

And It Was Night

John 13:21-30

07/19/2020

We are truly living in dark times. Evil is called good and good is called evil. Anger, violence and destruction have filled the streets of our cities. No one tells the truth anymore. Consequently, no one can be trusted. Criminals and communists work together to destroy our freedoms and constitutional government. Cowardly politicians and officials refuse to quell the violence in their cities. The perversion of homosexuality has been flaunted and indeed, we are being told that we must affirm this wickedness. The killing of babies in their mother's wombs continues in dark, demonic Planned Parenthood clinics. Darker times are sure to come, especially if police departments around the country are defunded as leftists are proposing. Churches and Christians are under attack for their faith and gathering for worship in the age of Covid-19. Riots and protests are OK, but church gatherings are forbidden.

How are we to overcome the evil of our times? How should we deal with evil people? Well, first we have to correctly identify evil and then we have to use the resources God provides. Jesus shows us in our passage how to overcome evil. In Romans 12:20-21 we read, *Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."* *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.* Jesus faced his enemy, his betrayer and he fed him with a piece of bread that had been dipped in the Passover sauce. Jesus knew that Judas would betray him, yet the Lord showed him love and kindness until the end. We do not overcome evil with evil. Like Jesus, we only overcome evil with good. In his darkest hour, the light of the Lord Jesus shone brightly. How did Jesus overcome evil? First,

I. Jesus Was Troubled by Evil

In verse 21 of John chapter 13, we read, *"When Jesus had said these things, he was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, 'most assuredly, I say to you, one of you*

will betray me." Although Jesus had always known what Judas would do, when it came time for Judas to actually betray the Lord, He was troubled in His soul. The word "***troubled***" in verse 21 is a strong verb that can signify "**revulsion, horror, anxiety or agitation.**" "*Troubled*" is the same word used in John 11:33 as Jesus stood by the grave of Lazarus and wept. It is the same term used in John 12:27 as Jesus thought about his coming death on the cross. One scholar writes, "**On the eve of the cross, our Lord's heart was troubled – not for himself, but for another – specifically for the one who was going to deliver him to death.**"¹

The disciples could see that he was troubled. They could hear it in his voice. He knew that one would betray him and yet when it happened, when Judas defected in his heart, Jesus was deeply disturbed by it. Jesus felt the sorrow of losing a disciple to the evil one. He felt the grief of knowing that Judas would be lost forever. Judas had every privilege given to him as one of the 12. He had heard all of Christ's sermons and he was privy to the most intimate times with the Lord and his disciples. Judas fell from a great height into the depths of evil. Yet Jesus had no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He was greatly troubled by the defection of Judas.

I wonder if we have any trouble in our own souls over evil? Are we troubled by those who depart from the faith and renounce Christ? Are we bothered by those false teachers who bring error and heresy into the church of the Lord Jesus? Are we troubled by false gospels and false churches, like the Roman Catholic Church, who lead people to hell by teaching a gospel of works righteousness? Is there any anguish in our souls over the thousands of unborn babies killed each day in our nation and around the world? Does it pain us to see churches pander to the LGBT movement today? Have we experienced the heartache of a close friend wander away from the Lord and leave the church? And, are we troubled by the evil within our own hearts and minds?

1 R. Kent Hughes, *That You May Believe*

One of the keys to overcoming evil in our lives is to be troubled by it and to hate it. Psalm 97:10 says, *You who love the LORD, **hate evil!** He preserves the souls of His saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked.* Proverbs 8:13 declares, *The fear of the LORD is to **hate evil**; Pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.* Are we troubled enough over evil that we actually repent of it? And having repented of our own evil, do we stand against it in our culture? And as we stand against evil are we also grieved over the fact that those who are evil need Jesus? Do we experience any anguish over lost souls who are without the knowledge of Jesus Christ? Ezekiel 33:11 says, *“Say to them: ‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the **death of the wicked**, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die?’* Christ was grieved over evil and was sorrowful over the betrayal of Judas. We too ought to grieve over lost and wayward souls.

How did Jesus overcome evil? Secondly,

II. Jesus Identified and Exposed Evil

Verse 21 says that Jesus, *“testified and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.”* Jesus told the disciples that it was absolutely certain that one of them would betray Him. At this point, He did not identify who that person would be. He purposely left them hanging. In verse 22 we read that, *"Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom he spoke."* In Matthew's account we read that, *"They were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to him, 'Lord, is it I?'"* Though only one of them was guilty, all of them needed to take a good hard look at their own lives. This was a good thing, for it gave them an opportunity to guard against hypocrisy. And, as we saw last week, Jesus told them ahead of time about the betrayal, so that when it happened, their faith would be strengthened.

Remember, Judas was still present with them when Jesus said this. At that point, ***Judas knew that Jesus knew*** about his plans to betray him. Jesus exposed

Judas, but not yet by name. The Lord was giving him another opportunity to repent. Whenever evil is present in the church, it ought to be exposed to the light. Of course we must use caution so as not to bring every little offense to public notice. Most of the sins that are committed in the body of Christ need to be overlooked, if possible. If a sin cannot be overlooked, then we follow the guidelines of Matthew 18 where Jesus tells us to go to the person who has sinned against us and seek to win them over and be reconciled. But when serious sin or evil is discovered, it must be exposed – at least at first to the elders of the church. If there is no repentance, then per Jesus’ instructions, the sin will be made public.

The point is that in order to overcome evil, it must be exposed. Ephesians 5:11 says, *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather **expose** them.* This also applies to the sins of our day and of our culture. Ignoring evil around us and staying quiet about it is to help promote it. There are times when we cannot avoid direct verbal confrontation in the face of evil. There were many in Nazi Germany who refused to speak against the evils that were committed. Of course those who did speak out, like pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, suffered and some died for doing so. What are the evils in our own day that ought to be exposed and confronted? Are we willing to speak up, even though we might suffer for it?

Remember also that the devil is at work behind the scenes whenever there is evil in the world. Verse 27 says, *“Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him.”* John 13:2 already informed us that the devil had *“**already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray Him.**”* The devil and those who do evil hide like to hide in the darkness. Evil loves darkness and by nature does not want to be exposed by the light of God’s truth. Earlier in John 3:19 we read, *“And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”* As a Christian, it is a merciful thing to have our sins exposed, by our own conscience and the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

This usually happens when we read Scripture or hear the truth from the preacher or another believer. When the evil in our hearts is made known to us, there is an opportunity for us to confess it to God, and to anyone else that we need to.

The Bible tells us, “*Be sure, your sin will find you out.*” We can wait until our sin is discovered by others, or we can discover it and repent of it ourselves. If we are walking with the Lord, the evil of our own hearts will be exposed daily as we seek him in prayer and in the word of God. God’s law is like a mirror and when we look at it, it will reveal our sins and shortcomings. The book of James speaks of looking into the mirror of the “*perfect law of liberty*” in order to repent of our sins and become doers of the word. Are you taking a daily look into the mirror of Scripture, and asking God to show you your faults? You should!

Jesus exposed the sin of Judas, to give him another opportunity to repent, but also as a warning to the rest. Whenever sin is rightly exposed in the church, it has a purifying effect on the body of Christ. Speaking of a certain situation concerning the sins of an elder in the church, 1 Timothy 5:20 says, *Those (elders) who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also **may fear**.* So then, to overcome evil in our personal lives, it must be exposed and brought to light in our lives so that we might turn from it and turn back to the Lord. And in order for evil to be overcome in the church, there are times when sin must be made public so that the fear of God might keep us from falling into the same sins. Galatians 6:1 says, *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.* In order to restore someone caught up in sin, that sin will have to be confronted, but as Paul said, it must be done with gentleness and love. This is exactly how Jesus dealt with Judas. That leads us to the final way in which Jesus overcame evil:

III. Jesus Showed Kindness to His Betrayer

As soon as Jesus mentioned that one of them would betray him, the disciples wondered who it might be. Verse 23 says, "*Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.*" That was the apostle John of course. He does not mention himself by name in his gospel. He only mentions that Jesus loved him. They were reclining at the table, and John was right next to Jesus. Jesus was probably right behind John, so John could easily have a private conversation with Jesus by leaning back. D.A. Carson writes that "**It was customary to sit at most meals. Reclining at table, a Hellenistic custom, was reserved for special meals.**" They sort of reclined on their side, leaning on one elbow. Davinci's painting of the Last Supper was not accurate, since he had them sitting in chairs.

Peter couldn't stand it—he had to know who it was! He motioned to John to ask Jesus who it was, since John was right next to the Lord. So John asked Him who the betrayer was, and Jesus said, "*It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when i have dipped it.' And having dipped the bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.*" Some commentators believe that at this dinner, Judas actually occupied the place of honor. We don't know for sure. However, we do know that Jesus was the host of this meal, and according to scholars, a host at such a meal might dip into a common bowl and pull out a tasty morsel and pass it to a guest as a mark of honor or friendship.² This final act of love by Jesus, served also as the decisive moment for Judas. Sadly for Judas, he took the morsel of bread, but he did not accept the love that came with it.

Having rejected Christ's loving gesture, Satan then entered his soul to possess and control it. We see Jesus here, overcoming evil with good. Proverbs 25:21 says, *If your **enemy is hungry**, give him bread to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.* This verse is repeated in Romans 12:20, where Paul also adds the next verse in Proverbs 25, "*For so you will heap coals of fire on his head.*" With the offer of bread

2 D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 474

from Jesus, Judas should have felt shame and remorse – he should have then turned from his evil plans. However, in rejecting Jesus’ loving offer, Judas reaped the fire of judgment. Matthew Henry comments on Proverbs 25:22 saying, “**The way to turn an enemy into a friend is, to act towards him in a friendly manner. If it does not win him, it will aggravate his sin and punishment, and heap the burning coals of God’s wrath upon his head.**”

Jesus Christ showed us how to love our enemies. He loved Judas, even when he was about to betray him. More importantly, Jesus loved us when we were his enemies. We had betrayed him by our rebellion and sin. We were going our own way and did not want God to run our lives. We were God’s enemies, yet God sent his one and only Son to die that we might become his friends. In Colossians 1:21-22 we read, “*And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death.*” We are reconciled through Christ’s death on the cross when we receive the Lord Jesus and trust in his death for our sins by faith. Jesus offers, not merely a piece of bread to us – He offers himself—He is the Bread of Life. Have you received the Lord Jesus Christ and his offer of salvation?

Those of us who have received Christ’s loving offer have been called to love one another. We are to love our enemies, as Jesus commands us in Matthew 5:44 – “*But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.*” How are we to overcome evil in our culture today? How are we to overcome evil in the lives of others that we encounter in our daily lives? We must overcome evil with good, as the Lord Jesus taught us. Sometimes the evil person will be won over and perhaps will become a Christian. Of course the person may continue in their evil ways, just as Judas did. After Jesus gave Judas the piece of bread, he urged him to do quickly what he was planning to do. The rest did not understand what Jesus meant. They thought

he was going out to buy food for the feast or that he was going to give something to the poor. It was common on Thursday evening of Passover to be able to purchase some last minute things for the coming seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread. It was also customary to give alms to the poor on Passover night. The priests left the temple gates open from midnight on, allowing beggars to congregate there.³

Verse 30 concludes, “*Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night.*” It was night. It was the hour for the powers of darkness to do their work. It was the night in which our Lord Jesus was betrayed and arrested. Judas went off into the night, into the darkness, never to return to the light. We are living in dark times. It seems like night has fallen over America. But remember, on the third day, Jesus rose from the dead and conquered sin, hell and death. Jesus is the light of the world, and the light shines brightest when it is dark. There is hope for America, if we turn back to the Lord Jesus and his light. There is hope for us individually, as we walk in the light and for our nation as we let our light shine and proclaim the Lord Jesus and his gospel. What is our message to this dark world of ours? I’ll answer that as we close with a line from the hymn, “The Light of the World is Jesus.”

*Ye dwellers in darkness with sin-blinded eyes, The Light of the world is Jesus!
Go, wash at His bidding, and light will arise; The Light of the world is Jesus!*

Those who heed the good news and come to Jesus will never be in darkness again. The last verse of that hymn says:

*No need of the sunlight in Heaven we’re told; The Light of the world is Jesus!
The Lamb is the Light in the city of gold, The Light of the world is Jesus!*

3 Carson, p. 475