

John 13:21-30

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[0 : 00] John 13, we looked at the first part of John 13 this morning, we're going to look at verse 21-30 this evening. You'd have thought, wouldn't you, that people would always respond to acts of love in a positive way.

So if someone shows you compassion, they show you kindness, they give something to you, normally that would help you to love them back, wouldn't it? You'd feel a certain sense of love for them in return.

But the truth is that we have a very funny relationship with the love that Jesus shows. When he shows love, that is not always the response that he gets back from us in return.

The story goes, you've probably heard it of a man walking by a river in a tropical country, and he sees a scorpion drowning on the roots of a tree.

And the man crawls out with compassion on the scorpion and tries to reach out and rescue it. But every time he tries to reach out and grab it, the scorpion stings his hand.

[1 : 17] We meet a man today who responds to Jesus' grace with a sting. Judas, isn't he? Judas, one of Jesus' disciples, betrays his rescuer famously.

He shows us a twisted response to Jesus' grace. We see in Judas a warning, but we see in him an encouragement as well.

So first of all, the warning, Judas is the one who can't stand the love of Jesus. Judas can't stand the love of Jesus.

This morning we looked at the beginning of chapter 13, didn't we? Jesus arranges this meal with his disciples. And John says that having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them till the very end.

He's referring there to the cross, I think. He loves them and he serves them, doesn't he? He washes the heel, even of the man who's going to try and crush him with his heel, to betray him and stamp on him.

[2 : 24] And just imagine this scene. Jesus washing his disciples' feet, serving them, loving them. You can imagine the atmosphere, can't you? The room is filling with light.

Filling with the generosity and the kindness of Jesus. The light of the love of Jesus, even for Judas himself, fills the room.

But John tells us that strangely, with the light growing, the atmosphere changes quite drastically after verse 21, isn't it?

After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in spirit. And he says, truly, truly, one of you will betray me. Turns out that when the light gets brighter and brighter in the room, the light of Jesus, some in the room want to retreat deeper into darkness.

Some people can't stand the light of Jesus. There's a discussion, isn't there, as to who the betrayer is. The sort of murmurs go around the room, don't they?

[3 : 37] And again, it's as if the action slows down. I think John does this quite a bit. Verse 26. Jesus answered, it is to he to whom I'll give this morsel of bread when I've dipped it.

And then the action slows down. So when he dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. The focus for one moment is held, isn't it, on this action of Jesus passing a morsel of bread to this man.

This piece of bread passes from one hand to another and Judas is left holding it. And this moment, this action is the tragic climax.

It's the tragic conclusion to Judas' whole attitude towards Jesus. It's the headline for how Judas responds to Jesus' love.

Because it is at that very moment that John tells us that Satan's influence on Judas reaches its climax. He enters into Judas at that moment in verse 27.

[4 : 49] You see, in the moment of Jesus giving to Judas, Judas starts his betraying. Why is that?

So the ancient custom in a meal like this was to be sitting in a group for a meal and the tables would be quite low, a bit like coffee tables. And you'd probably lean on your left side so that you could eat food with your right hand.

And the host would be in the middle of maybe a circle or a horseshoe arrangement of couches and tables. And the host would show honour to his guests by offering them food.

You know, isn't it, when you host? Jesus has been the slave at the beginning of the meal in the foot washing. But now he takes the role of the host passing the food.

And to pass somebody food is a sign of great honour. You can do it with your honoured guests. It's a bit like maybe a wedding when the groom gets a piece of cake on the court, doesn't he?

[5 : 56] And feeds it to his bride, something like that. Feeding someone is a sign of love, isn't it?

And this is the moment, this is the way that Jesus identifies his betrayer.

The thing that sends Judas over the edge in resentment of Jesus is the love of Jesus. The whole evening Judas has had to sit there, hasn't he, and get his feet washed and be served by Jesus and honoured by Jesus.

And he can't stand it. It is the moment that Judas follows Satan wholeheartedly. In these moments of light and of love from Jesus, Judas is filled with darkness and loathing.

There is something about the love of Jesus that oddly does that to people, that some people find it infuriating, don't they?

We've had a bit of an inkling about Judas before in John's Gospel. This has been his quiet, secret disposition towards Judas. His hidden feelings about Jesus for a while.

[7 : 10] Back in chapter 6, and you can maybe look at it later, we've known that Judas was a bit different. Jesus says to his disciples, one of you is a devil.

John adds another note, he was referring to Judas Iscariot. If you flick back a page to chapter 12 of John, there's this time when Jesus was at Lazarus' house for dinner, and the room is filled with the fragrance of Mary's devotion to Jesus.

So he's just raised Lazarus from the dead, and she extravagantly anoints Jesus' feet with ointment. She pours a whole bottle of Chanel No. 5 over his feet.

It's an extravagant sign of affection and thanksgiving, isn't it? And then Judas pipes up in verse 5, why was this ointment not sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor?

John adds, he said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief. And having charge of the money bank, he used to help himself to what was put into it. And Jesus said to Judas, you leave her alone.

[8 : 24] You see again there, the moment Jesus' love and grace is shown in somebody else's life, he can't stand it.

He's strangely angry, isn't he, at what's going on in that house. And inside his heart there is this growing bitterness towards Judas' love.

How odd. He's growing hard into it. He hates it when it's shown to him or to others. He can't stand it. It's a very secret thing with him, isn't it?

Nobody else can tell this about him. So back in John 13, it's odd. Don't you think that when Jesus singles Judas out at the meal table, the other disciples still don't understand what's going on.

So when Judas leaves, in verse 29, they assume he's going out to get supplies for the feast or that he's going to go and give money to the poor. No one quite knew, did they, the resentment that he was holding in his heart.

[9 : 30] No one except Jesus, of course. And we're told again in verse 30, you look there, After receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out.

It's as if John wants to highlight something to us, isn't it? It is that act, after receiving the morsel of bread, part of the regular supper meal that they were eating.

That is the moment that seals Judas' desire to betray. Can't stand it. What's going on in this man?

Can you imagine how someone who is wracked with guilt and shame can refuse, further still, to accept the grace of Jesus?

Can you imagine that? How the love of Jesus itself is the thing that we retreat from and that people can't stand? I wonder if you maybe know people like that.

[10 : 33] Maybe that's a bit like you. Even the mention of grace or Jesus' love for sinful people like you and me.

Things of embarrassment and avoidance. The light of Jesus shines and it softens some, doesn't it? But it hardens others.

I was reading an article the other day and the title of the article was, I Can't Stand Amazing Grace. And the writer says, Is it just me or do you just hate the song Amazing Grace?

It's not just the tune or the fact that it's played at every college football game these days. I quote, I'm damned if I'm going to call myself a lost and blind wretch who needs grace.

Judas would have been like that, wouldn't he? Judas would have been in church. Imagine when the benediction goes out. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

[11 : 40] And Judas would have had his fingers crossed behind his back, wouldn't he? Very uncomfortable moments. Because there is something about the grace of Jesus that people can't stand.

Jesus knew Judas' dark secret. He knows your secrets. Judas has become well practiced at masking things.

He thought, I feel so guilty about my thieving. But the last thing I'm going to do is admit that. Maybe he's thought, I'll stop the thieving myself.

I'll get it under control. I'll change myself. But it's a stalling tactic, isn't it? He's thought to himself, I'd rather have the other guys think well of me than admit this.

I'd rather refuse the grace of Jesus and be forgiven and face up to who I really am. If I can compensate myself for my sins, I can deal with it.

[12 : 44] I can do better. I'll make up for it. But there comes a point here, doesn't there? The more and more he refuses to come to Jesus for help and mercy, the more and more actually that refusal transforms into a kind of resentment of the help Jesus offers.

He resents that mercy. And then the more he hates Jesus himself, this is the road. And the grace of Jesus that could have melted his heart.

Imagine, it could have been so different, couldn't it? Imagine Jesus gets to Judas and he starts washing his feet. And he has this food passed to him in the field.

He could have at that moment gone, Lord I can't do this anymore. I've been living a lie. I've been untrue to you. I've been a hypocrite.

Forgive me Lord, help me Lord. And he would have been restored, wouldn't he, right then? And yet the love that was meant for restoration and the grace that was meant for restoration is twisted in Judas' mind as an excuse for greater distancing from Jesus and greater bitterness in the end.

[14 : 06] It's a warning, isn't it? It's a warning to us. To us when we refuse Jesus' grace. It's possible in the life of church to be like this, isn't it?

Maybe you've seen people, maybe you've known people, maybe this has been you in the past.

Where there's a response to the love of Jesus or a response to the love of others that is irrationally twisted into a delusion that when love is shown it's a sign of superiority, isn't it?

How dare you? How dare you? How dare you? What do you think you are? How dare you think that I need serving? It's an awful, awful thing to grow bitter towards the love of others.

Towards the love of Jesus. And on top of that, how we respond to Jesus Christ in other people's lives is a test for where we are with Jesus, isn't it?

Do you remember the religious leaders? They were absolutely furious. They were like Judas. When they saw the grace of Jesus towards others, when he ate and sat with tax collectors and sinners, they couldn't stand it.

[15 : 20] We're like that with others. We don't really treasure his grace for ourselves, do we?

Maybe you've been on the receiving end of that. When your family and your friends, they balk at the idea of forgiveness for you.

What makes you special? They balk at the idea that they need it, don't they? To clear about them.

That there is anything wrong at all with them that they can't themselves fix.

Jesus forgives and transforms and some people, they can't stand it. Judas couldn't stand to be reminded of the truth that he was still refusing what maybe deep down he needed from Jesus.

And it went on and on and on until the possibility of receiving grace passed forever. This is the moment, isn't it, in his life when the line is crossed.

John tells us that in his bitterness he immediately went out. He says it was night when he went out. And John speaks there symbolically.

[16:32] It was night time, but there's something significant about that, isn't it? He's going out of a room full of light and he's going into the darkness.

He's going into the abyss. He finally and dreadfully leaves the light of Jesus and the grace that he could have received. And he plunges into the darkness of death.

He closes the door on Jesus literally, doesn't he? He leaves the light inside and he goes into the darkness outside. And so he is a warning to you and I.

Judas is like the ghost of Christmas future, isn't he? Because it can only go two ways, one of two ways. But for groups like this, groups who are with Jesus, who are close to Jesus, who have a privileged access to Jesus, it can only go one of two ways for people like that.

They either grow in greater devotion to him and they want to be closer to him or they leave in eventual antagonism and impossible doom.

[17:49] Just as there might be two groups in this room. Will you stay in the room? Will you go towards the light or leave the room and go into the darkness?

That is the choice that Judas places before us, isn't it? His grace can only do neither with us. So he is a warning from the one who can't stand the love of Jesus.

But then there's an encouragement as well here. Because we see in Judas the one who can't stop the love of Jesus. He can't stand the love of Jesus but he can't stop the love of Jesus either.

As the narrative goes on here, we see behind Judas the work of Satan. He's all over it, isn't he? You can tell. His influence is all over Judas.

Back in verse 2, the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas to betray him. You can sort of translate that as the devil had already put it in his mind to do it. But notice how the influence grows, the satanic influence in verse 27.

[18:51] After Judas took the morsel, Satan entered into him at that moment. It began with a thought planted by Satan in his head. It ends with Satan himself in his heart.

Judas willingly and consciously makes the decision here. He's not a robot possessed by the devil. Satan merely taps into Judas' own hatred of Jesus' generosity.

Something that has been going on for a long time in him that Satan monopolises. Judas willingly becomes impossibly mastered by Satan here.

And so Jesus is troubled in his spirit, isn't he? Because in Judas, it's as if a bit of darkness tries to get into the room, isn't it? From the outside.

The light of the world is in the room and the darkness is trying to snuck him out and get rid of him. The darkness wants to enter in here and to overcome Jesus.

[19:59] But he can't stop Judas. And actually we see even in the evil intentions here that they are all bound for good ends, aren't they? Jesus still commands the darkness here.

And so he says to him in verse 27, What you're going to do, do it quickly. Notice how Judas leaves. He doesn't storm out in a half, does he?

Judas is dismissed after the evening. The darkness is banished with permission from the light of the world.

Even in his disobedience, Satan here is compelled, doesn't he, to obey the Lord. And there is a note of irony in the little details here.

So you see how the disciples think that Jesus is telling Judas to go out and buy food for the feast. Did you notice that? He's talking about the Passover feast there that they were having at this time.

[21:01] And Judas was in charge of the money bag, so they put two and two together. He's planning on going out and making a transaction, isn't he?

Of getting money for handing Jesus over to the authorities. Judas has got no intention of getting food for the feast or anything like that. But ironically, making preparations for the Passover feast is exactly what Judas is about to go and do, isn't it?

Without knowing it. The disciples were right. By making a transaction of betrayal, where money is going to change hands, He betrays the lamb of God to his death, and unwittingly hands over the lamb of God to the priests.

He supplies the Passover lamb, doesn't he? The lamb who is slain for the sins of the world. He supplies the whole world unwittingly here, in his betrayal, with what they need for the feast.

The feast of the Passover, where sin is taken away, isn't it? And the rich communion, He supplies the Passover lamb to the high priests.

[22 : 25] And so do you see that the more and more he hates Jesus and he tries to stop Him, the darkness grows in him and it tries to get in. But it just gets absorbed into the light.

Just gets washed out into the plans and the purposes of the God who is light. Darkness cannot overcome Him.

The one who can't stand Jesus can't stop Jesus either. And the desperation shows. And the first thing that we know is, just ask the question together. I have a bit of deep thinking.

But why would Satan want Jesus to be betrayed? Satan is crafty and cunning. He's vindictive. He's not stupid.

Satan knows what will happen if the Lamb of God lays down life. We know that Satan actually, part of him doesn't want Jesus to die like this.

[23 : 27] Before his death, Jesus tells his disciples that this must happen. That he must go to the cross and be handed over to the authorities to be killed and then to rise.

Do you remember Peter at the end? He says, no Lord, far be it from you. And Jesus says, you get behind me, Satan. The devil doesn't want Jesus to go to the cross.

He doesn't want Jesus to suffer. He'd rather Jesus didn't fast in the wilderness. He'd rather Jesus was comfortable and he avoided the cross.

Not because he loves Jesus, but because he knows the plan. So why is he doing this? It's because Satan knows he can't stop the love of Jesus. So this is his last-ditch attempt at something evil.

But all he can do now is make it as painful as possible, isn't it? Do as much damage as he can. Drag others into it. Make it a death by betrayal.

[24 : 30] Make it as heartbreaking as it can be. He can't stop the love of Jesus. But even the betrayal part is Jesus' own settled destiny.

Let's see, we've got back in verse 18. This is happening, but the scripture will be fulfilled. He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.

I just think there is an encouragement here, isn't there? On the inscrutable, immovable decrees and plans of God. That all wickedness, that the greatest act of wickedness and wicked people, even if they have another goal in mind, and they don't wish to love Jesus, they will be obliged to obey Jesus.

That even if nothing is further from their intentions, God directs wickedness to an end that is not known to those wicked people, and which is altogether good.

We don't know why wicked things happen sometimes. There are devilish things going on in the world, isn't there? And in your life. Things being done to you right now, even.

[25 : 43] Jesus' disciples in the room with him still see who is the Lord here in those moments of wickedness. The one who can't stand him can't stop him.

A minister writes in a book of the time when he went on a pastoral visit to someone in his congregation. And this member of the congregation had struggled for a long time with various addictions, so alcoholism and drug use.

And this minister went round. He hadn't been able to get through to him on the phone, so he thought, I'll go round to the house. And this church member saw the minister walking up the drive through a window.

And as he saw him, he immediately shut the curtains and turned off all the lights. That weekend he relaxed with a binge of drink.

And he felt overwhelmed with shame. So, he tried to hide in the darkness. What guilt can do to you, isn't it?

[26 : 56] Force you into hiding. Darely face the gospel. Darely face grace. If it's too painful, he couldn't stand amazing grace.

Guilt can pull you into further sin, can't it? And further darkness. The devil says the only way that you can relieve this guilt is by doing more of the sin.

It gives you a bit of a hit of pleasure for a moment. But it just gets worse and worse, doesn't it? And embarrassment about sins and about going to Jesus for grace grows into avoidance.

And avoidance grows into resentment. And resentment grows into outright bitterness towards Jesus and his grace. And that was the road that Jesus was on.

But in that darkness of refusing Jesus, he discovered that there was just nothing there. There's nothing there. It's utterly empty.

[28 : 07] He couldn't stand Jesus. Neither could he stop Jesus. There was no pleasure found in spite of Jesus. Nothing to be gained whatsoever in refusing him.

So what about you? The only two outcomes in that room that night, and in this room tonight, there are only two outcomes on that. It was the grace of Jesus.

Those who were closest to Jesus, who had privileged access to Jesus, could either grow in greater devotion. Or to slowly walk on this path of growing bitterness.

Can you see that? Can I? Can you see that? Can you see yourself becoming harder and retreating into the dark more and more?

Can you see yourself wanting to open up the curtains and open up the doors and to let him in. Can you stand in this amazing grace?

[29 : 21] Shall we pray?