**John 13:18-21, 26-27** February 21, 2018

Pastor P. Martin **Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, KY** Mid-week Lent #2

*John 13:18“I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: ‘He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.’ 19“I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He…” 21After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me… It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. 27As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.*

Dear Friends in Christ,

This last weekend we visited my aunt. She recently lost her husband of 39 years. In the few hours we visited, we often thought of what her husband had thought and said, and what he would have wanted for her and the farm they farmed together. When people leave us, we remember them. And that is a good thing. It is a blessing.

In our Lenten services we imagine ourselves as Jesus’ disciples. Perhaps not on that night in the upper room, but a little later. We imagine ourselves as disciples who woke up in the same house as Jesus for three years running. And then one day we had to say good-bye to Jesus vanishing into the clouds above the Mount of Olives. Now we live with the memories of him. It bears repeating that the theme of our Lenten devotions is What Jesus Wanted Them to Remember – Jesus’ Upper Room Teachings. At the beginning of their last Passover, Jesus had reminded them that his disciples serve other people – just as he served them when he washed their feet.

*This* week Jesus wants them to remember something about his betrayal. To borrow someone else’s theme, he wants them to know

**He Could Have, But He Didn’t**

It might seem strange that Jesus wanted the disciples to remember his betrayal. But he wanted them to remember that he *knew* he would be betrayed. He knew *before* it happened. He knew *who* would do it. Jesus even quoted the book of Psalms, ***“I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: ‘He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.’”*** But why did he want them to remember that, of all things?

This is very important. But before we get to that, we must consider Judas. Some of the really big questions of our faith, strangely enough, revolve around Judas. Was Judas doomed to betray Jesus? Was Judas sort of forced into betraying Jesus because the book of Psalms had prophesied it? Did Jesus pick Judas just so that he could fulfill a horrible prophecy? These are big questions, worthy of a Bible study, or even a book. But when we start to ask those questions, we should remember what the Bible clearly tells us: *“The Lord is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”* Judas is included in that “everyone.” God did not want Judas to fall from faith. God simply knew that Judas, in his freedom, would choose to do it. God knew Judas would reject him and then decide to sell him for a profit. He did not force him to do anything.

It is not unlike Adam and Eve. God gave Adam and Eve the choice to obey him in Eden. They chose not to. Was God short-sighted? No. The Bible tells us, *“Christ was chosen before the creation of the world”* (1 Peter 1:20) to be our Savior. So if God knew mankind would fall, if he knew we would need a Savior, if he knew it before the whole rodeo got started, does that make God the author of evil? Some people think so. But those people are trying to dodge responsibility. God gave Adam and Eve a free will, and they used it for evil. And now we want to blame God? So too Judas.

But enough about Judas. Let us just say that God Incarnate, Jesus, stood before him, broke bread with him, calmed storms in front of his eyes, gave sight to the blind, and Judas still considered him nothing more than a goose laying golden eggs.

Jesus knew the betrayal would happen, and he felt it important for his followers to remember. ***“I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does you will…”*** “You will” what?

We have all heard of people who walked off their job. They were there making enough to pay the rent and buy the food, maybe even a lot more. Then one day they walked away from it. They walked away saying something like, “I don’t have to deal with that… – that overbearing boss, the low pay, those long hours. I don’t have to put up with nasty customers, stress so bad that I am losing my sleep, my hair, my health.” So they walked away. I might too! My question is why they didn’t walk away sooner!

Not Jesus. He saw a terrible and dark end coming his way. And he knew it would be a knife-in-the-back betrayal. He could have walked away from it, but Jesus walked toward it. ***“‘He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.’ I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He.”***

He wanted them to remember that he had predicted it so that they would know 1) who he was and 2) how much he loved them. He wanted them to know that he was doing what he was doing because he chose to do it. “Yes, I know that one of you will betray me. But I still want to do this for you.”

He kept on going for your sake, for my sake. He kept on going so that when we have lived our sin-scarred lives, and as children of Adam return to the dust from which we were taken, that we will have an awakening to life!

That was important for them to remember if you think about the betrayal from the disciples’ perspective. If you had been a disciple of Jesus and seen Jesus’ miracles and heard his teaching, and then you saw him betrayed, what would your first thought be? Wouldn’t it be, “If it hadn’t have been for that Judas guy, Jesus would have done so much more!”

That is, in fact, exactly what the disciples thought. After the crucifixion two disciples commiserated, *“Jesus… was a prophet, powerful in word and deed… The chief priests and our rulers… crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.”* (Luke 24:19-21). To them, the betrayal looked like their hope, their faith, had died.

In the upper room Jesus says, “When it happens, remember that I knew about it. And not only did I know about it, I chose to go through with it, for you!” This prophetic sentence speaks still to us. Jesus was the Son of God who could have called down twelve legions of angels in an instant (Matthew 26:53), he could have prevented his betrayal from happening. But he did not. He was betrayed because that was all part of God’s plan, Jesus’ plan, to save us from our sins.

It was *not* like a 16 year old taken from us by a school shooter, an eight year old taken by leukemia, a 60 year old taken by a heart attack, where we are left asking questions. Jesus’ plan was to be betrayed and condemned to death, death on a cross. If he had not said so beforehand, we would never have believed it.

Jesus’ prediction proves Jesus’ great and mighty love for us. He knew about his end. He had the means to make it not happen! But he willingly endured treason. He suffered it all and told us about it before it happened, ***“so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He.”***

He could have, but he didn’t. Thank you Jesus! Amen.