

## **When Jesus Says Goodbye**

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John: The Jesus I Never Knew

John 13

A few weeks ago I had the privilege of conducting the funeral for a member of our church, Donna Kanning. Donna was about 70 or 71 years old and had lived very devotedly to Christ for the last 34 years of her life. Donna enjoyed a rare intimacy with Christ. People who were with her knew that there was something different about Donna. She was one of those people who really could hear from God. And she was one of those people who, when you were with her, you felt that you had been spending some time with Christ.

Well, Donna was stricken with a very aggressive form of cancer and it became evident a couple of months before she died that she would, indeed, die apart from a miraculous intervention by God. What was really interesting was that by all accounts Donna seemed to have a greater impact for Christ in the last month of her life than she did in the previous 34 years. Here was a very devoted Christian, one who was sold out to God and to his purposes, yet something happened in the last year of her life. It was as if God gave her words and her person added weight. Many people who came in contact with Donna during the last months said that they would never be the same as a result of spending an hour with her while she was dying.

There's an old saying that last words are lasting words. Recently there have been several book-length studies simply cataloging the last words of famous people. Some of the last words of murderers before they were executed are amusing in a rather macabre way.

James Rogers, who was facing a firing squad, was asked if he had one last request. He said, "Why yes, I do have a last request: a bullet-proof vest."

When James French was facing the electric chair they asked him if he had anything to say. He said, "I see it now, the headlines tomorrow, 'French Fries.'"

George Appel, before he faced the electric chair, said to his executioners, "Well, gentlemen, now you're really going to see a baked apple."

President John Adams, who had an on-again, off-again friendship with Thomas Jefferson that lasted half a century, died exactly 50 years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence. John Adams died July 4, 1826. His last recorded words were, "Thomas Jefferson lives." What he didn't know was that Thomas Jefferson had died earlier that day. Two of the leaders of the Revolution – one the main driving force behind the Continental Congress, John Adams, and the other the draftsman of the Declaration of Independence - died exactly one-half century after America declared independence.

George Gipp, whom Ronald Reagan played in the movie version of the life of Knute Rockne, was a University of Notre Dame football player, who led Notre Dame to unbeaten seasons in 1919 and 1920. In December 1920 he contracted pneumonia after a serious throat infection and died at the height of his college football fame. On his deathbed he told Knute Rockne, "Someday, when things look real tough for Notre Dame, ask the boys to go out there and win one for the Gipper." Eight years later at the end of a terrible season, Notre Dame was about to play the Army team. Trailing at half time, Rockne gathered the players and for the first time ever related Gipp's word in an attempt to inspire the team. Rockne said, "I've never used Gipp's request until now. This is that game. It's up to you. Let's go out there, boys, and win one for the Gipper." The team went on to beat Army by the score of 12-6.

In the movie "Gods and Generals" there is a powerful scene involving the death of Confederate General Stonewall Jackson in the battle of Chancellorsville. Jackson took about a week to die. He was told by his doctor on a Sunday that the end was near. He looked up from his bed and said, "That is good. I always wanted to die on a Sunday." He kissed his wife and baby daughter goodbye and then drifted in and out of consciousness. Occasionally he would revert back to ordering some military action, "Order General Hill to prepare for action." "Pass the infantry to the front." And then Stonewall Jackson grew still. Right before he breathed his last he said, "Let us cross over the river and rest under the shade of the trees."

My all time favorite last words were those of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism in England in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He lived and died as an Anglican pastor. Six days

before his death he wrote this wonderful letter to a member of Parliament, William Wilberforce, urging him to work for the abolition of slavery. Tens of thousands of people were converted under Wesley's ministry. When he died, well up into his 80's, he was surrounded by his supporters. As he lay in his bed, it was as if he was seeing the heavens open. Three times he shot straight up and pointed at the ceiling crying out, "Best of all, God is with us. Best of all, God is with us. Best of all, God is with us."

Today, we are in the home stretch of our study of the gospel of John. We are going to look at the beginning of what has been termed the farewell discourse of Jesus – words that Jesus spoke the night before he died. Last words are lasting words. There are no words more lasting than the final words of Jesus. I've called today's talk, "When Jesus says Good-bye." John 13:1-10:

*It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later*

*you will understand.” “No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” “Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!” Jesus answered, “A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.”*

John 13 begins for us the second act of the gospel of John. The first act is often called the Book of Signs. Jesus performs 7 signs culminating in the raising of Lazarus from the dead that communicates to us that Jesus is, indeed, the Messiah sent from God and that we should put our faith in him.

The second half of John, beginning in chapter 13, is often called the Book of Glory, because it focuses upon Jesus’ glory displayed most evidently at the cross. In chapters 1-12, Jesus’ ministry is public and his teaching is public. Now in chapter 13 his audience has narrowed to his 12 disciples; almost every word is private.

This scene is the Last Supper, a Passover meal celebrated the night before Jesus was to go to the cross. I believe Jesus’ Passover meal was celebrated without the traditional Passover lamb. The Passover lambs were slaughtered the next day at the very time Christ was hanging on the cross. Jesus’ Passover meal had no lamb because he, himself, was serving as the Passover Lamb. He himself would secure our salvation for those who partook of the Passover. There was no longer a need for an animal sacrifice.

The structure of this text amazingly follows the pattern of Paul's words in Philippians 2. I want you to see this. If you will put your finger in John 13 and flip over to Philippians 2, here's what we read in vv. 5-7, *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing.* If we go back to John 13 we read in v. 3, *Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.*

Here is a picture of what Philippians 2 is talking about. God the Son coming from the Father, he lays aside his divine prerogatives and literally strips himself of the right to exercise deity, although he is eternally the second person of the Godhead. And having stripped himself, what does he do? Philippians 2 says, *He took the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself.* John 13:5 says, *After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*

Here is Jesus performing the act of a servant. He is acting out the drama of Philippians 2, laying aside his divine prerogatives, taking the position of a servant, his service going all the way to the cross.

Then Philippians 2 says, *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.* In John 13 we read in v. 12, *When he had*

*finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. The physical picture of clothing himself again with the divine prerogatives that he had when he was with the Father.*

And finally in Philippians 2, we read in v. 10, *That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* And if we go back to John 13:13 we read this, *You call me “teacher” and “Lord,” and rightly so, for that is what I am.* We have a movement down from God to man to servant, service even to the cross, then a movement back up to God, resulting in our confession of him as Lord.

What is this foot washing all about? Well, certainly it is designed to communicate our need for forgiveness. Peter objects to Jesus washing his feet. We’ll talk about that in a moment. But Peter says in John 13:8, *“No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” “Then Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet, but my hands and my head as well.” Jesus answered, “A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.” For he knew who was going to betray him, and that’s why he said not every one was clean.*

Jesus says a person who has a bath needs only to wash his feet. His whole body is clean. And you are clean. The church has historically seen in this statement a picture of salvation. He is speaking to his disciples and he is saying, “As a result of your trust in me, you have already experienced a bath, an internal cleansing that

comes through the born again experience.” The apostle Paul calls it the washing of rebirth and the renewing by the Holy Spirit, in Titus 3:5. When you come to Christ you receive whole person cleansing through faith in Christ and his finished work at the cross. You are new. You are changed. You are different. You are cleansed. You do not need another whole person bath. You do not need to be saved again and again and again in other words.

What you do need, children of God, is to have your feet washed. You see, as you live life in this world, you pick up dirt. The dirt comes as a result of your own sin. The dirt comes as a result of you being sinned against. And so daily you need your feet washed so that you can be entirely clean. This comes through the daily confession of your sins.

Years ago, I met a group of Christians who taught a very unfortunate, and I believe false, doctrine. They said that since my sins have been forgiven already through Christ’s death at the cross, I do not today need to confess my sins and ask forgiveness. Forgiveness is already taken care of through my salvation. These folks learned that justification means that it’s just as if I’ve never sinned, therefore, I should not have to daily ask for forgiveness. This false teaching led to spiritual disaster for those who believed it.

You see, it’s true that Christ has secured your eternal state. You have had whole person cleansing when you came to him for salvation. But the daily experience of God’s presence requires us to confess our sins as they occur. If you do not confess



your sins daily, if you do not have your feet regularly washed, you will destroy your intimacy with God. I'm not saying you will destroy your salvation. I believe if a person truly trusts in Christ, if a person truly rests upon Christ's death on the cross as the full and final payment for their sins, that person is secured eternally forever. But friends, your fellowship with God, your enjoyment of God, your experience of God is, indeed, hindered, and can be almost entirely blocked by unconfessed sin. There is a difference between being saved eternally and experiencing the joy of salvation now. If you do not regularly confess your sins, you will have virtually no enjoyment of the experience of God. The pipeline between you and God will be clogged by sin.

Have you ever had your experience of God cut off by your sins, even though you knew that God was there and even though you knew that you had trusted in Christ in the past for salvation? Of course you've had this experience. What do you do when your experience of God is cut off by unconfessed sins?

Well, you can go through a mental exercise of reminding yourself of certain doctrines. You can remind yourself of Christ's death on the cross. You can remind yourself that in the past you trusted in Christ for salvation. But you will continue to lack the presence of Christ. You will lack the friendship of Christ. You will lack the closeness of Christ, if you don't confess your sins. Daily we need to have our feet washed. Daily we need to pray the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our debts..." That prayer is addressed to children of God, who have already been saved, but now need to be regularly cleansed.

Feeling forgiven by God is the most wonderful thing in the world, friends. Experiencing God's forgiveness releases in us a sense of freedom. Revelation 1:5 says, *Christ loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.* Forgiveness releases in us an experience of cleansing. Psalm 51:7 says, *Purify me and I will be clean; wash me and I will be whiter than snow.* God's forgiveness cleanses your conscience so that you don't feel dirty anymore.

Do you feel dirty? Do you need to experience forgiveness from God? If you feel dirty inside because of your sins, you need to experience the forgiveness of God.

The psalmist goes on to say in Psalm 51, *Make me to hear joy and gladness.* Experiencing God's forgiveness restores joy to our souls.

I believe that a lot of depression that you and I suffer is rooted in our not experiencing forgiveness for past sins. Why do we get so down? Why are we so depressed? Why are we so downcast? Why do we feel so weighed down? Because sometimes we are dragging around the weight of unforgiven sins.

Now, some of you would say, "I've confessed my sins to God, Rich, and I still don't feel forgiven." Do you know that one? "I have confessed. I have acknowledged my sins to God, but I don't feel forgiven. I don't feel the joy that you are talking about. I don't really feel clean. I don't feel the freedom that the Bible tells me I will feel. I still feel depressed."

I've often heard folks say, "Well, when you are in that state, the problem is not that you haven't experienced God's forgiveness. The problem is that have not forgiven yourself." I've heard people say, "Well, I believe God has forgiven me, but I haven't forgiven myself."

Friends, you cannot forgive yourself. This is an entirely unbiblical concept. I'll challenge any of you to find even one verse in the Bible, one phrase that tells you to forgive yourself. It is a completely secular psychological notion. It is not a Christian idea. Your problem is not that you haven't forgiven yourself. Your problem is that you haven't experience divine forgiveness.

You say, "Well, how do I experience divine forgiveness?" There's something so incredible about experiencing God's forgiveness. It's not something you give yourself as a gift. It is something you receive from God. How do you do it?

First of all, I believe that often our lack of experience of divine forgiveness is because we have come into an agreement with a satanic lie. Like what? What sort of lie would keep us from experiencing divine forgiveness? Some of you would say, "I have sinned too often in this area." Too often for what? Too often for the blood of Christ to cleanse you? Too often for the infinite mercy of God? Too often for what? That's lie that you have sinned too often and therefore can't be forgiven.

Or, "I've gone too far. I should've known better." Sometimes we don't receive divine forgiveness because we say, "I should have known better." We are disappointed in

ourselves. How could I have done this? You know, if you are disappointed in yourself, if you are shocked by your behavior, that's another way of describing pride. How could you have done what you did? Because you are a sinner. How could I do what I did? Because I am a sinner. Because you and I are not nearly as holy, not nearly as together as we wish we were. God is the one who receives the prodigal back. He will receive you. You don't need fancy speeches. You don't need to wind out perfect words. You just need to come to the Father and he grants mercy. Forgiveness is not based on the depth of your sorrow. It's not based on the depth of your ability to persuade God to forgive you. Forgiveness is based on your trust in the blood of Jesus to cleanse you from every sin.

Expose the lie. What is the lie that you believe regarding divine forgiveness? And then break agreement with the lie. Renounce it before God in prayer specifically say, "Lord, I renounce the lie that I have sinned too often for you to forgive me. I renounce the lie that I have to somehow pay for my sin. I renounce the lie that anything could be more precious than the precious blood of Jesus."

And here's the third step, confess the truth. Say to God, "No matter what I have been believing and no matter how long I've been believing it, I am going to come into agreement with your written word. Your written word says that you are faithful and just to forgive my sins and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness."

Do you know, friends, it would be not only unmerciful of God to not forgive you, it would be unjust. 1 John 1:9 says, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to*

*forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* It would be unjust for God to not forgive you. Because if you plead the blood of Jesus Christ, the blood of Christ has paid the debt you owe. It would be unjust for God to charge you with a debt that has already been paid by his Son. It would be unjust of God to charge you with a crime that's already been taken care of.

Christ has born your judgment. He's been condemned already. God is not going to condemn you for something Christ has been condemned for. Christ is your surety. Christ is your bail that lets you out of jail. Because of Christ we can stand in the realm of the forgiven. Because of Christ we can say, "I am your friend, God. I am your beloved. I am righteous. I am your holy child."

Expose the lie. Renounce your agreement with the lie. And confess the truth. Receiving divine forgiveness is infinitely better than trying to forgive yourself.

But you know, we don't only need to experience forgiveness, we need to extend forgiveness. Listen, one of the most damaging things that I've seen to people's ongoing walk with Christ is bitterness. Some of you have elderly relatives who have just shriveled up inside behind a self-imposed wall of grudges and bitterness for the things that life has dealt them. The fact is it is impossible to live in this world without getting hurt. And when we talk about the need to have our feet washed by Jesus, it is not only our sin that daily needs to be washed away, but also our bitterness for sins committed against us. It doesn't matter how good a person you are, how nice you are to other people, how high your standards are, how much you try to do the right

thing, you will in this world be hurt. You will be misunderstood. You will be offended. You will be misrepresented. You will be bruised. You will be ripped off. Sometimes you will be abused by other people – by family, by brothers and sisters, by spouses, by children, by in-laws, by co-workers, by employers, by competitors, by clients, by people here in the church, by former pastors, by present pastors.

We live in a sinful world. And we regularly have cause to be offended.

So let me ask you a personal question: Maybe you daily go to Jesus and ask forgiveness for your sins. But do you daily put into practice the forgiveness of others, so that bitterness is washed from your heart? Are you as quick to forgive others as you are to ask for forgiveness for yourself?

Do you wonder why you lack intimacy with God? A simple reason may be that the pipe between you and God is clogged by wounds you have received at the hands of others that have never been cleansed away. We are to daily pray, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive the debts of others.”

Forgiveness is conveyed through this foot washing. Service is portrayed through the foot washing.

*John 13:12-17 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now*

*that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*

Jesus tells us in v. 15 that the reason he washed Peter's feet is to set before the disciples an example, a pattern, that you should do as I have done for you. Those of you who have ever sown your own clothes, you follow a pattern. You cut the cloth according to the pattern. Those of you who do needlepoint, you have some sort of color on a canvas so that you can see where the various colors of thread go. Stitch by stitch, you carefully follow the pattern.

For those of you who have worked with wood, you perhaps have used a jig. You press the wood into the jig to carve out a pattern, or you have used a template.

Jesus, having washed the disciples' feet, tells us that he is laying out for us a pattern that we should trace our lives around and follow. Now, how do we follow Christ's pattern?

Some churches engage in foot washing ceremonies once a year on Maundy Thursday, the day before Good Friday. Some churches engage in foot washing a few times a year. This is certainly capable of being debated in the Christian world. I personally do not believe that Jesus was setting before us a ceremony of foot

washing. Rather, he is setting before us a pattern of service. And he tells us this in v. 16, *I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*

In the ancient world, it was the role of a slave to wash the feet of guests to his master's home. The reason the ancient world engaged in foot washing was because people wore sandals, the roads were dusty, and your feet would get filthy as you traveled from place to place. So washing the feet of a guest was a necessity. It wasn't just ceremony, it was a necessity. Today, as we wear shoes and socks and walk on pavement, washing a guest's feet is not a necessity.

Jesus is not talking about religious ceremony. He is talking about doing what is needed. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

What does it mean to follow Jesus' pattern of service? He's not talking about religion here. He's not talking about some sort of formal liturgy. It is not enough for us to discuss or to know what to believe or to study. To serve, we must do.

What must we do? We do what is needed. In the ancient world, washing someone's feet is what is needed. If I am going to serve you, I am going to meet your needs. If you are going to serve me, you are going to meet my needs. Serving doesn't necessarily mean that we meet each other's wants, or we meet each other's demands. Just because someone whines and cries and manipulates and pushes



does not immediately create a demand in the Christian to meet that person's demands. But the Christian is required to meet people's needs. As servants, you and I, who are followers of Christ, are to approach the world with a question: what does this person need?

Some people just need to be listened to. Husbands, one of the best ways you can serve your wives; parents, one of the best ways you can serve your children; children, one of the best ways you can serve your parents, particularly if they are elderly and widowed, is just by listening. The question that a servant asks is, "What does this other person need?" And having discerned what this other person needs, we do it. This other person needs a cup for their coffee, or a chair, or a pen, or a word of encouragement, or a ride, or a meal, or help with one of their kids.

I don't think there's anything more counter-cultural than following the pattern of Jesus who is a servant in a society of consumers. The question that all Americans are asking is not, "How can I meet your needs?" The question of our consumer society is, "How can you meet my needs. What can you do for me, and what have you done for me lately?"

We consume entertainment, education, information, and relationships. Our American culture turns every thing into a commodity, including church. Even followers of Jesus Christ are infected by the consumer mentality, so we have, unfortunately, a generation of church shoppers and hoppers. Let's be honest, how many people in a church approach church as a place to serve rather than a place to

consume. More fundamentally, how many people essentially have the attitude when they go to a small group meeting, a women's group, men's group, home group, teen group, worship service and say, "My fundamental question as I'm coming in is, 'How can I meet someone else's needs?'" If we were honest before God, we'd say that the vast majority of times we evaluate things by whether or not our own needs are being met. Can I meet my needs through this women's group? Are my needs being met by this men's group? Have my needs been met today at worship or at this ministry?

You say, "Where do I serve?" Start with your own family – with your own parents, with your own spouse, with your own roommate. And in your home, with your own family, with our own roommate, begin to practice the question, "How can I meet this other person's needs?" Maybe I can meet their needs by balancing the checkbook, or getting up at night and rocking the baby. We don't need someone to wash our feet, but we do need somebody to wash the dishes. We don't need someone to wash our feet, but we do need someone to wash the kitchen floor. We don't need someone to wash our feet, but we do need someone to wash our cars. And our aging parents probably don't need someone to wash their feet, but they do need someone to regularly visit them.

You say, "It's inconvenient. My life is so busy." Along with doing what is needed, I would say doing what is inconvenient is the essence of service. It is not called service if it is convenient any more than it is called sacrifice when we give away what we will not miss. Begin to serve in your own family.

And then extend your service to this church. If you are part of this church, you are a regular attender here, you are a member here, have you found a place of service where you are doing something here to meet other people's needs? Are you doing something here beyond being a consumer? Are you becoming a servant?

You say, "I don't know what to do." Call Diane Bauman, our volunteer coordinator, and say, "I don't know what to do." She'll communicate to you where the needs are. Consider hosting one of our small groups. We have over 250 groups here at the Vineyard. By next year we want to have something like 350-375 small groups. You could meet other people's needs by opening up your home to host a group. You say, "But if I did that, that would mean I would have to pick up my house beforehand. I'd have to vacuum. I'd have to set up chairs. I'd have to make coffee. People would hang out and I'd have to clean up afterward. Put all the chairs away and vacuum again. It's terribly inconvenient."

You've got it now! That's what it means to be a servant. Some of you say, "But I've tried to serve and nobody said, 'thank you.' No one even acknowledged what I did. I worked for months on something and I didn't get a thank you card." Is it nice to be thanked? Yes, it is. Is it nice to be acknowledged? Yes, it is. Is that a requirement for servanthood? Absolutely not. Servants do what is needed, inconvenient, and they do it without any credit.

Taking the role of a servant is so unnatural for us. It is so radically counter-cultural to our American consumer society that we must pray, "Jesus, fill me with the spirit of

servanthood that dwelt in you. On my own, Lord Jesus, I am a consumer, not a servant. I am interested in meeting my needs, not the needs of others. On my own, Lord Jesus, I do what is convenient and I want to be noticed. But you are the chosen servant of Isaiah 42. It is you on whom the spirit of servanthood rests. Share that servant's heart with me."

We find here in the farewell of Jesus not only service portrayed, but friendship betrayed. John 13:18, *I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: "He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me."* He is referring to a scripture involving King David where David was betrayed by one of his closest and most intimate friends. Now the greater David, the Son of David, Jesus applies the experience of King David to his own life.

He goes on to say, *I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He. I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me. After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me." His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant.*

There is nothing more awful than being betrayed. The medieval writer, Dante, in his Divine Comedy, offers a vision of hell. In Dante's vision of hell, hell has nine levels going down. The level of hell that a person goes to is determined by the kinds of sins they commit. The worse the sin, the deeper into hell that person is sent. So Dante

has nine levels, or nine circles of hell. Do you know who is in the lowest circle of hell, according to Dante? The traitor, the betrayer, people who have betrayed God, betrayed country, betrayed family. Dante reserves the lowest circle of hell for Satan and Judas, who betrayed Jesus, and Brutus and Cassius, who betrayed Julius Caesar.

Why does Jesus prophesy his own betrayal to the other disciples? Because Jesus wants us to know that he is in control and that he knows about betrayal. See, betrayal catches us unawares. We are shocked when we discover that a business partner or a family member has been stealing money from our business. We are shocked by discovering embezzlement. But Jesus knew about betrayal. He's not shocked. He's in control.

We are stunned by the discovery of an affair by our spouses or the discovery of unfaithfulness by a fiancée, boyfriend or girlfriend. But Jesus knows about betrayal and he is in control. Jesus wants us to know that when we are stabbed in the back, when we are betrayed by a friend, we can turn to him and he can deliver us.

Now the meal Jesus was eating was a Passover meal. We read in v. 23, *One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means." Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish."*

The disciples were eating a Passover. The table was likely u-shaped and the disciples were leaning on couches, those long couches, so that their legs are away from the table. They are being supported by their left arms and are eating with their right hands. Five disciples would be against one of the tables, five disciples were against the other, Jesus was at the head table with two disciples. One of his disciples, John, his friend, leans into Jesus and asked him, “Lord, who is the one who is going to betray you?”

There is another disciple not sitting at the end of the table, but lying right next to Jesus at his left hand, one of Jesus’ most intimate friends – John on one side and Judas on the other. And Jesus displays his friendship to John by telling John who the betrayer is. Jesus displays friendship to you when he tells you secret things that he doesn’t say to other people. He reveals his mind to you. He shows you what’s going on. He tells you things that you would not otherwise know.

What we see in Judas is the descent into absolute corruption. Jesus offers him friendship, v. 26, *Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it into the dish.” Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered him.*

There is a final appeal of Jesus to Judas and Judas makes an internal choice. He opens himself more fully to the leading of Satan and he becomes entirely corrupt. *“What you are about to do, do quickly,” Jesus told him. But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. Since Judas had charge of the money, some*

*thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the Feast, or to give something to the poor [both things that would be done at the Passover]. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.*

It was not only physically night outside, it was night inside Judas' soul. It wasn't just that the sky was dark, Judas' heart was dark.

How do we get to a place of utter corruption? Have you ever woken up in someone's bed and said, "What am I doing here? What did I do last night? Why am I with this person? How did I ever end up in this kind of relationship?"

The psychologist, Eric Fromm, said simply that we become corrupt by a series of choices. He writes, "The longer we continue to make the wrong decisions, the more our heart hardens. The more often we make the right decisions, the more our hearts soften, or better perhaps comes alive. Each step in life, which increases my integrity, my courage, my conviction also increases my capacity to choose the desirable alternative until eventually it becomes more difficult for me to choose the wrong rather than the right. On the other hand, each act of surrender and cowardice and compromise weakens me. It opens the path for more acts of surrender and cowardice and weakness until eventually freedom is lost" and I would add and we become utterly corrupt.

See, evil is like a cancer that grows within us. Little choice after little choice to sin, a refusal to deal with our sin on a daily, hourly basis through confession and

repentance, the accumulation of sin and bitterness where we simply have not dealt with sins and offenses committed against us by extending forgiveness to others, this deadly mix of unconfessed sin and bitterness swished together, perhaps, with a high degree of self-deception – that we somehow are the exception to the rule, that God’s rule and judgment doesn’t apply to our lives, either God doesn’t see what we are doing or he doesn’t care, but in any case God will not discipline and God will not judge – swish in a high degree of self-deception and you have a deadly formula for total corruption. We walk around with radioactive waste in our souls and choice-by-choice we allow that waste to eat out our wills until we have virtually no will left.

Have any of you ever experienced the total erosion of your will as a result of the repeated surrender of your will to sin?

Well, here’s the fourth act in this drama of Jesus’ farewell speech to his disciples. We read in v. 31, *When he was gone [that is, when the corrupt one was gone], Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once. My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*



Jesus says, “A new command I give you: to love one another.” The Old Testament certainly commanded the people of God to love each other. Why does Jesus call it a new command?

It is a new command because we have a new power, the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfill the command. It is a new command because we have a new pattern, the pattern of Jesus’ own servanthood and self-denying love in which he established a new covenant giving us new access to God, bringing us into a new community, a community of Jews and Gentiles, a community in which walls are broken down between whites and blacks, men and women, the wealthy and the poor. A new command he gives us – to love one another, just as he loved us.

And then he says, *By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*

Many years ago the brilliant Christian author named Francis Schaeffer wrote a wonderful essay titled, “The Mark of the Christian.” He said, “How does the world know that you are a follower of Christ? Some Christians try to mark themselves off by the clothes they wear, or their haircuts, or the bumper stickers and logos they put on their cars. Some of us try to mark ourselves off by our jewelry, the size of the cross we wear, little fish pins.” Schaeffer says that Jesus gives the Christian one mark to communicate to the world that you are a follower of his. The mark is love.

The world has no capacity to judge doctrine, whether you are being faithful to the teaching of scripture, by what you believe the church teaches. The world doesn't care anything at all about doctrine. The church will judge you regarding your doctrine. The world judges people based on their love.

Jesus says, in fact, that the world has a right to judge you. When the world sees bitter, vindictive, angry Christians, Christians fighting among themselves, churches that wound their own people, molesting priests and pastors, selfish, greedy churches – the world looks at that and says, “Well, I don't know much about Christianity, but whatever you have going on in that church, that's not Christianity.”

On the other hand, when someone who is not a follower of Christ comes into a small group of Christians who are obviously loving each other, we see a group accepting one another, genuinely caring for each other, visiting each other in the hospital, helping each other with chores, assisting single moms in the care of their kids, when a person comes into a group of Christians who are expressing love for each other, there is something inside a non-Christian's heart, which leaps and says, “That's what I want. That's the real deal. That tells me that what you guys are into is real and true.” Schaeffer calls love the final apologetic, the final defense for the truth of our faith – love of each other and our love towards the world. That is the most compelling argument that can ever be offered regarding why someone should become a Christian.

When Jesus says good-bye, he tackles all of the big subjects of life – forgiveness, service, friendship, betrayal, love. Last words are lasting words. Listen to the words of Jesus. Let's pray.

## When Jesus Says Good-bye

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Rich Nathan

July 5-6, 2003

John: The Jesus I Never Knew

John 13

- I. The Good-byes of the Famous and the Infamous
  
- II. The Good-bye of Jesus
  - A. Forgiveness Conveyed (Jn. 13:1-11)
    - 1. Experiencing Forgiveness
    - 2. Extending Forgiveness
  
  - B. Service Portrayed (Jn. 13:12-17)
    - 1. Do What is Needed
    - 2. Do What is Inconvenient
    - 3. Do Without Credit
  
  - C. Friendship Betrayed (Jn. 13:18-30)
    - 1. Betrayal Prophesied (Jn. 13:18-22)
    - 2. Friendship Exemplified (Jn. 13:23-26)
    - 3. Corruption Metastasized (Jn. 13:26-30)
  
  - D. Love Displayed (Jn. 13:31-35)

