

The Gathering at The First Lord's Table

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 18 February 2024

Preacher: Pastor Steve Hersey

[0 : 0 0] Go with me to John chapter 13. John 13. Without a doubt, one of the best known representations of The Last Supper is Leonardo da Vinci's painting.

You can see behind me. It represents the exact moment that Jesus said, one of you will betray me. And you notice what happened.

The disciples start talking amongst themselves. And you know from the story, they were talking about the fact that he had used that word betray. Is it I? Is it I?

Am I going to do it? Here's the 12 men most closely associated with Jesus during his life and ministry. And he says, one of you, he's going to betray me.

The scene is the night of Passover. Jesus is surrounded by his disciples. He's breaking bread with them. It's his final meal with them at Passover.

[1 : 1 2] And there's all kinds of reactions taking place in that painting behind us. As his disciples, they kind of divide up into four different groups of three each. Talking amongst themselves.

Is it I? You notice Jesus sits alone there in that that portrayal. Each of the disciples expressing their feelings.

They're talking about what's going on. Read with me in passage. John chapter 13, beginning at verse 21. It says this. When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit and testified and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you that one of you shall betray me.

Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spoke. Now, they were leaning on Jesus' bosom, one of his disciples, whom God, Jesus loved.

Simon Peter, therefore, beckoned to him that he should ask him, ask him who it should be of whom he spake. He then, lying on Jesus' breast, said unto him, Lord, who is it?

[2 : 2 1] Jesus answered, He it is to whom I shall give a sop when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.

And after the sop, Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus to him, That thou doest do quickly. Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him.

For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, by those things we have need of against the feast. Or that he should go, should give something to the poor.

He then, having received the sop, went immediately out, and it was night. Let's have a word prayer. Father, I pray tonight, day, that you would help us to understand exactly what it is you want us to learn from this.

Lord, those men were there, they all had different things going on in their lives, they all had different things that they were facing, they all had different thoughts, but Lord, you brought them together this one spot, where Jesus is going to teach them to do this in remembrance of me.

[3 : 31] But Lord, at this particular moment, there's a crisis in their lives. Who is it going to be that would betray him? Lord, help us this morning to understand that we all have different things going on in our lives, but the last thing we want to do is betray Jesus.

We want to live for him. We want to show others. We want to remember him. So Lord, I pray that you would just open our hearts and minds today to what you have for us.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. This last Passover celebration that Jesus is going to celebrate with his disciples, he starts this ordinance that we practice today.

The Lord's table, the Lord's supper, communion, communion, whatever words you use for it, this is what Jesus instituted at this moment as he's talking with these disciples.

And we read John's account of this. We think about those who were gathered there for that first communion. They were gathered around the table that night, and each one, as I prayed, had their particular needs.

[4 : 36] They had their particular thoughts. They had their particular things that were going on, things about their character. And as they face what's going on, they have questions. Each one of us are facing different things in our life.

Each one of us has our own particular thoughts. We have our own characters. We have our own needs. And as we gather around this table today, we'll have questions.

We have things. But we need to stop and reflect and remember who this is. remember what Jesus did for us. We should unite around Jesus Christ.

So I want to look at some things about these guys this morning that are in the picture behind me. And I want to look at their thoughts about this table. What were they thinking about?

Number one, there were those for whom the Lord's table meant nothing. Hard to believe, isn't it? But there were those for whom the Lord's table meant absolutely nothing.

[5 : 41] Judas is there. He decided to betray Jesus. He decided for 30 pieces of silver he was going to go and sell Jesus out.

And here's Jesus making an appeal after an appeal after an appeal to Judas to get him to repent of what he is about to do. But to Judas it meant nothing.

Jesus went so far that first of all Jesus gave Judas a special privilege. A special privilege. The fact that Jesus allowed Judas to be present on that evening.

Judas is going to go out and betray him and sell him for 30 pieces of silver. He's going to go out he's going to get with the leaders the Jewish leaders and he's going to tell them where Jesus is going to be and he tells them and betrays him.

And Jesus knows all this is going to happen. Yet he allows Judas to be there at that dinner.

[6 : 47] You know if the other disciples had known what Judas was going to do he probably wouldn't have left there in one piece if they had known.

But Jesus knew what he was going to do. he knew he was going to betray him and yet he extends an opportunity to Judas to repent of what he's about to do. Jesus gave Judas a special position.

In Jesus' day this painting shows them all seated around the table that was probably not the way they did it. In Jesus' day a lot of times they would recline on couches or mats and things and they would be basically leaning on their left hand reaching out and bringing food to them with their right hand.

And so doing that you can see that it mentions John doesn't say John but it's talking about John him being close where he could ask Jesus questions says he was leaning upon his breast he was close by him so if Jesus' head was here John's head was like here as they reached out so they staggered around to be able to reach the food.

So John's right there and Peter says John ask him who he's talking about ask him what's going on so John's right there where's Judas? Apparently right here on his left side the place on the left of the host was considered the place of the highest honor it was reserved for your most intimate friends that's the position Jesus allowed Judas to have that night he was right there next to Jesus that place of honor giving Judas a chance again to repent of what he had done Jesus gave Judas a special portion a special portion you know he says when I dip it in the sop and whoever I hand it to well to hand it to somebody was a special thing verse behind me from Ruth

[9 : 04] Ruth 2 verse 14 Boaz said unto her at mealtime come thou hither and eat the bread and dip thy morsel in the vinegar and she sat beside the reapers and he reached that word reached means handed her parched corn and she did eat and was suffice and left Boaz grabbed food and gave her specifically a portion he was showing honor to her he had invited her to come he was showing the fact that she was important to him Jesus is doing the same with Judas he's handing the bread to Judas giving him a special portion you know it's ironic despite one attempt after another to get Judas to repent of what he's about to do Judas persisted in going the direction he was going to go he was in rebellion against Jesus and he kept going that direction you know we look at that and we say how dumb can you be but we really shouldn't be too hard on Judas in there time after time after time

God gives us ability to repent God gives us ability to get things right with him and we don't do it we go our own way doing our own thing even though God has blessed in so many different ways remember last week I talked about the fact that Judas had gone out with the two by two with the other disciples when they went out into the cities he got to perform miracles he got to see God do great things he was a part of that and yet he's going to betray Jesus that night God has allowed us to be part of many wonderful things and yet so often we turn against him but you know the great thing about God he doesn't give up he's always out there throughout scripture he's revealed himself as a seeker

John chapter 4 verse 23 but the hour cometh and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the father in spirit and in truth for the father seeketh such to worship him he's looking down from heaven psalm 14 2 the lord looketh down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand and seek God in 2nd chronicles it talks about the fact that his eyes are running to and fro over the whole earth and when Jesus came what did Jesus do Luke chapter 19 verse 10 for the son of man came to seek and to save that which is lost God is always looking for those of us who want to follow him he goes even deeper into this I didn't put the verses up but in Luke chapter 15 you remember that chapter it has three different parables in it

Jesus left the 99 to go find the one the lady in the house when looking for the one coin the father kept going to the top of the hill looking for the prodigal son who would return he gave Judas every opportunity to come back to him throughout scripture we find God doing that over and over and over again it's part of his nature and what should startle us is the fact that here's a completely omniscient God self-sufficient God who owns everything needs nothing but he's always seeking for something and that something is us he's always there looking for us it's just an amazing thing to think about what God does so here's Judas he's the one at this this last supper at this

Lord's table and it means absolutely nothing to him second there are those for whom the Lord's table meant examination look at verse 24 Simon Peter therefore beckoned unto him that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake he wants to know he's examining he's looking around he's looking at himself you know he says John ask him who it is ask him why who it is he's looking for I think Peter had some doubts about himself that night Peter had some doubts about himself where he was going you know Shakespeare's old me thinks thou dost protest too much Peter's too interested is it going to be me is he talking about me you know later that night we see that Peter had good question a good motive to question himself because later that night what happens

[14 : 43] Peter's there in the court he denies Christ three times he had to stop and he had to examine himself take a look at himself problem was Peter was a little too too focused on himself he's questioning whether he has proved his love to Christ or not later on he's going to deny Christ he's going to receive Christ forgiveness his focus needed to be on Christ and Christ alone when Jesus and Peter reunite what is Jesus instruction to him follow me don't worry about anything else follow me you know that was kind of a common problem for Peter wasn't it taking his eyes off of Jesus in Matthew 14 it's the story of the walking on the water

Peter gets off the boat he goes into the water he's walking on the water and then what does he do he takes his eyes off of Jesus he starts looking at what's going around and he starts to sink Jesus reaches down and lifts him back up how often have you heard me say looking unto Jesus we take our eyes off of Jesus we always get in trouble we take our eyes off of Jesus we always go in the wrong way Paul says in 1st Corinthians chapter 11 part of what we usually read for our communion time he says let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup we need to take time while we're here to examine ourselves would would we be ones who would betray him would we be ones who would deny him would we be ones who might not follow him as we should he says take time to examine yourself see where you're at number three there were those for whom the

Lord's table meant love look at verse 23 now there was leaning on Jesus bosom one of his disciples whom Jesus loved that's usually the way John would refer to himself John never named himself if he was ever in the story he usually named himself as the one Jesus loved so again as I said Jesus is here reclining eating his food John is probably here but John can easily ask him the question unlike Peter who said I love Jesus I love him with all of my heart I love him in so many different ways and they wound up denying him John says he loves me he understood the difference the fact that Jesus loved him gave him the position he had the fact that

Jesus loved him gave him the salvation that he had he didn't need to prove his love for Jesus Jesus had already proved his love for John and was about later that night and the next day prove even more how much he loved John John didn't know anything about what was about to happen but Jesus was about to demonstrate his love for him in such a great way Jesus when he went to that cross demonstrated his love for John his love for Peter his love for the other disciples his love for you and me when he went to that cross he demonstrated his love in such a great way and John wrote about that later John wrote in 1st John chapter 4 verse 10 he says there in his love not that we love God but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins propitiation appeasement three weeks if I can fit it in one more week maybe he'll have it propitiation the appeasement of our sin

John is one whose love was strong it was sure he did not question himself he didn't want to know who is it who is he talking about John never questioned that was not in his mindset anywhere he did not need to ask his heart was fixed on Jesus his heart was steady it was there and he tells us again in 1 John chapter 4 verse 19 why that was so we love him because he first loved us because he loved me that's why I'm sure it's not me because I understand who he is and what he has done number four there were those for whom the Lord's table meant loyalty there were 12 people there that day 12 disciples in Jesus 13 people three of those disciples are named

[20 : 11] Judas Peter and John what about the other nine what about them were they not important absolutely not they were loyal they were faithful they were obedient they were ready to be involved in the advancement of the cause of Jesus Christ no matter what you know if you read through history you find out all nine of those men died martyrs deaths they went out from there and they proclaimed Jesus Christ and they wound up dying for it but they were so loyal that they were ready to do whatever God asked them to do you know they were ready to pay the ultimate price you know even though we may not recognize it God has so much for us we need to be loyal to him sometimes things come in our lives and we question and we wonder he says no trust me all things work together for good to them that love

God to them who are called he doesn't say everything's going to be good but he says everything is for good everything's going to happen for a reason now we consider these disciples who are gathered around this table who do you most closely identify with of those ones I have up there means nothing the time to examine myself the time to love God for what he has done for us is a time to be loyal we'll follow him anywhere but there's one more person there look in the middle of that table behind me Jesus is there by himself there is one for whom the Lord's table meant forgiveness Jesus was there about to go to the cross so that they could have forgiveness of sin and he institutes this communion

Lord's table and he says do this in remembrance of me remember what remember that I gave my life remember that I rose again from the dead remember that I brought forgiveness of sin to you and that you can have salvation he gave his life so we could be forgiven so we could have new life the elements of the Lord's table they remind us of the fact that he of what he did the cup for the blood the bread for the body Jesus gave himself for us that's what we're here to remember today when he says do this in remembrance of me that's what we are to remember death burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ because also in that passage in first Corinthians he talks about till I come he's still alive he is still ready to come he is still watching out for us he's still watching over us now as we look at this this morning

I want you to think about it for a second here's this table all of these men like I said had their own needs their own personalities their own issues yet he brought them all together for this table there's a song we usually use for an invitation song but I think it fits this morning for those of us who are here this morning we come to this table like I said we're all different but as we come to this table come just as you are just as you are be ready to follow him and to serve him no matter what I want us to stand we're going to sing just as I am this morning he says it says in the song it talks about coming broken coming wounded coming desperate doing all those different things go ahead and stand he says you do all of these different things and there are people here this morning who are wounded there are people here this morning who are desperate he says you come just as you are you come to this table and as you come to this table do it in remembrance of me because I have given my all for you

I've done everything that you need for salvation I've done everything are you ready to follow this this morning and do this to follow him this morning