

Session 2

March 13, 2022

A LIFE OF LOYALTY

John 13:21-27, 31-35

Judas is as infamous for his betrayal of Christ as Peter is for His denial of Christ. Both knew Jesus well. Both traveled with Him and were recognized as His disciples. Both fell into the temptation to deny the Lord Jesus. Both had the opportunity to remain loyal to Him. But Judas was a thief (John 12:6), the son of perdition (literally, *destruction*; see John 17:12), whom the devil used to betray the Lord unto death (John 13:27). He was the one among them who remained “unclean” (John 13:10-11), and ultimately hanged himself in disgrace (Matt. 27:5). Peter, on the other hand, was *a rock* (Matt. 16:18), with enough faith to walk on water (Matt. 14:28-29), and enough courage to draw his sword in the Lord’s defense (John 18:10). When he denied the Lord, Peter wept bitterly in repentance (Matt. 26:75) and died a martyr’s death for his faith (John 21:18-19). In this week’s lesson, we see three truths about what a life of faithfulness to Christ entails, and the challenges that come with it.

Faithfulness at risk (vv. 21-27). The scene is quite dramatic. Unlike the famous Da Vinci painting, the disciples were actually reclining with Jesus around a low table upon which the Passover meal was served. They most likely propped themselves on their left elbows, while reaching to the table and feeding themselves with their right hands. This would have placed John the Beloved at Jesus’ chest, allowing him to simply lean back and whisper his questions to Jesus. The most poignant part of this story is not that Jesus would be betrayed, or even who would be responsible. The most remarkable part of this story is that each of the disciples asked Him, “Is it I, Lord?” (see Matthew’s account in Matt. 26:22). That means that each one felt like he had the capacity to betray their Lord! These are those who spent their days and nights traveling with Christ, hearing His teaching and observing His miracles. If they, of all people, had the capacity to betray the Lord, what does that say about us? Nevertheless, Jesus identified the betrayer by an act of hospitality (v. 26), apparently only to John and by insinuation Peter, who had given John the nudge to ask (v. 24). At this, Satan entered into Judas and Jesus commanded him, “What you’re doing, do quickly” (v. 27). For reflection: *Judas betrayed Jesus in such a way that led to His arrest and crucifixion. Are there other ways that we might betray Him today?*

Faithfulness rewarded (vv. 31-33). With the departure of Judas, the final stage of Christ’s redemptive purpose is initiated. Yet the Lord does not chafe at the burden He must surely have felt. Rather, He exalted in it! Five times in verses 31 and 32 the word “glory” appears in some form or other. This is the reward for faithful obedience. The first few times it is in the present tense, indicating the certainty of the events that shall unfold, namely, His arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection. In verse 32, the tense shifts to the future, perhaps indicating the completed plan of redemption (ascension, return, and eternal destiny) that will result when all the redeemed are finally present at God’s throne (see Rev. 7:9-12). The gentle words that follow in verse 35 served to remind His disciples that the glory awaiting Him required a pathway that He would need to walk alone. For reflection: *Why do you think Jesus associated His humble death on the cross with glorification? How do you think God the Father was glorified by Jesus’ death on the cross?*

Faithfulness revealed (vv. 34-35). One would think that the mark of discipleship would be *obedience*. Jesus Himself said, “If you love Me, keep my commandments” (John 14:5). But there is no contradiction here, for Jesus had continually preached love as the greatest commandment (see Matt. 22:37-40). But here, the commandment is intensely personal. Those who follow Christ will be known not for their religious fervor, but for their fervent love for other believers. For reflection: *Why do you think Jesus chose to put this commandment here, just after the departure of Judas and just before the scattering of the disciples at His arrest?*