



WHEN YOUR WORLD TURNS AGAINST YOU

SERIES: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

Catalog No. 878

John 13:18-30

30th Message

Gary Vanderet

October 17, 1993

One of the most difficult things to deal with in life is rejection. I know that a significant number of women here this morning have been rejected in the past or are presently suffering rejection. Their husbands have either walked out on them and filed for divorce, or they may still be living at home but they have checked out emotionally. They don't talk to their wives; they don't want to communicate with them. There are parents here who have been betrayed by their children. They have lied to them and used them. Others have been betrayed by their parents. They have abused them and used them.

Betrayal is a violation of trust. It is an inside job, a weapon wielded by one who is loved. Enemies don't have such a tool; only a friend can betray. Rejection by a stranger or a random attack would be easier to handle. Being victimized by a friend is hard to take.

Knowing that our Lord knows all about betrayal and rejection is encouraging. He experienced all the difficult circumstances of life. A knowledge of how he handled rejection, therefore, will help us handle the hard times. That is what we will discover this morning in our study in the gospel of John.

We pick up the narrative at verse 18 of chapter 13. These chapters, as we have already learned, are commonly referred to as the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus' last words to his own before he was crucified. Sharing his final meal with his disciples, at one point Jesus rose and washed their feet. Then he commanded them to wash each other's feet, and pronounced a blessing on those who would follow his commandment, saying, "If you know these things you are blessed if you do them." That conditional clause anticipates a maybe yes/maybe no response. We may or may not obey. This is what leads him into what he has to say now, beginning in verse 18:

"I do not speak of all of you [in other words, there would be one in this group who would not obey, who would not be submissive to the word]. I know the ones I have chosen; but [it is] that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.'

Jesus quotes Psalm 41. David, the author, wrote this psalm while he was in exile, having been betrayed and driven off the throne by his son Absalom. But what hurt David most was his betrayal by Ahithophel, a close friend and counselor who had been part of his inner circle. The phrase, "eats my bread," is a Near Eastern way of describing someone very close. Betrayal by one who was sharing bread was especially hard to bear. "This one who has eaten at my table has lifted up his heel." What a word picture. It was as if, without warning, for no reason, your companion jumped up and kicked you in the face. It was hard for David to take. In fact, the psalm says, "Even my close friend, whom I trusted, who shared my bread, has lifted his heel against me."

Jesus knew that his situation was analogous to David's. In fact David's betrayal as king was predictive of Jesus' own betrayal as Messiah. Thus it was foreordained that someone close to our Lord, someone who ate his bread, would betray him. Just as Ahithophel betrayed David and then took his own life, so Judas would betray the Son of David and then take his own life.

As part of his prophetic office, Jesus goes on to predict his betrayal. This is the significance of verse 19:

"From now on I am telling you before [it] comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am [He.]

One of the marks of a true prophet was that he could predict the future with absolute accuracy. Jesus was doing that here. He was saying, "One of you will betray me. You will remember this after it comes to pass."

Next he goes on to speak of the authority of an apostle:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send [the word "apostle" comes from this word "send"] receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."

This is descriptive of the high calling and privilege of apostles. In these words of Jesus their mission is given the highest theological significance, and absolute binding authority. This select group of men, the apostles, went out with the authority of God himself. Failure to choose Christ would mean failure to know God.

Verse 21:

When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me."

Thinking about the high, holy calling of an apostle, and the fact that one of them would betray him, distressed Jesus greatly. "Troubled" means, "to be deeply agitated, grieved, hurt." This is the same word used to describe his emotions as he stood by the tomb of Lazarus. If we think our Lord was unmoved by circumstances, that he was always poised and unemotional, we are wrong. It ought to encourage us that his rejection distressed him. Anxiety over rejection is not sin. Our Lord never sinned. He was fully human and fully divine. His being troubled was a mark of his humanity. He experienced all the emotions that you and I feel. And being betrayed shook him to the core. It hurt.

Jesus' anguish was now apparent to the disciples. Verse 22:

The disciples [began] looking at one another, at a loss [to know] of which one He was speaking.

It's interesting to learn that Jesus knew from the beginning who would betray him. The other gospel accounts reveal that he knew Judas was the betrayer. Earlier in this

gospel, John said that Jesus "knew what was in man." He knew Judas, and yet nothing in his attitude or actions toward him betrayed that knowledge. He never betrayed the betrayer. Isn't that amazing? He was just as kind to him as he was to the other apostles.

The text literally says that the disciples "looked to one another without a way to know of which one he was speaking." Nothing in Jesus' demeanor or attitude tipped them off that Judas was the one. He was never cold toward Judas. He was concerned for him and compassionate toward him. They probably had long conversations together on occasion. Jesus would inquire about his family, his plans. Yet nothing our Lord said or did led the disciples to think that Judas was the betrayer. He loved him to the end.

John continues:

There was reclining on Jesus' breast one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.

Here is the first reference in the gospel to its author. John is being typically anonymous here, describing himself as the "one whom Jesus loved." He never got over his sense of awe that Jesus loved the likes of him. He apparently was reclining on Jesus' right. The disciples were not sitting in chairs on one side of the table; rather they were reclining at a low, probably U-shaped table, leaning on their left elbows, eating with their right hands, their legs stretched out away from the table. Jesus probably was in the middle of the closed end of it, with John on his right, so that John's head was almost in our Lord's chest. And, as we will see in moment, Judas was probably on Jesus' left, the place of honor, which best explains the conversation that followed.

Simon Peter therefore gestured to him [the word means "nodding," some kind of non-verbal signal], and said to him, "Tell [us] who it is of whom He is speaking."

Obviously Peter is not sitting next to John because he has to gesture. When Jesus said, "One of you will betray me," the other gospel accounts say that all of them began to ask, "Is it I? Is it I?" They wondered whether some inadvertent word or action had endangered Jesus. Peter probably thought it was him. Knowing Peter's temperament, and the fact that he carried a side-arm, he may have been thinking of taking care of whoever it was would betray Jesus. So he made a gesture to John, whispering to him, "Find out who it is."

John leaned back on Jesus' chest to ask him.

He, leaning back thus on Jesus' breast [so he could whisper to him; none of the other disciples picked up any of this conversation] said to Him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus therefore answered, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." [He said this quietly. None of the other disciples heard this.] So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, [the son] of Simon Iscariot. And after the morsel, Satan then entered into him.

We know from verse 2 that Judas had repeatedly been tempted by Satan to betray the Lord. Judas was a greedy man. Having been chosen to be the treasurer of the group, however, and given charge of the money box, he must have appeared to be a dedicated, honest follower.

When Judas first joined the group, he evidently saw in Jesus an opportunity to fulfill his dreams. He believed that Jesus was the Messiah who would deliver Israel from bond-

age and make it head of all the nations on earth. The idea of being part of the inner circle appealed to him. But when Jesus talked about the cross, and when he offended the Jewish leaders, Judas' dream began to unravel. He might have become resentful and bitter toward Jesus. He had contracted to buy a field, so he began to steal from the money box, feathering his own nest.

Apparently Satan had put into Judas' mind a plan to betray Jesus. Maybe all of this began at Bethany on the occasion when Mary broke the jar of expensive ointment and poured it on Jesus' feet. Judas protested her action, but Jesus rebuked him because he loved money more than his Lord. Lacking 30 pieces of silver to complete his purchase of the field, Judas made a deal with the high priest to betray Jesus for the money he needed. He thought he was acting as an independent agent, but he wasn't. He was Satan's tool. At this point his giving in to Satan's leading became outright possession.

There was love in our Lord's eyes when he gave Judas the morsel, but all that Judas saw was the determination of his jaw. Judas received the morsel, but not the love. Instead of breaking him and urging him to repentance, it had the effect of hardening his resolve. This was the final gesture of supreme love on Jesus' part. The host at a feast might well dip into a common bowl, pick out a particularly tasty morsel and pass it to a guest as a mark of honor or friendship. The word translated "morsel" commonly referred to bread, but it can also refer to meat. John may well have been thinking of an earlier point in the Passover meal when bitter herbs were dipped into a bowl of fruit puree (a sauce of dates, raisins, and sour wine). That Jesus could pass it to him so easily suggests Judas was close by, probably at his left, the place of honor.

Here is how one commentator described Jesus' action:

And that final act of love becomes, with a terrible immediacy, the decisive movement of judgment. At this moment we are witnessing the climax of that action of sifting, of separation, of judgment, which has been the central theme in John's account of the public ministry of Jesus . . . (Jn. 3:16-19). So the final gesture of affection precipitates the final surrender of Judas to the power of darkness. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has neither understood it nor mastered it.

Judas received the morsel, but not the love.

Jesus therefore said to him, "What you do, do quickly."

This is stated in a comparative form that could be translated "more quickly." In other words, "do it quicker than you were planning; speed up the process." Jesus knew that his passion was orchestrated by the Father and that he was destined to die on the day when the Passover lamb was sacrificed. Judas probably did not want to put Jesus to death on a feast day, but Jesus tells him to speed up the process.

Verse 28:

Now no one of those reclining [at the table] knew for what purpose He had said this to him. For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, "Buy the things we have need of for the feast [The feast actually lasted seven days, so they would need to buy food from time to time; the others thought Jesus was instructing Judas to do this.] or else, that he should give something to the poor." [It was customary to give alms during the feast. The temple

gates were left open from midnight on, allowing beggars to congregate there.]

The conversation between our Lord and Judas was so hushed that none of the disciples picked it up.

And so after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.

This is one of the pregnant statements in the New Testament. It is not merely saying that the sun had gone down. Even though the Paschal moon was shining at its fullest, Judas was swallowed up in the most terrible darkness. He had turned his back on the light and gone out on his own journey into the night.

It was also nighttime for Jesus, the hour of the power of darkness, the time when the serpent would bruise the heel of the Seed of the Woman.

It could be argued that the OT predicts a betrayer and that therefore someone had to play that role; there could be no arrest, trial, and crucifixion without a betrayer, and Judas was chosen to fill the part, so there never was any question about his involvement. On the other hand Judas chose to be the betrayer. He was responsible for his actions. Here is that strange blending of God's sovereignty and human responsibility. As Luke wrote: "The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed, but woe to that man who betrays him." (Lk. 22:22.)

All of this leads me to believe that Jesus' actions here were loving actions designed to bring Judas to repentance. Though he knew Judas was never one of them he treated him no differently from the others. He washed his feet; he handed him the bread. This was one more offer of forgiveness, but Judas spurned it. Jesus did what he did because he wanted to save Judas; his actions were redemptive.

As we think about this story and its application for our lives, our Lord's focus needs to be our focus as well. Jesus was aware of certain things that permitted him to love Judas. That same spirit ought to inform our actions toward those who betray us. Our purpose should not be to avenge ourselves and wreak havoc on those who betray us, nor should it be to protect ourselves from harm, but rather to save our betrayers if we can. We, like Jesus, have come to seek and save those who are lost.

Let me suggest some ways to react correctly when we have been mistreated. Our typical responses are to focus on the circumstances and get angry, focus on ourselves and feel sorry for ourselves, or find someone to blame. If we wish to identify with our Lord, however, we need to focus in another direction. In fact my two exhortations are the only choices we can make with complete confidence, because they tell us the only things we can know for certain about our circumstances and those who betray us.

First, we need to *focus on the origin* of the problem. We must consider the source. Typically when we use that expression we are referring to the person who has wronged us. "Consider the source," we say. "He's just a jerk. I won't let it bother me." But that is not what I am saying here. When I say, consider the source, I am saying that Judas was a secondary cause; we need to focus on the origin of it. The primary cause was the devil. Jesus knew that Judas was an unwitting tool of Satan. Judas thought he was acting out of self-interest, but in fact he was a tool of the evil one, Satan's

dupe. He wasn't aware of the enormity of his crime. He didn't know what he was doing. That is why Jesus could pray from the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." Satan had victimized Judas.

That is true of those who betray us as well. They are not the enemy, but the victims of the enemy. Behind our every so-called enemy is a real enemy. That was what made Jesus mad, and it should make us mad, too. We must never forget that we have a murderous, treacherous enemy who is out to destroy us.

In C.S. Lewis' classic on spiritual warfare, *The Screwtape Letters*, Screwtape, a high-echelon demon, is writing to Wormwood, his underling. The book captures well the animosity of the demons toward humans. Everything the demons do is designed to wreak havoc in our lives and ultimately destroy us. Wormwood's "patient" is a doctor who had fallen in love with a fine Christian woman. Listen to what Screwtape says of her:

I have looked up this girl's dossier, and I am horrified at what I find. Not only is she a Christian, but what a Christian. A vile, sneaking, simpering, demure, monosyllabic, mouse-like, watery, insignificant, virginal, bread and butter miss. She's a little brute. She makes me vomit. She stinks through the very pages of the dossier. It drives me mad the way the world has worsened. We'd have had her sort in the arena in the old days. That's what her sort is made for.

This grants us some idea of what Satan thinks of us. It gives us a different perspective on the people who are Satan's tools: the husband who walks out, the cold, vindictive wife, the tyrannical boss, the friend who stabs you in the back. They don't know what they are doing. But, faced with this kind of betrayal, we can do what our Lord did. Though we have not been nailed to a cross, we might be nailed to a wall. Like him, therefore, we can pray, "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." They are not the enemy; they are victims. The source of our problem lies much deeper.

There is a second exhortation we can make from our Lord's response to his betrayal: *Focus on the outcome*. Though Satan's intent was to destroy Jesus, and thereby put an end to God's plan to bring salvation, he was in fact the instrument used to bring about that very salvation. Satan got Judas to betray Jesus to the officials. They arrested him, put him on trial, and crucified him, and through that act of crucifixion the whole world was saved. The principle we learn in our own lives, though it is not apparent to us at times, is that people who betray us may in fact be accomplishing God's purposes. Though God doesn't send the trouble, he will permit it for our good.

We learn this truth throughout the scriptures. Take the story of Joseph, for example. Joseph's brothers hated him for his arrogance. One day they sold him to Midianite traders who in turn sold him into slavery in Egypt. There he spent 12 years in prison, but finally rose to be Vice-Regent of the land. Years later a drought in the land of Canaan forced his brothers to go to Egypt, and Joseph was in a position to help them. He provided a place for them in Goshen, preserving their lives unknown to them. Some time later, in a very emotional scene, Joseph broke down and revealed his identity to them. They were scared to death because they thought he would take vengeance and kill them, but

Joseph said to them, "You *sold* me . . . but God *sent* me. You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good."

The providence of God involves concurrent actions and intentions. Human actions and divine actions, human intentions and divine intentions, happen simultaneously. God overcomes evil for good. This is how we have to look at people. They may direct an evil deed against us, but the promise is that God will take that circumstance that hurts so badly and turn it to good: the good of conforming us to the image of his Son. He will use it to grow us up. God allows these circumstances to disrupt the harmony of our lives, but these are the very things that drive us back to him. If we lay hold of him and his resources, we will begin to mature and grow up. We become mellow, humbler, easier to live with. God overcomes evil situations and uses them for good.

Now this does not mean that we have to remain silent in the face of abuse. Look at what Paul says in 2 Timothy 2: "And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, [that is, meekly, non-defensively] in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will." There once again is repeated the truth that these people are not the enemy but the victims of the enemy who is using them as his tools. We break through to them by speaking the truth in love.

These two elements must always be held in balance. How we do what we do is just as important as what we do. If someone is abusing you verbally or physically, you have every right to tell him or her that they should not treat people that way. Some would tell us that a wife's submission in the home means that her husband can say anything and do anything and she must take it and be silent. The text quoted for that position is 1 Peter, where the apostle, using Jesus' example of suffering, urges women to submit in difficult marriages. They argue that, like Jesus, the lamb brought to the slaughter who opened not his mouth, so women ought to submit in silence to their husbands; like Jesus, they should bear it when they are abused. But the point of 1 Pe-

ter 2 is not that Jesus did not speak, but that he did not sin. When he was reviled, he did not revile. When he was accused, he did not accuse back; he did not strike back; he did not retaliate. If your husband verbally abuses you, you are entitled to say, "That's not right. We can't talk to each other that way." The same is true of physical abuse. You don't have to take it. That is not male headship. It is male dominance. It is sin.

But our actions must be motivated by love. We must first focus on the origin. We have to see that the person who is betraying us, hurting us, abusing us, stabbing us in the back, is not the enemy. Behind him is the real enemy. And secondly, we must focus on the outcome. God can use these situations that are damaging and hurtful to accomplish his good. He will be with us and give us what we need so that we can bear it.

Our Lord was kind to Judas. He loved him and prayed for him. He overcame evil with good. As his children, we must do the same to those who betray us. When we take matters into our own hands and seek to avenge ourselves, we always make things worse. We have to put ourselves into God's hands. They are good hands. Let him take care of us. He does it best of all.

Jesus was true to his own teaching: He loved his enemies. And this is what he instructed us to do in the Sermon on the Mount:

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:43-48.)

May God grant that we will respond as our Lord directed when we face rejection and betrayal.

©1993 Peninsula Bible Church/Cupertino