

Leading Like the Lord *Luke 22:21-30*

Orange shadows flickered on the wall. But oil was running low in the upper room's lamps. The roast lamb was all gone now. So were the bitter herbs. The unleavened bread was eaten. And the wine glasses were empty.

The last Passover supper was finished. And so was the first communion. But the Lord still lingered at the table.

The disciples did not know it. But this was their last quiet evening with the Man they had followed for three years.

All too soon, Christ would be caught up in a torrent of suffering and savagery. And there would be no time for talking and teaching.

The Savior looked around the table with a sad smile. The men He had chosen had learned a lot. But there was still so very much they needed to know.

Now the last few grains of sand were draining out of the hour glass. And there was no time left for preaching or parables.

There was only time to repeat and reinforce one last lesson. It is a lesson the Redeemer had taught them time and time again.

It is a lesson saints of every age are slow to learn.

Disciples and Judas

The Master's men thought they were all faithful followers of the Man who called and commissioned them. But they were wrong. One of them was a wolf hiding in false fleece. And behind his serene smile was a thirst for blood.

But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Mine on the table. Verse 21

Judas' dark deal with the wicked old priests who ruled the temple was signed and sealed. All that was left was to deliver the Carpenter into their hands.

Jesus did not name Judas as the betrayer. So the indictment accused all of His disciples.

For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed! Verse 22

Up to that moment, Judas was proud of his plot. He was smug and sure he had deceived everyone. Indeed, he believed he had even beguiled the Man he was betraying by hiding his hatred behind a sweet smile.

Now he realized he was wrong. Jesus knew all about his plans. And so did the heavenly Father.

Judas also thought he was charting his own dark course. But he was wrong about that too.

God not only knew His Son would be betrayed. He actually ordained that His eternal enemy would plant treason and treachery in the heart of Christ's one pretending apostle.

Yes, the Lord of love and life would be betrayed. But only because it was ordained by God and prophesied long ago.

Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me. Psalm 41:9

But Judas could take no comfort in God's plan. In the same way, Titus was ordained by God to punish the Jews and turn Jerusalem into a pile of scorched stones.

But that did not wash the blood from Titus' hands or absolve his guilt for ruthlessly slaughtering men, women and children as well as both defiling and destroying God's dwelling place on earth.

The great God of Heaven can use wicked men as easily as He can those who love and live for Him. So, while both Judas and Titus thought they are going their own way, they were really carrying out the God's will.

Still, their minds were set on sin and savagery, on brutality and betrayal. And for that they would pay an eternal penalty.

...woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born. Matthew 26:24

The Savior's sharp words cut into the hearts of the disciples. The other eleven loved their Lord more than life. And they could not imagine they would ever betray Him.

They began to be grieved and to say to Him one by one, "Surely not I?" Mark 14:19

Each of the eleven were sure they would never betray their Lord. But moments later, they did exactly that.

And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest. Verse 24

It was an excited, eager argument. And it seemed harmless. But their pride and lust for power betrayed everything their Savior stood for. A desire to dominate others always does that.

Still, just like the disciples did that day, saints today wrap their raw ambition in robes of righteousness. They tell themselves they simply want to do great things for the Lord they love.

But they really want to be envied in the eyes of other men. And we cannot do that and be considered great in Christ's kingdom.

David Wilkerson put it best. If we would be somebody in our Savior's sight, we must be willing to be nobody in both our own and others' estimation. Christ could have criticized and condemned His disciples for their selfish ambition and hunger for power. After all, He had talked to them about it again and again.

But He did not. Instead, He used what little time He had left with them to teach them a vital truth. He started by defining the error they were entertaining.

And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.'" Verse 25

It is the way of the world. From the hushed halls of parliaments and presidential palaces to small clubs and community organizations, it is the same. Men strive to dominate one another.

And the reason why they do is simple. It is a part of what John called the pride of life. They want to be obeyed and honored.

We all want to be the one who directs the lives of those around us, who makes the rules and sets the standards. And that is not all.

We want to be appreciated and honored as a benefactor: as one who provides what others want and need. And that is blasphemy. After all, there is only one Jehovah Jireh.

Our glorious God is the great provider. He is our Sovereign Shepherd, too. And He is the only One who is allowed to direct the lives of those who serve Him. Neither pope, priest nor pastor has the right regulate the behavior and direct the lives of God's people.

Only God has the right to dominate His people. And if we try to do it ourselves, we are no better than Judas.

We betray the Savior who loves us.

Disciples and Jesus

First generation saints insisted that Mark merely wrote down what Peter told him. And Peter remembered the reason the Redeemer chose twelve men.

He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him... Mark 3:14

Sure, the Savior spent many hours talking to the Twelve. He spoke to them in parables and plain principles, giving them both counsel and commandments.

But listening was not the most important thing the Master's men did. They watched Christ. That was the most eternally important thing they did. Each day, the disciples saw how the Savior responded to both desperate needs and dangerous enemies.

In fact, that was why He chose them. He knew the strongest spiritual witness men can give is never what they say, but what they are and how they both act and react. Like the gentiles who came to Philip in Jerusalem, people need to see Jesus.

So the Master was adamant. We cannot, indeed we must not dominate others as this world's leaders do.

But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant. 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. Verses 26-27

In the original, the Savior's statement was sharp and emphatic. Not with you! We simply must not lead like this lost world does.

It is God's perfect will that we become like His Son. And although He was the Lord of Glory, Jesus came as a servant.

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Philippians 2:5-7

Most likely, this was the moment the Master wrapped a towel around His waist and washed His disciples' dirty feet. By both word and example, Jesus taught that those of us who trust Him are to serve others in any way we can.

That means no chore can be too menial or mundane. Neither are we to shy away from serving because the task is too humble or humiliating, too dirty or degrading.

John opened his Gospel account by reminding his readers that Jesus Christ was and is the high and holy Creator God. And as such our Redeemer had every right to be served.

Nevertheless, it was His choice not to be served, but to serve. And that is not all.

...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. Matthew 20:28

We call Christ our Savior because He willingly sacrificed His life that we might live. Remembering that is an important reminder. Serving God demands that we willingly make sacrifices, both for our Lord and for the sake of others.

So we cannot serve Jesus, yet stubbornly refuse to sacrifice even our pride and personal dignity. We must not merely be willing to be treated like the least and the last. We must prefer it.

Paul wrote that we are to have but one aim in life. We are to glorify the Savior who purchased us with His own blood.

...you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. 1 Corinthians 6:20

Our Savior is worthy of all glory and gratitude, all praise and preference. Therefore, if we receive any honor or glory, we have stolen it from the Lord who laid down His life for us. And stealing is being like Judas, not Jesus.

Disciples and Judgement

We must not be misled. The Master did not say we are to refuse to serve as leaders. He said we are not to lead like people in this sinful, self-centered world.

Both then and now, Christ appoints some men to serve as leaders: as elders and pastors. But He not only expects, He insists that we lead after His example and in His image, not this world's.

After all, this life is not the end. And Heaven is hardly a place of rest. Our eternal life will be one of important service.

In the Sinai desert, Moses was wearing himself out. His father-in-law, Jethro, could see that. All by himself, Israel's leader was trying to settle every dispute and judge every disagreement.

But Jethro had a better idea. Why not appoint some judges to make minor decisions in his place?

In the same way, it is the will of our righteous Redeemer that we who trust Him, rule in His name. That is the principle within His promise to the eleven in the upper room.

You are those who have stood by Me in My trials; and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Verses 28-30

The simple fishermen who sat across the table from Jesus that day would one day rule as judges over all Israel. And Paul added that Christians will also judge angels one day.

However, we will not sit as judges as a result of our own efforts. Jesus said that His Father gave Him a kingdom. And in the very same way, He will give us authority as leaders.

We must never forget. Both in this life and in our eternal life to come, all authority and importance, all power and position we might have comes from God.

We can do nothing to earn it. He gives it to us. It is a gift out of His grace and goodness.

That is one reason why it is wrong to rebel against anyone who is in a position of authority over us.

For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Romans 13:1

That is especially true in both our family and our church. God is the one who appoints leaders. So when we rebel against them, we are resisting God.

We must also remember that those who lead for the Lord are never free to do as they choose. The judges Moses appointed were not. And leaders our God calls and commissions are not either.

We are to judge just as Jesus would if He was in our place. His standards are to be ours. And so are His compassion and kindness, His purity and purpose.

Jesus said His disciples had been with Him through all the trials He endured. Soon they would be entangled in trials of their own. And men would hate and hound and hunt them simply because they loved and served the Savior.

They were fit to be appointed to positions of power and share in His sufferings because they had been with our Lord, because they listened to Him and learned from Him.

That has not changed. We must spend time with Jesus, talking to Him in prayer and learning from His Word, if we are to be fit to guide to others. There is no shortcut. If we would be like Christ, we must be with Him.

These few days we have to live and serve the Savior now are a training camp. Someday beyond this life, we will sit in judgement of angels. And we will have to judge them as God's Son would.

We will have no time to prepare then. That is why it is so important that we think, act and react

like Jesus did. And that we do so each day and in every way.

By disciplined, daily practice we must learn to serve like Jesus, to sacrifice like Jesus, and to be selfless like Jesus. Only then will we be worthy to be called Christians.

Little Christs!