

Well, it's my speech I've been working on, so if I mess up and put all of the disciples in the ark, it's not really my fault. I've had a stroke. But else, let's try this - Mark 14:12 - as we continue in our study through Mark's gospel.

Mark wrote this, really, from Peter's testimony. It really could be called, I guess, the gospel of Peter. Mark was most impressed by Jesus' servant heart, and so he writes his gospel looking not so much at the preaching of Jesus but to the doing - more miracles here, more action. Night and day the Lord is busy serving, and He calls us to do the same. Well, maybe 35% of the gospels are committed to looking at the last week of Jesus' public ministry, the Passion Week, if you will. And out of that 35%, nearly 60% of it is dedicated to the final day, if you will, the last twenty-four hours.

Well, this morning we will start with Mark - headed for the Passover evening Thursday night after 6:00 (it would be Friday, of course, on the Jewish calendar), and then Mark will take us through all of the events of the evening until we meet with Jesus at the cross at 9:00 that morning.

Just to go back - I was going to say last week, but it was eight weeks ago - Mark covered Judas' betrayal of Jesus there in the first ten verses or so. We learned there that it was the previous Friday night at dinner that Judas went out to try to make a deal for Jesus' betrayal. In fact, John mentions it in chapter 12 as well. The thing that Mark wants us to know (and don't forget) is that the Lord was in charge of all of these things. There's a lot of betrayal, a lot of subterfuge, a lot of deceit going on, and you might wonder, "Gosh, maybe it got away from the Lord." It was Albert Schweitzer who wrote a book years ago called "*The Quest for the Historical Jesus*," and his conclusion, along with a lot of other people who don't believe in Christ, was that He just overplayed His hand. He got caught, kind of, into the merciless gears of history. But that's totally wrong. It isn't the best-laid plans of men going astray. The gospels make it abundantly clear that Jesus was in charge of everything. And Mark goes out of his way to tell us that. He's the Servant who willingly goes to the cross. But nothing escaped His attention, if you will. Nothing got away from Him. The timing was perfect. His arrest and then all the way to His death, where He declares that it was finished, was in His hands.

And so Mark will highlight that as we go through. And we'll see it again this morning as the Lord makes plans for the Passover and then as He turns to the last supper as well.

It's a good thing to learn, I think, when your enemies are against you or you feel like you can't win, that the Lord with you, you'll win, won't you? It doesn't really matter how many people are standing with you, "if God be for you, who can be against you?" (Romans 8:31) And we find as the world gathers against our Lord, He's on the homestretch, right? There's betrayal and false trials. I guess we can use a modern word and say there were "fake" trials. There were beatings and mockeries, and yet everything was under His perusal and under His care.

Well Mark continues in verse 12 by saying, "Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, 'Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?' And He sent out two of His disciples and said to them, 'Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him. Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, "The Teacher says, 'Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?' " ' " Jesus was staying, as we mentioned to you before, up in Bethany that last week with Mary and Martha and Lazarus. When you are in Jerusalem, the law said that you had to eat the Passover in town, in the city limits, if you will. And so Jesus had made preparation to do just that, advance certainly. This time of year, if you owned a place, you could make bank. I mean, everybody was in town, right? And so here the disciples asked Jesus where they would be keeping the Feast. And notice in verse 13, and down from there, that the Lord gives to two disciples (we know that from Peter and John) specific directions that are definitive, but they're very vague, if you will. They are definitive. In fact, they know they have to go into town. They're indefinite enough to not know who the owner might be and where the place might be. It does appear from the gospels that this man to whom Jesus sends them was a believer. He worked with the Lord. He worked on this obscure kind of cryptic plan. He is providing for Jesus a room that he could have made a lot of money on. He provided a large enough place to gather all of the disciples together. And the signs that the boys were given were fairly obvious. There was a fellow who would be walking around carrying a water pot. Now, at least in the culture, women usually did that. Guys wore animal skins around their necks with water. So it would be like saying, "Go into town and look for a guy with a purse." He would stick out like a sore thumb. But the sign was given so that the boys who went - Peter and John - would know where they were

going, be able to identify the place that they were heading, and yet no one else really would know until they got there.

And your first question is - why all the cloak and dagger? And the answer is - well, there're a couple of answers, but I think the main answer is it wasn't time for Judas to know where they were going to meet. That previous Friday, he had made a deal. "I'll get Him in a place by Himself, away from the crowds. I'll let you know. You be ready." And so that had happened the previous Friday, and so the Lord now, in planning the Passover, I think Judas was probably listening very carefully and saying, "All right. I'm going to find out where that is and let everyone know. By the end of the day, we'll be waiting for Him." But he couldn't find out. So this would have been an ideal time. It was hidden from him. And so the Lord makes this kind of cryptic plan. "All right. Just look for a guy with a purse." And that was all they knew, and I think Judas just went, "Darnit. I thought I had Him! And now I don't have Him." So he might have been left fuming, but he won't really be able to go to his co-conspirators with any kind of information. Now, nobody else understood that. The other boys just said, "All right. We'll just go find that guy." And off they went. So the place was hidden from Judas. I think that's number one.

Number two, the Lord wanted some time with His boys. This was going to be the most important, I guess, meal in history. It was the Lord's final meeting with His boys before the cross. He wanted to affirm to them and encourage them to reinforce what He had been teaching them, tell them about the resurrection (though they wouldn't really embrace it), let them know His heart and ultimately say, "I'm the Passover Lamb, I'm the One that has come to give My life."

So we read in verse 15 that they were to be shown an upper room. If you go to Israel with us ever, there is an upper room in Israel that we have taken folks to for the past many, many years. We can't verify to you that that is the exact place, although it is certainly in that vicinity of town - for sure. And not only is the area right, but the size is right, the architecture is right. It would certainly approximate where the Lord would have gone with them. But we can't tell you for sure. Eating in the culture was very important, and it still is in Israel today. When you eat with people, that's really more important than having a meeting with them, right? They see it as, "Whatever you're eating and I'm eating, we're both being sustained by the same food." So we're kind of made one together by that meal. And I find it very interesting that the Lord constantly - when He ministers to

people - eats with them. He does that more than anything else. Read through the gospels. Just look for dinners and lunches and snacks. I've tried to follow that as best I can because it is in the Bible (Laughing) to go to eat. Even last time - two months ago - there at the dinner at Mary and Martha and Lazarus' house, there was that gathering and that teaching. Jesus invites Himself over to Zacchaeus' house, asks him to, "Come on, get down. I want to have lunch at your house." Revelation 3:20 says the Lord knocks at your heart, wants to come in and have dinner with you. He's always inviting Himself over to eat, if you will.

So this was a big deal, this dinner, and it culminated, if you will, this final week as the Lord heads for Calvary, and it paints the picture of the Passover Lamb from Exodus 12. So this was a big deal, this last supper. In fact, after this meal, Passover was not really needed to be practiced anymore, not in the form that it was; because the Messiah had come, and so communion takes its place, right? And we partake of the death of our Lord. We look at the cross. We anticipate His return. And that's what Passover becomes after this meal, if you will.

So, it was on this very night - and still today, for the Jews - that devout Jews everywhere gather to ask God to deliver them as He did out of Egypt, how He did that one time. The Lord said, there in Exodus 12:42, that this would be the night of the LORD, that they would have a solemn observation of the fact that the LORD brought them out. And so, every Passover there's that cry. But we already know He's answered the cry, hasn't He? He's come. So, far from being crushed in the gears of history, Jesus is turning the wheels as He wants. He's making the preparations. He's got a plan. His death wasn't an accident.

Well, we read in verse 16, "So His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them" (they found that guy with a purse); "and they prepared the Passover." Now, that was quite a bit of work. I mean, we read it in one little verse, but they had to get the lamb purchased and taken to the Temple, and it had to be sacrificed. They had to stand in a long line of folks, worshipping, taking their turn. They had to roast this thing for folks to be able to eat it. They had to get the bitter herbs and the fruits that would have to go into the dip, if you will, with the honey and the nuts that would remind them of the mortar they made in Egypt. I mean, it was just an all-day deal. They had to cleanse the house of leaven. And so it was their job to get it ready. Most speculation, and I tend to agree with it - but it is only speculation, is that the house that they met in was probably the house of John Mark's family (the fellow who wrote this gospel). And

in the book of Acts they become the central gathering place in Jerusalem for the early church. And it would certainly explain why a young 12-year-old Mark was at the Garden of Gethsemane later, spying on Jesus when these folks were coming to arrest Him. And the explanation would be he followed them from home, which makes good sense. But it is speculation, and so it's not gospel, I guess.

With that being done, verse 17, "In the evening He came with the twelve. Now as they sat and ate, Jesus said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me.' " A dinner they would never forget. Mark covers the last supper in very small portions. In fact, that is true of Matthew and Luke as well. Mark only devotes fourteen verses to the entire last supper. Compare that with John's report that is found in 129 verses, and twenty-six of those were of that prayer as they went out (John 17). So John gives five chapters to the last supper; Mark gives fourteen verses. I mention that to you because, because we're doing Mark, we're going to pretty much stay with Mark and not bounce around too much unless we need it for context. But I would encourage you - we did a series of studies in John a while back. We spent nineteen weeks going through those five chapters. So don't say it's not available. It's available. Go check it out.

But Mark chooses to focus on a couple of things, the fact that Jesus is in complete control. In fact, He's aware of His enemies, He dismisses Judas, He points him out. Judas had not been allowed to get the information to his plotters beforehand. He would only now, at dinner that night, be released by the Lord to go do quickly what he had planned to do. And the Lord's timetable was still in order. In the meantime, Jesus uses this dinner (it seems to me) to reach out to Judas in every way possible. The fact that Judas will not listen, the fact that the Bible declares him to be who he is, does not turn the Lord away from giving him every opportunity. And I think that's important to understand because there is this delicate balance between the choices that you and I make as people in response to the Lord and God's will which seeks to bring us to Himself. So, in His love, He loves us, but He knows what you'll do with His Word and with His invitation. But that doesn't get you off the hook. He never forces you to make those decisions. He knows it by His knowledge - He's God. But He doesn't manipulate you, and I think that's the balance that you don't want to lose sight of. God is still going to reach out. He knows your decisions. He uses the weak and the submissive, as well as He does the rebel, for His own purposes. Satan, in that regard, Jesus uses him as He sees fit. But, on the other hand, His knowledge of us doesn't get us off the hook for the responsibility we have to respond to Him because there's that culpability that comes with it. So

there's this interesting picture at the last supper where Jesus literally does everything He can to say to Judas, "Judas, I love you. And I'm the Lord." Now, does Judas respond? Of course he doesn't. Will he respond? No, he won't. Does that mean he couldn't respond? Well, we know that the Lord knows that he will not respond, and He'll use him in that regard. But Judas is every bit as responsible for the decisions he makes as everyone else. However, the Lord doesn't stop loving him as a result. In fact, I think you'll see that as the Lord makes the declaration, "One of you is a devil," no one said, "I'll bet it's Judas because Jesus never liked Judas. He always treated him badly." That never happened! He treated him the same as everyone else. So, as the dinner goes on, the fact that He knew Judas wouldn't listen or turn to Him doesn't turn the Lord away from giving him the opportunities to do so. In fact, we read in verse 18 about Jesus' declaration. We know from John that it was right after the Lord had washed the feet of His disciples, had encouraged all of them to follow His examples, that "He was troubled in spirit." That's what John writes (13:21). Finishing washing their feet, He groaned within. The Lord's heart broke, and He sat back down, and He was troubled, and He was disturbed, and He lays out this bombshell to the group. I don't think anybody expected to hear this. "Oh, yeah. By the way, one of you is going to betray Me. One of you here at dinner, eating with me - intimately involved - is going to turn." And from the humanity side of Jesus, which Luke is very interested in, Jesus wasn't a stoic. The cross was the ultimate climax of His ministry, and certainly there was lots of physical pain that came with it. But His rejection by men happened throughout. He wept over a city whose heart wouldn't turn to Him and the cross just hours away. And now His heart breaks over Judas, sealing his eternity; and the eyes of Jesus see it, and nobody else does. And He suffers through it, though no one else can. He was "a Man acquainted with grief." That's what the Bible says (Isaiah 53:3). And certainly part of the grief was here. You should know that God's heart is the same towards you, that His desire is that you would listen and follow, that He would rejoice over you, that He could give you life. There's no joy for the Lord in the death of the wicked. That's what we read in Ezekiel 18:23. There's joy in the presence of the Lord when a sinner repents (Luke 15:7). But there's no joy in God's heart when men walk away, and you watch Jesus troubled in spirit, hurting over Judas. We call him names. Nobody uses his name. But we call him names. We can't believe what he would do.

From the gospel accounts, and from most historical accounts, you can certainly piece together the seating arrangements for this dinner. Verse 18 uses the word "one of you who eats with Me," who "sat and ate." The word may be a little

misleading because the word means to recline. In fact, from all that we can gather and all that we've learned in the gospels as well, the dinner table to which Jesus brought these men was probably u-shaped; that everyone would recline on a pillow with their left arm, feet away from the table, hands reaching in to the table to eat with your hands. So there were a bunch of guys laying around this table. I know it messes up your Da Vinci picture, but I'm pretty sure that was a painting, and it was posed. We also know from the gospels that from left to right, at least a portion of what we can look at, was Judas and then Jesus and then John. And then at the end was Peter who had his feet, it seems, washed last; which would have meant that Jesus' head would have been on Judas' chest, and John would have been on Jesus' chest. So, we are told in the gospels that as they entered to have this dinner, they were still arguing amongst themselves about who the greatest was. And we've talked a lot about that, right? That because they didn't understand yet between the first and the second coming, between the death and the resurrection, they all thought the coming of the Lord was immediate in terms of taking over. So they walk in arguing about greatness, and Jesus sits down, and He invites Judas to sit down on His left (in the place of honor), which would have been close to Him, where He could privately talk to him. And the Lord would have led this Passover dinner. He would have blessed the first cup of wine and recited the Exodus account of the redemption, the deliverance from Egypt by the strong hand of the Lord. He would have led them in singing one of the Hallel psalms (Psalm 113 or 114 or 115) to just worship God. He would have directed the drinking of the second cup of wine and blessed the bread, and He would have begun to hand out the bread that could be dipped in these bitter herbs and these sweet fruits and all. And then somewhere after that, Judas would be dismissed, dispatched, told to leave. "You're not to stay any longer." And it would seem, from the gospels, that he was gone before communion was established. It was the third cup of wine, the cup of redemption. But throughout this dinner, as Jesus progressed, it was the Lord reaching out to Judas as He washes his feet. He gets to hear what Jesus said to Peter, "Hey, if I don't wash your feet, you don't belong to Me," and Peter wanted a bath. He was invited to sit in the most cherished spot. While everybody argued about greatness, Jesus said to Judas, "Come sit with Me," and he's brought to that place of honor.

But then comes this word in verse 18 about betrayal. " 'One of you is going to betray Me,' " and it's a quote (according to John 13:18) exactly out of Psalm 41:9. It's a prophecy, but yet it is a word from Scripture that, if the boys were at all in tune with it, they might have put it together. But in any regard, Psalm 41 speaks

about David's heartbroken experience as his good friend, Ahithophel (wow, I said Ahithophel without stuttering, that's pretty good right there - I'm getting better). He was so brokenhearted about the rebellion of his son, Absalom, and his good friend had joined the rebellion. It broke David's heart, and when the rebellion failed, it was Ahithophel that would go out and hang himself (2 Samuel 7:23) - figuring he had chosen the wrong side in despair. So for Judas.

So, if you're sitting at this table, and the Lord has been talking about dying and not everything is making sense, there's a lot of shock that is in the hearts of the guys. And the Lord makes it known who he is. Mark would have you to know Jesus knew. He's known all along. The Scriptures talked about the price (in Zechariah 11) of His betrayal. And Judas may have fooled everyone else. He didn't fool the Lord. And so the disciples - you can imagine how perplexed they are. I think if it had been known who it was, Peter would have killed him. That's my feeling. "Who is it, Lord? All right. I got him." Because I think that's what Peter would do. I think he'd take him out. He certainly would want to.

So, in the midst of this wonderful union and fellowship, with soft hearts and men that loved Jesus, is a rat, a hard-hearted deceiver. When Jesus told the parable of the tares (in Matthew 13), He talked about the enemy coming to sow amongst the wheat. The tares - they look real, they appear to be like wheat, and it isn't really until the fruit is borne that they turn out black, and they're poisonous, and no one would eat them. You could identify them clearly but not until the fruit came forth. And so it is possible, like Judas I think, to have people in your church that are involved and regular, and nobody sees them as devils, nobody even imagines it, and yet they turn out to be wolves. We've seen a few come through church over the course of our lives. When I don't recognize them, it makes me feel foolish. "Gosh, why didn't I see it!" you know? Get by us. But I see it getting by here as well. We just need God's wisdom to be wise, to be careful. Folks do come in and make merchandise of you sometimes.

I wrote in my notes, and I remember years ago, there was a story in the "*Chicago Tribune*." It was in the mid-80's about a fellow named William Matix, and he had killed two FBI agents before being gunned down himself. He was a bank robber, and he was good at it. And he maintained an image, though, in the public of being a born-again believer. He was active in his church. He had preached on a Sunday. He had shown up in a magazine called "*HomeLife*," where he was set before the reader as an exemplary father and Christian and husband. This guy was robbing

banks. And I thought it's kind of like Ananias and Sapphira. I'm sure they fooled a lot of the church. That's what the word "deception" means.

So, look, everybody else was fooled. Jesus wasn't fooled. And Jesus isn't fooled by you. He knows you, and He wants you to be right with Him. So, the other guys - it's a completely different story. Notice in verse 19 where we read, "They began to be sorrowful," (these men did) "and to say to Him one by one, 'Is it I?' And another said, 'Is it I?' " "Is it me? I don't want it to be me." Nobody said, "Is it Peter? I'll be it's Peter." Or, "I'll bet it's Judas." Judas had been treated by Jesus, for these last three and a half years, with the same love and the same respect and the same compassion so that there were no telltale signs at all. But the Lord was aware. Judas, sitting as cool as ever at the table, says to the Lord (in Matthew 26:25), "Rabbi, is it me?" And Jesus said, "You've said it." Or, literally, "Bingo! Yep, it's you, pal. I know who you are." And Jesus identifies him to Judas. Again, this act of love, "I know what you're up to. I know what you're doing. I know it's you." You know, all of those opportunities for him to straighten out. Now, he wasn't going to. The Lord knew that. But that doesn't set aside the Lord's treatment of him. Like I said, I think if the Lord had pointed out it was Judas, he'd have never made it to the door.

John (13:24) tells us that Peter, who was sitting across from John, makes signs to him. "Ask Him who it is." And because John was leaning on Jesus' chest, close by, it was John who said, "Lord, who is it?" And the Lord said, verse 20, " 'It is one of the twelve, who dips with Me in the dish.' " And you read it in John, and you get the impression that the Lord said, "It's the guy I'm giving this to." But obviously that's not the case because nobody got up afterward and went, "Grab him!" I think Mark makes it a little clearer. "It's one that's here in fellowship with us. It's one that's here sharing intimacy with Me. It's one that I've reached out to and I've drawn in. I've chosen twelve of you. One of you is a devil." And so I think it would be wrong for us to say Jesus pointed him out here in this sop because everyone had been dipping in the bowl. But it was this gesture of friendship and loyalty, and I don't think Peter or John would have let Judas walk out the door otherwise. But here's what the Lord said loudly, and Judas heard it. "Look, I'm your Friend. I'm for you." But behind the eyes of Judas danced the devil.

We read in Luke 22:3 that earlier in the week Satan had entered Judas' body, had taken him over. We read in John 13:2 that it happened so again. So he would enter him at this point and send him out. And so verse 21 we read, " 'The Son of Man

indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.' " John (13:27) says that Judas then got up, the Lord said, "What you do, go do quickly," and it says Judas got up, and he went out, and then (very cryptically) it says, "And it was night." It was nighttime. He ran into the night, out from the light, into the night. And so Judas is off to get all of these guys that he's made plans with. In a few hours, not very long, he's able to muster what looks to be about a thousand people to come and grab one guy. "Maybe He'll fight back. He is the Lord. Maybe He'll hide. Maybe He's got other plans. We'll surround the place." In just a few hours - because everybody was on standby to hear from Judas. But who would tell him to go? Jesus would say, "Okay, you can go do what you've done, and go do it quickly, now."

Notice from verse 21 that Jesus is the only Person who ever lived who was the Captain of His own soul. He's in charge of everything, isn't He? And with the loss of Judas, Jesus proclaims again that He's going the way of God's plan "as it is written of Him," as the Scriptures had declared, that Judas would have no power, that his end would be horrible (as you can imagine). But even though he made those choices, the Lord said, "It would have been good for that man if he had never been born." He was a willing participant to accomplish these things, and I always think about these words of Jesus because it's amazing to me that you could do something so horrible that it could negate your entire life. Right? You negate the goodness of your human existence. "It just would have been better if you didn't show up at all." This deception and then this rejection of Jesus.

So, the Lord is going to go to the cross. David wrote about it in Psalm 22 a thousand years earlier. Isaiah wrote about the suffering that He would suffer seven hundred years earlier. But no circumstances are catching up with Him. The Lord has set the agenda, and that's important, I think, for you and me to understand; that in all of these stories, it's the Lord who's in charge. It doesn't look like it sometimes, but He is. In light of knowing that, though, knowing that He's the Lord over all, that He's going to have the last work, that He will love you till the end, but you'll be accountable for your response to His love - how are you doing with Him? How are you doing? It doesn't mean He'll stop loving you. He didn't stop loving Judas. To the very end, He reached out, He loved him, He took him in. He knew what he would do. He didn't make him do it. He used His knowledge as God. What are you doing with the Lord? You can resist His love and go your own way. "What you do, go do quickly." Or you can be with eleven other

guys (in verse 19) who find themselves just brokenhearted; soft-hearted guys who really were so aware of their own sin that they said, "Lord, it could be me. I could be the one denying You, betraying You." You don't want it to be you. I don't think they wanted it to be them, but they were aware of their inability to please. They were aware of their sin, which is why God could forgive them and wash them and use them in the days and weeks and months to come. But there was one hard-hearted guy. He was saying the same thing, but he would be separated from the crowd by his behavior. In fact, the Lord said of his life, "He probably shouldn't have shown up at all." Who are you following? That's the key because it's either a soft heart that knows its limitations, or it's a guy like Judas who makes up his mind, gets his reward in this place and then has nothing to show for it.

Next week, we will look at the last supper, and we will look at the institution of communion together.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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