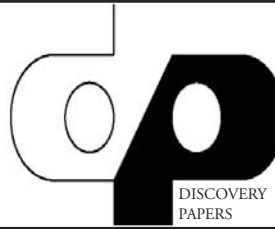




## LOVE BETRAYED



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John 13:1-30  
27th Message  
Paul Taylor  
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We're going to start out this morning by doing a little exercise. I'd like to invite you to follow my example.

*Clap once. Clap twice. Clap twice with knee slap.  
Clap complicated rhythm.*

Some of you had a hard time following my example. Some of you weren't in the mood and didn't even try. Some of you had fallen asleep and thought that the whole church was clapping for you.

Jesus is a lot of things. He saves us. He shows us who God is. He loves us. And he is an example for us of what it means to live this life. But sometimes he is hard to follow.

We're in the middle of a series right now that we're calling Signs of Life. It's a study working through the entire gospel of John. John paints a picture of Jesus as the source of life. Jesus is the source of original life. He is the source of new life. And his life shows us how we ought to live. He is an example of living life the way it was meant to be lived.

Today we're starting a section of John that will cover the entire season of Lent. Lent is the season immediately before Easter. It's celebrated as forty days, not including Sundays. It begins this Wednesday and concludes on Easter morning.

The passage that we'll be looking at during this season is often called the Upper Room Discourse. It begins in John 13 and goes through the end of chapter 17. It covers the moments that Jesus spent with his disciples just before he was arrested. It begins with the meal that they celebrated together and concludes with a beautiful prayer that Jesus offers to God on behalf of his disciples.

This morning we are looking at the first passage in that section: John 13:1-30 – the story of Jesus' last meal. This is a bit of a longer passage, so we're going to experiment with something new as a way of listening to the passage. We've prepared a video reading of it for us to listen to in order to get the whole flow of the passage. If you'd like to follow along, it's on page 900 in your pew Bibles. So engage in this however works best for you.

John 13:1-30 —

**Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. <sup>2</sup>During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, <sup>3</sup>Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, <sup>4</sup>rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. <sup>5</sup>Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. <sup>6</sup>He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" <sup>7</sup>Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." <sup>8</sup>Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." <sup>9</sup>Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." <sup>11</sup>For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."**

**<sup>12</sup>When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? <sup>13</sup>You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. <sup>14</sup>If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup>For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. <sup>16</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup>If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. <sup>18</sup>I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the**

Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’ <sup>19</sup>I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. <sup>20</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.”

<sup>21</sup>After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” <sup>22</sup>The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. <sup>23</sup>One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus’ side, <sup>24</sup>so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. <sup>25</sup>So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, “Lord, who is it?” <sup>26</sup>Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.” So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. <sup>27</sup>Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” <sup>28</sup>Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. <sup>29</sup>Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor. <sup>30</sup>So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

The passage begins with an introduction to this new section of the gospel. Then Jesus does something unexpected: he washes the disciples’ feet. Then there’s a conversation between Jesus and Peter in the middle of that. Then Jesus has some stuff to say including a prediction that he will be betrayed. The passage ends with the disciples’ conversation about who the traitor is.

There are five movements in the whole passage. Introduction. Foot-washing. Peter’s conversation. Jesus’ words. And the discussion about the traitor.

During Jesus’ words, you might have noticed that he makes three statements that begin with “*truly, truly, I say to you.*” Those introductory words are a clue that those are particularly important declarations. Because of that, we are going focus on those three statements this morning.

As it turns out, each of those statements corresponds in some way to the action in the rest of the passage. The first statement relates to Jesus washing his disciples’ feet.

The second statement relates to Peter’s conversation with Jesus. And the third statement relates to the discussion of the traitor’s identity.

So this morning we’re going to consider these three statements of Jesus in light of the three events of this passage. Each of these statements offers us something different. The first is an invitation to emulate Jesus—to do as he did. The second is a comfort about the relationship we have with Jesus and our involvement in his work. The last is a warning against falling away and turning aside from the God who loves us.

*An invitation. A comfort. And a warning.* All part of Jesus asking us to follow his example. We can learn something about following Jesus. We can do a better job than we did with the clapping.

## Introduction

The first verse of chapter 13 sets the stage for what is about to happen. Listen to it again. Here’s John 13:1.

*Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.*

Throughout the gospel of John, we have heard Jesus speaking of “*his hour.*” Last week Steve pointed out Jesus’ announcement that “*the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.*” We are in the last moments of Jesus’ life—the hour that the whole book of the gospel of John has been leading up to.

And in this hour, what happens is that Jesus loves his disciples. The author points out that he had loved them faithfully up until now and this is the moment that he completes his love for them. That’s important. This is what makes love so difficult. Real love is fragile. It takes a lifetime to prove love. But betrayal can happen in a moment. Years of faithfulness can be destroyed by a single decision.

In this passage, we see both. The completion of a life-long habit of love is juxtaposed with a momentary decision to betray. Love takes a lifetime. Betrayal takes a moment. This is the hour for both of them. Each of them is surprising. The way that Jesus completes his love for his disciples and the in-your-face choice to betray. Neither makes sense. The hour has come, but it is way different than what anyone thought it would be.

## Serve Each Other

At the height of his greatest hour, Jesus does what no self-respecting Jew would do. He takes off his outer garment. He wraps a towel around his waist. He kneels on the floor with a basin of water. And he washes the filthy feet of the disciples. He cleans the dirt and the sand and the animal excrement off their feet. Starting with one disciple and working his way around the room, he cleans every single one of their feet.

No one would have understood what he was doing. Putting on a towel was the symbol of a slave. Washing feet was a task that was reserved for the lowest class of slave. Jewish slaves weren't even allowed to do it—it could only be done by Gentiles, women, or children. Why would the man who had just entered Jerusalem to a crowd cheering him as the Jewish king act like a Gentile slave?

What's even crazier than Jesus acting like a slave? The fact that he asks his disciples to do the same. Listen to the first “*truly, truly*” statement from John 13:14-17.

*If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.*

Jesus has just humbled himself in front of his disciples. Those who would call him their master. Those whom he would call servants. He has served them. And now he tells them that this was meant as an example for them. He intends for them to follow his example. “*You also should do just as I have done to you.*” He emphasizes it by saying that it is great if you know these things. But you are blessed if you do them. It's the doing of them that is important. You must follow my example.

Early in the service when I invited you to follow my example of clapping, many of you did. But some of you wouldn't. And some of you couldn't. You didn't quite have the skill that was necessary.

Here Jesus is inviting his disciples to follow his example. Do what he just did. What he just did was vulnerable. It was humiliating. It was gross. It was dirty. It put himself below everyone else. We live in a culture where displays of humility are appreciated. But real humility is humiliating. No one was thinking, “Wow—Jesus is so humble. What

a great guy.” They are embarrassed for him.

This is the example he wants us to follow. Humiliate ourselves for the sake of love. It's not enough to hear these words. He wants us to do something, too. He invites us to follow his example.

What does that look like for you? What does it look like for you to wash the feet of the people in your life? To do something that serves them in a radical way. Maybe it's people in your family, your children or your parents. Maybe it's people at your workplace. Maybe it's people at church or some old friends. What does it look like for you to wash the feet of the people in your life?

There are lots of ways to wash the feet of the people in your life. But there is one big way that we are planning as a church to do together. You heard about it earlier in the service. It's happening on May 17 and 18 and it's a really big deal for us as a church. To my knowledge, we have never canceled Sunday services to go into our community and serve like this. And it is not something we have entered into lightly.

This day—Life In Action: Beautiful Day—flows organically from our series in the gospel of John. The scene we are looking at this morning is a culmination of the journey that Jesus has been making throughout this gospel. Ever since the beginning of this story, he has been on a descending path. It began with his incarnation. It continued with his interactions with people. It reaches a climax as he stoops down and washes people feet.

Our hope as we've studied this book is that we would have a renewed vision of what it means to follow Jesus—particularly, to follow him into the world. So this event in May is one of the ways that we want to respond to being sent into the world. We want to follow Jesus into the world and serve others. We want to wash people's feet even if it's hard, dirty work. We want to give and ask nothing in return. We want to bring the loving nature of God into our communities.

As you can tell, we've been working hard to coordinate and plan and create a structure that allows us to do this. Those things are necessary. You can't just decide one day to go help the world. It takes time and energy to organize and prepare. Jesus didn't just come to earth one day on a whim. God carefully planned everything to lead up to that moment.

Our prayer is that this is one of the ways that we as a community respond to our journey in the Gospel of John.

Not just those who are excited about it, but everyone who is capable. There are chances to be involved no matter whether you are young or old, rich or poor, handy with a hammer or not. So pray about how you can be involved. At the very least, mark it off on your calendar to participate on May 17 and/or 18. But also think about being a sub-lead for a project. Or coordinating something at church that morning. Or helping financially. Or something else we haven't even thought of.

So that's a way that we can do this as an entire community, but there are other ways that you might wash the feet of others. Jesus is clear: this is the way he treated his disciples, so this is what we do for one another. What does it look like for you to wash the feet of the people in your life?

## Receive Jesus

I think that when Jesus began washing the disciples' feet, the room fell silent. Imagine Jesus moving down the row of disciples, person by person. Nobody knows what to do or say. Then he comes to Simon Peter. You can always trust Peter to break the silence—to create a stir. He is never one to be content with letting things happen the normal way. So Peter's bold statement interrupts the silence, "You're not washing my feet, Jesus."

Think about what Peter is doing. None of the other disciples tried to stop him. But Peter does. What is he thinking? He thinks it is humiliating that Jesus is doing this and he doesn't want his Lord to be humiliated. But he's also standing up and marking himself out from all of his peers. He wants to be the most radical, the most extreme, and the most loyal.

So when Jesus tells him that he can't be part of his movement if Jesus doesn't wash him, he goes extreme in the other direction. He wants Jesus to wash all of him: his hands and his head too. At every turn, Peter wants to go all the way. He is never satisfied with being a normal follower of Jesus.

You have to like Peter. He's kind of making a fool of himself, but his reasons are good. He just wants to be fully committed. He wants to be as connected to Jesus as possible. He is frenzied, almost panicky about being part of Jesus' team. That's not at all a bad thing. But there is an edge to it: some kind of insecurity that Peter has about his relationship with Jesus.

So when Jesus starts explaining things, I think his second

comment is directed mostly at Peter. The first comment was an invitation: an instruction to follow in the example that Jesus set. The second comment is partly an invitation as well, but I also think it's a comfort. It's an explanation of what it means to be connected to Jesus and what it means to participate in his work. Listen again to 13:20.

*Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.*

Every Jew would recognize a maxim of the ancient world, "*the one who is sent is as he who sent him.*" That was a phrase in common usage that referred to the idea that when someone sends you to do something, you go with the sender's full authority and representation. It is as if you are that person.

We're familiar with the idea of chain of command. A chain of command means that if I'm in charge of you and you're in charge of someone else, the authority flows from me through you to the other person. That's kind of like what Jesus is doing here, but it's not a chain of command, it's a chain of connection. I think what Jesus is trying to do is to establish what it means to be in a relationship with God and to participate in his work.

Later in this section, Jesus will use a powerful phrase to describe this connection. He'll talk about remaining in his love. But here he says that when someone receives Jesus, they receive God the Father. And when someone receives a disciple, they receive Jesus and God as well.

He is trying to comfort Peter. He wants Peter to know that he stands securely in a chain of connection. He wants Peter to know that if he has received Jesus, he is connected to God the Father. And when Peter goes out and ministers in Jesus' name, people who receive him are really receiving Jesus.

He wants Peter to know that he is OK. He is on God's team. Peter doesn't have to worry about whether he's doing enough or whether his efforts matter. If he has received Jesus, then he's part of the chain.

I think the same doubt and insecurity that affects Peter is rampant in the church today. Whether you are sitting in the pew or serving as a deacon or organizing a massive service project or preaching from the pulpit, there is always the question, "am I doing enough?" Am I doing enough for the kingdom of God?

That is a terrible question. In fact, I think it's deadly. It

is like poison that works its way through our system. First, it can make us panic and take on too much. Then we burn out. Finally, the poison has completed its work and we are bitter and jaded and disillusioned. Frustrated by the fact that we can't ever do "enough", we give up altogether.

The right question is not "am I doing enough?" but "am I doing what God has asked me to do?" Jesus asked Peter to let him wash his feet. First Peter thought that was the wrong thing, then he thought that it wasn't enough. What he doesn't understand is that it isn't up to him to decide those issues. All he has to do is what Jesus asks him. And Jesus asked to wash his feet. Nothing more. Nothing less.

So if you're wondering whether you are doing enough, stop wondering. Stop asking that question. God may want you to do something different than what you're doing. Not because you aren't doing enough. But because God is asking you to do something.

You don't have to go "above and beyond." You have to be faithful. You don't have to be extreme and radical and frenzied. You just have to be obedient. Jesus may be asking you to do something radical and extreme, but the issue is obedience. Not "doing enough." If you have received Jesus, you are connected to God. You're OK. And when others receive your testimony, they receive Jesus. Your efforts matter.

Jesus' first statement was an *invitation* to follow his example. His second is a comfort that when you try to do so, no matter how small your efforts, it makes a difference. You're part of the story. We are all part of the story.

Except when we choose not to be. It would be great if the passage ended here. But it doesn't because that's not the way life works. Even in the best of situations, even with all the right information, people make bad choices. We make bad choices. So what follows is a warning and a caution against throwing all of this away and turning back.

## Be Warned

Jesus has given a powerful invitation to service. He has given a rich comfort of connection. Now he gives a chilling warning of betrayal. This isn't the first time he has warned that one of his own will betray him—such warnings have been sprinkled throughout the gospel. But this is the final moment. This is his last opportunity to change his mind. And this is the moment when he makes the final decision to betray Jesus.

Jesus' last "truly" statement is a final warning about Judas' betrayal. Listen again to John 13:21,

*After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me."*

"*One of you will betray me.*" These are the words that ring in the ears of the disciples. And they cause some concern. What a night! First Jesus washes their feet then he tells them that one of them is going to turn against him. Nothing is as they expected. So the disciples were upset. They were confused and they started looking around at each other.

Judas knew who it was. He had already met with the religious leaders. He knew how much betraying Jesus would earn him.

But imagine what the other disciples must be thinking and feeling. Most of them had been with Jesus for three years. There were high moments and there were low moments. Surely most, if not all, of them had doubts and questions about this whole endeavor. You have to believe that every one of those men in that room had wondered at one point whether they made the right choice in following Jesus. They had considered leaving this crazy journey and going back to life as they knew it. Return home, pick up the fishing rod and lead the life that you had been living.

I think that Peter wanted to make sure it wasn't him, so he conspires with John to get more information out of Jesus. They are somewhat successful, but everyone still doesn't get it. The identity of the traitor was still up in the air for most of them.

My guess is that every single one of them wondered in his heart, "Will it be me?" Will I be the one to give in to my doubts and confusions and walk away? I think Jesus intended this kind of self-examination. He wanted each of them to realize that they all had it in them. It could be any one of them.

Wednesday of this week marks the beginning of Lent. We don't come from a tradition where we always think carefully about the church calendar. But that is starting to change. Evangelicals are showing more and more interest in the seasons of the church.

The purpose of these seasons is to give us specific times to focus on aspects of what it means to follow Christ. Being a Christian involves a lot of things: joy, hope for the future, self-reflection, acts of service, self-restraint,

community involvement—and that’s only a few. It’s hard to experience all of these at once. The church calendar helps by suggesting seasons to focus on certain themes. Advent is a time of waiting and thinking about hope. Lent is traditionally a time of self-reflection. A time to examine.

Consider whether you might do something unique during this Lenten season. Something that could lead you into a time of examination. There are a lot of options. We have a Lenten devotional that we produced several years ago with reflections from members of our community. Many people find meaning in giving something up for Lent: ice cream or coffee or Facebook or meat. Others introduce a new spiritual discipline: Lent is a great time to try a weekly Sabbath or fast one meal per week. It’s only six and a half weeks and there are rich themes to reflect on during this season.

But at least for this morning, the specific examination that Jesus invites is the depth of our commitment to him. Each of us is here for our own reasons. Some are here to worship God. Some are here out of habit. Some are here because someone dragged you here. Some are here out of curiosity.

But it is certainly true that not all of us will be here next week and the week after and the week after that. Some of us here will turn our back on God and refuse to receive Jesus. Some will reject the comfort that Jesus offered to Peter or have already rejected it. Some have decided to do it and nothing can be done to change your minds.

It’s a chilling kind of warning. Not all of those who follow Jesus will stay faithful. I admit I’ve considered walking away from God. What would my life look like if I walked away? What would my life look like if I rejected God? And the haunting question, “would it be better?” “Would it be easier?”

Some of us will eventually answer yes to that question. Some of us will embrace sin. Some of us will reject Jesus. It could be any of us.

I’ve talked with people as they are trying to figure things out and seen them on a path that they could turn from but they refuse to. I’ve seen people walk away from their spouse with a resolute determination to leave. I’ve seen people choose sin even as people warned them. I’ve seen people walk away from God and never look back.

I’ve experienced some of it in myself. There have been times in my life when I have knowingly and intentionally chosen sin even when I’ve had opportunities to turn away.

It is a dark and deadly path. It’s like you’re on a train that is about to crash into a mountainside. So you stand there on that train, watching the side of the mountain approach. You know you should jump off. You know what you should do. But you don’t do it. You stay on that train. Even though you know it leads to your doom.

That’s what Judas did. But he didn’t have to. Jesus was giving him a warning here. An opportunity. A chance to make a different decision. Judas could have done something different. It wasn’t actually too late. It’s never too late. You can always turn from sin. You can always turn back to God. You can always make a new commitment to follow him, to address your fears or your doubts or your confusion and to strengthen your faith.

If you’re struggling with sin this morning, don’t stay on the train. Talk to someone. Talk to me. Talk to one of the other pastors or elders. Get off the train. If you have doubts or are confused and feel like your faith is reaching its breaking point, don’t stay on the train. Talk to someone. Talk to me. Talk to one of the other pastors or elders. If you feel like you’re on a train this morning that is headed to disaster, do something about it. Don’t stay on the train. Don’t be like Judas. This is your chance. You are being given an opportunity. Don’t let it pass you by.

Jesus’ first statement is an invitation to follow his example. His second statement is a comfort and a promise that enables us to do so. And his final statement is a warning against turning away and leaving him behind. Don’t be Judas. Get off the train.

## Conclusion

At the beginning of this message, I asked you to follow my example. Some of you did. Some of you weren’t interested. Some of you tried but couldn’t quite keep up. Some of you wanted to, but held back for some reason.

It’s fairly common to think of Jesus as our example. But in reality, Jesus rarely speaks of it. This is the most explicit passage in all of the gospels where he invites his followers to follow his example. There are two passages in Matthew that are close, but not as clear (Matt 16:24, Matt 20:25-28). So it is significant that here, as he washes dirty feet, he holds himself up as an example.

For us, Jesus’ words have meant several things. We have seen this invitation to serve as he would serve. We have been comforted by knowing that when we receive Jesus, we are fully vested. We don’t have to show off or impress God. We are part of the team. But we’ve also been warned

by how easy it is to make a different choice. There is much in this world that would lead us away from Jesus.

Be invited to serve. Be comforted that you belong. Be warned about your own fickleness.

It's not exactly a feel-good passage. The part in the middle about being connected to Jesus is nice. Except that it means this is the example we're supposed to follow. I wish he'd said that he were an example when he rode into town and everyone was praising him. But it's this scene where he asks us to imitate him. Service. Dirtiness. Humiliation. And eventually being abandoned. Betrayed. And lonely.

If you think I'm being dark, remember that the end of John 13:30 reads, "*And it was night.*" John isn't just telling us the time of day. He is no amateur when it comes to imagery. This passage ends with a somber warning. The events that follow will not be pleasant.

Yet it's exactly the darkness of the events that follow which eventually give way to light. John knows that, too. Night is a temporary condition. Even in the darkest night, you know morning is coming.

So it's appropriate for us to move from this passage into the celebration of the darkest moment that led to the brightest morning. We're going to celebrate a time of communion—where we remember the death of Jesus in anticipation of his eventual victory.

I love how Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 11:26, "*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*" When we come to the table, we proclaim the death of Jesus until he comes back a second time in life. We acknowledge the darkness and we wait for the light.

Take some time during communion to reflect. To examine yourself. Imagine yourself in that room when Jesus says, "*one of you will betray me.*" Consider something you might do to celebrate the Lenten season. Or simply rest in the comfort of knowing that by receiving Jesus you are fully a part of his team and his plan.

Let's pray.