

Lasting Impressions from the Last Week of Jesus' Life
The Last Supper: A Matter of the Heart
Matthew 26:20-35

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Text Introduction: We return this morning to a series of messages concerning the "last week of Jesus' life." Today, we consider the last supper. As a matter of fact, we are now on the evening before His death. Later in this same evening, Jesus will be handed over first to Jewish authorities, then Roman authorities for crucifixion on Friday. At this point, we certainly remind ourselves again that Jesus knows His earthly fate. As a result, his actions and words take on even more significance.

Text: ²⁰ When evening came, He was reclining at the table with the Twelve. ²¹ While they were eating, He said, "I assure you: One of you will betray Me."

²² Deeply distressed, each one began to say to Him, "Surely not I, Lord?"

²³ He replied, "The one who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl—he will betray Me. ²⁴ The Son of Man will go just as it is written about Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."

²⁵ Then Judas, His betrayer, replied, "Surely not I, Rabbi?"

"You have said it," He told him.

²⁶ As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take and eat it; this is My body." ²⁷ Then He took a cup, and after giving thanks, He gave it to them and said, "Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ For this is My blood [that establishes] the covenant; it is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ But I tell you, from this moment I will not drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it in a new way in My Father's kingdom with you." ³⁰ After singing psalms, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

³¹ Then Jesus said to them, "Tonight all of you will run away because of Me, for it is written:

I will strike the shepherd,

and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.

³² But after I have been resurrected, I will go ahead of you to Galilee."

³³ Peter told Him, "Even if everyone runs away because of You, I will never run away!"

³⁴ "I assure you," Jesus said to him, "tonight—before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times!"

³⁵ "Even if I have to die with You," Peter told Him, "I will never deny You!" And all the disciples said the same thing.

Introduction: We have learned that in the last of week of Jesus' life He had purposes in all that He did. Certainly He had purposes in this final meal. Jesus used the customary Jewish celebration of the Passover meal to reveal even a greater significance for a similar meal in future times. That is—in the future, every time the meal would be shared, the meal shared would be “in remembrance of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The scene of this last meal reminds us of several things that are true in our relationships with God. These things ought to occupy our hearts as we remember this morning, through the partaking of the Lord’s Supper, His sacrifice.

God knows the condition of my heart.

“I assure you: One of you will betray me.”

When pressed, Jesus answers rather ambiguously that the one who dips in the bowl will betray. The truth of the matter is that at some point in the evening, all disciples will dip in the bowl.

Beware of a Perceived Relationship—Oddly enough, all the disciples are wondering if they will betray. Maybe, on the one hand, all of us ought to have the awareness that we are capable in our sinful nature of betraying. In that sense, we should beware of the perceived relationship. Sometimes those closest to Jesus are the very ones most far from Him.

Beware of a Deceived Relationship—Likewise, we must beware of the deceived relationship. Even Judas asks “Surely not I?” Even having made the deal, Judas is unaware of the full implications of his plan.

We have all been physically lost and not know it. As well, we can be spiritually lost and be deceived.

God cleanses the corruption of my heart.

His sacrifice . . .

Was For Me. We all should dwell deeply on verses 26-28. This is for us.

Was once and for all. His sacrifice is forever. (Not in the sense that He keeps making the sacrifice, though. His sacrifice has forever results.)

Robert Coleman tells the story in *Written in Blood* about a brother and sister. The little girl needs a blood transfusion. After some testing, it is determined that her brother is the only candidate. When asked of his willingness, he hesitated some, and then trembling said, “Sure, for my sister.”

Once the process started, the little boy closed his eyes and asked the nurses, “OK, so when do I die?” It was only then that everyone realized the reason for the hesitation and the trembling. He thought that his sister’s living meant his dying.

In our case with Jesus, it did require His dying, but thanks be to God, that He gave Himself willingly for our sin.

God challenges the commitment of my heart.

“Even if I have to die with You, I will never deny You.” And all the disciples said the same thing.”

It seems that we often overlook the conversation that follows the supper as is recorded in verses 31-35. However, this conversation poses perhaps the best reflection of all before we receive the Lord’s table together. You see, Jesus challenged their commitment. Now, all we see in the text is that in their words, they voiced their commitment. We all know however that the commitment of their words did not necessarily reveal the commitment of their hearts. As I look at these words, I wonder how many times we come to this place on Sunday to voice great commitments, but fail to live them out even the next day. Here is the reminder before we go to the table.

What we do on Monday is more important than what we say on Sunday.