



May 21, 2023

“It’s Him Through Us”

SS 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.

News:

★ VBS June 12-16★

★ Church Camp August 24-27★

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God condescended to sacrificial distasteful labor on behalf of people who didn’t _____ it. If such service were a gift of selfless love for them, then it was anything but _____ - it was _____.

The same applies to _____. When you serve others for any reason other than love, you will end up hurt. It’s entirely different when you merely _____ love from God to other people.

When you are sharing the love of Jesus with another person and the interaction devolves into an _____ with them, you’ve made it about you. When you serve others and you become _____, you’ve made it about you.

Simply be a font that when overfilled, _____.

The Biblical mandate is for Christians to love one another through tangible service and that means that Christians _____ be regular and active participants in the life of the _____.

JOHN 13:18-20 ~

Jesus picked Judas out of a field of potentials. It was an _____ Judas received. It was an _____ of him and an _____ of his status. Jesus further invested in Judas by putting him in charge of the ministry’s finances.

Why were the chief priests willing to pay Judas _____ pieces of silver for his help?

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

The normal dinner in those days was set up as a triclinium, which is a latinized version of the _____ word τρικλίνιον (třĩ-klē-nē-ōn), meaning _____ platforms (Esther 1:5&6, Luke 14:8-11, John 2:8).

The host was the _____ person on the left couch as you entered. The “master of the feast,” was on the same couch nearest the door. The guest of greatest honor was on the other side of the _____ guarding his back.

Jesus clearly told the guys that one of them was a betrayer and then He actually made a gesture to point out Judas and none of them had a _____. Why?

Jesus went around the room washing the feet of each and every disciple including Judas, but for Judas it only further _____ his heart. God chose Judas for this very _____.

Judas knew Scripture, which is to say, Judas knew an interpretation of Scripture that fit his personality and agenda. Judas was a Jewish nationalist. He desperately wanted Jesus to make Israel great again and if Jesus needed a _____, Judas was _____.

Jesus chose him and for three years tried to teach him what the Scripture actually meant. God _____ Judas’ heart for His Own purposes, by giving Him _____ to repent and be Saved. That’s the how.

From Judas’ perspective, it a series of intentional _____ to reject the Jesus Who stood before him, in favor of a Jesus that he would have preferred.

That’s what people do today. Millions of people reject, the Jesus before them, because He’s not the Jesus they _____.

What is the cause of rejecting Jesus? It is _____. It always comes down to the belief that I know how it all should be, how it all needs to go, and due to that certainty, there is a complete unwillingness to listen, hear, understand, and trust even a little. It is an _____ spirit, and it is alive and well in the world today.

It mostly _____ as objections and excuses.

God uses imperfect people to reach other people so that His love through them will be tangibly received by those desperately needing His _____ touch.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____



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the gospel of
JOHN

ΕΝΑΡΧΗ Η ΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΙ Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΝ Η ΠΡΟΣΤΗ
 ΘΗ ΚΑΙ ΘΕ ΤΗ ΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΣΤΙ ΤΟΣ Η ΝΕΝΑΡΧΗ ΤΙΡΟΣ
 ΤΟΝ ΘΗ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΔΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΕΓΕΝΕΤΟ ΚΑΙ ΧΩΡΙΣ



Last week we saw God humbly serve men in what to the uninitiated would seem like an incredibly demeaning fashion and so it was, if done as a duty, or an obligation, or a recompense, or a payment, or for any other reason you can think of... it was a condescension to sacrificial menial and distasteful labor on behalf of people who didn't deserve it. As we also saw last week, if such service were a gift of selfless grace poured out upon others because of a boundless love for them, then it was anything but demeaning - it was glorifying.

The same applies to you. When you serve others for any reason other than the Agapê Love that God pours

into your heart you will be hurt, disillusioned, frustrated, and depressed by the inequity of the exchange. Where those blessed by your service should be humbly grateful and appreciative, it will not work out that way very often and so, over time, you'll become resentful and bitter.

It may be why so many Christians are resentful bitter people. They serve others out of their flesh in a legalistic effort to appease God. It will not work long term.



By Allowing God to Love Others Through You

What must happen is a fundamental shift in one's approach. See yourself as merely a go-between, a messenger, an ambassador, a mediator, someone who

merely relays love from God to other people whom He wants to serve through you.

Such service for others is understood as His service to them using you as a conduit and not your service to them. When approached that way, the reaction of those served is irrelevant when it comes to your emotional state, your feelings, attitude, and heart. Oh, as an extension of God, you care about their reaction, hoping for the best, but you do not take it personally. The exchange is between God and them, you're merely the messenger.

In such a case, you can provide unbelievably humble and generous service to another, be totally rejected, or totally taken for granted, and while being concerned for their relationship with God, you are not personally offended by their choices.

As I have said so many times, when you are sharing the love of Jesus with another person and the interaction devolves into an argument with them, you've made it about you. When you serve others and you become offended, you've made it about you. The true disciple of Christ is His hands and feet in the physical world. Christian ministry to God, to the church,

and to the lost, is effective when it is His love flowing through you and therefore is between God and God, between God and the church, between God and the lost all with you operating as the conduit.



You are simply a font, a font when overfilled, overflows. The water overflowing the font is not about the font - it's about the water.

It's between the source of the overfilling and the beneficiaries of the overflow. It's not about the font. When we make it about the font, the font cannot help but be offended. Be a font that is far less concerned about itself and far more concerned about maintaining a fully open connection to the Source of overfilling and

be happy that His overflow of you blesses others. If you have love you will be blessed by the Source's use of you, if you don't have love, you will be frustrated by the Source using you and by the recipient's reaction to you. You've made it about you.



Where we finished last week was with the Biblical mandate for Christians to love one another through tangible service and that means that Christians must be regular and active participants in the life of the church.

Contrary to popular belief, Christianity is worked out in Christian community. I'm going to steal an analogy from our dear brother Jim. He shared with me a

graphically apropos example. Cut off a finger from your hand and set that severed finger on a fencepost. Apart from the body, the life in that finger will quickly drain away and it will start to shrivel and dry out. It will start to curl, get ugly, and stink. Then a black, beady-eyed buzzard will swoop in and take that finger back to its nest and devour it at its leisure. That is the Christian cut off from the Body of Christ.

I mentioned last week that an unintended result of radical reform is what's known as low church. After 500 years it has led to a general feeling among most Christians, particularly Evangelical Christians, that church participation isn't that important. Each generation becomes less inclined to spend their resources, their time, their effort, and their money, amid and amongst a dedicated Christian family. The trend is accelerating.



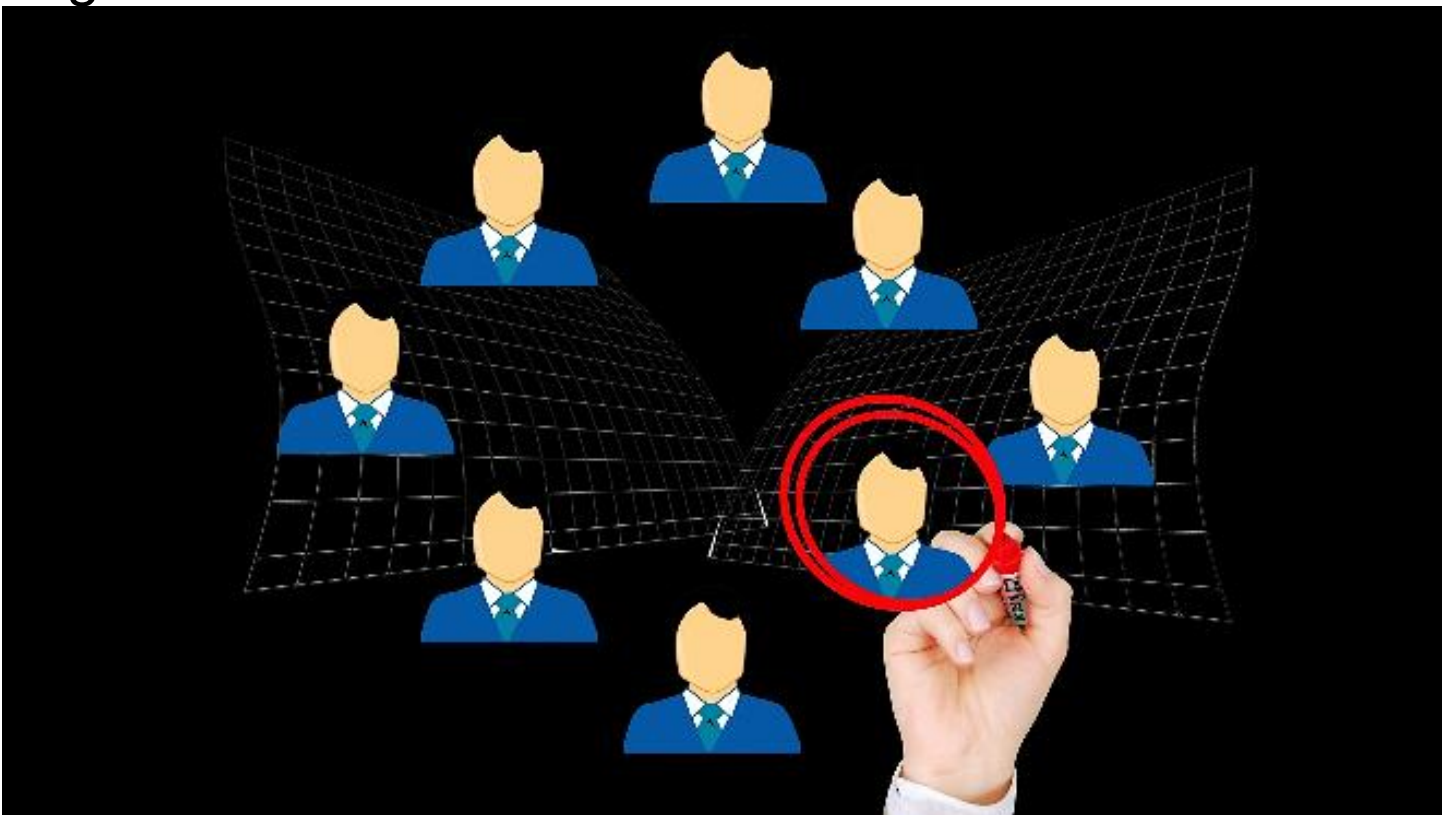
I have to hand it to Satan - color me impressed. Congratulations Lucifer, on effectively killing the church and making Christians so independent of each other that every fencepost on the ranch has a finger ready to eat.



Speaking of The Deceiver, that's where we left off. Satan had decided that Judas was his pawn of choice to destroy Jesus, and Jesus knew it, so we continue with Jesus declaring to His group in...

John 13:18-20, 18I am not speaking about all of you. I know the ones whom I have chosen; but this is happening so that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.' 19From now on I am telling you before it happens, so that when it does happen, you may believe that I am He. 20Truly, truly I say to you, the one who receives anyone I send, receives Me; and the one who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."

There is actually a lot to unpack there in those three little verses. Jesus stated that He knew those whom He had chosen. Is that referring to timeless divine predestination or simply to the 12 Apostles picked by Jesus? In this case, it's the latter, but that doesn't negate the former.



What Jesus was saying is that He was fully aware of the guys that He had selected to be His primary disciples and that one of them was selected for the very purpose of betraying Him in the end.

It's worth talking about even though it will require a bit of concentration on your part. Jesus picked Judas out

of a field of potentials. There were many other disciples besides Judas whom Jesus could have selected to be one of His 12 Apostles. It wasn't like there was a shortage of candidates for the position. It was an honor Judas received. It was an acceptance of him and an elevation of his status.



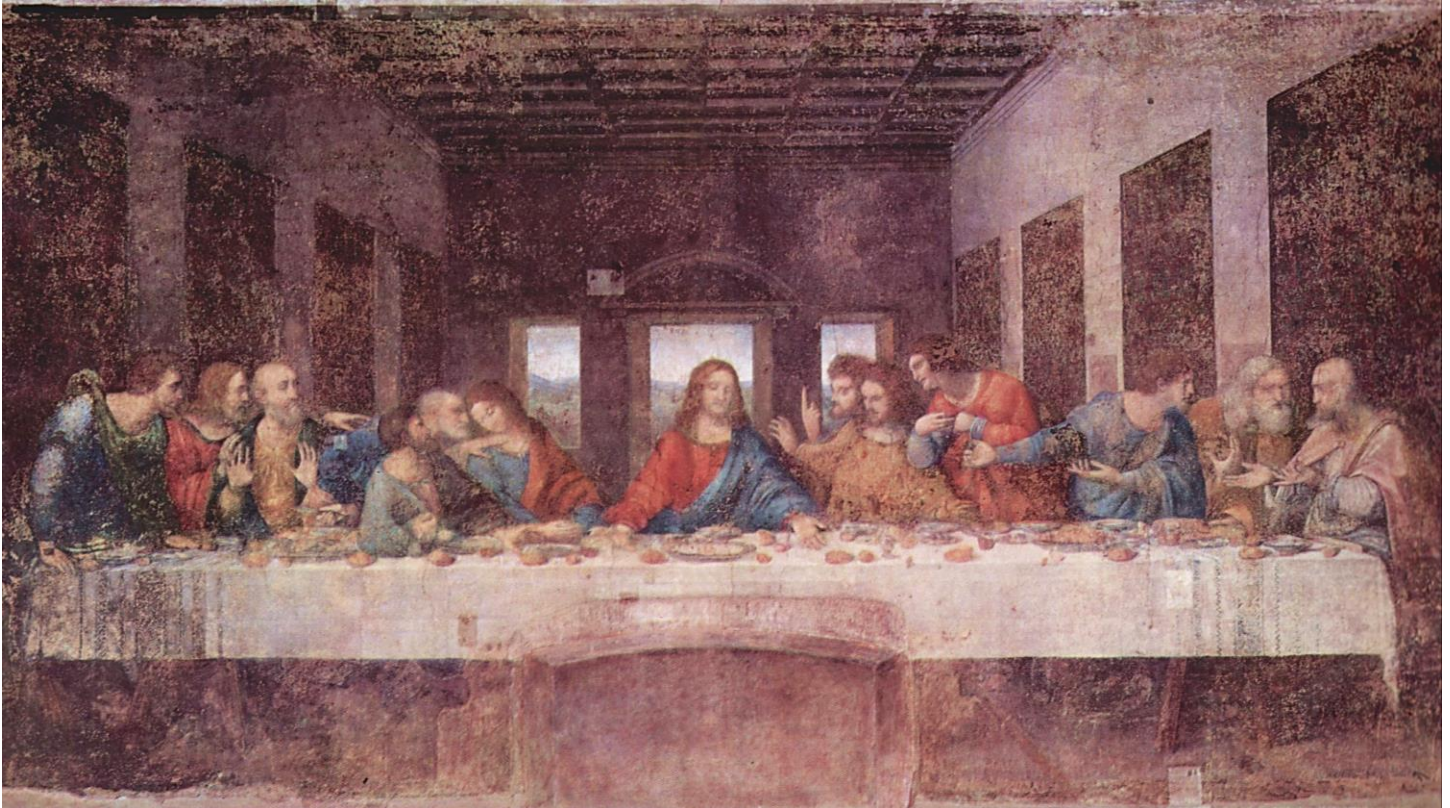
Jesus further invested in Judas by putting him in charge of the ministry's finances. There were, no doubt, many times when Jesus took a personal interest in guiding Judas into the Light. By the time of this meal we know from Matthew, Mark, and Luke, that Judas had already made his deal with the chief priests for 30 pieces of silver in exchange for betraying Jesus.

After the incident in Bethany, where Mary anointed and washed the feet of Jesus, Judas had gone out and negotiated the details of his betrayal. From then on, he was looking for an opportunity.

Why were the chief priests willing to pay Judas 30 pieces of silver for his help? Why not simply arrest Jesus in the city, or the Temple courts, where He was freely moving around? The people. The large number of His own disciples along with the vast crowds of interested people were always massed around Him. The chief priests feared a scene if they took overt action against Jesus in broad daylight.

Remember, in those days the only thing Rome was interested in was peace. Peace allowed taxes to flow unimpeded. Turmoil, unrest, protests, and riots disrupted the positive tax stream and actually cost tax money in order to restore the peace. The greatest threat to the ruling class was losing control of the people. They wanted Judas to help them take Jesus secretly and privately. They needed the Romans to finish their plan so that they could permanently rid themselves of Jesus and still claim a degree of innocence concerning His permanent removal.

Judas had made his deal and was looking for an opportune time and Jesus knew that. Yet, Jesus hosted a Passover meal and had invited Judas to take the most trusted position at the event.



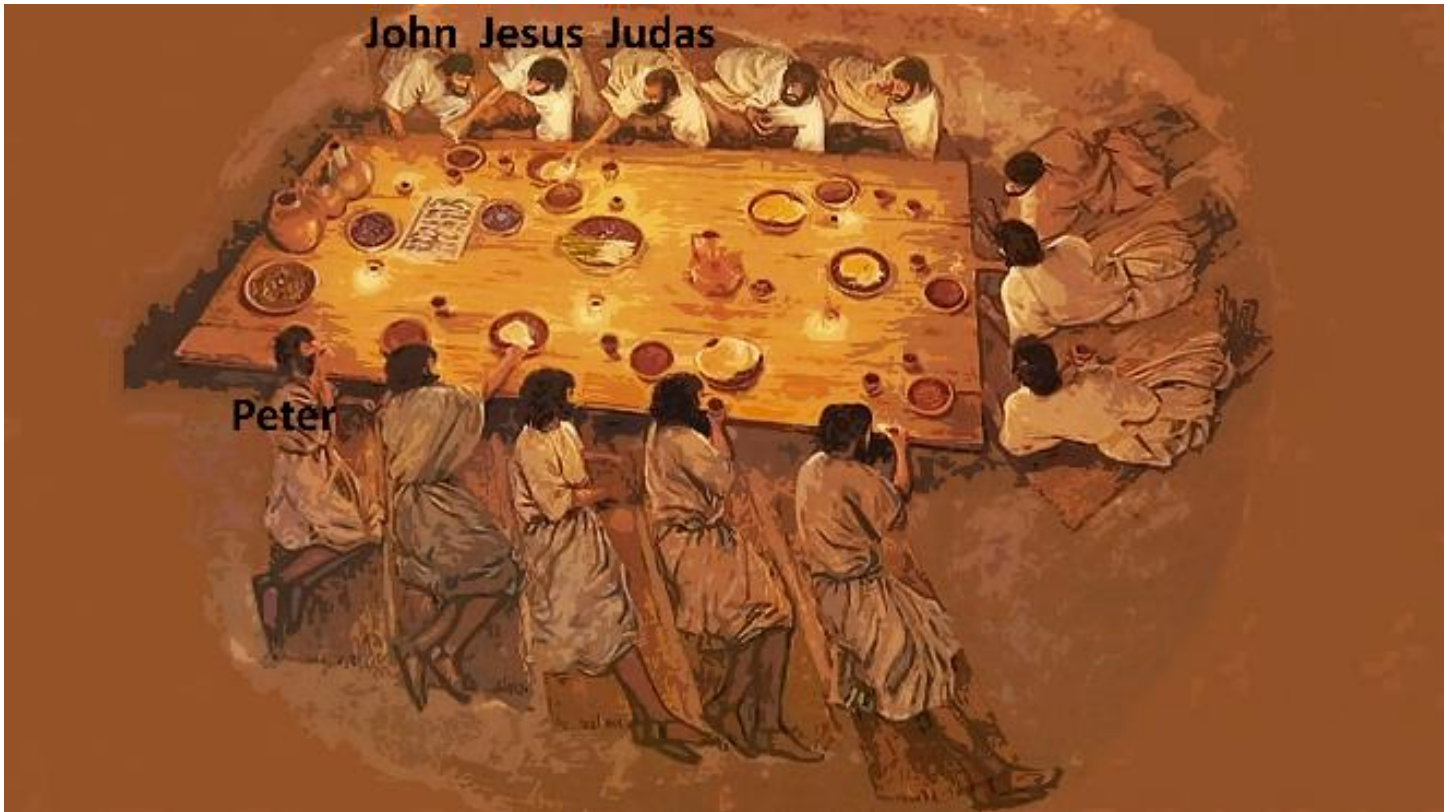
The normal dinner in those days was set up in what was called a triclinium, which is a latinized version of the Greek word τρικλίνιον (trī-klē-nē-ōn), meaning three platforms, beds, or couches. We've talked about it before, and recently, but it's worth talking about it again, because I think we easily envision a long table and chairs.

Triclinia came in a wide variety of styles as they were in use by people of all socio-economic backgrounds from

rich, powerful elites, to poor, working-class peasants. By people of varied cultural backgrounds from Persia to Britannia and from Gaul to Ethiopia and were in use over multiple centuries. So, some were extravagant, and others were little more than sleeping mats laid out on the floor. An example of a lavish one is described in Esther 1:5b&6, 5bthe king gave another big dinner. It lasted for seven days. It was held in the garden of the king’s courtyard... 6The garden was decorated with white and blue linen banners... There were gold and silver couches (τρίκλινος (třē-klē-nōs), triclinium couches) in the garden. They were placed on a floor that... had purple crystal, marble, mother-of-pearl, and other stones of great value. Another example comes from Jesus Himself in Luke 14:8–11, where He said, “Whenever you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take [κατακλίνω (kā-tä-klē-nō) meaning to recline at the table... Literally to recline down] the place of honor (πρωτοκλισία (přō-tō-klē-sē-ä) proto as in first reclining place), for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him,” Jesus is clearly referring to a triclinium style feast and not the Davinci table and chairs.



What all triclinia had in common was three couch-like surfaces arranged in a “U” shape where the diners would lay down on their left side propped up by their left elbow. They would lay front to back with their feet to the outside all the way around the “U” with some kind of table or series of tables in the center. The opening of the “U” faced the kitchen or anteroom or open area from where the food was brought into the room.



The host was the second person on the left couch as you entered. That was Jesus' position that night. Between the host and the door or opening was His co-host, the person He entrusted with conducting the actual evening. In this case the Apostle John. Functioning as the "master of the feast," this was a position of tremendous honor. From his vantage point he could see everyone coming and going, see the food and drink arriving, talk to the servants and give any instructions necessary. In situations where there were no servants, that person would be free to easily get up and act as the server, much like a hostess sitting closest to the kitchen today.

This position was mentioned in the Wedding Feast at Cana. In John 2:8 he was called the “headwaiter,” “master of the feast,” “chief servant,” “master of the banquet,” “governor of the feast,” “head steward,” “master of ceremonies,” or “the person in charge of the dinner.” These are all translations of the word ἀρχιτρικλινος (ä̀r-ḡē-tṛē-klē-nōs), literally the chief, of the three couches, or the person in charge of the triclinium for that meal... Our author John, in this case.

Peter was in the opposite position of John, directly across from him in the lowest possible place because his back was to the door. Jesus was sandwiched between John who obstructed His view of the comings and goings and Judas at His back.

As host Jesus made the seating chart. He appointed and honored John as ἀρχιτρικλινος. Jesus placed Peter in the lowest spot - no doubt an object lesson for Peter and probably a factor in why he, in the lowest spot, was the one who objected to Jesus washing his feet. Jesus selected Judas to the place of highest honor and trust. Jesus gave Judas the position where he would have Jesus' back.

John would alert Jesus if any threat came from outside the room, Judas was given the honor of most trusted friend as he was in a position to protect Jesus from any threat in the room and of course, Judas was in the very best position to do harm to Jesus.

Notice in all four Gospels Jesus clearly tells the guys that one of them is a betrayer and He actually makes gestures to point Judas out and none of them had a clue. Why? Jesus, Who knows His betrayer has just put Judas in the most honored place at the feast guarding Jesus' back! To the very end, Jesus did everything He possibly could to reach Judas with love and acceptance and reinforcement, and the net effect was that every offer only served to further alienate Judas and set him more firmly on his course.

Jesus got up from His position of the couch between Judas and John and went around the room washing the feet of each and every disciple including Judas and for Judas it only further hardened his heart.



We see it all the time - a person gets going down a negative path and every attempt to change their course is seen by them negatively and their spiral into deeper negativity accelerates. The more people reach out to them, the more negative the person becomes. It's the same with depression. This phenomenon leads us to another important concept theologically.



God chose Judas for this very purpose, so that Judas would betray Jesus in order to fulfill God's plan, and the prophecies in Scripture. Did God create Judas and manipulate him all the way through his life to get him to this point of betrayal? In a sense, just like Pharaoh, yes, He did. What's important theologically is how.

God gave Judas every opportunity to come to terms with his upbringing as the son of a Zealot. Judas knew Scripture, which is to say, Judas knew an interpretation of Scripture that fit his personality and agenda. He was a man disgusted with the Roman oppression of his people. He was appalled by the Jewish leaders actually conspiring with Rome by selling out their people to line

their own pockets. He was repulsed by the Jewish people who did nothing about it, but instead went along with all the liberal, progressive, woke, Greco-Roman garbage destroying his nation. Most of all he was offended that Jesus hadn't started the revolution yet, but maybe with a nudge from him, He would. You see Judas was a Jewish nationalist. He desperately wanted Jesus to make Israel great again and if the Messiah needed a catalyst, he would set that in motion.

I am convinced that Judas never for an instant thought that his actions would lead to Jesus' death. I would bet almost anything that Judas saw himself, not as a betrayer, but as a hero. He was the only Apostle with enough gumption to force Jesus' hand and get the war between good and evil, the war that would bring about God's Holy Kingdom on earth, started.

Jesus chose him as an Apostle and for three years tried to teach him what the Scripture actually meant. Jesus put Judas in charge of the ministry's money, He honored Judas in many ways and served him in repeatedly and gave him multiple opportunities to change his course, but Judas would have none of it.

As with Pharoah mentioned earlier, God hardened Judas' heart for His Own purposes, by giving Him chances to repent and be Saved. That's the how.

Jesus selected Judas as His most honored and trusted guest by essentially asking, Judas will you have my back? Jesus washed Judas' feet with the same loving service with which He washed John's feet. No matter what Jesus did at this point Judas was set on his course - He was fully hardened against God, and he was fully in league with Satan.

Did God force that outcome to accomplish His purposes? As I said, in a sense, yes, He did, but it is in the sense that God kept pushing Judas to repent and for Judas that only served to harden his heart all the more - just like Pharoah. For some people nothing will work and just because God knew Judas before He spoke Light into existence, does not for a moment mean that, from Judas' perspective, it was a series of intentional choices to reject the Jesus Who stood before him in favor of a Jesus that he would have preferred.



That's what people do today. Millions of people reject, the Jesus before them, because He's not the Jesus they want.

What is the cause of rejecting, the Jesus Who is, because He doesn't fit your agenda? What was Judas' major malfunction? It is always the same. It is always the same with every human being who has ever or will ever reject Jesus. It is arrogant pride. It is always arrogant pride. Non-Christians hearing me say that will be offended, which, in itself, is proof of arrogant pride.

Arrogant pride says a lot of specific things, but it always comes down to the belief that I know how it all

should be, how it all needs to go, and due to that certainty, there is a complete unwillingness to listen, hear, understand, and trust even a little. It is called having an unteachable spirit and it is alive and well in the world today.

It mostly manifests as objections and excuses. What you have on your list of objections and excuses, it is all nonsense. It is all human wisdom, finite logic, and selfish rationalization in the face of God Who literally spoke the universe into existence with His Word and by that same Word of His power holds all things from flying apart at the speed of light. “Who are you, O man, that you should question God?” Rejecting Jesus is always questioning God. Pride cannot get more monumentally Arrogant than to talk back to and question Almighty God. Again, my point proven.



What are we to do? Listen, hear, understand, and trust a little - see where a little openness to your Creator leads you. Seek God and His purpose for your life and your life both here and later will have meaning. Eternal meaning. Just because every Christian in the history of Christianity has failed to live up to your standard, doesn't mean that Jesus isn't the only True Mediator between God and us.


Actively cultivate an intentional humble gratitude that willingly yields a bit to Him and see what happens. If you are such a person continue in that same path - keep yielding a little more and a little more than that as your faith in Him is built by Him. Keep moving, keep

your eyes on Jesus until you have surrendered all of you... to whatever the Lord would have for you. When that happens perfectly in every area of your life, you'll look around and realize that you are in the Kingdom of God seated at the wedding feast with Jesus forevermore. You will have finished the race well and never once looked to see your progress.

Quit worrying about all the things that you cannot possibly hope to control, quit worrying about the finish line and just run towards Jesus and before you know it you will have crossed the finish line.

Verse 20 is another important assurance that Jesus wasn't a man starting a rival religion to Judaism. He has repeatedly shown that He and the Heavenly Father along with the Holy Spirit are One. To love, serve, and worship Jesus is identical to doing the same regarding the Father and the Spirit.

To "Receive" Jesus is another way to say to "Believe in His Holy Name," which both mean to embrace Jesus genuinely as the only Lord and Savior sent by God the Father for the purpose of creating right-relationship between Creator and creature.



**Preach the Gospel at all
times and when
necessary use words.**

Francis of Assisi

God in His infinite wisdom chose this as His plan of Salvation and He chose to offer His Grace through His Gospel taught by human beings. At first blush, arrogant pride says this is a bad plan - why O God would you do it this way. On a personal note, why O God would You have Scott be a proclaimer of Your Son Jesus?

It's all about love. God demonstrated His love for mankind by sending a portion of Himself to dwell among us and pay the price we could never pay. God intervened in the affairs of man to provide man a different future. God continues to interfere in the affairs of man by ministering His Grace to others through those who are already His.



God uses imperfect people to reach other people so that His love through them will be tangibly received by those desperately needing His personal touch.

Here's where we come to the breakdown in the process. So many Christians throughout the last two millennia are so incredibly ignorant of what Christ wants from them and then on top of that, they are not interested in being led by the Holy Spirit. As a consequence, Christians classically do more harm than good. Even when Christians do good, it is with wrong motives and Christ gets another black eye.

We don't have time to go into all the particulars and it's just as well. I'll cut to the chase. The eternal life through Jesus does not start when your physical life on this planet ends. Eternal life in Christ begins the moment of Salvation with the indwelling of God's Spirit and lasts for eternity. That implies that a Christian's life in this present reality should be fundamentally and dramatically altered.

That altered life is to be a disciple of Jesus. It is to constantly learn and grow to serve Him just as He served the Father during His sojourn on this pale blue marble. To serve the Master means that we no longer serve ourselves. To serve the Master means we love and obey Him, we love and bless our fellow Christian, and we love and minister to the lost.

It means we love with our physical service - just like washing someone's filthy feet. Someone who does not deserve it, someone who cannot repay it, someone who doesn't appreciate it, someone who hates you for doing it... And we do it without judgment, without condescension, without impatience, without expectation... We do it because Jesus washed our feet! Most importantly, we do it by allowing the Holy Spirit to work through us to that someone. Then it's

Jesus doing the washing through our hands. Then it's between Him and that someone. It's not optional, by the way. We are commanded to love by physically serving.

You cannot be a Christian if you do not love Jesus and Jesus Himself declared that "if you Love Me, you will obey My commands." What were His commands? The first (1), "Love one another just as and in the same way and to the same degree that I Jesus love you and by that all men will know that you truly are My disciples." The foot washing was an example of putting that love into actual practice through service. That's loving God by serving His children - the church.

The second command (2) comes at the end of Jesus' High Priestly Prayer recorded in John 17:17-21, 17Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. 18Just as You sent Me into the world, I also sent them into the world. 19And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, so that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. 20"I am not asking on behalf of these alone, but also for those who believe in Me through their word, 21that they may all be one; just as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The exact same

command stated more directly is called the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:19&20, 19Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” That’s loving the lost enough to share Jesus in a way that is winsome, engaging, appealing, winningly.



Why don't Christians obey Jesus? The first problem is ignorance as Jesus noted in His Own disciples in Matthew 15:16, "Are you also still lacking in understanding?" Christians don't learn this; the second problem is Christians still follow their worldly, prideful,

fear-driven flesh far more than they follow God's soft still voice within.

The result has been disastrous. Learn what Christ wants from you, yield to His plan for your life, quit making everything about you and simply serve as vessel through whom God can pour out His love upon those around you. Quit worrying about what everyone else is doing and do right.



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News:

★ **VBS June 12-16** ★

★ **Church Camp August 24-27** ★

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