

Culver Community Church
Pastor Chris Sweeney
Sermon Notes
March 31, 2019

Matthew 26:17 – 25 - Dinner with the Enemy

{vs. 17} This verse brings us back to the present, the flashback is over and **all the pieces are in place for God's drama to continue**. It is now **the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread** – an eight-day festival that begins with the **Passover Seder** or dinner which commemorates God's miraculous deliverance from Egypt. At their exodus (departure), God commanded that they not take any yeast with them, eating only unleavened bread (*matzoh*). Since the children of Israel left Egypt hastily, they did not have time for the bread to rise, and this symbolized **not taking any influence from their old life in Egypt** (yeast symbolizes influence or sin in scripture). God was starting a new nation and He didn't want them bringing any of their old life, old ways – old sins with them! Every year they commemorate (remember) this during the **Festival of Unleavened Bread**.

It is on this first day, this crazy busy beginning to the high holidays when everyone has come to Jerusalem that the disciples ask Jesus – “Where should we eat the Seder?” This was more than the perpetual “Where do you want to eat?” question that we all seem to struggle with – this was a meal that required lots of preparation. It was not just thrown together, every bit of it was scripted and every piece of food was required and held specific symbolism – nothing last minute or willy-nilly about this meal! They needed to **pick up the lamb** (selected on the day that Jesus entered the city), **purchase the bitter herbs and all of the other elements of the dinner, take the lamb to be slaughtered** with everyone else within a two-hour window (imagine Disneyland like lines!) and oh, yes **find a place to put it all together** in a city swollen to ten times capacity where every place to sit and eat has been **booked solid forever!** It would have been far easier to skip the whole thing, except scripture required it and Luke 22 verse 15 tells us that **Jesus desired**, and the word in the Greek, describes a **great and intense desire to keep the Passover with His disciples**. It's very important to Him, not just because of tradition and the Law but because this will be His last chance to give important lessons (John's gospel goes into great detail) and to transform the **Passover remembrance into our new testament Communion remembrance** for the disciples and the church.

{vs. 18-19} One of the greatest things about walking with Christ must have been the way they could rely on Him for everything. He lead them, fed them, often got them out of whatever fix they stumbled into and answered every question. If this group was led by anyone else – they would have been stressed beyond measure trying to find a place, but the boys simply go to Jesus and ask – **“Where should we go?”** This would be like (but even worse than) a man trying to find reservations on Valentine's Day or a place for the whole family to eat on Mother's day! With God however, there is no need to panic – He has the answer.

Jesus answers them by sending (given in the form of a command) **two disciples** (Luke 22 tells us Peter and John) **to make preparations**. This is beautiful – you may miss it if you read too quickly though. Remember, Judas is also looking for a place – a spot to betray Jesus, to lead the soldiers to arrest Him without the crowds. So Jesus gives Peter and John **a cryptic command** – go and look for **a certain man** – that is not a pronoun or placeholder for his real name, **Jesus did not tell them who they were looking for!** Their only clue (found in Mark and Luke's gospels) is that he will be carrying a water jug when they enter the city and see him (very unusual for men – that was woman's work). **Why?, so that Judas wouldn't know where they would be that night, so he and Satan couldn't rush these events and take the Last Supper away from Jesus, the disciples and the church!** These two go off and find everything as Jesus said (His word never fails!) and they don't come back. Their preparations take the whole day and **Jesus (who knows where they are) brings the other ten disciples as evening, the time for the Seder approaches**.

{vs. 20} They begin to eat according to the customs, this meal was instituted as a simple reminder to be eaten **ready to go, with staff in hand**, etc. However, over time traditions were added (as happens) and the meal became a long drawn out affair. Over time, they started to recline simply because it took so long and we see that Jesus observes as they do (He's fine with it).

{vs. 21} [Bitter news to go with the bitter herbs!] Jesus has known this since He chose Judas, but here we see a prediction for the disciples and one more opportunity for Judas to repent and change course!

{vs. 22} Upon hearing this shocking news, the disciples react with sorrow and a questioning heart. Unlike the sinful, arrogant man who thinks with confidence **"It couldn't be me!"** - they each, in turn ask **"It's not me, is it Lord?"** You see each of them (especially Peter) has fallen short; they have been rebuked and called out for their lack of faith and so, they know it could be them – they wouldn't think it possible, they wouldn't want it to be but . . . **could it be me?**

{vs. 23} Clue number one – Once again it's someone at the table, eating with Me. Jesus said this **not to point out a specific disciple**, because they all dipped with Him. Instead, Jesus identified the betrayer as a friend, someone who ate at the same table with Him. This is part of the reason the news was so shocking – in their day, having a meal together was an intimate occasion. **You just would not sit down to eat with a stranger or an enemy.** Although that is exactly what Jesus was doing with Judas because of His love for him and because scripture must be fulfilled! **"Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me."** (Psalm 41:9 NIV)

{vs 24-25} What has been written (prophesied), will come to pass – God's word cannot fail! Psalms 41:9 (that I just read for you) and Psalm 55 are quoted as the scriptures referenced here. We know that Jesus had to experience everything we do – even the lowest betrayal, so that no one could ever look to Him and say **"You just don't understand!"** Whatever you're going through, **Jesus has been there!** He has experience with all of our temptations, struggles and feelings **and yet, He is without sin!** None of this (our life and experiences) is foreign to Him, He is not a distant God but an intimate, loving One – I hope you appreciate that! Whatever it is give it to Jesus – He is all-knowing (He knows the way of escape), He loves you (wants the best for you) **and He understands!**

We can see that even in the loving way He treats Judas – loving Him to the end, treating him just like the others, giving so many chances to repent - - - even though He knows that Judas will not! **Woe to him** – Jesus is not saying "woe is me", like so many of us would do in knowing what He knew, but rather He is concerned with the disciples and yes, **even the devil among them – the betraying thief Judas!** On this very night Jesus will call Judas the **"son of perdition"** (meaning a wasted life or man doomed to destruction) a name used only of him and the Antichrist in scripture! Judas' life was wasted; all that opportunity, so close to Jesus and **"It would be better for him if he had not been born."** How very tragic!

Finally, after all the other eleven have asked **"Lord, is it I?"** – Judas gets around to asking. Why would he ask? Not because he had any doubt, the matter was settled and the deal struck, but when everyone else asks, you can't be the odd man out! After all the others, he had to bow to peer pressure and for the sake of appearances, asks the question he already knows the answer to all too well. It is interesting to me that the others call Jesus Lord, but Judas uses the term **Rabbi**. There is nothing wrong with this term, meaning master or teacher. However, in this context it can easily be seen as a weaker term than **Lord** – expressing the idea **"You may be a teacher, but you're not my Lord (in charge of me)!"**

In response, Jesus tells him **"You have said so."** or as we would say **"you said it."** Jesus knows (He always knows!), Judas knows and now Judas knows that Jesus knows what he knows he is about to do! (say that ten times fast!) **However, we must understand that the others did not get this** (John's account tells us directly!) If any of them were pushed to make a guess - - - **maybe it's Peter**, Jesus said he would deny Him and he is so impulsive, maybe Thomas – he's such a doubter or could it be me (I fall short, Jesus is always rebuking me for my lack of or little faith)? Judas however, was **the most trusted of them all!** He was the one who came from Judea proper (Iscaiot means "man of Kerioth," a city in Judea), not rural Galilee! He was the one who carried the purse (not because it went with his outfit, but because he was the trusted steward or accountant!) The other disciples thought that Judas was going out to carry on a time honored tradition – during the Passover Seder, a representative of each family or group would go out and give to the poor. What better representative but the one who was so concerned about the poor, who also happened to carry the money?

We'll stop here today. Next time picking it up as Jesus transforms the Seder into the Last Supper. From today, what you and I should take away is **God is Sovereign! He is in control of everything.** I know that this is hard to understand, because from our perspective we make choices (good and bad) and it shapes our lives – and that is absolutely true! However, above our lives, our choices and everything - - - is God.

This is not just concerning the lives of Biblical characters either; God is sovereign over your life also! We choose (from the choices God allows us) **and He reigns over all!** In the light of all this, choose wisely so that you can be one of God's faithful (that He already knew you would be)!