

JOHN 13:21-30
THE BETRAYER!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 13 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

Of this chapter, one writer had this to say regarding not only John chapter 13, but John chapters 13-17. He wrote,

Nowhere else is His speech at once so simple and so deep. Nowhere else have we the heart of God so unveiled to us. . . . The immortal words which Christ spoke in that upper chamber are His highest self-revelation in speech, even as the Cross to which they led up is His most perfect self-revelation in act.

- Alexander Maclaren

Keep in mind how close we are to the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Maybe only some 15 or 16 hours away!

Jesus is celebrating the Passover meal with His apostles, these twelve men that have been following Him and learning from Him for the past three years!

And, according to Luke 22:24, that even before the Passover meal began His disciples began to argue who would be the greatest in the Kingdom!

Can you imagine. You poured your life into these men. You are just hours away from being crucified. And now this! They are arguing who would be the greatest in the Kingdom.

And for Jesus, He kept on showing them what a life in Him was to be like. He rose up, took a pitcher of water and poured some into a basin, wrapping a towel around His waist for an apron and went around this table washing the feet of the disciples! (John 13:4-7)

In other words, as Jesus said in Matthew 20:25-28, “**... ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’**”

Jesus is basically telling them, “*Stop fighting over who is going to be the greatest in My Kingdom. If you want to be great in the Kingdom of God, learn to be a servant of all! Follow my example as I did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give My life as a ransom for many!*”

As we will see in our study this morning, Jesus is going to expose who the betrayer is! And we will deal with this, but keep in mind that Judas spent three years with Jesus and these men. He went out on mission trips. And yet, as we will see, he was never a believer!

To betray someone speaks of coming against them, delivering them into the hands of an enemy. It is not a good thing, and it hurts even more when it comes from family or friends.

Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

No treachery is worse than betrayal by a family member or friend.

Julius Caesar knew such treachery. Among the conspirators who assassinated the Roman leader on March 15, 44 was Marcus Junius Brutus.

Caesar not only trusted Brutus, he had favored him as a son. According to Roman historians, Caesar first resisted the onslaught of the assassins.

But when he saw Brutus among them with his dagger drawn, Caesar ceased to struggle and, pulling the top part of his robe over his face, asked the famous question, “You too, Brutus?”

- Today in the Word, August 13, 1992

I have called our study – ***THE BETRAYER!***

And you will see why.

I have also broken these verses down into two main points. They are,

A CHOICE TO MAKE – JOHN 13:21-26

PASSING THE POINT OF NO RETURN – JOHN 13:27-30

Let me share with you these words from Warren Wiersbe regarding the events taking place in these verses we will be looking at this morning.

We are told,

A dark shadow now fell across the scene as Jesus dealt with Judas, the traitor.

It is important to note that Judas was not a true believer; he was a hypocrite. He had never believed in Jesus (John 6:64-71), he had not been bathed all over (John 13:10-11), and he had not been among the chosen ones whom the Father gave to the Son (John 13:18 and 17:12).

How close a person can come to salvation and yet be lost forever! Judas was even the treasurer of the group (John 12:6) and was certainly held in high regard by his fellow disciples. .

..

From the very beginning, Jesus knew what Judas would do (John 6:64), but He did not compel him to do it.

Judas was exposed to the same spiritual privileges as the other disciples, yet they did him no good.

The same sun that melts the ice only hardens the clay.

In spite of all that our Lord said about money, and all of His warning about covetousness, Judas continued to be a thief and steal from the treasury.

In spite of all our Lord's warning about unbelief, Judas persisted in his rejection. Jesus even washed Judas' feet! Yet his hard heart did not yield.

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p278

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in John chapter 13, beginning in verse 21 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word and look at this topic – ***THE BETRAYER!***

JOHN 13

VERSES 21-26

Notice again what is said in John 13:21, that “**... He was troubled in spirit ...**”

The Greek word for “**troubled**” is ***TARASSO***, (tar-as'so) and carries with it the idea of being disturbed with various emotions. Like agitating water in a pool.

Morris put it like this, “***Though John pictures Jesus as in control of the situation he does not want us to think of Him as unmoved by the events through which He is passing.***”

You see, many just read these things and they don't see Jesus with any emotion. That He just went about and did what He needed to do with no feelings towards things.

We know that is not true. Jesus was not emotionally detached from what was going on around Him.

He knows what Judas will do and it is breaking His heart! He knew the destiny of Judas if he continued on this path and, like I have said, Jesus knew exactly what Judas would do.

Now with all that was before Jesus you would think He would be more concerned about that, but He was troubled for Judas' sake!

And think about this. Here we see Judas, His friend, was going to betray Him! Over and over in the Scriptures we see the compassion that Jesus had for people and especially for Judas.

And imagine doing this. On this very night that he would betray Jesus, Jesus seated him at the place of honor, and I believe He was giving Judas a chance to repent, not to go through with this betrayal, but that is not what he did.

But he did have a choice, Jesus gave it to him!

That is why I have called these verses – *A CHOICE TO MAKE!*

As I said last time, many have a picture of this Passover meal with Jesus and His men sitting at a table. The old Leonardo DaVinci painting of the Last Supper is ingrained in our minds but that is not how this meal went.

During a meal like this they would lay on the floor on their side leaning on their left elbow and eating with their right hand around this U-shaped table or triclinium.

Thus, John was to the right of Jesus and Judas to the left, the place of honor, and Peter was probably at the end of this U-shaped table and couldn't hear what was going on. That is why he asks John to ask Jesus who this person is that is going to betray Jesus!

And when Jesus said, “. . . Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.” they were troubled! (John 31:21)

Matthew gives to us that insight as he tells us in Matthew 26:22, “**And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, ‘Lord, is it I?’**”

What I find interesting is that they did not know who it was, and they were troubled that it could be one of them. You see, they did not suspect Judas!

I don’t think they believed it was a betrayal, like what Judas was going to do, but somehow one of them disappointed Jesus, said something that was not right, and they were concerned that it was one of them!

Now think about this for a minute.

How come no one knew it was Judas who was betraying Jesus? Because Jesus loved Him even at this point.

He showed the same love and compassion to the one who would betray Him as He did to the others.

Why?

He gave every opportunity for Judas to turn from his evil ways and receive Him.

You see, not only did Judas have the place of honor at the table, but he also received the bread dipped in the sop, which was designated to the person who was being honored.

And this was the sign that the person who dips with Him will be the one who betrays Jesus, but the other disciples didn’t pick-up on this.

And John, having his head close to the chest of Jesus, was probably the only one who heard what Jesus said and that is why Peter asks John the question. But I don’t think John was able to grasp all that Jesus meant by that, it was such a troubling thing to think about.

And, like I said, for Judas, Jesus had His head on the chest or near the chest of Judas. What love our Lord had for this man, even to the end!

Now let's play that out in our own lives. Are we willing to love someone who may betray us, or may do things we don't like, or even cause us some hurt, some pain?

Jesus gave Judas every opportunity to come to Him, but again, it was a choice that Judas had to make.

Let me share this with you and see if you are willing to love like we see the people in this story love.

We are told,

What would you do? You make the choice! Don't look for a punch line; there isn't one.

Read it anyway.

My question to all of you is: Would you have made the same choice.

At a fundraising dinner for a school that serves learning disabled children, the father of one of the students delivered a speech that would never be forgotten by all who attended.

After extolling the school and its dedicated staff, he offered a question: "When not interfered with by outside influences, everything nature does is done with perfection. Yet my son, Shay, cannot learn things as other children do. He cannot understand things as other children do. Where is the natural order of things in my son?"

The audience was stilled by the query. The father continued. "I believe, that when a child like Shay comes into the world, an opportunity to realize true human nature presents itself, and it comes, in the way other people treat that child."

Then he told the following story:

Shay and his father had walked past a park where some boys Shay knew were playing baseball. Shay asked, "Do you think they'll let me play?"

Shay's father knew that most of the boys would not want someone like Shay on their team, but the father also understood that if his son were allowed to play, it would give him a much-needed sense of belonging.

Shay's father approached one of the boys on the field and asked if Shay could play. The boy looked around for guidance and, getting none, he took matters into his own hands and said, "We're losing by six runs and the game is in the eighth inning. I guess he can be on our team and we'll try to put him in to bat in the ninth inning."

In the bottom of the eighth inning, Shay's team scored a few runs but was still behind by three. In the top of the ninth inning, Shay put on a glove and played in the outfield. Even though no hits came his way, he was obviously ecstatic just to be in the game and on the field, grinning from ear to ear as his father waved to him from the stands.

In the bottom of the ninth inning, Shay's team scored again. Now, with two outs and the bases loaded, the potential winning run was on base and Shay was scheduled to be next at bat.

At this juncture, do they let Shay bat and give away their chance to win the game?

Surprisingly, Shay was given the bat. Everyone knew that a hit was all but impossible cause Shay didn't even know how to hold the bat properly, much less connect with the ball.

However, as Shay stepped up to the plate, the pitcher moved in a few steps to lob the ball in softly so Shay could at least be able to make contact.

The first pitch came and Shay swung clumsily and missed. The pitcher again took a few steps forward to toss the ball softly towards Shay. As the pitch came in, Shay swung at the ball and hit a slow ground ball right back to the pitcher.

The pitcher picked up the soft grounder and could have easily thrown the ball to the first baseman. Shay would have been out and that would have been the end of the game.

Instead, the pitcher took the ball and turned and threw the ball on a high arc to right field, far beyond the reach of the first baseman.

Everyone started yelling, “Shay, run to first! Run to first!” Never in his life had Shay ever made it to first base. He scampered down the baseline, wide-eyed and startled. Everyone yelled, “Run to second, run to second!”

By the time Shay rounded first base, the right fielder had the ball. He could have thrown the ball to the second baseman for the tag, but he understood the pitcher’s intentions and intentionally threw the ball high and far over the third-baseman’s head.

Shay ran toward second base as the runners ahead of him deliriously circled the bases toward home.

Shay reached second base, the opposing shortstop ran to him, turned him in the direction of third base, and shouted, “Run to third!” As Shay rounded third, the boys from both teams were screaming, “Shay, run home!”

Shay ran to home, stepped on the plate, and was cheered as the hero who hit the “grand slam” and won the game for his team.

“That day,” said the father softly with tears now rolling down his face, “the boys from both teams helped bring a piece of true love and humanity into this world.”

- <https://bit.ly/3zzINV1>

What a wonderful story that is. But let’s make this even more difficult for us, because that is something that the Lord is showing us here.

Imagine if you knew someone, a friend who was going to betray you and you became aware of it, what would you do?

I have seen this so much and many times, and really most of the time it is a misunderstanding. But what would you do if someone truly was going to betray you?

Maybe you would distance yourself from that person. Maybe you would even confront them before they are able to carry out their betrayal. Maybe you would make some accusations against the person so whatever they do won't hold water in what they say about you!

And we can have many, many reasons why we would do any one of these things and we could even give spiritual reasons.

I even heard one person say that they would not forgive someone until that person first said that they were sorry!

Here's the thing, and I will use that old 1980's or 1990's phrase – ***WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?***

We don't have to guess because as we look at what took place the night of the Last Supper, as they were celebrating the Passover meal, just hours before Jesus would be betrayed by Judas, we see that Jesus loved this man.

Did Jesus know what this man was going to do?

Absolutely He did, even though the rest of the disciples did not know.

Now, in knowing that, then what was the point of Jesus sitting Judas in the place of honor and loving him?

Because Judas had a free will to either go through with His betrayal or turn to the Lord. He gave Judas every opportunity to do that, but in the end, it was a choice that he made!

Now, if our Master, if Jesus has done this, why are we refusing?

In other words, "**If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.**" John 13:17.

Now some may argue, "***Yes, but He is God and thus, He can do those things!***"

That is very true, but do you really think that God calls us to love others like He does and then does not equip us to love them?

Of course God has called us to love like He loves and He has also equipped us to love like He loves.

He has given to us His Spirit to guide us, to direct us, but like Judas, we have a choice to make. To follow the Holy Spirit's direction or to follow the flesh and do what we want!

Now some may be offended by that, but if you are not walking in the Spirit, where are you walking?

The only option is the flesh. And the only way we are going to be able to love like God is by surrender to His leading. Paul put it like this in Galatians 5:16-17, **“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”**

I don't think that many Christians realize the battle that goes on in our lives because we can love people that love us back, so we are good, or we think we are. But when they do something against us, well, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde! That is the problem.

We have to be careful and not let the flesh control our lives, but we are to let the Spirit of God guide us in all that we do. We can't accomplish this on our own!

And please understand that Judas, even though he looked like a believer for most of Jesus' ministry, he wasn't. He was a tare amongst the wheat. He was never saved!

And here's the thing. Just because you go to church, are involved in ministry and call Jesus **“Lord”** doesn't mean you're going to heaven someday - Judas is a prime example of that.

Salvation comes by admitting that you are a sinner and that your sins have separated you from God. And the only solution for salvation is through Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and man. That God became flesh, dwelt amongst us, went to the cross of Calvary and paid in full the penalty for our sins.

That means you admit you are a sinner. You believe in Jesus Christ. And you ask Him to not only forgive you of your sins, but, as I have said, to be Lord and Savior of your life!

James Montgomery Boice gives us this insight to what went on with Judas, how he missed eternal life and how many people today do the very same thing. He wrote,

How could Judas have missed learning what was truly valuable and giving up everything for it? I do not know, but I know that millions are doing just that today. Let me remind you that it is possible to be quite close to Jesus Christ, to sit in a Christian church listening to good sermons, to hear good Bible teaching on radio or television, to have Christian parents or Christian friends who live consistent and effective Christian lives and bear strong testimonies to the gospel of God's grace, and yet fail to love Christ and never reach the point of making a personal commitment to him as one's Lord and Savior.

You can be that close to Jesus Christ and yet be lost.

It would be a tragedy for that to be true in your case, but it is not necessary, especially if you have understood who Jesus is and what he came to earth to do. Like Mary, you need to look deeply into his eyes and learn to love him as the one who loves you and gave himself for your salvation.

- James Montgomery Boice

Make no mistake about it, the Devil loves to deceive people into thinking that they are saved, but they are not. And many times, you can tell just by listening to what they have to say.

They will tell you that they are a good person, that they go to church, that they do this or do that.

But again, that does not get you into heaven, Jesus does.

Deception, the worst kind, is self-deception!

Arthur W. Pink, who went home to be with the Lord way back in 1952, some 70 years ago, and listen to what he said about what was going on in his day, and it is worse today. He wrote,

Never were there so many millions of nominal Christians on earth as there are today, and never was there such a small percentage of real ones. . . . We seriously doubt whether there has ever been a time in the history of this Christian era when there were such multitudes of deceived souls within the churches, who verily believe that all is well with their souls when in fact the wrath of God abideth on them.

- Arthur W. Pink

Judas thought he was one of them, he just had a different philosophy of ministry. But Judas was deceived. And, in the end, he knew what he did and who he betrayed and all that he lost because the flesh was more important to him than Jesus was.

Many of you are familiar with William Tyndale. He was the first to translate the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into English, making a Bible for the common people.

But, in 1535 he was *betrayed* by a friend, taken prisoner to the castle of Vilford, and continued to work on his translation.

He was unable to finish his work because he was sentenced to die a heretic's death: strangulation and burning at the stake.

On October 6, 1536, William Tyndale cried out his last words, "***Lord, open the king of England's eyes!***" and then he died.

His prayer was answered within a year.

Here's the thing. No matter what, as we stay faithful to the Lord, no matter who comes against us, if we have that love like Jesus has, the work will be completed. Nothing is going to stop the Lord!

Now let me take a few minutes and look at this Passover meal or Passover Seder because in John 13:26 we see Jesus speaking of dipping a piece of bread or matzah to expose who the betrayer was going to be, and He gives it to Judas. Let me show you how this all plays out.

The meal begins as the father, or the head of the family takes the first of four cups of wine.

This first cup is the ***CUP OF SANCTIFICATION***.

He would raise this cup toward heaven and recite the prayer of sanctification or the Kiddush. The reason for this is to set this day apart to God. He then would drink from this cup and share it with those at the table.

Next would come ***THE WASHING OF HANDS***.

Here one of the family members would bring a pitcher of water, a bowl and a towel to each person at the table to wash his hands. This was symbolic of purification.

It would seem that it was here that Jesus girded Himself with a towel and washed the disciple's feet.

Then came ***THE GREEN VEGETABLE.***

This is known as the Karpas, usually parsley and it was dipped into salt water and eaten.

This symbolized the tears of pain and suffering that the Jewish people shed when they were slaves down in Egypt.

The next part of the Passover Seder was ***THE MIDDLE MATZAH.***

And this is interesting to me. You see, there were three sheets of Matzah used in the Passover meal.

But the middle matzah is taken and broken, and half is placed back, and the other half is hidden and will be brought back later on in the meal.

Keep in mind that the Matzah is pierced and scored, and it is a picture of the second person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ.

The other two pieces of Matzah represent God the Father and God the Holy Spirit! What is interesting is they don't know why there are three pieces, we do!

Then there are ***FOUR QUESTIONS THAT ARE ASKED.***

Here the tradition is that the youngest person asks the questions. And the questions deal with ***“Why is this night different from all other nights?”***

1. Why is it that on all other nights during the year we eat either bread or matzah, but on this night, we eat only matzah?

2. Why is it that on all other nights we eat all kinds of herbs, but on this night, we eat only bitter herbs?

3. Why is it that on all other nights we do not dip our herbs even once, but on this night, we dip them twice?

4. Why is it that on all other nights we eat either sitting or reclining, but on this night, we eat in a reclining position?

Now we don't see Jesus doing that with His men on this night, and it may have been overlooked.

It was at this point in the Seder that they would sing Psalm 113 and 114.

You see, Psalms 113 to 118 are the Hillel psalms. (The Psalms of praise) These were sung during the Passover feast but at this point they would only sing Psalm 113 and 114.

We now come to the second cup or the *CUP OF DELIVERANCE*.

It is at this point that the father or the head of the family will begin to answer those questions and tell the story of the Passover in Egypt.

From there we go to *THE DIPPING OF THE MATZAH*.

Prior to this everyone washes their hands a second time for a ceremonial cleansing.

Then each person must eat a piece of matzah dipped in the horseradish. Why do they do this?

The horseradish produces tears that remind them of their bitter years in Egypt, those years they were slaves.

And then they would dip the matzah into haroset. This is a paste-like mixture of apples (or other fruits), nuts and sweet wine or honey and represents the mortar used by the Israelite slaves when they laid bricks for Pharaoh's monuments. It was to remind them of God's eventual redemption out of their bitter slavery!

From there we move to *THE DINNER*.

And in Jesus' day they would have roasted lamb, served with bitter herbs and matzah.

Now, this dipping of the Matzah in the haroset is where we pick up our story in John as Jesus said in John 13:21, “. . . ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.’” and we are told in John 13:25-30, “Then, leaning back on Jesus’ breast, he said to Him, ‘Lord, who is it?’ Jesus answered, ‘It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it.’ And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, ‘What you do, do quickly.’ But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him. For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, ‘Buy those things we need for the feast,’ or that he should give something to the poor. Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night.”

And remember what Judas said to Jesus, “Rabbi, is it I?” (Matthew 26:25)

And Jesus replied back, “You have said it.” (Matthew 26:25)

And I don’t believe Jesus said these words loud enough for the other men to hear because no one thought that Judas was the betrayer, except, of course, Jesus!

And think about it. If they all knew what Judas was going to do, do you think Judas would have made it out of that room alive? I don’t think so. They would have laid hands on him and not in a good way!

So as we put this all together it looks like Judas left the meal before the Passover meal was shared or the dinner. And it also means that he left the room to carry out his betrayal before communion was instituted by Jesus.

And that makes sense. Communion is only for believers and Jesus would have never shared this with Judas!

Listen to what happens after Judas leaves here in Matthew 26:26, “**And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’**”

I believe it is here that the Passover meal is shared and Jesus institutes communion with His men! Again, Judas has already left to betray Jesus before this meal and communion begins.

Now remember those three matzah sheets and how I said that the middle piece was broken and hidden to be brought back later in the meal.

I believe that this represents Jesus who was broken and to return later, hidden in a sense for a time. So we see His first coming with Him being broken and then His second coming with the return of the hidden matzah.

I believe it is here that Jesus broke the bread and gave it to His disciples and said, “**Take, eat; this is My body.**”

Then he would take the cup, give thanks, and He gave it to them, saying, “**Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many remissions of sins.**”

It is here that they shared in the third cup or the *CUP OF REDEMPTION*.

With this cup Jesus was showing them that it was going to be His blood shed for us on the cross of Calvary, that would take away the sins of the world. The Lamb of God who has come to take away the sins of the world!

Now let me say this. There was a fourth cup and that would have been the *CUP OF PRAISE*.

Jesus did not drink of this cup that night. Interestingly enough, we are told in Matthew 26:29 what Jesus said, and He shows us when we will share in this cup. He said, **“But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”**

This cup of praise (sometimes called the *“cup of restoration”*; or *“the cup of the kingdom”*) will not be drunk until He drinks it with all of us in the Kingdom.

You see, the Passover meal was not completed that night, which tells me that one day we are all going to finish that Passover meal with Jesus!

From there they would have a ***CLOSING HYMN***.

In other words, they would sing from Psalm 118 and the Passover meal or Passover seder would be over.

We are told of that in Matthew 26:30, **“And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”**

Now let me get back to Judas, who sat at the place of honor. How did he get to sit in that place?

You could not just pick any place to sit that you wanted. In that Jewish culture you had to be invited to sit there by the host.

What that means is that Jesus invited Judas to recline there next to Him, in that place of honor.

Not only that, but to offer a person the bread after it had been dipped, as Jesus did with Judas, was a sign, in that culture, of deepest friendship.

Why would Jesus do something like that knowing what Judas was going to do to Him? How he was going to betray Him!

Again, even at that late hour, Jesus was showing Judas how much He loved him and was giving him a chance not to go through with this, with his betrayal or rejection of Jesus.

It's as if Jesus was saying to Judas, ***"I still want to be your friend and your Savior, it's not too late, but this is your last chance."***

You see, it was a choice for Judas just like it is a choice today for people. Jesus loves them, and died for them, but they must choose to come to Him – ***A CHOICE TO MAKE!***

Which brings us to our last point, and a very sad point for Judas – ***PASSING THE POINT OF NO RETURN!***

VERSES 27-30

Notice what is happening here. Jesus dipped the matzah bread into the haroset, and Judas sealed his fate of rejecting Jesus and what happens next?

SATAN ENTERS JUDAS?

It truly is as Jude said, **"... for whom the gloom of eternal darkness has been reserved forever."** (Jude 1:13, The Amplified Bible)

And the key for me regarding Judas is found in John 13:30, **"... And it was night."**

Yes, it was dark outside but there is more to it than that.

It was dark in the heart of Judas as he rejected God and surrendered his life to Satan!

The day of God's grace for Judas was over as he passed the point of no return!

I don't know about you, but as I read this, I can't help but feel sad for this man, for Judas!

There was no longer any hope for Judas to repent and be saved, as I have said. The opportunity was over; the day of God's grace had come to an end and the night of eternal darkness had begun and would culminate in the outer darkness of hell forever.

I think you can clearly see that for Judas, at this point, he passed the point of no return, he could no longer be saved. He committed what the Bible calls the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, and Satan entered him.

Now for some of you, you may wonder what this blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is, and maybe some of you may be wondering if you have even committed this blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

So I want to take a few minutes and explain it to you because I don't want you to be confused. And it is also important for us to understand because, like I have said, Judas committed this.

Let's read Matthew 12:22-32 to get a full picture of when Jesus said this, the context of this. We are told, **“Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed and said, ‘Could this be the Son of David?’ Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, ‘This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.’ But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad. Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the**

blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.”

Here we see that this man who was demon-possessed, blind and mute was brought to Jesus and Jesus healed him.

As the multitudes saw this they were amazed and they said, “**Could this be the Son of David?**”

Why did they say that?

Because they knew what the prophets said of the Messiah, the Son of David, and they are witnessing these things come to pass before their eyes. They believed that Jesus is the Messiah because, who else could do these things? And the answer is simple, “***No one!***”

Then we see the response of the religious leaders, the Pharisees and they were not amazed, they were angered and came up with some preposterous allegations that Jesus was casting out demons by the power of the Devil, Beelzebub!

But Jesus is going to show how crazy that is. I don’t think they thought this through enough, but Jesus will help them out on this one and it will lead to something very serious for them!

We are told here in Matthew 12:25 that “**Jesus knew their thoughts . . .**”

Being God He knows all things and Jesus knew what they were trying to do, and He shows them how foolish their reasoning is.

Point one in this section is simple.

If a kingdom is divided against itself, then it won’t stand. That should just make sense. Thus, why would Satan cast out this demon, he would be defeating himself!

Then Jesus asks them another simple question, “**And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? . . .**”

You see, the Pharisees supported those Jewish exorcists who went around casting out demons.

Now here is the second point.

If Jesus is casting out demons by the power of Satan, then what about these men that you are supporting!

You see, what they refused to see was that Jesus cast out demons by the power of God, and thus the Kingdom of God had come. It was right in their midst! Point number 2!

The third point is found in verse 29, “**Or how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.**”

The idea here is that before you can plunder the strong man, defeat him, you must bind him, and that is done through prayer.

And ultimately, here in this verse we see that Jesus is the One who binds the strong man or Satan. That happens as soon as we come to Christ, that strong man is bound, and we are delivered! Thus, there is nothing that is in our life that must stay under Satan’s control. The Lord will see to that if we surrender to Him!

And for those who like to sit on the fence in regard to their faith, you can’t do that! Not because I said so, but Jesus did!

You see, there is no neutral position. You are either for Jesus or you are not! Here’s the thing, you don’t have to oppose Jesus to be against Him, you only have to ignore Him!

Listen to what Paul says in Romans 5:9-10, “**Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.**”

Notice, if you are not with Jesus, you are His enemy!

And thus, Jesus is saying that these religious people were His enemies because they were not with Him!

And it is after all of this we deal with this very difficult passage for some.

In fact, it has brought great fear to believers and if you are a believer, it should not do that.

Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees, the Jewish religious leaders who have rejected Him and they were getting close to this danger zone.

But let’s take this one step at a time.

First of all, we see that Jesus tell us “**. . . every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men.**” Matthew 12:31.

That is a good thing. In fact, that is a great thing! There is no sin out there that will keep you out of Heaven except one and we will deal with that in a minute, it is called blasphemy against the Spirit!

The word “**sin**” in the Greek is *HAMARTIA*, (ham-ar-tee’-ah) and this word speaks of the full gamut of sin you might say.

It is missing the mark and that mark is perfection. It was an archery term and the bull’s eye was the mark of perfection.

None of us make it, none of us are perfect, we fall far short and yet, Jesus tells us that He will forgive us of our sins!

Then we see this word, “**blasphemy**” and even though this word speaks of sin, the way it is used here is that blasphemy is worse.

It is the Greek word *BLASPHEMIA*, (blas-fay-me’-ah) and this word speaks of open defiance, speaking evil against God or defaming Him, mocking Him.

Sin is not to be taken lightly, not at all and yet, Jesus tells us that we can be forgiven of our sins, of our blasphemy.

And as true as that is, and it is true, Jesus will forgive every sin, every blasphemy against Him *EXCEPT*, “**blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.**”

Why can everything else be forgiven except this? What is so big about this that a person can’t be forgiven, they can’t be saved if they commit it?

Please understand that this is not speaking of swearing or taking the Lord’s name in vain, divorce. These are not unpardonable sins even though some like to make them!

And I do understand that there are some Christian’s who feel that they have committed this sin but if you are worried about it then you have not committed it!

Then what in the world is this blasphemy of the Holy Spirit?

First of all, let’s look at the work of the Holy Spirit.

In John 15:26 we are told, “**But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.**”

The Holy Spirit’s main ministry is to testify of Jesus, He is to bring people to Jesus!

That means blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is speaking of rejecting the work of the Holy Spirit and that work is to draw men to Jesus.

In other words, if you reject Jesus, you are committing blasphemy of the Holy Spirit because you are rejecting the work that He has come to do, draw you to Jesus and there is salvation only found in Him!

When you say “*No*” to Jesus you are lost in your sins.

Peter put it like this in Acts 4:12, “**Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**”

That means when that testimony of Jesus is fully and finally rejected, one has truly blasphemed the Holy Spirit and essentially called Him a liar in respect to His testimony about Jesus.

The religious leaders were close to this. You see, these religious leaders saw the miracles of God, the power of God working through Jesus, and they were now rejecting it and saying it was coming from the devil, and they were very close if not committing blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

In fact, in John 12:39 we are told of the Jewish religious leaders, “**Therefore they could not believe . . .**”

Why could they not believe?

The reason is simple; they had rejected the truth that was before them. They had passed the point of no return. They could no longer be saved.

Think about an airplane. It has so much fuel in it. As it is flying across the sky there is a point where it can't go back because it won't have enough fuel, it must continue on to its destination. That is the idea here, they have passed that point of no return and they could not go back, they could not be saved!

So there is only one sin that will keep you out of heaven, which should bring great comfort to every person on this planet! And that sin is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit or rejecting the work that the Spirit of God is doing, drawing you to Jesus! If you reject Jesus, you have committed the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit!

And as you look at what happened to Judas, it just shows us that fallen man needs more than an example and even more than good teaching. Judas had the best example and the greatest teacher and was still lost.

You must repent and receive Jesus to be your Lord and Savior, or you are lost!

Now think about what happened here. Judas left the Light of the world, Jesus Christ, and he went out into the darkness of this world where the prince of the power of the air, Satan dwells!

You see, it was not only night outside, dark outside, but in the heart of Judas as he prepares to sell Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, something he would never get to enjoy, but it was so important to him now!

How often people do the same today, they sell their soul to the Devil thinking they are getting something in return, and in the end, it is short lived and deadly!

For Judas, he saw the love of Jesus for him, but he just rejected that, just like many do today, as I have said.

Make no mistake about it, God's Spirit will not always strive with man. There comes a point in every unbeliever's life when they have rejected Jesus and the light of the gospel so much, that God withdraws His offer of salvation, and they are sentenced to eternal darkness.

Several years ago they had a Vietnam veterans parade in Chicago. Part of the commemoration was a mobile Vietnam wall like the one in Washington, DC, bearing the names of all the soldiers who had died there.

One newscaster asked a vet why he had come all the way to Chicago to visit this memorial and to participate in this parade.

The soldier looked straight into the face of the reporter and with tears flowing down his face he said, ***“Because of this man right here.”***

As he talked, he was pointing to the name of a friend whose name is etched in the wall. And as he pointed to the name, he traced the letters of his friend’s name in the wall. And he continued to answer the reporter by saying, ***“This man right here gave his life for me. He gave his life for me.”***

As the news clip ended, that sobbing soldier simply let the tears flow without shame as he stood there continuing to trace the name of his friend with his finger.

There is no doubt about how much love this man had for his friend who gave his life for him.

And as wonderful as a story as that is, there is another who gave His life for the sins of the world!

God became flesh, dwelt among us, went to the cross of Calvary and paid in full the penalty for our sins and we truly did not deserve it, not at all. And yet He gave His life for us so that we can live with Him.

Each of you have a choice to make this morning on who you will serve. Many and maybe most of you have already given your life to Jesus and that is great. Never lose sight of what He has done for you.

For those who have not made that commitment to Christ, today is the day of salvation, don't pass it up.

You see, there does come a point in a person's life, like in Judas, where you keep passing up Jesus and you can end up passing the point of no return and you will spend eternity apart from Him!

But God is calling, and He loves you more than you will ever know.

I pray for all of us, that as we leave here today, we would leave with tremendous joy knowing what God has done for us and the life He has given to us!