

Sermon- Discerning the Enemy's Schemes

Scripture: John 13:18-30 2 Cor 2:11

Sunday, June 16, 2019

The last time we were in John, a couple weeks ago, Jesus was demonstrating an extremely important lesson to the future leaders of the church. He was telling them that they need to be a new kind of leader. A new kind of leader the world had never known. A servant leader. A servant leader is not someone who is docile and let's the followers do what they want. No, a servant leader is someone who is extremely strong in the lord, who operates in the power and authority that comes from the Lord, but someone who is so secure in their identity that they can set their ego aside to see and address the needs of the people he or she serves. That is what it means to wash the feet of those you serve. After Jesus taught them this valuable lesson, the events of the evening take on a very different tone. We get into the meal itself. This is of course the famous last supper meal. In the other Gospels the focus is on Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper. In John, the author is not focused on the Lord's Supper but on the actions of Judas at the Supper. And that is what we are going to focus on today.

Our passage starts off with some very intriguing words from Jesus. After he finishes his explanations and teachings of the previous section he tells his disciples that he is not speaking to all of them. In other words, there is an exception to what seems to the outside world as a Jesus follower. He tells them, "the one who eats my food has turned against me". In verse 21, you can see that Jesus is extremely troubled by this fact as he declares in that definitive voice Jesus is famous for, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me". Now the disciples look around and they do not get what Jesus is saying. And they don't know who Jesus is talking about. In fact the disciples are very curious about who Jesus is talking about. At this time two of his disciples try to find out. So we have Peter who motions the beloved disciple. Just to remind you of how the set-up would

have been, they were all seated at a low U shaped table. Everyone sat at the three available sides. The open side would have been used by the servants to come in and serve the food. And in this arrangement it is possible that the beloved disciple was sitting next to Jesus while Peter was sitting across but facing the two of them. So Peter makes eye contact with the beloved disciple and gestures him to ask Jesus who he is talking about. Now when Jesus hears the question he is very open with his answer. He tells the beloved disciple in front of everybody that he is talking about the one who he is going to give the bread that he dips in the bowl. Then he takes some bread, dips it in a bowl and gives it to Judas Iscariot. Now it is likely that Judas was actually sitting on the other side of Jesus so it would have been quite natural and easy for Jesus to do this.

With Verse 27 onwards you see something very strange take place. This is evil in action. It tells you that as soon as Judas finished eating the bread, something really strange happened. It says, Satan enters Judas. Then Jesus says, “hurry and do what you are going to do”.

The remarkable thing is that no one around the table is able to figure out that is going on. In spite of Jesus indicating who his betrayer was plainly, nobody at the table is able to figure it out. When Judas leaves in response to Jesus’ words saying “go quickly and do what you are about to do”, the other disciples are still thinking Judas was the treasurer that he is going to buy some more food or give some money to the poor. In other words, the disciples are stuck in familiar patterns of thinking and completely unable to see what was really going on. What was going on was extraordinary and the disciples were unable to adjust their thinking sufficiently to discern what ***was really happening***.

What I laid out before you up-to this point is the surface level action playing out. But with the benefit of the Holy Spirit today, I want to lay out for you all the extraordinary things that are going on in this passage that Jesus was signaling to his disciples that day.

I want you to be aware of is that it is in this passage in John that you see the evil forces move in to take charge of Jesus. But the first thing I want you to see is that, it is no surprise to Jesus. He knows what the evil forces are going to do. At the human level, Jesus is going to be handed over to the Romans soon. And there is only one way for the Romans to take charge of Jesus. It is for someone from his inner circle to give Jesus up. He knows who among his disciples is going to be Satan's agent. Jesus warning all his disciples about what Satan was going to do clearly but at that point they were unable to understand and what Jesus was captured they all ended up running away. Knowing the plans of the enemy makes all the difference whether it is physical warfare of the spiritual kind. On June 6th, the world celebrated the 75th anniversary of D-Day. This was the Normandy landing of the Allied troops in World War II. Now I don't believe we should glorify war and that is not my intention here. But to understand spiritual warfare it helps to use a physical warfare example. So on D-Day June 6th 1944 the allied troops managed to secretly storm the beaches of Normandy in France with a massive force of 160,000 troops, 13,000 aircraft and 5000 ships. The success of this operation was in the fact that the Germans did not know that it was coming and they were confused about what the allies planned to do. Switching back to our spiritual battles, when you know what's coming you will not be overcome. Apostle Paul puts it this way in 2 Cor 2:11 "*so that Satan will not outsmart us. For we are familiar with his evil schemes*". This leads us to our first take away from this passage. We need to be able to see the enemy's strategy to gain victory in our spiritual battles. And we can only see what the enemy is doing if we can hear what Jesus Christ is warning us about, through the translation of the Holy Spirit.

There is a second thing in the spiritual battle I want you to see is, the leash that Satan is one. Look verse 27 is really intriguing. It says when Judas had eaten the bread, then Satan entered him. You must be wondering, "why does Satan enter Judas after he has eaten the bread?" Well, take a step back and look at that action in light of the prophecy

Jesus quotes in verse 18. Satan entering Judas after he finishes the bread handed to him by Jesus is a direct fulfillment of the Psalm 41:9 prophecy, “the one who eats my bread has turned against me”. Ok, then Jesus says, “hurry and do what you are going to do” Everyone assumes that Jesus was talking to Judas of course. But was he? You see, once Satan entered Judas who is going to be in control? Judas or Satan? Yes it would be Satan. You see once Satan comes inside a person, to use a car analogy, the owner of the car becomes the passenger and Satan takes the driver seat. So if you have to give instructions about where to go, whom would you give it to, the driver or the passenger? Well, the driver of course? So, Jesus in this verse was speaking directly to Satan and telling him to go quickly do whatever he was going to do. This may sound very strange to our ears but there is a very important point I want you to pay attention to. And that is, Satan cannot do anything without the permission of God. I am not drawing this conclusion just from this passage. You see this in the first chapter of Job where he goes to God and asks him permission to put Job through the wringers. In Luke 22 Jesus says, “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat”.

(But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.)

You see the Biblical principle in operation here is that Satan is real and Satan’s mission is to steal, kill and destroy. But never forget that Satan is on a leash. He needs permission to act on people because every human being is God’s creation. What Satan did with Judas was at the moment Jesus gave him the permission and ultimately serving his purpose. Yes Satan is terrible, but the one who holds his leash is awesome. In a spiritual battle, you need to be able to hear Christ’s warning about the enemy’s plans. But you also need to see the leash the enemy is held on by God. See the enemy’s plans. See only the leash it is on.

But there is one more aspect of the functioning of evil we see in our passage today. That is the human role in evil. Before we look at what is happening with Judas, let's for a moment look at the situation with Job. In that case, Satan was wreaking havoc in Job's life, yes, but in spite of everything, Job was not giving Satan a foothold to act inside of him. So Satan was acting in Job's environment and doing as much damage as he could externally to break Job. Satan's strategy was to use the circumstances to create an opening for him to enter inside of him. If you are familiar with that story, you know that Job remains strong and ultimately Satan time is up with Job. Now what you see with Judas is very different. With Judas, his test came in the form of a conversation he had with Satan. That conversation was about whether Judas could put his trust in Jesus as the Messiah or Judas had another choice. He could put his trust in himself, make some money on Jesus, then get rid of Jesus and live happy ever after. That conversation with Satan was enough to break Judas. He took Satan's option, let him enter and take the driver seat of his life. The reason I am focusing on the actors in Judas' situation is because when we see Judas' role and participation in the act of evil, it gives us insight into our own participation in evil. Yes, the enemy wants to mess with us but Satan cannot mess inside of us unless we allow him to come inside. Satan wants to take over your home, he wants the driver seat of your car, he wants to rule your heart. But remember, we always have to option to resist. James 4:7 says "Resist the devil and he will flee from you". You and I have a super power from God to resist Satan. We don't have to fall, if we have the power of the Holy Spirit in us. When Satan entered Judas that day, it was only because ultimately he gave Satan the permission to enter. He had the agency and the responsibility. Never ever forget that in the spiritual battles yes we are dealing with God and Satan. But you and I are not pons in this battle. We have agency. We have a super power to resist. Satan cannot come in until we let him. So don't.

I want to recap what we see in our passage today about spiritual warfare. The first thing to know is that to gain advantage in war you need to know the enemy's plans. How can we know the enemy's plans? Well Jesus is always ready and willing to speak to share with us what the enemy wants to do, if we are only willing to listen with the help of the Holy Spirit.

But it is possible to get scared when you hear about what the enemy is going to do. But this is where we also need to know that the enemy may be a roaring lion. But it is a roaring lion on a leash. And there is God on the other side of the leash. That leash cannot be broken and God's hands do not slip. God is also good. He has a purpose. Remember earlier I quoted the Luke 22 passage where Jesus says, ³¹ *"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat.* That passage goes on to quote Jesus, ³² *"But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers."*

Know this about evil folks. In spiritual warfare, God only allows the enemy to mess around to fulfill some good divine purpose. So strengthen us or to prove our faithfulness to him. And as we go through the test, Jesus is simultaneously praying for our success. Isn't that amazing?

Finally remember that no matter how intense the external pressure Satan puts on you, if you have the Holy Spirit in you, you have the superpower to resist the devil. And when you resist the devil, he will flee. That is God's promise to you.

So remember to ask God for the enemy's plans, be reassured in the enemy's limits, look to accomplish God's purpose and resist the devil. Then you and I can be like the 11 who took the Good News to the ends of the earth and not like the one who fell headlong into it. Let us pray.