

Pastor Daniel Waldschmidt – Midweek Lent 2021 – John 13:21-30 – The Hands of Betrayal (Judas)

In our midweek Lenten services we are looking at the different hands that played a role in the Passion. Tonight we are considering the hands of betrayal. And what I would like us to consider tonight is that hands of betrayal start with letting Satan into your heart.

One of the things that shocks us about Judas is that Judas was one of Jesus' closest companions. Just before our passage for tonight Jesus quotes an Old Testament passage that says, **"He who shared my bread has turned against me" (John 13:18)**. Judas' hands ate from the same bowl as Jesus. He was one of Jesus' closest companions. Judas' hands also shared in the ministry of Jesus. Judas' hands passed out the bread that Jesus multiplied when he fed the five thousand. But then Judas' hands also betrayed Jesus.

It's shocking that one of the twelve disciples could betray Jesus. The disciples were shocked by it too. Our passage says, **"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.' His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant." (John 13:21-22)**¹ The disciples were shocked that one of them could betray Jesus.

Satan works even on us believers in Jesus. And before betrayal gets to our hands, Satan tries to sew the seeds of betrayal in our hearts. And we might not realize when Satan is sewing the seeds of betrayal in our hearts. In this story, the whole time the disciples don't know what's going on. They don't know who is going to betray Jesus. It says, **"His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant" (John 13:22)**. Then John leaned back against Jesus and asked, **"Lord, who is it?" (13:25)** And Jesus said it is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread. And Jesus gave it to Judas. And Jesus said to Judas, **"What you are about to do, do quickly" (John 13:27)**. And then Judas got up and left and again the disciples did not know what was going on. It says, **"No one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him" (John 13:28)**. They guessed at what Jesus meant by this, but their guesses were way off. **"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" (John 13:29)**. They didn't know what was going on. Satan tries to sew the seeds of betrayal in our hearts before we realize what is going on.

It says that **"Satan entered into Judas" (John 13:27)**. Satan had been working on Judas for a long time before this. I don't know what caused Judas to betray Jesus. I don't know what seeds of betrayal Satan had planted in Judas' heart. But I do know that Satan tries to plant seeds of betrayal into our hearts. The apostle Paul says, **"Do not give the devil a foothold" (Ephesians 4:27)**. The devil is kind of like a rock-climber. A rock-climber needs a hole to put his foot on so that he can climb up. Well, Satan tries to climb up into your heart and he tries to make little footholds so that he can climb up into your heart.

What are the footholds that the devil might try to create in us *before we even realize it*? Maybe he might try to sew in us the seeds of discontentment. If we are discontent with the things God has given us then that might drive us to sinful actions. John mentions that Judas had charge of the money (13:29). Elsewhere John mentions that Judas sometimes stole from the moneybag (12:6). Judas' hands reached into the money bag and stole. Judas' hands also took the 30 pieces of silver that he received in exchange for betraying Jesus. Be careful of discontentment and greed because discontentment might lead us to fall into similar sinful actions as Judas.

¹ All Scripture quotations are taken from the NIV.

Before betrayal gets to our hands, it starts in our hearts. Satan tries to sew the seeds of betrayal without us knowing it. But the apostle Paul says in another place, **“We are not unaware of his schemes” (2 Cor 2:11).**

Another one of Satan’s schemes is that he tries to convince us that Jesus could never forgive us. When we realize that our hands have betrayed him and we are sorry for it, he tries to convince us that Jesus could never forgive us. Sadly, that’s what Satan convinced Judas of in the end. You know that after Judas’ hands betrayed Jesus, Judas was very contrite. But he still didn’t believe in Jesus as his Savior and he sank into despair.

But instead of sinking into unbelief like Judas did, let your heart lean back against Jesus in faith. Our passage tonight mentions that John leaned back against Jesus and said, **“Lord, who is it?” (John 13:25)** We don’t have to lean back against Jesus and say, “Lord, who is it?” We can lean back against Jesus and say, “Lord, it’s me. My hands have betrayed you. And I’m sorry. I believe in you as my Savior. Please forgive me.” And then Jesus tells us about what he has done to forgive us.

Look at the reading for tonight again and see how your Savior goes willingly to the cross for you. We mentioned before that the disciples had no idea what was going on. But Jesus knew. The reading begins, **“After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit...” (John 13:21).** Why was he troubled in spirit? Because he knew that one of his own disciples would betray him and that he was about to suffer and die on the cross. He knew which of the disciples it was who would betray him. Jesus indicated that he knew which one it was by giving the bread to Judas.

Now Jesus could have avoided the whole thing. Jesus could have escaped his betrayal by Judas. But instead he says to Judas, **“What you are about to do, do quickly” (13:27).** One author noted that this does not shift the blame off of Judas. Judas did what he wanted. But it does show that Jesus was in control and that Jesus went to his death willingly.² And why did Jesus go his death willingly? He went to his death willingly to take away your sins and mine. He went to the cross to forgive us for the times when we have let Satan sew seeds of discontent in our hearts. He went to the cross to forgive us for the times when our hands have betrayed him.

A few chapters after our reading for tonight, Jesus prayed for his disciples. He prayed, **“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one ... Sanctify them by the truth, your word is truth” (John 17:15, 17).** The hands of betrayal start in the heart. But God guards our hearts through his word. In that word he warns us of Satan’s schemes. In that word he reminds us how much he loves us. In that word he reminds us of what Jesus did to take our sins away. And now instead of hearts of discontent and greed, we have hearts of thankfulness. Instead of hands of betrayal, we have hands of faithfulness. Amen.

² I owe these insights to Armin Panning in the article, “What You are Doing, Do (More?) Quickly” John 13:27.” Available at the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Online Essay File (<http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/bitstream/handle/123456789/3574/PanningQuickly.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>).