

The Prediction

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[0 : 00] I'd like to go look back to the passage anyway in the chapter that we read in John's Gospel chapter 13 where we have a pretty solemn section of the Bible but one that's I think full of important and significant information, spiritual truth for us to consider.

Because I think there's always a challenge for us in our Christian lives or even if we're not Christians in our Christian thinking there's a challenge for us and the challenge of our Christian life is that we underestimate the goodness of Jesus Christ.

We underestimate how perfectly good he is. We think of goodness and we think of ourselves or we think of, we imagine what someone who is good is like but we underestimate how absolutely good and perfect and just and actually how other is the goodness of Jesus.

So I think it's a good thing to probably put out of our minds any ideas of our own ideas of goodness and maybe multiply it 100 times for Jesus or something like that because it probably doesn't work because he's perfectly good and perfectly just and perfectly holy and perfectly right in all in one but he's absolutely good.

So we underestimate his goodness. At the same time I think what we always do, often do anyway and at least I do, is overestimate my own goodness.

[1 : 48] So we underestimate how good God is, Christ is and potentially therefore we find it easy to blame him when things go wrong because we don't really understand or think of him as perfectly good but we overestimate our own goodness.

So we actually don't think very much about what we look like before God because we've made up our own minds what the kind of people we are and we're really basically pretty good.

We don't think sin is that serious. We find it easy to sin in many ways and we don't really battle against it.

It's a light thing for us. We shrug our shoulders that way, it doesn't really matter what I do because I'm really basically quite a good bloke, quite a good person, quite a good girl.

We sometimes look at other people and we think well they're really bad. I'm not like that. We moralise, we make our own standards of morality so that they're quite attainable.

[2 : 53] They're not that high, they're certainly not the height of Scripture and the height of Christ's morality and goodness. They're not that high so we can reach it and therefore we're quite happy to reach that level and stay there.

So we underestimate the goodness and the purity and the holiness and the light and the beauty of Christ and we overestimate our own. I think that's constantly a problem for us.

And what we find in this passage here is that we are disabused of a lot of our own ideas about Christ's goodness or His light as we'll come to see and our goodness as it's reflected in the character of Jesus.

It's a really powerful contrast here between two characters. There's lots of other people in this story, well there's the other disciples, but it's not really about them.

Can I ask you just to focus on the two main characters in this drama? And it is a powerful drama, it's a powerful story. So if I make you fall asleep tonight, if I make you bored then I have absolutely failed to express the drama and the intensity of this story between these two people.

[4 : 09] I've also got one or two scripture texts that I'm going to read from because this is very much about Jesus and His goodness and His light.

And we know earlier on in John 8 he says, I am the light of the world, whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

Jesus makes that clear, that's who He is. And he goes on to say in John 12, he says, I have come into the world as light so that whoever believes in me may not remain in the darkness.

So this is a passage which brings a great contrast between light and darkness, between goodness and evil, between Jesus and Judas, that's the two characters.

And they are as it were personifying this truth of Jesus being the light of the world and He's come in to face and to deal with the darkness and that's the darkness of human hearts.

[5 : 10] And can I just say at this point, don't think of Judas as someone other, apart, different and terribly bad compared with ourselves.

I want us to be putting ourselves into Judas' camp rather than Christ's camp naturally in our lives and I think that's important for us to remember because I think we tend to, maybe it's not the right word, but we tend to demonise Judas and think, oh he was a terribly, terribly bad evil person, again judging him against our own standards and thinking we're really not like that, we would never do that, we would never be like that, we're not like Judas.

I don't want us to do that this evening, I don't think the Bible will allow us to do that. So this great drama this evening, there's great suspense in this story and there's some classic kind of story telling themes coming across in this drama.

It's a bit like if you were to take two well-known TV stories or TV dramas, the band of brothers and friends, if you could bring them both together there's a lot of aspects and a lot of truth from these two kind of stories about importance of friendship and loyalty and betrayal and all of these kind of very real human story lines that come into this, this is really a divine drama with Jesus as the main player and Judas and I would argue ourselves as the other players in the story and this is his living word so we look to take from this challenge for our own relationship with the light of the world Jesus Christ who has come to remove the darkness from our lives and to remind us as Christians where we have come from the darkness that we've come from spiritually.

So Jesus here in this story the light of the world, I want to focus for a few minutes on Jesus and then on Judas okay and think of this outworking of Jesus who claimed to be the light of the world in this scenario in the upper room.

[7 : 33] How did Jesus who was the light of the world who came to banish darkness, spiritual darkness from people's lives, how did he act in this situation when he was in the upper room heading towards the cross about to be betrayed, how would this pure perfect good light of the world, Jesus Christ, how would he respond to Judas, the savior, the betrayer.

Jesus came to know the heart of Judas perfectly so it's not like just you and me getting to know one another, we can get to know each other very well but Jesus as the Son of God is able to discern what's in Judas' heart, in other words what nobody else can see and he knows from fairly early on we don't know exactly how long he comes to learn of in his human nature of the betrayal of Judas but from an early time he knows that Judas is going to be the betrayer and as the darkness of Calvary draws close how does he treat Judas you know as the weight of darkness comes into his own life and as he begins to face the reality of hellish experience on the cross, how does he treat Judas who will betray him, who will hand him over and who will betray his friendship, well it's quite interesting he treats him as the guest of honour at this Passover meal, now I want you to use your imaginations for a little while and the young people will be good at this okay because what we have here certainly more than likely in terms of the Passover meal isn't a typical sit-down meal that we would be used to with our knees under the table but rather would be what's called a meal at a triclinium which was a three site a U shaped table, a U shaped kind of couch table, it was quite low and rather than sit at the table people would recline at the table so they would lean on their elbow and their legs would be out and there would be four at each side of the U as it were, there would be the U at the front, I haven't got the notice board back up I would have drawn it on, so you've got three sides, you've got the U here and here, there'd be four at each side and the host would be in the middle of this part of the U of this triclinium meal and that would be Jesus, Jesus was there as the host and as we unfold the story it becomes clear that he had on one side John the beloved disciple probably his best friend and on the other side Judas and the left and the right these were the seats of honour that the host would have the people of most significance on either side of him and the most significance would be on the left, on Jesus left which is where Judas would appear to have been sitting because later on Jesus dips the bread into the soup and passes it to him, he wouldn't have been able to pass it far down the table very probably he passed it to Judas who was very next to him and we'll see that unfold as the story goes on, so Jesus seats Judas who he knew was going to betray him at this seat of honour, now there's a phrase that people say today is keep your friends close, keep your enemies closer, I don't think that's what Jesus is doing, I don't think

he's got Judas beside him because he wants to keep his eye on him, I think rather it's part of Jesus last appeal to Judas to change his behaviour, to change what he's going to do, he's his guest of honour, as we saw last week he washes his feet, as he did with all the other disciples he makes no exception for Judas who is about to betray him, he washes his feet, he does this great act of self-forgetfulness as Corrie preached to us last week about, he reminded Judas of the need for cleansing, it would have been a reminder to Jesus himself of what was lying ahead, why he was here, that he was going to the cross to provide cleansing for sin and to provide cleansing for sin that Judas needed also, so the light of the world washes Judas the betrayer's feet, gives him the place of honour, makes clear to him that he knows that he's the betrayer, this Christ who's the light of the world is revealing himself very significantly to be the one who knows the heart of Judas, this is no small Christ, this is no victim Christ who has unwittingly fallen into a trap and is going to be betrayed and crucified on a cross in naivety and in innocence, no, this is God, now the power of betray, if you're going to betray someone, if you're going to go behind someone's back and betray them as Judas did, the great power in betrayal is the shock value isn't it, it's the fact that it's unexpected, that you've duped somebody, that you've done something that they could never have expected and that is what makes betrayal so powerful and so awful also, but here's Jesus reminding Judas and telling Judas that his betrayal is completely flat because he knows, he already knows his heart, he is the omniscient God and he wants Judas to know and to other disciples to come to know that, also I am telling you this now before it takes place that when it does take place you might believe that what, that I am, that's what he says, that you might believe that I am and many of us will know that that is the great Old Testament designation of the Saviour God of the redeeming God of the restoring God, tell who sent, the great I am sent me, so

Jesus was saying I want you to know that I know your heart, I want you to know that I know that you're the betrayer, I am the omniscient God, that I am the great light of the world, that I am the sovereign, I am not speaking of all of you, I know whom I have chosen but that the scripture might be fulfilled, he's saying this is all known, this is all prophesied, this is all clear to me, I understand that this is the case and I think you'll find earlier on in John chapter 6 even he tells the disciples saying Jesus answered and didn't I not choose you the 12 and yet one of you is a devil, so that even much earlier he was making clear that he knew that he was in control of the situation and that the betrayal wasn't something that was a surprise to him, which betrayal should be, it wasn't in any way a surprise, it was the focus as he goes on to say of prophecy, we read that story or that quote from Psalm 41 which speaks of in very moving terms of David's betrayal by his close confidant, his close counsellor, Ithifo, who turned his back on him and became the advisor to his rebellious son Absalom and how much that hurt David and here we have David being the lesser king yet is the type of Christ and Christ here is in this prophecy seeing it being pointed forward into the darker moment of fulfillment here and yet he's allowing the betrayer his choice, so Jesus as the sleight of the world as the one who is the redeemer and the perfectly good one makes Judas the betrayer his guest of honour, he washes his feet, he allows him, he lets him know that he knows but we also see that he's moved to act on his behalf and here we find a paradox of sovereignty and God's knowledge and his choice and his understanding and yet Judas' freedom to act, the power of Christ and yet his tender longing for Judas to turn and not continue in his deception and his treachery and his betrayal verse 21 tells us that he is troubled in spirit, deeply troubled and he has deeply troubled in spirit, this is his friend that we have here, this is no stranger, this is not a Pharisee, this is not one of the religious leaders who have always opposed him, this is Judas his friend, his close friend, there's only two other instances when this deep troubling of his spirit is mentioned in the gospels, one is at the death of Lazarus, another close friend of his when he deals with just the effects of death and sin in his life and also at the prospect of the cross in the upper, in the Gethsemane, he's deeply troubled in spirit when he anticipates the cross and he reflects more deeply the betrayal that David felt with a hithful as friend and the phrase, he ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me, it doesn't mean much to me or to us in our culture but I'm sure if I had had the time I would have thought of cultural parallels today but that phrase, the exposing of the heel like that was a symbol of real personal contempt, it was a symbol of despising someone and that's how he felt, he's deeply troubled and he's troubled by the choices that Judas is choosing to make and the betrayal that he's going to go ahead with, this brother of his is choosing the darkness but will he turn? Will Jesus persuade him? Will making him the guest of honour bring him to his senses and help him to see that Jesus loves him, he's providing opportunity

upon opportunity for Judas to turn, he lets him know that he knows, he doesn't expose him here publicly, this is something I wondered about for a long time, how the other disciples didn't have any idea that Judas was the betrayer but it would seem that in this triclinium set up it talks about Peter saying to John who is next to Jesus almost you know kind of signaling, ask, ask Jesus, who is he talking about? So John talks about him leaning back and as he was leaning he would just, as they were leaning, he would just lean back and just one to one probably say well who are you talking about? And it seems that Jesus would have just said back to John the one whom I dipped the bread in, who I dipped the bread, is the one who will betray me. It wasn't, he didn't announce it publicly, he just spoke to John and said it which is partly the explanation by all the other disciples didn't understand and didn't know what was going on. He didn't humiliate Judas to the point where Judas said well absolutely I'm going to go and betray him now, he humiliated me in front of everyone, he did it quietly, he did it in such a way, dipping the bread in and of itself, dipping the morsel, gave it to Judas was a sign of a mark of honour. It wasn't, we've come used to becoming a mark of, or a symbol of betrayal but it wasn't then, it was a mark of honour that the host would dip the bread and give it to the guest of honour, didn't need to do it himself. All of these things, these last appeals, last words, Judas if you are going to go out and do it, go and do it quickly, don't prolong your agony, he goes on to betray Jesus Christ and Christ is compassionate for him because he knows he's going out into far deeper darkness than simply the darkness of the night and he knows that he himself, Jesus is going to face deeper darkness as he goes to the cross. There's a great mystery there and there's a great sense in which he is longing for Judas to come from the darkness and into the light and this is the judgement that light has come into the world, John 3 and verse 19 and people love the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. This ongoing theme in John's [21 : 30] Gospel of light and darkness from the very beginning which finds its culmination I think in the three hours of darkness on the cross is constantly mentioned throughout and here we have it, the outworking of John's words in John 3 19 that Judas preferred the darkness, the spiritual darkness rather than the light and that's a huge challenge as we consider our own lives, we consider our own spirituality because I want briefly having looked at Jesus who is the light of the world, who has come to redeem people like Judas, remember that, he came to redeem Judas and people like Judas and he pled with him in the actions here in all the mystery of his sovereignty and all the mystery of his choice and his election in his saving work he pleads with Judas not to do what he is doing and then we see the dark night of Judas soul and I want to emphasise this evening that he is not a monster, I think history has made him a monster, history has made him the great betrayer but he is me without

Christ. If you go back to the text in John I have come into the world as light so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness so we are people who have been in the dark spiritually and the light of Jesus Christ has given us hope and forgiveness and grace and a future but Judas is not the monster that we often make him out to be.

What do we see about Judas briefly, very briefly here, first we see he is in disguise, in 2 Corinthians 11 verse 14 it speaks of the devil being an angel of light and it says that his followers are also angels and no wonder for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light and it talks about his followers also being like him as angels of light and that's what Judas is here, he is like Satan and he seems to be an angel of light, isn't he a disciple, he is one of the 12. Judas isn't going around with big arrows on his back and his t-shirts saying, bit's rare, he is different from any of the other ones. Judas was, they had no idea that he was any different, that's partly why they are confused when Jesus speaks about it and that's why they asked the question, is it me, is it me?

Because none of them knew, there was no difference between Judas and the other disciples, he was a believer to all intents and purposes, he is not like the villain T-Bag in the prison break which kind of oozes, I am a villain, I am a betrayer, he is not like that, he is not like the evil bad monster that we sometimes see in the Hollywood movies, he is a God fear, he probably did miracles along with the other disciples, he certainly would have preached with them and he would have been completely at home in this church, he wouldn't have stood out in the congregation here as he didn't stand out in any other congregation where he was and we can be very naive about sin in our own hearts and absolutely deceived with self-righteousness and pride when we look around and we expect sin and evil to be very obvious and very clear and very dastardly, it's not like that, it often gets, and within a church context it often comes through angels of light, in the disguise of angels of light, we are naive to think that sinful behaviour has stamped on its skull and claw crossbones, it's

not like that, we can look the part outwardly, we can look just fine and dandy spiritually but inside we can be full of rotting bones, we can be full of dead men's bones spiritually speaking, we can be entombed and spiritually in the darkness because it was only Christ who could see Judas' heart and he could see the darkness and the betrayal in that heart, so Judas was in disguise, he was a hypocrite, there was hypocrisy, he lived to every intense and to every means he was a believer and he was one of Jesus' followers, but can we surmise that he was disappointed with Christ? It wasn't the kind of saviour like the other disciples also at various points thought that Jesus would be and was maybe the washing, the final act of treachery from Jesus as far as Judas was concerned was the fact that as the master he was washing his feet, as Corrie spoke about last week, this wasn't what he expected from his saviour or from his leader or from his teacher and maybe that was just the final straw with his disappointment with Jesus who spoke of sin and cleansing and inner need and redemption, maybe we are disappointed, maybe you are disappointed with your own version of Jesus Christ, he isn't giving you what you expect, what you want, what you long for and you are uneasy with his challenge to your own heart and to your own spirituality and to your own sinful desires that nobody else knows about but that you can keep to yourself and still look fine and dandy in Christian company. He was disappointed with Jesus but ultimately what we see of Judas here is that he chose the darkness, he chose the darkness. With our theological background we may be tempted towards a fatalistic idea of Judas that he had no option, that he had no choice, that he was a son of perdition that would never have been able to change his mind. That my friends is not biblical, it is not because it is fatalistic. However we recognise the dichotomy between God's sovereignty and our responsibility, we can never deny our responsibility and Judas freely and independently chose the darkness. There was an unseen thought process over months [28 : 22] in Judas that drove him further and further away from Jesus Christ. The betrayal was planned, we know John tells us that he sometimes stole from the money bag so that there was obviously a spiritual hypocrisy there and a duplicitous way of thinking that he was wanting money and wanting to steal from it. He was living a lie, now that is a choice, you choose and I choose to live a lie, nobody makes us live a lie, we make that choice, we can say that we believe Jesus on one hand and yet by our lives and our choices we are living something else in our hearts. He rejected the truth of Christ's life and teaching, he did not like the idea of being cleansed by Christ. He got up and left the upper room, Jesus did not make him, he chose to get up and he walked into that dreadful symbolic darkness which was also a real darkness. He opened himself to satanic influence in his life. Right from the very beginning in Genesis it speaks about Cain and Abel and God says to Cain, if you do well you will not be accepted and if you do not well sin is crouching at the door, its desire is for you but you must rule over it. Sin was crouching at Judas's door and he let in and he allowed himself to be ruled by the darkness and by the prince of darkness and he freely walked into hell and that left him with deep, deep regret. It talks about some later that he betrayed an innocent man, he has regret for that but not repentance.

What is the difference? Regret can't live with yourself and so he takes his own life. Repentance can live with your forgiven self. That's the difference. He was unable to repent and turn to Christ and find freedom and forgiveness in Christ. Regret is that ugly darkness of being enslaved to who you are and what you are and recognising the ugliness. I think that is probably the worst thing about hell. It's a place of absolute regret where you can't but have to live with yourself eternally. So you see the contrast between the light of the world and between the darkness of Judas's heart and what he chose and I think we need to as we close recognise these things, recognise one who Christ is, that as we live our lives daily, that he knows our hearts. Whatever else we think and do, the worst thing to do is to try and live a Christian life to please other people but inside you are not allowing Christ to transform you. That you are living a lie, that there is a hypocrisy there, that you are putting on a show, that you are not allowing Christ in to transform and change and renew your heart which is what he came to do and what he wants to do. We can only do that as we spend time with him. This hour in church is simply not enough for us. It needs to be a wrestling that we engage in personally where we allow the light of the world to shine into the dark, civil and harsh, to cleanse us and to renew us and to enable us to see because his light enables us to see and it gives us life. So remember who Christ is. Remember also that every day that we live is governed by choices. We make choices every day and we need to remember that we either choose towards the light or we choose towards the darkness. Even as believers we have that choice. We choose towards allowing

Christ into our hearts more powerfully or we choose to keep him out of our hearts and so we begin to shroud ourselves more in spiritual darkness. And the more we do that the harder and the colder our hearts become. And you will know that as a Christian if you spent a lot of time away from Jesus Christ, from his word, from prayer and from his people in worship, you will know that your heart becomes cold and indifferent and disinterested in the things of Jesus and you become more attracted to the sins of the world. And that is something that we have a responsibility as new creatures, new creations in Christ.

We have a responsibility to stay in the light. Right? Employ you as I have to implore myself to stay in the light. Stay in the light of Christ. Keep close to him. Be in that great part, be in the shadow of his light and that is your responsibility and it's mine.

And I think we need to also remember not to say I'm no Judas. I will never be like Judas or the other disciples and where all the disciples ended up betraying him. I'm no Judas. Often those who are closest to Christ, as Judas was, at least in a human way, become the objects of the deepest attacks. So the closer we are to Christ, often, will mean the ferocity of the attacks we face are greater. And yet, of course, the power to protect us is always greater than the enemy of our souls. So can I just remind you of that spiritual reality in which we live? It's a world we live in which is spiritual darkness and Jesus is the light of the world and he has come to bring us and keep us in the light of life, in the light of truth, in the light of his knowledge, in the light of his forgiveness, in the light of his grace and in the light of the future that he has for us. But we battle in a world of darkness and the world we live in and our hearts by nature and the remaining sin in our hearts, prone to the dark, prone to death and prone to sin. This reality of the contrast, the battle and the need we have to remain in Christ is absolutely strong. So may we learn from this great drama of the needs that we have spiritually and the battles that are absolutely victorious in Jesus Christ when we put our trust and faith in Him. Let's bow our heads and pray. Father God, we ask and pray that you would teach us to be aware of spiritual light and spiritual darkness, that we would be aware of the propensity of our own hearts towards that darkness naturally. The battle that we face may we be aware of the evil one who constantly wants to draw us away from Jesus, away from the light and sometimes we follow rather easily. And remind us that we can't pretend with you, we cannot often pretend with one another and we can even deceive ourselves. But remind us Lord and help us to see we certainly can't deceive or have any pretense before you and that you know our hearts and that your longing is always for us to turn to you, to turn away from evil, to not be on a broad road or not be attracted to a broad road but to remain in Christ and in that narrow road where there is life. So remind us of that and remind us of the greatness of that and the beauty of Jesus and the love of this great redeemer who promises to engulf us and protect us and to give us life and hope and a future and identity and family and belonging and all the great great things that are his in his promises and in his victory in the cross and we rejoice that he will wipe away every tear and that there is this great hope of one day living in the light where there will be no more darkness and no more night. We thank you for that and pray that we would see it clearly in Jesus' name. Amen.