the elephant float. C.S. Lewis added a little bit of a different twist to it, and he said, Scripture is like a river, broad and deep, shallow enough for the lamb to go wading, but deep enough for the elephant to swim. Now, what do you suppose they're both underscoring? It's the truth that the Word of God, in some respects, and in many passages, is very simple and easy to understand, isn't it? I mean, for God so loved the world, He gave His only Son. Whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. It's a truth we teach to our children at a very young age. They understand it. They grasp it. They believe it. But then there are also aspects of God's truth and God's revelation and God's Word that take us into the deepest mysteries that we could ever contemplate. And many of those bring to us the truths of God's sovereignty and human responsibility. And that's kind of where we land this morning as we turn again to John 13.

And this morning looking at verses 18 through 30, where we are introduced to Jesus' prophetic word about the betrayal that Judas is going to bring about. It reminds us this morning of this. It's possible to be near Jesus and still be very lost. Knowing about Jesus is not the same as believing in Jesus for eternal life. I want that to settle in. I want you to think about that for a moment. Because there is no doubt that in churches just like ours, all across this land and all across this world, there are churches just like ours that have people in them that are just like that. They know a lot of stuff about Jesus. They know a lot of stuff about the Bible. They think they're close, but in reality they may in fact be very far away.

So, let's look at this passage this morning that will challenge us, I assure you. Let's review what we saw regarding Jesus' last night in our study last week. Three things. I'm leaving, you're staying, and you're going to represent me to the world. Jesus says, I'm leaving. My hour has come. That hour that had not come, that so often we read in John's Gospel, his hour had

not yet come. And now the hour has come. And that is still a mystery to the disciples. They aren't going to understand. Jesus tells them so much. You don't understand what's going on right now, but you will. You'll look back and you'll go, wow, now I understand everything that he was saying.

So, I'm leaving, you're staying. Now that certainly didn't come off as good news, even if they weren't quite understanding what he was saying. That's not what they wanted to hear. But then that third element, you'll represent me to the world. This three-year discipleship training that Jesus has been doing with these twelve men, and equipping them to represent him to the world for sure, we would have to perhaps say eleven of them, right? Verses 1-17 of this chapter is this dramatic illustration in which Jesus puts forward this principle and this truth that if you want to be great in God's kingdom, then you just need to learn to be a servant of all. You go up by going down, and that was the challenge as Jesus washed the feet of the disciples.

Let's look this morning at the epitome of opposites. There is in this passage before us a treachery that is unequal in all human history, and there is also this incredible pure love. It begins with Jesus as the omniscient one in verses 18-20, and it starts off with the trustworthiness of Scripture, or the trustworthiness of God's Word. Verse 18, I am not speaking of all of you. I know whom I have chosen, but the Scripture will be fulfilled. The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me. Now Jesus has said previously about Judas two things, go back to chapter 13 and verse 2, and we note there during supper when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him. He'd already indicated at the front end of this evening what was going to transpire, and then of course we also noted when you looked at that tenth verse as Jesus talked about the one who has bathed does not need to wash except for his feet, but is completely clean, and you are clean, but not every one of you. So, there's somebody in this midst who is not born again, who has not been regenerated, who is not bathed in the language that Jesus is speaking of here, and of course that's Judas.

But it's even back in the sixth chapter. Go back to the sixth chapter. Jesus answered them in verse 70, Did I not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil? He spoke of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him. Now that's troublesome, isn't it? We read in the gospel account that Jesus spent the night praying about

the choosing of the twelve disciples, and yet here in the sixth chapter already we have this understanding and revelation of who Judas is and what he would do. Clearly Jesus chose him to be a disciple. There's some mystery in that, isn't there? He chose him to be a disciple. He obviously did not choose him to salvation. Judas had not been bathed, Jesus said in that previous verse. He was part of God's sovereign plan.

And in fact, in this 18th verse, what Jesus does is He finds Judas in the Old Testament. He finds him in Psalm 41 and verse 9. And it's there that David, as he's a type of Christ, right? In the ninth verse, David says this, Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me. And then he probably finds him in Psalm 55 where you have another reference to this kind of treachery. And then surely he finds him in Zechariah and verse 11, where you have the prophecy about the 30 pieces of silver, which ultimately will be the very transaction that Judas ends up involved in.

When you look at that 18th verse, the word that kind of is the focal point is the word fulfilled. I know whom I have chosen, but the Scriptures will be fulfilled. David, about whom Jesus reaches back to speak about, knows something about this treachery. His own son, Absalom, of course, turns against his father. I happen to be reading in 2 Samuel 17 and 18 in my reading through the Bible right now, and it's the story of Absalom turning against David. It's incredibly sad. And beyond sad, it's just tragic. He wants to kill his father, the king. And then Ahithophel, David's right-hand man, one of his top advisors and counselors, joins with Absalom and contrives to also kill David. So that's what this is about.

He who eats my bread. We're not talking about just having a sandwich with somebody. That's a Jewish colloquial term and language that speaks of friendship. It speaks of trust. It speaks of the depth of a friendship. That's the context. And then, of course, the same thing is true of lifts up his heel. There's violence there. There is force. Ahithophel and Absalom tried to find a way to kill David. So, you look at this opening part of this passage, there's a somberness to these words. There's a soberness to this whole passage.

It makes me think of Acts chapter 20. Paul spent three years in Ephesus discipling the believers of Ephesus, the longest he spent at any place. And you remember in Acts chapter 20 and 28, 29, 30, Paul calls together the elders of Ephesus and he's going to leave them. And

they're down by the ship, and they are having this emotional farewell. And Paul says to these men, who he has discipled, he says, you guys need to be on guard. You need to be mindful that there are going to come in from among you ravenous wolves who are going to seek to destroy the church at Ephesus. It's an incredible thing.

It's one of the reasons why in our list of ten things that we pray a lot about for Covenant, one of the things that's on that list is God protect us from evil men, evil people, and evil ideas. Because that's the battle that we're in. We're in a spiritual battle. Jesus recognizes that and He wants them to have this strong confidence and trust in the Scriptures. Because that's the anchor that we need and have. It's, first of all, the trustworthy word, right? It's the trustworthy Scriptures.

Notice, secondly, it's a trustworthy Lord. Verses 19 and 20. I am telling you this now before it takes place, that when it does take place, you may believe that I am He. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send, receives me. And whoever receives me, receives the one who sent me. Now, here's the thing. We know this story well. We know this story from the beginning to the end. We're so familiar with this story and what's coming. It's hard for us to step into the shoes of the disciples because they don't know. They have not yet put all of this together. We've read it from beginning to end. We know it well. We know what's coming next all the way through this. They have no framework yet. They don't have any idea about what's coming.

Jesus is moving to strengthen them because while they may be okay right now, every one of them is going to fail Him significantly in just a matter of hours. And they're going to be dealing with that. The weightiness of that and that sense of failure is going to be something that they're going to be grappling with. Jesus knows their faith is going to falter in the days that are ahead of them. He's strengthening them in their position and understanding of the trustworthiness of His Word and now the trustworthiness of the Lord Himself.

You notice at the end of 19, He says that you may believe that I am He. Now what does that tell us? I am He. *Ego eimi*. We've seen it seven times before, right? I'm the bread. I'm the light. I'm the door. I'm the shepherd. All of those. He's saying to them, do you understand that I am the one who was at the burning bush with Moses when He was told to take His shoes off

because where He was standing was holy? And when Moses said, who am I supposed to say is sending me down here to Egypt to deliver the people? What was it that was said? I am who I am has sent me unto you. That's what Jesus is claiming. He's claiming to be God. He's claiming to be the very Son of God.

All of that is to solidify their faith. And it's the same for us, isn't it? As we go through the hard things of life, we have to know where it is that we're going to be turning and to whom we're going to be turning. If we're not turning to the Word of God and the truth of God and the promises of God and to the Savior who's behind them who has declared Himself to be the trustworthy one, we're going to be in a bad spot. We're going to be in a hard way. That's what Jesus is doing for us here.

Verse 20 might seem out of place, right? Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives the one who sent Me. But the point is their future is tied to Him. That's what He wants them to understand. Their future is tied to Him. Instead of being overwhelmed, instead of being discouraged, because they're all going to fail Him, every one of them, to one degree or another, a day from now, 24 hours after this, they're going to all be very, very depressed and very, very discouraged. Jesus comes and He's saying to this group. The 20th verse starts off, truly, truly. Count on this. Hold on to this. This is truth. And we've seen that so many times, haven't we?

And then you have the receiving motif. Whoever receives, right? You have this in the Gospel of John, way back in the first chapter, verse 12, but as many as have received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God, even to those who believe on His name. All through the Gospel of John, this motif plays out. Those who have received Him, those who have welcomed Him, and those who have not, those who have rejected Him. And that reality is still true today. This room is filled with only two kinds of people, those who have received Him and those who have not. Those who have received Him and those who have rejected Him. That's this first word to us about Jesus and the Word.

Now the second is the betrayer. Look at verse 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. Now, look first of all at the prediction itself, what Jesus is saying here. All four of the Gospels tell us

that Judas is the betrayer. All four of the Gospels. You know what's interesting? In all of the Gospel accounts, whenever Judas is mentioned in the list, he's always mentioned last. Peter's always first. Judas is always last. The other thing that's always kind of interesting is the writers of the Gospel, not every time, but a lot of the times when they mention Judas, they will say, Judas, who was one of the twelve. Now why would they say Judas, who was one of the twelve? We know he's one of the twelve. They're underscoring the treachery of this whole action on the part of Judas as the betrayer.

There are three things Jesus says about this. First of all, there is the certainty of it, right? Truly, truly, there it is again. Truly, truly. And then John tells us that Jesus is troubled in His spirit. We all know what that means. We all have been troubled in our spirit. Sometimes just a heaviness, a sense of foreboding, an agitation. It's not a good feeling, is it? We don't like it. It robs us of our joy. It steals our peace. What is Jesus going to say when you get to chapter 14 and verse 1? Let not your heart be troubled. He's agitated in His spirit. The first thing about this betrayal that's coming is the certainty of it. Truly, truly, it is going to happen.

Secondly, it is Jesus' prophecy that it is a disciple. He says it. He's one of you. I say to you, He is one of you. So here is Judas being literally exposed in that way. That means only one thing. He's here. He's there. He's in the room when Jesus makes this prophecy. Now again, keep in mind, we know the story. We knew before we started this study in John's Gospel that Judas was the betrayer. We know how this whole thing unfolds. They didn't understand any of that. They didn't have that framework. So here He is. He's in the room with us. He's in the upper room. At that moment, He's sitting there among them.

It's kind of like those mystery movies. The detective gathers everybody together. You get everybody together. It's usually in the parlor or the library, right? You get everybody together. And he says, I want to let everybody know I know who the murderer is. And they're in the room right now. There's a big gasp, right? There's no gasp here. They don't understand what Jesus is saying. They can't process at this point. Remember, Jesus said, My hour has come. You do not understand what's going to unfold, but you will when you look back. And, of course, they would.

Now, I want to come back again to that statement about the anguish of our Lord. I think there are three times in the New Testament where we read this word that Jesus is troubled in His soul. He's troubled in His heart. It was back in John 11, outside of the tomb of Lazarus. Jesus was troubled in His spirit. He was agitated. He was broken over all that had happened.

Then there, of course, is just in the chapter before in the 27th verse, Jesus says, Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour, but for this purpose I have come to this hour. So, outside of the tomb of Lazarus, His soul is troubled. As He contemplates the cross, and we know that had to happen on more than just a few occasions. As that whole scenario plays out, He's troubled about that. And then, of course, here, as He thinks about what is going to take place with Judas.

Sometimes it's easy for us to overlook the humanity of our Lord. Yeah, we understand He is the Son of God. But that whole mystery of how He is the God-man, right? It's easy to display sometimes the sense of His humanity. So, what is it of you? What is it that is troubling Jesus to this extent? Well, certainly, I think you would probably say it's His burden for Judas. He's always looking at people through the eyes of mercy and grace and compassion. His concern is always looking outward. So, I think a part of this troubling is just His love and His concern for the soul of Judas. I think probably you would say for all of the other disciples as well, right? These 11 men are going to go through some really hard stuff, and they're going to face some significant challenges. He knows what's coming His own way in just a matter of hours. Not just the agony of Gethsemane, but the arrest and the torture and the beatings and the phony trials, all of that.

Everything about this underscores this theological tension, doesn't it? That God ordains and prophesies events that are going to occur that in many respects cause Him grief and sorrow. That's a mystery. How is it that a sovereign God who controls all the details of life sees everything before it has ever happened? The Scripture says, and this goes back to our opening quote, the rivers of the Scripture are shallow enough in which a child can wade, and they're deep enough in which an elephant can swim. We encounter things like this, these theological tensions that in our mind just simply do not make sense. How is it that God could ordain events that are going to be grievous and troublesome and cause Him agony? At some point, you either

say, in my human wisdom, this does not make sense, and therefore I reject it. Or you say the infinite wisdom, majesty, greatness of God is such that I bow before it. I can't explain it. I can't understand it. But that's what the Bible teaches, and that's what I'm going to accept.

Joseph said it, didn't he, in the 49th chapter of the book of Genesis? You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. Wow, God was orchestrating these things? Well, yes, He was. He was going to take the evil intentions and actions of men, and He's going to bring glory to His name for that. The greatest example of all is in Acts chapter 2, right? Where Peter, preaching on the day of Pentecost, says that God, by His predeterminate counsel and foreknowledge has determined that the death of His Son would be the provision for the salvation of our souls. And then he goes right on to say, and you wicked men have put him to death. And you have the tension there of both of those together, a holy, righteous God working mysteries of his will.

So now that brings us to the disciples. Let's look at the disciples in verses 22 to 25. They are, as I have been saying, totally perplexed. The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. There it is, right? Eleven of them are totally stunned. One of them, Judas, is like, I have just been revealed here. I feel like I've been called out. What Jesus said is just beyond their ability to comprehend and understand. But they know one thing, Jesus always speaks the truth. Truly, truly, I say to you.

Just note a couple of things here. Notice first of all, that each man for a moment wondered if it was him. Mark tells us in his gospel in the 14th chapter in verse 19, that they were literally sorrowful in their heart when they heard Jesus say, there is somebody in this room who is going to betray me. Mark says it just hit them, and they were sorrowful in their soul over the thought that that would be true. Matthew tells us that one by one, almost like he's indicated, they went around the room and they said, is it I? Is it I? It's rhetorical, it's phrased in a rhetorical way. And so they were saying, not me, I hope it's not me. Don't let it be me.

But here's the other thing of interest. Nobody was suspicious of Judas. Nobody was suspicious of Judas. As they look around the room, nobody goes, we all know who this is. It's kind of one of those moments. We've all been in that situation where there is somebody that we kind of all know is likely the one that's guilty of whatever it is we're talking about. That could

be a hundred different scenarios. But when something is said and the name hasn't been given, there's a lot of times where we go, yeah, I know who that is. But here they don't. none of them think about Judas. They don't get that at all.

So that tells me two things. It tells me something about Judas, doesn't it? It tells us something about Judas. He is not a victim, all right? He's not a victim. He's not a victim. We don't need to feel sorry for Judas. He is a cold, calculating man who has rejected the revelation of the grace and truth that John spoke of in the first chapter and the 14th verse. And he is not to be felt sorry for. He is a master deceiver. We know that his heart is hard. We know that he is unregenerate. We know that he has rejected Christ. He has not received this gospel.

But then the second thing it tells us, it's something about Jesus. It tells us something about Judas, and it also tells us something about Jesus, how He treated each of the disciples. How it is that they would not have for a moment discerned anything that would be different about Judas, as Jesus had interacted with all of them in so many of the same ways. Even the one who would betray Him would be treated with mercy and kindness.

In verses 23 through 25, they're seeking answers now. The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom He spoke. One of His disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at a table at Jesus' side. Simon Peter motioned to Him to ask Jesus of whom He was speaking. The disciple leaning back against Jesus said to Him, Lord, who is it? Again, you can just visualize this playing out in this setting that we've been familiar with now. They have no idea who Jesus is talking about. Peter, we would expect, right? We would expect Peter. Peter wants more information. He's not quite gotten over the foot-washing incident, so he doesn't actually verbalize this evidently, but rather he gives some non-verbal communication. Maybe he's doing a mouth-lipping, you know, John, ask Him who it is. It's happening in that way, and he signals John. John isn't identified by name here, is he? He's the disciple whom Jesus loved. There were three disciples that were in that inner circle, Peter, James, and John. And John, I don't think he's saying, I'm better than all the rest. This isn't the sibling thing where we claim that our mom or dad loves us more than any of the other brothers and sisters, right? We've all done that. But that's not what John's doing. I don't think John wants to mention his name. I think he just wants to stay in the background. But five different times in the gospel, he says he's the disciple whom

Jesus loved. So, there was clearly, even within this inner circle, a connection there with Jesus and John.

The departure in verses 26 through 30. Jesus answered, So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered him. Jesus said to him, what you are going to do, do quickly. You have this one final act, don't you? This amazing interchange that just takes place here, these verses. The receiving of this dipped morsel of bread is an act, again, of friendship. It's an act of trust. It's clearly an extension of Jesus giving perhaps Judas some measure of grace yet again. One final way of reaching out to him. He had just washed Judas' feet. The text doesn't tell us that, but I can't imagine that as Jesus went around that room with the other men that he passed by Judas. I think he washed his feet, and now here he is extending this.

But here's what I want to speak to, verse 27. Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, what you are going to do, do quickly. There's a lot of different viewpoints about Judas, some of them just ridiculous. But a very common viewpoint of Judas is he's a victim, that he didn't really have any choice in any of this, that this was all predetermined, preordained, that he was just a puppet in what God had determined already beforehand to do. And so, we read that he is a hapless victim. I can assure you that if this was happening in this day and time, you know as well as I do that there would be a Judas fan club online, lots of them. We see it, don't we? In the tragedies of our day and time, we see the most horrific things happen, and people rallying behind the victim, no, the perpetrator. It's to me like Romans 1 on steroids. It's a picture of our culture lost without a moral compass, without any understanding of what is truth and what is wrong and error.

Judas here is often depicted that way, but the Bible says something different. The Bible makes it clear that Judas is not an innocent man. Judas is not one day going to stand at the great white throne and lay claim to the fact of his innocence. Of course not. He is a man who has rejected Christ. He is a perpetrator of the greatest treachery ever. Satan's role in this story does not alleviate Judas of moral responsibility. So, when we read in that 27th verse that Satan entered into him, we don't read into that that now Judas has got no personal responsibility. No, that's not true at all. Judas is not a believer. Judas is one who has made a determination to

betray his Lord. He has lived in the light of the grace and the mercy and the tenderness of Christ for all of these years, and his very actions later reveal his own sense of personal responsibility in what he has done.

Then we do acknowledge that there is mystery in this, isn't there? But the Scriptures do not allow us to say that Judas, he's just a pawn, he's just a puppet. Listen, it's not a direct corollary, it's not one-to-one, but in Acts chapter 5, the very beginning of the church, Ananias and Sapphira, having seen what Barnabas did when Barnabas sold his property and he donated the money to the church. Barnabas evidently received some sense of acknowledgement and people knew what he had done. Ananias and Sapphira decided that they wanted that same approbation and they sold some property. Remember the story as it unfolds, it says that they determined to lie to the Holy Spirit and instead of giving all of the proceeds from the sale, they gave just some of them. But they lied. Remember what happened, when Peter confronted them, and the whole story speaks about what was going on regarding their heart and their deception, and also Satan's work in moving them towards doing that. It's not any different for us. We undergo temptation. When we yield to temptation, we can't say the devil made me do it. And so, the same thing is true with Ananias and Sapphira, and the same thing is true with Judas. There is personal moral accountability and responsibility.

Look at this last final picture, verse 28. Now, one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that because Judas had the money bag, Jesus was telling him, buy what we need for the feast, or that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out, and it was night. Again, the disciples aren't understanding what's going on here. They aren't understanding this whole scene of betrayal, the arrest, the crucifixion, they just haven't put that together. But in verse 30, you have this ominous word, don't you? After receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out, and it was night.

Now, we know John loves to give us time stamps, doesn't he? He loves to put in these indicators of change in scenery and time. That's not what's going on here. This is not a time stamp. This is a spiritual picture of Judas' heart. It is an indicator of where he is spiritually, and it's the theme of light and darkness that you see all the way through the Gospel of John. It's

John 3:19, the true light came into the world, and men did what? People loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

My friends, it's possible. It's possible to be very close to Jesus and still be lost. Just knowing stuff about Jesus, being in church, it does not give you eternal life. It does not bring about the forgiveness of sin. It is not a matter of attendance and works and knowledge. It's about believing in Jesus as our Savior.

So, what do we take away? Never underestimate the deceptive power of sin. Satan is out to kill, still, and destroy. Psalm 139 is our posture. Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my ways. Lord, see if there is any way in me that is grievous to you, and lead me, Father, into this life that is everlasting. Keep your heart tender before God. Keep short accounts with God. Keep short accounts with each other. Run from sin. Run from the things of the world. Pursue the things of God.

Most importantly, believe, embrace, and receive the Gospel. The Gospel which says all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The Gospel that says the wages of sin is death. The Gospel that says Jesus did something about that in his death on the cross. And the Gospel that says if you want your sins forgiven and you want the gift of eternal life, all you need to do is believe that what Jesus did is enough.

Let's pray. Father God, we are thanking you again this morning for this trustworthy Word and our trustworthy Savior. Father, even these deep mysteries of the works of your Spirit. We thank you for this trustworthy Word and our trustworthy Savior that guides us each step of the way. Father, I pray if there is someone here this morning who thinks just being close to Jesus is enough, that your Spirit would open their eyes and give them understanding to the beauty of the Gospel, that they would receive and welcome it and have the gift of eternal life. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.