

Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church

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Sermon manuscript

Sermon Series: Jesus' Hard Path That Leads to Gospel For Us

The Way of Jesus' Kingdom

(Luke 22:1-27)

Study #3

Introduction: The challenge of a paradigm shift...

Kathy and I have happily lived in San Antonio for a long time now.

So, if we were to decide to move next week to, say, Boise, Idaho or to Boston, Massachusetts, the culture and the ways of either of those new places would take some getting used to.

If we decided to move to Tokyo, Japan, or to Delhi, India, we'd find it an even greater challenge to adjust to either of those very different cultures.

No, we're not talking about moving. But there is a move all of us have made who believe in Jesus.

We didn't use to be, but we have now become citizens of Jesus' kingdom. Because of that change in status, we are all embarked on a very steep learning curve to adjust our lives to His kingdom's culture.

There are huge differences between the operation of His kingdom and the world's kingdoms.

Learning to live His way - aligning with His values and priorities - requires learning and re-learning and re-re-learning over a lifetime.

It is predictable that we'll struggle to learn some of the lessons Jesus wants us to learn. We'll encounter one of those today. It was a hard lesson for the first disciples to learn, too.

It was the lesson of service. I have recently learned that service is closer to the heart of Jesus than I thought it was. There are enormous implications that follow for us who follow Him who was a Servant.

Last Sunday we looked into events that occurred on the Tuesday of Jesus' final week. The Bible is silent about the next day, His final Wednesday. So today we'll skip forward to Thursday. Everything we will see this morning happened on His last Thursday.

The first section of our story today is tragic.

The Passover / Last Supper / Lord's Supper (Luke 22:1-23)

Preparations (vv. 1-13)

Judas prepared to betray Jesus (vv. 1-6)

Time stamp; trouble stamp (vv. 1-2)

[22:1] Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was approaching.

Passover (the first day of the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread) commemorated God's deliverance of the Jews from four hundred years of Egyptian slavery.

It was Passover time in Jerusalem when we read that ***[2] the chief priests and the scribes were trying to find a way to put Him to death.***¹

But there was an obstacle to killing Jesus. That was that He was very popular with the average Jew of that day. Most believed that Jesus was going to free them from Roman domination.

The rulers didn't take any action because they were ***"afraid of the people."***

They needed a breakthrough, something to happen that would allow them to deal with Jesus without it looking like they were taking the initiative. Enter Satan and enter Judas.

Satan entered Judas Iscariot (v. 3)

[3] And Satan² entered Judas, the one called Iscariot, who belonged to the number of the twelve.

I don't mind telling you that I find the arc of Judas's story to be confusing and confounding.

As Luke writes here, Judas was one of Jesus' apostles. We assume that he had been granted the power to perform miracles when he and the other apostles were sent out to preach and heal. (Luke 9:1-6)³

In addition, he was trusted by the others to such an extent that they made him treasurer of the apostolic band.

¹ See Luke 19:47-48 - they had wanted to kill Jesus for some time.

² The last mention of Satan in Luke was way back in chapter 4 when describing Jesus' temptations by ***"the devil."***

³ Surely, Luke would have told us if Judas had not been able to perform signs and wonders if he, alone, out of the twelve couldn't.

But John tells us that Judas was a thief. He stole from the group's money box. (John 12:6) And we know that he objected when Mary, the sister of Lazarus, anointed Jesus with expensive ointment. (John 12:1-8)

Judas puzzles me and he puzzles lots of others. There is great speculation about what motivated Judas to do what he did. Why did he betray Jesus?

One theory is that Judas was impatient or disappointed with the slow pace of Jesus' ministry, or even with the direction of His ministry. Another thought is that he simply loved money - and he certainly could have betrayed Jesus for free. The Bible doesn't explicitly say what was going on in Judas' head and heart.

I don't believe that Judas was a saved man. He is an example of someone who followed Jesus but never believed in Him.

So, with no explanation of all that this means, Luke tells us that Satan ***"entered"*** Judas. But Satan entered a very willing victim. Judas was still a responsible moral agent, but was now under the direction of the spiritual ruler of the realm that opposes God.⁴

What the religious rulers couldn't do was done with the help of a man who was hand-picked by Jesus. The betrayal was an inside job.

Judas and the leaders agree on a plan (vv. 4-6)

[4] And he left and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he was to betray Him to them. [5] And they were delighted, and agreed to give him money.

[6] And so he consented, and began looking for a good opportunity to betray Him to them away from the crowd.

⁴ The involvement of Satan shows that Jesus' death is ultimately a cosmic battle of epic proportions.

They can now get Jesus secretly without causing a public scene - and Judas will be a convenient scapegoat if anything goes wrong.⁵

On a grand scale, Judas' agreement with the rulers to betray Jesus begins the Lord's final movement to the cross.

But before the cross comes a meal. And preparations had to be made for that meal.

James and John prepare for the meal (vv. 7-13)

Thursday, the day of sacrifice (v. 7)

[7] Now the first day of Unleavened Bread came, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.⁶

The meal in question is explicitly called a Passover meal. Jesus and His apostles ate the Passover on this Thursday evening.

What can be confusing is that the Apostle John wrote that the Jews were going to eat the Passover on the next day, Friday, the day of Jesus' crucifixion. (John 18:28)

This confusion is not a show-stopper.

⁵ The other Gospels provide other details. Matthew tells us that Judas was paid thirty pieces of silver. John tells us that Judas left the Passover meal before it was finished.

⁶ Darrel Bock deals extensively with the issues concerning the date of the meal Jesus ate with His apostles AND with the question as to whether or not it was a Passover meal. With respect to the purpose, I agree with Bock that it was, indeed, a Passover meal as both Mark 14:12 and Luke 22:7 explicitly say that the meal was a Passover meal. With respect to the date of the meal, as required by the Mosaic Law, Jesus and His apostles ate the Passover on Thursday evening. (Nisan 14/15; see Exodus 12:11; Leviticus 23:5) John's reference to the Passover (John 18:28) may be related to discrepancies in calendars that led some Jews to celebrate Passover a day apart or John may have been referring to other sacred meals that were part of the Passover week.

The problem can be resolved by possible discrepancies in calendars (Galilean vs Judean) or to John's reference to a Friday "Passover" being to another sacred meal that was a part of the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Jesus commissioned the apostles Peter and John to do the preparing work for this Passover meal.

Jesus commissioned Peter and John to prepare (vv. 8-12)

[8] And so Jesus sent Peter and John,⁷ saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, so that we may eat it." [9] They said to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare it?" [10] And He said to them, "When you have entered the city, a man carrying a pitcher of water will meet you; follow him into the house that he enters. [11] And you shall say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"' [12] And he will show you a large, furnished upstairs room; prepare it there."⁸

It may have been that Jesus sovereignly and miraculously created this coincidental meeting of Peter and John with a man who just happened to have a large upper room suitable for a Passover meal.

Or - what I think is more likely - this had all been pre-arranged.

They prepared the Passover (v. 13)

⁷ Luke frequently mentions Peter and John together (Luke 8:51; 9:28; Acts 1:13; 3:14; 4:13, 19; 8:14)

⁸ Some have suggested that for security reasons, it was likely that no one of the apostles except Peter and John knew where the Passover meal would be held.

[13] And they left and found everything just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

They secured the room, saw to it that the lamb was slain, cooked and prepared in time for the meal, picked up the bitter herbs and whatever else was needed for the side dishes, and bought unleavened bread and wine for the meal.

Then, early in the evening the whole group gathered at the house to celebrate Passover around a great meal. (v. 14) They were reclining on large pillows sprawled out in front of a low table when Jesus spoke.⁹

At the Table with Jesus (vv. 14-23)

The final Passover; the first Lord's Supper (vv. 14-20)

Intro to the bread and cup (vv. 15-16)

[15] And He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."

With that, Jesus set the tone for all that's to follow. He is about to suffer.

[16] for I say to you, I shall not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

To this point, it has been a very full three years of ministry, three years of walking with these apostles, teaching and healing, speaking to crowds. That season comes to an end on this night.

On this night He turned to His redemptive work of being the ***"lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."*** (John 1:29)

⁹ Reclining was the posture of free people, recognizing that they were free because of God's having saved them from Egyptian bondage.

Jesus knew full well what He was about to face. He's been looking forward to having this last chance to be with His followers for a while.

Yes, they'll eat together, again. But not for a long time. Not until Jesus comes back to establish His kingdom.

Luke describes here what we call The Last Supper. It was a regular, Jewish Passover meal. We base our regular observance of The Lord's Supper on The Last Supper. We'll do that in just a few minutes.¹⁰

In no sense is our Lord's Supper a Passover meal. It does, though, remind us of the Last Supper and it whets our appetite for a meal that is yet to come.

Jesus was serving as the "father figure" for the apostolic band. So, as the father of this "family," He led in the Passover observance.

They take the elements (vv. 17-20)

[17] And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; [18] for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes."

This ***"cup"*** was the first of four times during the Passover meal when those present would take a drink together.

They probably took this drink out of a common cup, passing it around to each one. There is a great sense of unity at this point.

Then, they continued with the meal. Near the end of that meal Jesus led them again, this time in eating food.

¹⁰ Luke's wording is closer than Matthew's, John's, or Mark's to Paul's in 1 Corinthians 11.

[19] And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body, which is being given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

On different occasions, Jesus had already spoken about His coming death. These words clearly anticipated His death.

As He broke off pieces of the unleavened bread and distributed it to the apostles, He was illustrating to them what would happen on the next day for them.

A bit later, when they had all finished eating, Jesus spoke again.

[20] And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup, which is poured out for you, is the new covenant in My blood."

He had not eaten the bread, since it represented His own body. Here, He didn't drink from this cup. It symbolizes His life's blood.

The words ***"poured out for you"*** speak of sacrifice.¹¹ Jesus is the sacrifice. His death will inaugurate a new era of salvation. His death will bring in a whole new age.

I think that the disciples were just now "getting" that Jesus was about to die. The image of His body and blood being ***"given"*** and ***"poured out"*** through the symbols of the bread and wine are clear.

The previous predictions had been too vague. This is too clear to miss.

That makes this room easy to "read." The mood is somber. Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah, is soon to die.

¹¹ Luke wrote that the church was created ***"through His blood,"*** using language borrowed from Luke 22. (See Acts 20:28)

The mood turns from somber to disturbing after that final cup with Jesus' next words.

Jesus announces the betrayal (vv. 21-22)

[21] But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Mine on the table. [22] For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!"¹²

Can you imagine hearing Jesus say this at the end of a Passover meal? If you were anyone but Judas (remember that Judas had already struck the deal with the religious rulers), you would have been completely unsettled.

"Was Jesus talking about me? Surely not! if not me, which one of my eleven fellow apostles could it possibly be?"

They were filled with confusion and grief at the news of His coming death and were even more confused by the news of betrayal.

Discussion about who the betrayer is (v. 23)

[23] And they began to debate among themselves which one of them it was who was going to do this.

And we "get" that they would do this. We understand. There is something very right about trying to identify the betrayer.

While we imagine the debate raging, we circle back to Jesus and try to imagine what's going on in His mind and heart.

¹² Luke does not add (as Matthew and Mark do) that it would have been better for the betrayer to have not been born.

Having said what He said about being betrayed, He was quiet. He was listening in on His apostles' debate and looking ahead to His own gut-wrenching ordeal.

He was preparing His followers for the time when He would no longer be with them. But I think Jesus was also inviting His friends to share His pain.

So, while it was a fine thing for these friends to debate with their fellow-apostles, "*Who will betray Jesus?*," I've got to believe that Jesus would have appreciated them showing some support for Him about either His approaching death or about the betrayal.

When a friend describes some suffering he is going through or is anticipating, we like to picture ourselves going to him, putting our arms around him or her, offering consolation.

That's what friends do for each other. But that is not what happened here.

Jesus had told them about a looming cross for Him, and their discussion turned from betrayer identification to something else altogether.

The Path to Greatness (Luke 22:24-27)

A Disciples' Debate (v. 24)

[24] And a dispute also developed among them as to which one of them was regarded as being the greatest.

If that seems familiar, it's because the theme of ranking and reputation, greatness and firstness, has come up before.

This issue of who was greatest was a long-standing issue among the Twelve. Every time it came up, Jesus corrected that way of thinking.

They had this conversation earlier when they were walking on the road to Capernaum.

[Mark 9:33] They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He began to question them: "What were you discussing on the way?" [34] But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest.¹³

Jesus corrected them there by placing a child in their midst as an example of greatness in His kingdom.

The same issue came up when they were on the road to Jerusalem for the last time and James and John approached Jesus, asking if they could sit on Jesus' right and left side in His coming kingdom.

They wanted to be great, and He corrected them, again, calling them to lives of service.¹⁴

But to have the discussion here? Now? How could they? Just a few short hours before His arrest, trials, and crucifixion, they're arguing about who was regarded as being the greatest.

Jesus has an unholy mess on His hands. This is His final chance to drive home a key truth about life in His kingdom.

So, He spoke, one more time about what it meant to follow a Servant Messiah?

The Way of the World (v. 25)

¹³ Probably the background to Matthew 18:1-6 and Luke 9:46-48.

¹⁴ See Matthew 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45.

[25] And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles domineer over them; and those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors.’

“Benefactors” are at the top of the heap. They are leaders who have followers under them. The followers take orders.

The history of the world is the story of strong leaders giving commands, telling others what to do, bossing people around.

Of course, there are good bosses in lots of places in the world today. But it is easy to find rulers who rule with an iron fist. It wouldn't take us long to develop a long list of tyrants who have lorded it over the weak in recent generations.¹⁵

You might be able to tell stories of oppression from your own life. A boss who cracked the whip. A government official who made life miserable for you. A religious leader who barked orders at you.

All of these would be sad, but not remarkable. It's the way the world works.

Jesus' kingdom works differently.

The Way of Jesus' Kingdom (v. 26)

[26] But it is not this way for you; rather, the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader¹⁶ like the servant.

Those words sum up the revolutionary ethics of Jesus' kingdom.

But you'll notice that He doesn't condemn the desire for greatness. It is not bad to want to be great in the work of Christ. He doesn't say it is wrong to want to be first.

He simply points out that it's different in His kingdom. Greatness and firstness are defined by service.¹⁷

The idea of greatness we bring with us when we come to faith is the image of a pyramid. We climb up toward the top. The higher we climb, the fewer equals we have, and the more subordinates.

But in Jesus' scheme of things, we climb down the pyramid.

I began my life in Jesus with ME at the top. I was what my life was all about. As I grew in Jesus, I learned that He was pre-eminent AND that I was to consider others more important than myself. (Philippians 2:3) I've spent my life as a Christian leaning into and re-re-learning this.

You're learning and re-learning the same thing.

Growing in Jesus involves serving more sacrificially, serving better, serving more expansively. Serving by listening, serving menially, serving out of the limelight, serving by giving, serving by praying.

Jesus invites us to join Him in a race to the bottom. Then, He calls us great. God counts you great when you put others ahead of you.

And, to show that this is a principle of the first degree in the life of those who call themselves “disciples” - that this is not some peripheral, trivial thing - Jesus gives us “Exhibit A.”

¹⁵ A very incomplete list would include Mao Tse Tung, Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Polpot, Idi Amin, Ho Chi Minh, Kim Jong-il, Saddam Hussein, Nicolae Ceausescu.

¹⁶ Jesus does not say that there are to be no leaders. Rather, that leaders are to serve.

¹⁷ Every New Testament writer reminds us of the danger of leaders - elders, pastors, bishops - lording it over the church. There is to be no pecking order in the church. The New Testament repeatedly reminds us that those who are in positions of authority must not think that they have the right to tell others what to do.

The Way of Jesus (v. 27)

[27] For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

It just makes sense to us that the great one reclines at the table while the lesser one serves.

But here Jesus calls attention to His own example of service, an example He had just given at this Passover meal.

John's telling of the Last Supper includes this: ***[13:4] [Jesus] got up from supper and laid His outer garments aside; and He took a towel and tied it around Himself. [5] Then He poured water into the basin, and began washing the disciples' feet and wiping them with the towel which He had tied around Himself.***

He, the Master, was the Servant.

Or, as He said on another occasion, ***[Mark 10:45] For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."***

We have believed in a Servant King and are here to worship a Servant Savior.