
Day 1

Learn: Prayerfully read John 13.18-19. Jesus and his twelve apostles were sharing the Passover supper together. Jesus had washed their feet and told them they should follow his example with each other. He chose them to be his apostles, though he knew that one of them would betray him. Betrayal by someone who shared your bread [benefited from your hospitality] was especially offensive in this culture. Jesus said this would fulfill a prophecy in Psalm 41.9. The quotation literally is, “The one who eats my bread has lifted up his heel against me.” It is unclear exactly what lifting the heel meant, but obviously it represented aggression, which is betrayal if coming from an intimate friend or guest. This psalm was written by David, about his own life. But because the Messiah [Christ] would be the ultimate Davidic king [descended from David and heir to his throne], God placed prophetic hints about the Messiah in the life and writings of David. David suffered and was betrayed as part of the path God chose for him which would bring him to glory as God’s chosen king. The same was true for Jesus, a thousand years later.

The apostles already were finding it difficult to understand Jesus’ hints about his pending death, which made no sense to their conception of him as the Messiah-savior and Son of God. Now Jesus told them betrayal was part of it. The teaching he gave them in the last hours of his life would help them stay together amidst their trauma and confusion after the crucifixion and help prepare them for the revelation of the resurrection and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. Jesus showed he knew what was coming – betrayal, arrest, and death – and said this was part of the prophetic plan of God the Father and the conscious decision of Jesus [who chose Judas to be an apostle]. This was so their faith would endure, so they could believe in his self-identification with “I AM,” the one true God.

Reflect: The next day, Jesus would be arrested, tried, beaten, and killed. He chose to spend his last hours preparing his friends and praying. What would you do in your last hours? How does what Jesus did show his love for his friends? What comes to mind when you consider that Jesus chose Judas to be one of the twelve even though he knew all along it was Judas who would betray him? Why did Jesus do that?

Day 2

Learn: Prayerfully read John 13.18-20. 13.20 begins with “ἀμὴν ἀμὴν” [ah-MANE ah-MANE = truly truly], one way Jesus indicated an important teaching. English translations mention “receiving,” “accepting,” or “welcoming” in 13.20. The Greek verb λαμβάνω [lahm-BAH-no] means to take or receive, but here it has a nuance of receiving in the sense of accepting one’s authority or respecting. It also means to receive in the sense of relating. To respect and relate to God the Father, we have to respect and relate to the Son he sent; to respect and relate to the Son of God, we have to respect and relate to the apostles he sent out with authority.

If Jesus is the divine Son of God, if he really is of the same essence as God the Father, the great “I AM,” God of the Jewish scriptures [our Old Testament], then what he said in 13.20 is logical. God the Father sent the Son of God with authority in the Father’s name, and the Son sent the apostles with authority in Christ’s name. Only the apostles were authorized by Jesus to determine correct doctrine and write scripture, only the apostles were authorized to launch and shape the church. Even today, all of us [even pastor/elders in charge of a local church] must “receive” the apostles Christ sent to “receive” Christ and thus to “receive” God the Father.

Reflect: How do we receive the apostles today? How should you show respect for the authority of the apostles? Why do you have to relate to Jesus to relate to God the Father? How do we show Christ’s authority in our lives?

Day 3

Learn: Prayerfully read John 13.21-30. The disciple Jesus loved is John, the author of this gospel [see 21.20-25]. This is not arrogance, but wonder that someone like himself could be so loved as to be in the most intimate circle of Jesus [John was one of three apostles who had special experiences with Jesus when he was alive]. The evil betrayal of Judas, though foreseen, troubled Jesus in spirit. The apostles were confused. At the feast, they would be lying on cushions around a low U-shaped table, leaning on their left elbows, with their heads toward the table and their feet away. To the right of Jesus, John’s head would be close to Jesus’ chest. The terminology might also indicate their

relational intimacy. Peter gave John a signal to ask about what Jesus said, so “without further ado” [it says in Greek], John leaned back to Jesus and asked. Jesus and John must have spoken quietly, since the others continued to be confused about what was happening. When Judas left, he was carrying the ministry money box which was his responsibility, so the others thought he was leaving to keep the custom of giving to the poor at Passover or to procure what was needed for the rest of the weeklong festival [either way it was an abrupt exit during a meal!].

As part of the meal, they dipped bread in a bowl with a sauce of dates, raisins, sour wine, and bitter herbs. Jesus’ kindness toward Judas did not break Judas’ hardness of heart, instead Judas hardened his resolve to betray Jesus. We see here that while this was a sinful human act from a sinful human nature, it also was an orchestrated Satanic attack against Judas and [through him] Jesus. We saw before that Judas already was under Satan’s influence [13.2; Luke 22.3], but now the process was complete and Judas was ready to act. John mentioned it was night as symbolism for the spiritual darkness in which Judas walked and the time of evil that was coming.

Reflect: What do you think Judas was thinking at this point? Would his betrayal which led to Jesus’ death be any less evil if it was all his own doing and not prompted by Satan? Is he any less sinful for being affected by Satan? What does this imply about your own sins? In one sense, since Jesus died to pay the penalty for your sins, every sin you commit is a betrayal that sent Jesus to his death. Prayerfully reflect on that and see if it motivates you to obey.

Day 4

Learn: Prayerfully read John 13.31-33. In 13.31, Jesus uses a past tense verb to speak about something that is about to happen in the future as if it has already happened because it is certain to happen: God the Father would glorify the Son and thus the Father also would be glorified. This glorification was imminent: the hour had already come [12.23] and now the process was begun for the sacrificial death-resurrection-ascension of Jesus. In this event, the Son of God would be glorified by fulfilling perfect obedience to God the Father, fulfilling his mission, attaining honor from God the Father and earning honor from all the universe, powerfully saving people, defeating evil, and returning to his all powerful position in Heaven. All this would glorify God the Father, who had sent the Son to minister in his name, and the Father would honor the Son for doing so. Jesus told the apostles they could not come where he was going. In the immediate sense, this was because he would ascend to Heaven while they remained on earth; yet they would reflect his glory and be given new spiritual life through his sacrifice and resurrection.

Reflect: Jesus deserves supreme honor from us; how should we show him honor? What adjustments will you make to honor him more in your life?

Day 5

Learn: Prayerfully read John 13.34-35. To love others was not a new commandment [see Leviticus 19.18; Mark 12.28-33], but Jesus said they should love each other *as Jesus loved them* [as exemplified in the foot washing and the crucifixion it symbolized]. They were to love each other sacrificially, unconditionally. Only Jesus could offer people salvation, but his followers were to show the same love to each other such that they would be sacrificially serving each other [like washing feet in that day] and even be willing to die for each other. This new standard reflects the love the Father and Son have for each other and both have for us, and is designed to bring us to a level of unity in the church that reflects the unity of the Father and Son and the unity we aspire to have with them. We love in response to the love given to us by God through Christ, which prompts gratitude, provides our example to follow in obedience, and results in our inner rebirth and transformation in character so we *can* love. Christ-like love for each other in the church is one of our greatest identifications with Christ, our most powerful evangelistic tool, our strongest attraction for those not in the community. Our love projects God’s love and grace and light.

Reflect: Some churches teach that you can become perfect in your love, but this is ridiculous, for none of us can match Christ’s standard. The more we recognize the depth of our own sin, the more we realize the depth of Christ’s love and the higher his standard for us appears; and this realization in turn helps us see even more the depth of our selfishness, our sinfulness, our distance from perfection. Scholar D.A. Carson says this commandment is simple enough for a toddler to memorize and appreciate, but profound enough that the most mature believers are repeatedly embarrassed at how poorly they comprehend it and put it into practice. How could you love better?