



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

John 13 18-30

"It Was Night"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you, Joe. It's great to be here. It's great to have the Bible open and turned to a great text of Scripture. It's not one you might think we'd describe that way, but it is a glorious text because of what it says about our Lord. John 13, verses 18 through 30: Jesus has washed His disciples feet, all 12 of them, and there's a great lesson in that, obviously. Always a great lesson in everything in the Scriptures, but what a thing He did. He humbled Himself. He got up and washed the dusty feet of 12 men who would all, in a few hours, desert Him.

One of them would deny Him, three times, and He insisted on washing his feet. And another would betray Him, and He washed his feet. It's a great lesson in that for us. We read it, we think about it, we're a bit impressed with it, and we see the sort of prophetic foreshadowings of what the Lord would do on the cross in that event. But He gave it as an example to them and to us: Can we wash the feet of those who oppose us, who don't like us?

That's what we're to do. That's the Christian life, and it underscores what I often say; and I will say often again, 'It's a supernatural life. It's the work of God in us.' And so He says, 'I've done this as an example for you and for all of us.' (vs15). But He also adds, "If you know these things," verse 17, "you are blessed if you do them." So we can say 11 of those 12 would be blessed, 'if they do them'. But He says now in verse 18;

¹⁸ I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but *it is* that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.' ¹⁹ From now on I am telling you before *it* comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am *He*. ²⁰ Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."

²¹ When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me." ²² The disciples *began* looking at one another, at a loss *to know* of which one He was speaking. ²³ There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. ²⁴ So Simon Peter gestured to him, and said to him, "Tell *us* who it is of whom He is speaking." ²⁵ He, leaning back thus on Jesus' bosom, said to Him, "Lord, who is it?" ²⁶ Jesus then answered, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, *the son* of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷ After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly." ²⁸ Now no one of those reclining *at the table* knew for what purpose He had said this to him. ²⁹ For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, "Buy the things we have need of for the feast"; or else, that he should give something to the poor. ³⁰ So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.

John 13: 18-30

We have much to pray for this morning. We pray that the LORD will bless this reading of His Word and our time of study in it—and we have other families and friends to be praying for as well. So let's bow together and seek the LORD's blessing and help in time of need.

LORD, it's always a time of need for Your saints, because we live in a sinful world, and we have sin within us. We are justified if we're believers in Jesus Christ: You have forgiven us completely, and you've clothed us in the righteousness of Your Son; but as

the Reformers said, "We are righteous sinners." And so, LORD, we pray that You would bless us and sanctify us and make us more like Your Son, make us stronger in our faith, make us more obedient in our walk with You—and do that in part, at least, this morning through the text of Scripture that we have read. And that's what is Your great *means* of sanctifying, of transforming Your saints into conformity to the image of Your Son—it's through the Word of God. It feeds our soul; and so we're here to be fed, we're here to be taught by the Holy Spirit and pray that we would be open to that ministry of His, and we would conform to it and we would submit to Your Word, and we would believe it and grow in faith and grace as a result. So make us more like Christ this morning.

And bless those who are in need materially and emotionally. LORD, there's nothing too difficult for You, nothing too wonderful for You. You can do anything, and You do amazing things; in fact, every moment of our life is something of a miracle because You sustain us at every moment, and we live and move and exist in You. And You bless us beyond our imagination; You do 'exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or think'. And so we know, Father, You hear our prayers, and You will answer them far beyond anything we can imagine. We thank You for that.

We thank You, Father, that we're here and we can study the Scriptures together. We pray that You'd bless our time together. May it be a time in which we are instructed and built up in the faith, and also a time that our hearts rejoice in You, rejoice in the Triune God, rejoice in the salvation that Christ has obtained for us as the second Person of the Trinity, and that our thoughts will be that of worship as well as learning. So we commit our time to You now, and thank You for it, in Christ's name. Amen.

(Message) Dante's *Inferno*, is a journey through hell, which the writer imagined as nine circles, each worse than the previous one—making the last circle, the ninth circle, the deepest, darkest part of hell. It's reserved for the worst offenders: Traitors, those who betrayed their benefactors. Dante wrote in the 14th century, so that may be

medieval morality, but I think even in our age of moral ambiguity and tolerance, (when the word *sin* is rarely used), betrayal is still shocking.

Which brings us to Judas Iscariot and the greatest betrayal and greatest sin, when he sold out the Son of God for a few pieces of silver. It was the betrayal of the greatest friend he ever had.

It's astonishing that a man could spend three years with Christ living in His Light, seeing His glory, benefiting from His love and counsel—and then turn on Him. That's what Judas did. It took the other disciples completely by surprise. They never suspected Judas of such a deed. That's one aspect of betrayal that makes it so ugly, so shocking. It is unexpected because it occurs under the cover of friendship, loyalty.

When Caesar was betrayed by his friend, Brutus, and lay dying on the Senate floor, his famous response was, "Et tu, Brute?" ('You too, Brutus?') He was the last person Caesar expected to put a knife in him. But that's the nature of treason, of betrayal: It is unexpected; it's deception; it's committed by those who are trusted.

And the betrayal of the Lord was unexpected by everyone—everyone but the Lord Himself. He knew what was coming, and He exposed it, not to save Himself, but to strengthen the disciples. They were all gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem, celebrating the Passover meal, and He had been teaching them on humble service. He had washed their feet as an example for them, and told them that it was what they ought to do for each other, and assured them that as they served one another, they would be blessed.

Then, from the lesson on service, He moved to a warning; that there was one among them for whom the lesson was meaningless. He'd already warned them that not everyone within the circle of the disciples was 'right'. In chapter 6, (*verse 70*), He said, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" In chapter 13, *verse 10*, He said that, 'all of them were clean', but then added, "...not all of you." There was someone in their midst who was not like them.

He was a disciple—but also a devil; his feet had been washed but he was not clean. And now, having instructed them, ‘to be servants of one another,’ He said, "I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen..." (vs18). He knew each one of them. He knew their hearts. The fact that one of them was a spiritual stranger was not due to a mistake on our Lord's part, or an oversight by Him; He knew Judas from the beginning. And He explains that the reason Judas was among them was to fulfill Scripture, "...but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.’ “ (vs18b).

Now that's a quote from Psalm 41, verse 9, ‘A Psalm of David’, and a Psalm about betrayal in which he recounts the painful experience of being mocked by his enemies. But the worst of it was the treason of a friend, a trusted friend, a person who had eaten his bread, who had dined at his table, who had received hospitality from the King of Israel.

In the Orient, hospitality was considered sacred; and to receive it from the King was an especially great privilege. To be admitted to the King's table was to come under his special protection, to be counted among his friends, and to have his confidence. But this man repaid David's kindness with ingratitude. David said, "He has lifted up his heel against me," which literally means, ‘He made his heel great against me.’ It describes a violent kick; that of a beast, like a horse. It came out of nowhere. It took him by surprise and gave him a terrible fall. That's the picture that David gives.

That's what betrayal is like. It's like a hard kick in the stomach. It happened to David—and it's not uncommon, is it? It happens in business. It happens in marriage. It happens to the best people. It happens to godly people. It happened to David. It happened to the Lord. So if it happens to you, the Lord understands, the Lord sympathizes. He won't betray you, He won't desert you. He didn't abandon David. David prayed for grace, and the Psalm ended with the assurance that the LORD would deliver him, the LORD would save him.

But the Psalm is a lot more than an account of one man's treachery and God's faithfulness. The Lord interpreted the Psalm as a prophecy about Himself. He perceived that David's betrayal was a picture, or a foreshadowing, of what would happen to Him, because King David was the progenitor, or the originator of the Messianic line, and He, Christ, is the fulfillment of that line, He is Israel's king, its Messiah. The fact that David was betrayed by a person close to him signaled to the Lord that He would be betrayed by a person close to Him.

In David's life, that was probably Ahithophel, David's trusted counselor and advisor. He betrayed the King when he supported David's son, Absalom, in his revolt. (It's in 2 Samuel, chapters 15 through 18.) But early on, Ahithophel saw that his counsel had been rejected, (his war counsel), and he knew that the rebellion therefore was lost before it even, really got started. This was a brilliant man, and David knew that well. So what did Ahithophel do? Knowing that the cause was already lost before they ever attempted to marshal their army and attack King David, Ahithophel saddled his donkey, went home, put his house in order—and hanged himself.

The correspondence with Judas is obvious. He was a close associate of the Lord. He's one of the 12. He ate His bread. He ate the Passover meal with Him, right next to Him. And Judas also had a bad end—he too, hanged himself. There were remarkable resemblances between the two traitors.

But there's a significant difference between the Lord and David. David was taken by surprise. He wrote, "Even my close friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me." (Ps 41:7). But the Lord's quote of that verse is not quite the same. He did not say, 'My close friend in whom I trusted', but simply "He who eats My bread..." The Lord didn't trust Judas. He knew his heart from the beginning. He knew how all of these things would occur. He was in complete control of the events of His life and ministry, and the events of that evening—and used His knowledge of them to strengthen the faith of His disciples.

He states in verse 19 that he told them about the coming betrayal before it happened, "...so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am *He*",

or literally that, "I AM". Now, as we've gone through John's Gospel we have seen that statement, 'I AM', repeatedly. And it always calls our mind back to the name of God, "I AM WHO I AM," which means *Jehovah*, or *Yahweh*, that we see revealed at the burning bush in Exodus, chapter 3, verse 14.

Christ's knowledge of the future was proof that He is the Messiah: That He had not been surprised by betrayal; or that He would not fall, as a result, helplessly into the hands of His captors. So, even Judas' treachery would be made to serve the Lord's purpose, and ultimately strengthen the faith of the disciples, (which was about to be shaken to its very foundation).

But then He encouraged them, by speaking to the future beyond the cross. Betrayal would not bring things to an end; God's work cannot be frustrated. Verse 20, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me." In other words, 'The Lord's mission would not fail. It would succeed.' It would go on, and He would live; He would be resurrected, and He would send them out. And they would have great honor, for they would be God's ambassadors.

Oh, they'd be *despised*, they'd be considered the *refuse* of the world—but they're God's ambassadors. They are the noble men of the world. So things will go on; all was not lost. Just as David was vindicated in Psalm 41, the Lord would be vindicated; and there was a glorious future of service ahead for His disciples. That's good news; that's encouraging news. He's giving them great encouragement in the midst of this startling revelation He's given.

It was that, and it affected our Lord because the concern of that moment weighed heavily on Him. And John wrote that when He, "had said this He became troubled in spirit." (vs21). Jesus is the I AM. He's God and man, God revealed in the flesh. And in His human spirit, He was deeply grieved over what He had revealed; that one of His own, one of the 12, was a traitor.

Up to this point in the evening, He had spoken indirectly. He had indicated that something was wrong among them. One of them was 'not clean', (vs13), and treachery had been indicated. But now the Lord tightens the circle around the traitor. He became more specific and said, "One of you will betray me." (vs21b). The disciples were stunned. They began looking at one another at a loss to know of which one He was speaking.

Matthew recorded the response of the disciples; he wrote that they were "deeply grieved", and each one said, "Surely not I, Lord." (Mat 26:22). What is significant about that is they each had self-doubt. They didn't doubt each other; they questioned themselves because they knew they were weak in faith and didn't trust themselves.

That can be a healthy attitude, by the way, when we recognize our weakness and we draw near to the Lord. These men all recognized that they were weak—and so should we all because we are. When we think we're strong, we set ourselves up for a fall. We need to realize we're just dust and only the Lord can sustain us and look to Him continually. There seems to be some reflection of that in their response.

But what's also significant is that when the Lord said, "One of you will betray Me," all eyes did not turn to Judas. No one suspected him. We might imagine Judas to have been some dark, nefarious looking figure, skulking around the edges, sitting at the end of the table, not really a part of things, always on the outside.

That was not so. He was very much a part of things, and clearly he was very well thought of. He was the treasurer. He carried the money box. He was the man that they all trusted with their precious finances—a man who appeared to be reliable and appeared to be a genuine follower of Christ. And what that shows is: 'The false exists among the true.' Or as the Lord put it in a parable, 'There are weeds among the wheat.' Unbelievers will exist in a healthy local church.

Now it's not for us to weed them out. Christ warned against attempting to do that. We can't see into people's hearts. We don't know that; we don't know what's there. And the danger is, as the Lord pointed out, that the good will be uprooted with the bad. What we are to do is to be, (in ourselves and as a church), we are to be pure in doctrine and pure in practice. We're to preach the Gospel to the congregation as we

preach it to the world. And each individual, each one of us, is to pursue godliness and truth. We're to know the Lord. That's to be the great ambition of our life: To know Him and be pursuing that. God will clean His church, just as the Lord did His disciples.

They could not see into Judas' heart. From all outward appearances he seemed real. He acted as shocked as they were and he seemed to project the same devotion to Jesus that the others did.

But he couldn't quite do it; there was a difference. Matthew indicated it: Each of the others said, "Surely not I, Lord?" (Mat 26:22). Judas said, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" (Mat 26:25). It was as though he could not call Jesus 'Lord'. His response was a mask. And while the others couldn't see under the mask, couldn't see the traitor inside of it, the Lord could and did. Judas couldn't deceive Him. He sees under every mask and would now unmask Judas—though not directly.

The disciples were still perplexed about the traitor. The Lord didn't answer their question, "Is it I?" So Peter tried an indirect approach. He gestured to John to find out from the Lord who this traitor was. John, we read, was 'reclining with his head on Jesus' chest', (vs23), which meant that he would have been on the Lord's right side, while Peter was sitting across this table where they were.

John identified himself not by name, but as the disciple "whom Jesus loved." He didn't do that out of pride, but out of a profound sense of indebtedness to grace. The Lord did love him, loved John—loved all of them. But He gave John a special place, at His right side. And taking advantage of his nearness to Jesus, he leaned his head back and said, " Lord, who is it?" (vs25b). Jesus answered, apparently in a voice that was quiet enough for only John to hear, 'It is the one to whom I give the morsel.' (vs26).

Then we read, "When He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, *the son* of Simon Iscariot." (vs26b). [It was a custom to do that, for the host of a feast to dip a morsel of bread in the common bowl, and give it to a guest as a mark of honor and friendship. And in this case, the morsel was probably a piece of matzoh, which we take

at the Lord's Supper, and broke it off and dipped into the bitter herbs of the Passover meal.]

The fact that Judas was close enough that the Lord was able to easily give him the bread, and speak to him privately without being overheard, indicates that he was at the Lord's left side—which was the place of honor. And so it seems that all of this, his place at the table, the bread that was given to him, all was done as a last appeal by the Lord to Judas, to turn from his treachery. Now if that's so, (and I think it is), then it is an example of the love and patience of Christ.

We speak a lot about tolerance today. But true tolerance is seen in Jesus Christ. He wasn't indifferent toward sin. He wasn't indifferent toward error. He condemned it, He exposed it where necessary—but He was longsuffering toward the sinner. Patient even with evil men; dealing with them in grace with kindness; giving them the truth. Just as He does with each of us who are His own.

We disobey continually. We're constantly getting off the path. We're constantly going our own way. We have this struggle, the flesh and the spirit. But He's patient with us, always patient with us. And that patience is seen toward one who was not His own, in the last opportunity that He gave to Judas, to turn from evil.

It was done quietly. The other disciples probably didn't hear what He said to John. They would have understood the morsel to have been a gift of honor, so his identity as the traitor was kept from them. But Judas knew that Jesus knew, and he was faced with a choice: To go forward with his plan, or abandon it, repent, and seek Christ's forgiveness. The offer made was legitimate. The offer made was heartfelt. And Judas receive it, this final gesture of kindness from the Lord; he took the morsel. But rather than it break his heart, he only hardened himself in his resolve.

And at that point, we're told that, "Satan then entered into him." (vs27). And so knowing that Judas had chosen to go his own way, that repentance was an impossibility, Jesus said to him, in a voice loud enough for all to hear, "What you do, do quickly." (vs27b).

At that point the Lord was finished with Judas and sent him out to do the business that he was determined to do—showing that it was the Lord who was in complete control of what was taking place. The Lord could have stopped Judas. He didn't, making it clear that no one would take the Lord's life from Him. —No, He would freely, willingly give it up. And so, at Christ's command, Judas went out to actually accomplish the Lord's will, and serve God's purpose.

There's the wisdom of God. At least in part, there we see the wisdom of God, that He even makes His enemies to praise Him and serve Him. Nothing surprises the Lord. Nothing spoils His plan or purpose. Even Satan is made to serve Him.

Still the disciples were unaware of what was happening. Since Judas was the treasurer, they assumed that the Lord had sent him off on business; giving alms to the poor or perhaps, buying things that were needed for the feast of unleavened bread, which began the night of the Passover.

John would have known, though. In fact, he followed Judas with his eyes as he left the room and went out 'into the night.' His departure left an indelible impression on John's mind. Why didn't he try to stop him? Well maybe he was so shocked by the revelation that the trusted treasurer was the traitor, the one who sat in the seat of honor, that it took him a moment to recover from that.

Well, whatever the human reason, this was God's will. And it had been prophesied a thousand years earlier. So Judas made his exit unhindered and John gave a description of it. He wrote, "He went out immediately; and it was night." (vs30). It was the Passover, remember, so the moon was full. But it wasn't the moonlight that John noticed; it was the darkness that quickly swallowed up Judas. And John didn't miss the significance of that; not only was it night outside the room, it was night inside the soul of Judas. He joined the darkness, the forces of evil—and he would go into outer darkness. Augustin wrote, "It was, however, night. And he who departed was night."

What a tragic end for a man so privileged to be with the 'Light of the world', to receive kindness from Him and then to depart into darkness. How could that happen? Well John told us how it could happen early in the Gospel, back in chapter 3, (verse 19), where he wrote, "...men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil."

We need grace to change our hearts and give us love for the Light and truth; to enable us to understand the truth and to believe it—to trust in it. And grace is God's work. It's not our work—it's God's grace alone. So we must always look to Him for all blessings—for all grace—for all mercy.

Well someone might say, 'Well, Judas wasn't given grace, right? God left him in darkness. He didn't *choose* him. So really it's not Judas' fault.' This is probably not an uncommon objection; and it's not uncommon today to make Judas a kind of 'sympathetic figure'.

But nowhere does the Bible excuse him or mitigate his crime. And nowhere does sovereign grace exclude human responsibility. Judas had been given every opportunity for blessing—even a loving last appeal from Christ. Judas resisted. Judas refused—knowingly and deliberately—doing it *knowingly* and *deliberately*.

Judas was a man driven by greed. It's that simple—it's that crass. He had valued Jesus at a price of 30 pieces of silver and he wanted to 'cash in'. So he hardened himself to Christ—and in so doing he opened himself to Satan, who took full possession of him—and he rushed out into the darkness.

Dante's vision of hell is not biblical, but did convey a truth, a moral. The deepest part of perdition was where traitors were imprisoned, frozen in ice and darkness. The reason was, those who betrayed others denied the love of God and the warmth of love from others—and so they were deprived of the warmth and light of the sun.

While it's not biblical, it does give an insight into the sin of Judas. He rejected the Light, and love, and warmth of the Lord who offered it to him. He left the Lord for the spiritual world that he truly, really, loved—and that is *the night*. And as a result, he

inherited the very blackest night for all eternity; a place of fire without warmth and light, and without love.

There's a warning in that for us today. The Lord is patient toward unbelievers. He's given evidence of His existence in the natural realm, (in the heavens and in earth), enough to leave all without excuse that there is a God—that there is a creator.

But He's done far more than that. He sent His Son into this world to die for sinners, to save the lost. And the Good News of His saving sacrifice has gone out into the world of sinners, inviting them to come.

Isaiah gives a great picture of that, (I often refer to it, it often comes to my mind), but it's in Isaiah 65, verse 2, and it's this picture of the LORD 'with His hands spread outward', widely, to save the lost. And He's inviting them to come to Him. He's inviting rebels to come to Him—and they won't come. But the offer is there, and the offer is genuine. Those who refuse only condemn themselves.

If anyone is here this morning who has not believed in Jesus Christ as his or her Savior, this is the opportunity. 'His hands are spread out to you.' Come to Christ. It's not enough to come to church and be among God's people. Judas did that for three years. You must recognize your need, that you are guilty of sin and you are in need of a Savior. And all who do, all who come to Christ, the only Savior there is, the Savior of the world, all who trust in Him are saved at that moment—and forever rescued from the judgment of *eternal night*.

May God help you to see your need and to trust in Him, trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. And then, go out, as He would send His disciples to be ambassadors for the Lord God. You will bear the greatest title among men, and the greatest task: To present the truth of God and the Light of God to the lost world. May God help us all to do that.

Father, I think all of us can sympathize with William Cowper, as we reflect on Your power to save and the fountain that You've provided for us. Who can muster the words to express the greatness of our gratitude, or the greatness of the gratitude that we should have. We don't even comprehend that. We have such a small and vague understanding of the greatness of what Your Son did for us at Calvary.

But someday we will sing in a nobler voice and a sweeter song, that very thing about His sacrifice for us. And we will spend all eternity expanding in our appreciation and understanding of it, and all of Your glory and grace and character. We have a glorious future thanks to Your Son, thanks to the Triune God's love, unconditionally, for a lost people. Thank You for all You've done for us, and may we now live to Your glory and Your honor.

Now the LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance on you and give you peace. In the name of Christ Jesus. Amen.

(End of Audio)