May you receive the favor of God

*And [John the Baptist] was preaching, and saying, “After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”*

 Mark 1:7-8

There is so much in these verses! It is wonderful to see how humble the fiery Prophet is when he is talking about the One for whom he prepares the way. John attracted great crowds and he had disciples, but it never went to his head; he always pointed to the greater One who was coming.

Jesus once said, “*Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist!*” (Matthew 11:11) See, John was not only a prophet, he was also the fulfillment of prophecy. The one spoken of by Malachi as preparing the way for the Lord. He was the one coming in the spirit of Elijah.

He baptized with water. This was symbolic of the washing away of sins after repentance. We no longer need a symbolic washing since we are washed clean by the blood of Christ. We now submit to Christian baptism in water to make a public declaration of our submission to Jesus Christ, who is our Lord and Saviour.

But more than symbolism is the baptism with the Holy Spirit. It is a beautiful picture of being immersed in God the Spirit. Of being engulfed by Him; forever protected from the righteous wrath of God. This baptism is not only an immersion, it is a sealing. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit; He is the earnest of our salvation. It is also an indwelling and it is real. God the Holy Spirit takes up residence within us, an irrevocable gift from God to those who accept His Son Jesus as Saviour.

In Christ’s love

John

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John 13:18-38

During this last Passover meal that Jesus shares with the twelve, He has already taught them a great lesson in humility and in the servant’s heart that is required for a follower of Christ, by washing the feet of His disciples. This lesson in being humble is also a foreshadowing of the tremendous humiliation He will endure on the cross. Although John has spelled it out at the beginning of this chapter for his readers, Jesus has only made a veiled reference to one of the twelve being unclean.

Jesus makes another veiled reference here when He quotes from Psalm 41 saying, “*He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me*” This quotation reveals that someone close to Jesus will in some way come against Him. No one is closer to Jesus than the twelve who are gathered with Him in this upper room and sharing this meal. Jesus is saying that one of them will come against Him in some way.

Again, this comment is not very direct and it is easy to imagine that the disciples completely missed the point, especially since they were still dealing with the fact that their Master and Teacher had just washed their feet; an action reserved for only the most menial of servants.

Now Jesus tells them in verse 19 that He is saying these things so that they will come to know that He already knew what was going to happen; in fact, none of this was accidental. They will be dispersed in the Garden of Gethsemane; they will be dismayed when their Master is crucified; they will be happy but confused when He rises from the dead; and they will gaze in wonder as He ascends into heaven. It will not be until Pentecost when they receive the Holy Spirit that they will understand and put all these things together.

Jesus even promised them in 14:26, “*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you*.” So the apostles would later remember all the words spoken during this Last Supper and understand them. They would know that Jesus was not a victim of circumstance or that He had lost control; they would realize that Jesus voluntarily laid down His life in obedience to the Father and for the salvation of people. He had even chosen Judas to be among the twelve, in order to fulfill what was written in the Scriptures.

Verse 20 lets us know how closely tied together those who become Christians are with Jesus and with God the Father. This is something that should give us pause; this is something to think about. Jesus sent the apostles, but He also send us. That is the great commission from Matthew 28. Jesus Himself has sent us; Jesus Himself has told us to go and tell others the Gospel. And when someone listens to the message we bring, in other words, receives us; they also receive Jesus and they receive the Father. Remember how Jesus talks about us being in Him and Him being in us. That is how close the relationship is between the Almighty and we His creation. God’s plan is to bring all things together in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 1:10)

Jesus has spoken these things in veiled language so His disciples can later come to a greater understanding. But now in verse 21, He speaks very directly. He tells them all, “*Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me*.” The gravity of these words must have hit them hard. Jesus was suddenly troubled in spirit. As He spoke, the strain must have been visible on His face; they had to hear the tension in His voice. In the past, they had heard Him speak with authority and even in anger; but this emotion was something they had never experienced in their Rabbi.

It can be hard for us, but we must understand that the crucifixion was not something Jesus blithely went to. Yes, He knew that’s what He came for; He even had perfect faith that God would take care of Him and would raise Him from the dead and restore Him to glory. But the man Jesus, knew the physical and emotional horrors that He was facing. He knew that He was about the experience the wrath of God. These are things no one in their right mind wants to face; and Jesus was in His right mind. He didn’t want to go through this.

And He knew that Judas was about to put into motion the reality of what had been hanging over Him His whole life: The process of the actual crucifixion was beginning.

We have experiences like this. We know a surgery is coming; but suddenly we are walking into the hospital. We know a big test in school is coming; but suddenly we are sitting in our desk with the test paper in front of us. We know a baby is on the way; but suddenly the labor pains start. Our human minds seem to shield us from what is coming until reality suddenly breaks through. And Jesus is a human-being.

You can imagine the shock amongst the disciples when Jesus spoke these words. They would not have understood exactly what the betrayal would involve, but they knew what betrayal was. The first thing to come into each of their minds was concern that they might be the one to do it. They loved Jesus so it would have been natural for them to fear being the one who would mess up that badly.

At the same time, it is a display of the inherent selfishness of people. Now we certainly can’t condemn them for their fear that they might be the one. But wouldn’t it have been better to have been concerned for the One being betrayed? Again, we don’t condemn the disciples for this; none of us would have done any better. But it is a lesson for us that selfishness is deep seated within us. To be focused on others comes from consistent practice and can only come about by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Uncharacteristically, Peter shows some restraint. Instead of blurting out the question, he quietly gets John to ask Jesus. From the descriptions of what takes place in the upper room, John is at Jesus’ right. They are not seated, but reclined at table; they are laying supported by their left elbow with their feet radiating out from the table. John would have been able to lean back against Jesus to ask the question.

In order for Jesus to be able to hand the morsal to Judas, Judas had to be close to Him. There is a very good chance that Judas was next to Jesus on the left. Incidentally, reclining to the left of the host was the position of highest honor. For the host to hand a piece of food to a guest would also have been an honor. We see here the love of Jesus: He performs an act of honor toward the one who would betray Him; He loved them to the end. Remember that we are to love our enemies.

Previously, satan had put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus. Now, upon handing the morsel to him, Jesus gave permission for Judas to put in motion the crucifixion and all that came with it. Many times we read in the Bible about the last days, the last hour, or even that time is short. These are all varying degrees of how long before something happens. At the end of verse 32, Jesus uses the word “immediately” or the phrase “at once”. The actual moment for these things has come.

We are told that upon receiving the morsel, satan entered into Judas. This probably indicates possession. Satan didn’t send a demon to take care of this, he did it himself. He wanted to work things out exactly as he planned. He didn’t realize that he was bringing about his own defeat. The seed of the woman would crush his head that day.

How can Judas be held responsible if he were possessed by satan? Back in verse 2 of this chapter, we read that satan has already put into Judas’ heart to betray Jesus. The devil had tempted Judas; he had given him the idea that he could make some money by telling the religious officials where they could find Jesus. Judas accepted the idea; he succumbed to the idea. He held the thought in his mind and toyed with it long enough that he convinced himself to do it. Upon this decision, he opened the door for satan to enter.

It was his own decision, his own succumbing to temptation, his own sin-stained free will that brought about the betrayal of Christ. As we all know, after Judas had betrayed Jesus, he felt remorse. Satan had left him; once satan was done with Judas, he left him in order to carry out his work elsewhere. Remember that satan is not omnipresent like God; he can only be in one place at a time. He had to leave Judas in order to stir up other hearts against Christ.

Really, Judas had one more chance here: He could have repented. Yes, he felt deep remorse, remorse to the point that he committed suicide. But he didn’t repent. He didn’t turn to Jesus to seek forgiveness. And so he died in this most heinous sin. Jesus said of him that it would have been better for him if he had never been born. The indication is that he now suffers eternity in hell.

Jesus says, “*What you do, do quickly*.” In that same verse we were told that satan entered Judas. So, was Jesus talking to Judas or satan? Most likely, it was both. But here is the main thing: satan couldn’t do anything without Jesus telling him to. We see this same thing in the book of Job. Satan wanted to cause Job problems, but he couldn’t until God gave him permission; and then, God set limits on what the devil could do.

While there is a great cosmic battle between God and satan, between God’s forces of good and satan’s forces of evil; it is not a battle that goes back and forth with the winner unknown. God has already won. The victory was never in doubt, because God is infinitely greater than satan. As we see in the crucifixion of Christ, God uses satan for His own purposes. In spite of his raging malevolence, whatever satan does, it furthers God’s plan.

Now this does not mean that we can discount satan or ignore him. He is powerful and dangerous. He is a roaring lion; he is seeking someone to devour; and he can do it. We are not to revile him. In the letter of Jude, we are warned about fools who do so: *Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”* Even though satan has rebelled against God and become utterly evil, he is still an angelic majesty. If an archangel didn’t dare revile him, we better not.

Jesus giving a command to satan is one more strong proof that Jesus is God. He is far above even the archangels. This was God reclining at table with His people, comforting them and teaching them. This was God putting into motion the final act that would bring about the redemption of His people.

Don’t miss what Jesus said back at the end of verse 19: *you may believe that I am*. “I am” is the designation God used for Himself when He confronted Moses in the burning bush. It is no accident that Jesus uses that language here. Jesus and God the Father are one. Together with the Holy Spirit they make up the mystery of the Trinity. One God, yet three persons or personalities. Not one God acting as three different persons, but one God existing as three persons.

At this point, only John had the knowledge that Judas was the betrayer. Still, he would not have been able to understand what all this entailed. The others only heard what Jesus said and watched Judas quickly headed for the door. Along with everything else the disciples were dealing with, they now tried to figure out where Judas was going.

They had some reasonable explanations that might be a little confusing to us. Why would he go out to purchase things for the feast when they were already sitting there and had eaten? The meal they just had was the Passover, but the next seven days were the feast of unleavened bread. Jesus may have been instructing him to purchase things for that feast before the Sabbath set in.

What about giving alms to the poor? This feast time was generally considered to be a time to be especially generous to the poor. Again, Jesus may have told him to give to the poor before the Sabbath set in.

Importantly, John ends this section with Judas going out, and he lets us know that it was night. In John’s Gospel account, light and dark, day and night, have great significance. Light is associated with God and Jesus and truth and righteousness. Darkness and night are associated with evil. Judas left the light of the presence of Christ and went out into the darkness; filled with the evil of satan; about to commit the wicked act of betraying Jesus.

But God was guiding everything, to bring about the redemption of His beloved people.

Prayer

How blessed we are, Lord God of all creation, that You are above all that You have made, and guide things to Your own good purpose. We are in awe of You Lord, that You protect us from the most powerful of all Your creation, and even use him for our good.

We do plead with You that You would protect us and not turn us over to him for our testing. Strengthen us Lord, when he does come against us with temptation; keep us in Your path, on Your narrow way. All the bright trinkets he shows us are but false light; all his promises are hollow and lead to death. Keep us in Your narrow way that leads to eternal life.

Blessed Lord Jesus, we cannot imagine the distress of Your soul on that night that You were betrayed; betrayed by one of Your number, one that shared much with You. Yet it did not catch You off guard; it set off what You came here to do. We bless You and thank You Jesus, for what You have done.

It is in Your name we pray

Amen