

The Departure Temptation

Series: His Last Day

John 13:18-38; 16:1-4

March 13, 2022

This year during Lent, our series comes from a meme:

Sometimes I joke about what I'd do if I had one day left to live. Eat junk food, go crazy, etc. Today it hit me: Jesus knew. And He washed feet.

In this series "His Last Day," we are looking at some very important chapters in the Gospel of John, chapters 13-16. They are often called the Upper Room Discourse, for Jesus taught His disciples in the Upper Room the night before He was crucified.

So, turn to page 6 in your bulletin, or if you are online, grab your spiritual journal and turn to John 13.

A great deal happens in today's section of Scripture. Most of the Upper Room Discourse is teaching material. Last week's verses told of Jesus washing the disciples' feet, then some teaching. After this week, it will be all teaching. But today, we are going to look at three blocks of Scripture in what I am calling "The Departure Temptation."

This is not an aviation label, like, "Wright Brothers Traffic, Skylane 7311S, departing Runway 20 to the South." It is not:

Pardon me boy, is that the Chattanooga Choo Choo?

Track twenty nine, boy you can gimme a shine.

I mean departure, as in leaving, as in Jesus!

Sometimes, people depart from our lives for good reasons.

Benjamin Franklin famously said that guests in your home are like fish; they begin to smell after three days, and therefore, should leave.

Your son or daughter leaving to go to college or get married; that's a good thing.

Other times, people depart from our lives for bad reasons. Or for sad reasons.

Now, can you imagine any reason why someone would depart from Jesus? They did. In John 6, we have this incredible sentence:

After Jesus said this, many of his followers left him and stopped following him.¹

People stopped following Jesus: the greatest teacher, pastor, healer, leader, person, friend, ever to live. And they still left Him.

Let's look at what happened in the Upper Room on Jesus' Last Day.

From John 13:18-30

"I am not saying these things to all of you; I know the ones I have chosen. But this fulfills the Scripture that says, 'The one who eats my food has turned against me.' I tell you this beforehand, so that when it happens you will believe that I AM the Messiah. I tell you the truth, anyone who welcomes my messenger is welcoming me, and anyone who welcomes me is welcoming the Father who sent me." Now Jesus was deeply troubled, and he exclaimed, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me!" The disciples looked at each other, wondering whom he could mean. The disciple Jesus loved was sitting next to Jesus at the table. Simon Peter motioned to him to ask, "Who's he talking about?" So that disciple leaned over to Jesus and asked, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus responded, "It is the one to whom I give the bread I dip in the bowl." And when he had dipped it, he gave it to Judas, son of Simon Iscariot. When Judas had eaten the bread,

¹ John 6:66 (NCV)

Satan entered into him. Then Jesus told him, “Hurry and do what you’re going to do.” None of the others at the table knew what Jesus meant. Since Judas was their treasurer, some thought Jesus was telling him to go and pay for the food or to give some money to the poor. So Judas left at once, going out into the night.²

The person who faced the Departure Temptation in this passage was Judas.

Judas, one of the Twelve, selected personally by Jesus. Of course, we know the story, but let’s see if we can see it in a new light.

First, we need to understand the seating arrangements at the meal. Toss from your mind Leonardo da Vinci’s “The Last Supper.” The Jews did not sit at table; they reclined. The table was low, with couches round it, shaped like a “U.” The diners reclined on their left side, resting on the left elbow, thus leaving the right hand free to deal with the food. Sitting in such a way, a person’s head was near the chest of the person on his left. Jesus would be sitting in the place of the host, at the center of the single side.

The passage talks about the disciple whom Jesus loved. This person is never named. The general opinion has always been that this was the Gospel writer John himself. So, John must have been sitting on Christ’s right, for as he lent on his elbow at the table, his head was near Jesus’ chest.

But it is the place of Judas that is of special interest. It is quite clear that Jesus could speak to him privately without the others overhearing. Da Vinci’s got it wrong. There is only one place Judas could have been occupying. He must have been on Jesus’ left, so that, just as John’s head was near Jesus’ chest, Jesus’ head was near Judas’.

So, Jesus was right beside Judas. Unfortunately, Judas was already in trouble. At the beginning of chapter 13, John says:

It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.³

He was already listening to Satan. Had been probably for a long time, but at least a couple of days. So, when that meal began, Jesus must have said to Judas, “Judas, come, sit beside me tonight; I want to talk to you.” Sadly, Judas didn’t listen.

Why? Why did Judas betray Jesus? Some have suggested that Judas was greedy. John 12 tells us that six days before, while eating with their friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, Mary had taken expensive perfume and anointed Jesus’ feet with it, wiping his feet with her hair. But Judas protested. “That perfume was worth a year’s wages. It should have been sold and the money given to the poor.” Not that he cared for the poor—he was a thief, and since he was in charge of the disciples’ money, he often stole some for himself.⁴

So, trading Jesus for 30 pieces of silver was an act of greed. But I don’t think so.

Write down in the next column to the right: What he saw in Jesus was not enough for him.

Commentators suggest that Judas’ idea of a Messiah was vastly different from what he saw in Jesus. He was like most: looking for a militaristic Messiah who would

² John 13:18-30 (NLT2)

³ John 13:2 (NLT2)

⁴ See John 12:1-6 (NLT)

overthrow – preferably in a very brutal manner – their Roman overlords. Jesus clearly had the power.

We are like Judas sometimes. Jesus is not enough for us. He is not Santa Claus or the magician or the indulging parent who gives us everything we want. He isn't the one that ensures "my will be done", not "thy will be done." Jesus doesn't take revenge on our enemies or prop us up with power and glory like we want Him to. He is not the Messiah we want Him to be. Therefore, people depart from Him. They say, "Jesus doesn't listen, doesn't do what I pray for, so I'm not going to follow Him as I used to."

But what did Jesus do?

He extended love and friendship to His betrayer.

The revealing thing is that the place on the left of the host was the place of highest honor, kept for the most intimate friend. And for the host to offer this guest a special tit-bit, a special morsel from the dish, was again a sign of special friendship. When Boaz wished to show how much he honored Ruth, he invited her to come and dip her morsel in the wine.⁵ When Jesus handed the morsel to Judas, again it was a mark of special affection.

But when Judas received the morsel, the devil entered into him. It is a terrible thing that what was meant to be love's appeal became hate's dynamic. That is what the devil can do. He can take the loveliest things and twist them until they become the agents of hell. He can take love and turn it into lust; he can take holiness and turn it into pride; he can take discipline and turn it into sadistic cruelty; he can take affection and turn it into spineless complacency. We must be on the watch so that in our lives the devil never warps the lovely things until he can use them for his own purposes.⁶

Christ extended love and friendship to the very one who was going to betray him.

Let's look at our second section of today's passage and the Departure Temptation: John 13:36-38:

Simon Peter asked, "Lord, where are you going?" And Jesus replied, "You can't go with me now, but you will follow me later." "But why can't I come now, Lord?" he asked. "I'm ready to die for you." Jesus answered, "Die for me? I tell you the truth, Peter—before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me."⁷

Our second person is Peter.

Peter has already been prominent during the evening. At first, he refused Jesus to wash his feet, then insisted Jesus wash his entire body. Now, he demands to know Jesus' plans, and when he's told he can't follow, he declares a falsehood. He lies. "I'm ready to die for you," he says. Of course, we know that he is not.

In the next column, write down Peter's Departure Temptation: He did not follow Christ's path.

Jesus had been telling them for months what His path was. Listen to this encounter in Mark 8:

[Jesus] then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him

⁵ See Ruth 2:14

⁶ Barclay's Daily Study Bible, John 13:21-30

⁷ John 13:36-38 (NLT2)

aside and began to rebuke him. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."⁸

It was abundantly clear where Jesus was heading, but Peter wouldn't hear of it.

We are tempted to depart from Jesus when His path for us is not the path we want to take. When a loved one dies, when we are diagnosed with cancer, when our world turns upside down, we begin to doubt Christ's good and perfect plan, or whether He has a plan or the power at all. We can't see God's plan in our lives, so we go it on our own.

What did Jesus do?

He warned him of his failure.

He warned him of his failure. Peter didn't believe God was in control, that Jesus was a victim of circumstances. Jesus proved that He knew exactly what was going to happen, down to the number of times Peter would deny Him.

Don't doubt or depart from Christ's plan. You will get hurt in the end. What does the Bible tell us would happen later that night?

*Suddenly, Jesus' words flashed through Peter's mind: "Before the rooster crows, you will deny three times that you even know me." And he went away, weeping bitterly.*⁹

The final section and Departure Temptation is in John 16:1-4:

*[Jesus said,] "I have told you these things so that you won't abandon your faith. For you will be expelled from the synagogues, and the time is coming when those who kill you will think they are doing a holy service for God. This is because they have never known the Father or me. Yes, I'm telling you these things now, so that when they happen, you will remember my warning. I didn't tell you earlier because I was going to be with you for a while longer."*¹⁰

The final group is the rest of His followers.

Be it the disciples that night or those through the generations, He was telling us what would happen for being His follower.

For the Jew, to be expelled from the synagogue meant to be cut off from God and the community. Some of the Rabbis argued that prayer was not effective unless it was offered in the synagogue.¹¹ Aside from death, it was the worst thing you could do to someone.

The Departure Temptation comes from the fact that we will face persecution.

Folks, do not be deceived that the Christian life is an easy life. When we are following Christ, when we are pointing out sin and calling for repentance, when we are fighting the devil on his own playing ground, we are going to face persecution.

John 15:18-19 in The Message Bible reads:

If you find the godless world is hating you, remember it got its start hating me. If you lived on the world's terms, the world would love you as one of its own. But since I

⁸ Mark 8:31-33 (NIV)

⁹ Matthew 26:75 (NLT2)

¹⁰ John 16:1-4 (NLT2)

¹¹ Barclay's Daily Study Bible, John 16:1-4

*picked you to live on God's terms and no longer on the world's terms, the world is going to hate you.*¹²

We prefer to ignore sin, let things slide, do not cause a fuss. Are we guilty of that? Have we looked past the sin we see?

So, what did Jesus do?

He prepared them for their future.

*Yes, I'm telling you these things now, so that when they happen, you will remember my warning.*¹³

Jesus told us this stuff would be coming, so we should not be surprised when it does. We will be called all kinds of names – even by those who believe they are doing God's will – but we must stay true to Christ and His way.

Now, I know that I have one final fill-in, but I am going to stop there. I think I will put it some place else in this series.

A few days ago, in the devotional "My Utmost for His Highest," Oswald Chambers commented on the Departure Temptation.

"Do you also want to go away? What a penetrating question! Our Lord's words often hit home for us when He speaks in the simplest way. In spite of the fact that we know who Jesus is, He asks, "Do you also want to go away?" We must continually maintain an adventurous attitude toward Him, despite any potential personal risk... [People] turned back from walking with Jesus; not into sin, but away from Him. Many people today are pouring their lives out and working for Jesus Christ, but are not really walking with Him. One thing God constantly requires of us is a oneness with Jesus Christ. After being set apart through sanctification, we should discipline our lives spiritually to maintain this intimate oneness. When God gives you a clear determination of His will for you, all your striving to maintain that relationship by some particular method is completely unnecessary. All that is required is to live a natural life of absolute dependence on Jesus Christ. Never try to live your life with God in any other way than His way. And His way means absolute devotion to Him. Showing no concern for the uncertainties that lie ahead is the secret of walking with Jesus."¹⁴

Are you really walking with Him? Don't be tempted to depart Jesus.

¹² John 15:18-19 (MSG)

¹³ John 16:4a (NLT2)

¹⁴ Oswald Chambers. My Utmost for His Highest. March 9