

# Betrayal, Love, and Denial

Thomas Robinson, February 14, 2010

John 13:21-38

<sup>21</sup> After he had said this, Jesus was **troubled in spirit and testified**, "*Very truly I tell you, **one of you is going to betray me.***"

<sup>22</sup> His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant.

<sup>23</sup> One of them, the **disciple whom Jesus loved**, was reclining next to him.

<sup>24</sup> Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "**Ask him** which one he means."

<sup>25</sup> Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "**Lord, who is it?**"

<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered, "*It is the **one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.***"

Then, dipping the piece of bread, he **gave it to Judas**, the son of Simon Iscariot.

<sup>27</sup> As soon as Judas took the bread, **Satan** entered into him.

So Jesus told him, "**What you are about to do, do quickly.**"<sup>28</sup> But **no one at the meal understood** why Jesus said this to him. <sup>29</sup> Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor.

<sup>30</sup> As soon as Judas had taken the bread, **he went out. And it was night.**

<sup>31</sup> When he was gone, Jesus said, "**Now is (was) the Son of Man glorified and God is (was) glorified in him.**"<sup>32</sup> *If God is (was) glorified in him, **God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.***

<sup>33</sup> "*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.***"

<sup>34</sup> "**A new command I give you:**

**Love one another.**

**As I have loved you,**

**so you must love one another.**

<sup>35</sup> **By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.**"

<sup>36</sup> Simon Peter asked him, "*Lord, where are you going?*"

Jesus replied, "*Where I am going, **you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.***"

<sup>37</sup> Peter asked, "*Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.*"

<sup>38</sup> Then Jesus answered, "*Will you (really) lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, **before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!***"

John 13:1

<sup>1</sup> It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. **Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.**

## The Day of Love and Glory

It is Jesus' last day with his disciples before his crucifixion. Jesus knows. We know.

The disciples don't. Jesus devotes it to love - showing love to this circle of followers, but also preparing them (and us) to take in an event of love so profound and astonishing that it will remake their experience of love and life.

Love is a powerful and complex reality, woven into the core of our being - our identity, aspirations, sexuality, relationships, philosophy, sinfulness, saintliness. Love is multi-sided: Friendship, companionship (*philia*); family affection (*storge*); love as desire, need, longing, (*eros*), romantic love, seeking fulfillment, union; love as self-giving, overflowing, grace (*agape*), focus on the good of another. All are related, important. The first three are very familiar human experiences. The last (*agape*) is rarer, but crucial. It is the heart of what Jesus is doing in his final actions, it is the heart of God, the very nature of God - self-giving Love.

## Three Disciples

The drama begins with Jesus' troubled spirit: One of the disciples will betray him.

The Gospel helps us understand by showing us Judas, Peter, the Beloved Disciple.

"The disciple whom Jesus loved" is introduced for the first time. He is the one whose memories and testimony are the foundation of this Gospel (21:24). He is traditionally identified with John, but the Gospel keeps him anonymous. Thus he is both an individual and represents every disciple (and us), loved and drawn into close relationship by Jesus (13:1), aware of the struggle to understand, believe.

Peter is one also with whom we identify. He genuinely loves, follows, believes in Jesus the best one can from a human point of view. The journey deeper is hard.

## Into the Night

Judas Iscariot - the mystery. Looking back, the others realized Jesus knew but they did not anticipate his treachery. His name may suggest he was (like his father) one of the *sicarii*, anti-Roman Jews devoted to the overthrow of Gentile rule. If so, he followed Jesus for the sake of the cause, for a Jewish king and revolution.

But Jesus loved him, washed his feet, shared his food. Judas refused that love as weakness. The cause was first, not Jesus. Mutual recognition. Into the night.

## Into the Mystery of Glory and Love

Jesus interprets: In what has just happened - washing their feet, caring for even the betrayer - Jesus' glory was revealed: Glory, significance, weight, meaning. God's own true glory shone through in Jesus. In the events that follow that revealing will continue: God will show his glory - his true heart, his love, the center around which all else revolves - in the Son. This unique event of divine love transforms.

Jesus begins to speak as a departing father to children. You cannot go with me, no human can. You must let me serve you, wash you, die for you. Only I can do this.

What you must do is live from the glory/heart/meaning of what I am doing. You must learn and live out my love for you. Love each other with self-giving love that gives grace and seeks the good of the other. Start close and move outward.

Peter illustrates the challenge. He is ready to follow, give his life. He means it. But Peter must learn to receive the gift of life - let Jesus give his life & give him life. Jesus turns life/death upside down, disorienting. Peter will fail first, then follow.