

April 6, 2011
Sermon for Lent V
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

John 13:21-30 (ESV)

²¹ After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” ²² The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. ²³ One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table close to Jesus, ²⁴ so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. ²⁵ So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, “Lord, who is it?” ²⁶ Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.” So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷ Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” ²⁸ Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. ²⁹ Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor. ³⁰ So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

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¹ *The Holy Bible : English Standard Version.* Wheaton : Standard Bible Society, 2001

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

The first Maundy Thursday night, with his beloved disciples around him, Jesus knew what was going to happen. He knew that Judas was going to betray Him into the hands of the Satan's lackeys for 30 pieces of silver. He knew that Judas had already made the arrangements for the conspiracy with those that would put Him on the cross the following day.

Knowing what He knew, Jesus gave Judas every indication that He loved him. John's Gospel seems to indicate that Jesus had asked the disciple He loved, probably John, to recline at His right and that He gave Judas the place of honor at His left. There are many people who have studied the eating styles and table positions when folks would recline "at table". I haven't so I will have to go along with their opinions as to how the disciples ate in the upper room. Tradition tells us that a host at that time reserved the place at his left for his closest friend, because they could talk privately during the meal if they wanted too.

Jesus loved Judas, even though He knew what Judas was planning to do.

Then Jesus took a piece of the unleavened bread and dipped it into what was most likely the charoseth sauce, and gave that to Judas. When a host gave a guest morsel bread dipped in sauce to a guest, it was a sign of special favor, a sign of friendship. That's why in the Old Testament, Boaz invited Ruth to dip her bread in his wine (Ruth 2:14). He wanted to show Ruth honor, just as Jesus was honoring Judas, even though He knew that Judas was going to betray Him.

The charoseth sauce into which Jesus dipped Judas' morsel, a sweet, dark, chunky sauce made of ground fruit such as apples or figs with nuts and wine, reminded every Jew at every Passover celebration how their ancestors in Egypt felt betrayed by God. As they carried heavy mortar, which the charoseth symbolized, and laid the bricks of new Egyptian cities, the Hebrew slaves felt that God had abandoned them and betrayed His covenant, His promise to them.

Even when Moses arrived to deliver the Hebrew slaves, they still thought that God had betrayed them. In fact, they felt more abandoned. You see, after Moses first demanded that Pharaoh let the Israelites go, Pharaoh refused and in retaliation, he ordered that the Hebrews be given no straw to mix into the mortar, yet still make as many bricks. When they could not meet the quota of bricks, they were whipped. With Moses' arrival, the oppression had gotten worse.

No wonder "... Moses turned to the Lord and said, *"O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all."* " Exodus 5:22-23 (ESV).

All the Israelites thought God had betrayed them, though, of course, He had not, and the sauce, the charoseth sauce, into which Jesus dipped Judas' morsel symbolized their feelings of abandonment and betrayal. What an irony! The sauce that reminded the Jews how they had felt betrayed by God is now given in love to the man who would betray God's Son.

Can you imagine how Judas felt? The deal had already been made for Jesus' betrayal, but here and now, how did it feel to take the place of honor at the

meal...to take the morsel from Jesus own hand? He had just heard Jesus statement that one of them would betray Him. Do you think maybe he began to sweat a little...when Jesus answered the question of “*Lord who is it?*” with “*It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.*”

30 shekels or pieces of silver, each about 2 fifths of an ounce of silver; this was the price paid for a slave that was killed or gored by an ox in the Old Testament. The price paid for a slave, was the price paid for betrayal for the one who came to save.

However, Jesus could have gave the morsel dipped in the sauce of betrayal to Peter too. He later betrayed Jesus by denying Him three times to save his own skin. He didn't want to hang on the cross with Jesus no matter how he claimed otherwise when confronted by Jesus at the supper.

For that matter...Jesus could have given the morsel dipped in charoseth sauce to each one of us. Because we betray Him and we deny him, and He loves us every bit as much as He loved Judas and Peter.

Do you know why Jesus Loves you? If you truly look at yourself, without puffing yourself up with false pride in your abilities, you have to be honest and say that you don't see how. But He does. Jesus loves you with an *αγαπε* love, a *love that loves, not because the object of love is loveable, but because the Lover is*. He loves you because He has decided to, whether you deserve it or not; whether you appreciate it or not or whether you even accept it or not. This is how Jesus continue to love all of us who betray Him.

First, He washed their feet on Maundy Thursday, the feet of men who would desert Him. Next, as a sign of love and friendship, He offered Judas the morsel dipped in the sauce of betrayal. From there He instituted His Supper that we partake of even today, where His true body and blood are given and shed for the forgiveness of sins. Then, He went from the table to the garden; from betrayal to trial to death. And Jesus said: ... *“Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.”* John 13:31 (ESV)

To leave the upper room and go to the cross was Jesus' glory because He loves us. His love is His glory. His *ἀγαπᾷ* love is His glory. Certainly God's glory is seen in His power that created all things with a Word. And His glory is certainly seen in His wisdom that made everything so amazingly wonderful. But His glory is most fully seen in His Love that brought Him to the cross for your sins and mine. For His glorious death, God has exalted Him to the highest place and given Him the name above all names. God has exchanged the shameful crown of thorns for a glorious eternal crown.

Yet, we still deny our Lord; we still betray, as we who have been forgiven. We still indulge in the secret...and not so secret sins. We betray Jesus when we willingly sin when we think no one else is watching and we betray Him when we openly sin, laughing about it with our neighbors. We don't want to look at Judas too closely because that same look on his face, when he realized that Jesus knew of his betrayal, might be the same look on ours, when we realize that we have sold Jesus out for much less than 30 shekels.

And even knowing that we are traiters and deniers, Jesus offers us the morsel dipped in the charoseth betrayal sauce as a gesture of His friendship and His *αγαπε* love.

This is why we take the time to taste the charoseth sauce now as our usher passes it around.

Know that Jesus offers you His forgiveness and love again and again as He offered it to Judas on Maundy Thursday. He offers it in Baptism, in His Words of absolution, and in Holy Communion. He knows who we are and all that we have done, yet, He loves us and forgives us.

Judas hung himself in despair. He tried to fix things, he gave the money back but could not buy his forgiveness.

Jesus asks for nothing to pay for your sins...we couldn't afford to pay anyway. And knowing what He knows about us, could Jesus weary of our waywardness and finally deny us before God? Not as long as we repent of our sins and believe in Him as our Savior.

We are promised in Hebrews 13:5, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

Through faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are indeed forgiven of all of our sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

Adapted from the Lenten series: *Christ our Passover* by Rev. Dr. David Peter