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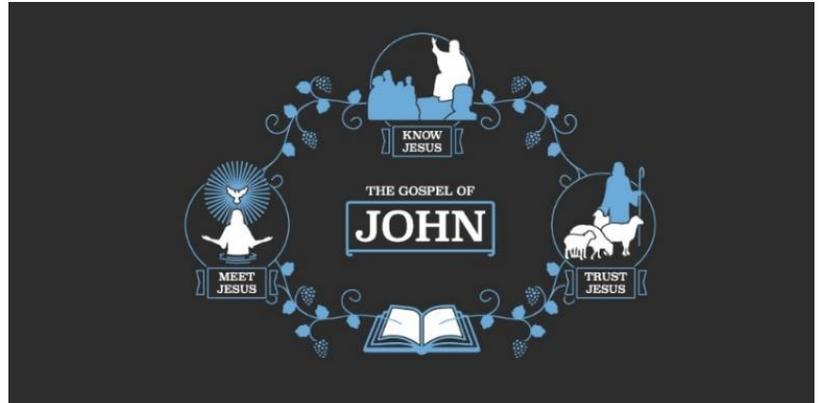
SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

It Was Night

The Gospel of John

John 13:21–38

Jeremy Anderson | March 27, 2022



I'd like to invite you to open your Bible to John 13, where we're going to devote our attention this morning. We're continuing in a series we've been in for quite some time. Back in August we started taking a look at Jesus' life and ministry through the lens of one of His closest disciples and arguably one of His dearest friends as well—John.

We've recently closed the door on His public ministry and now we are getting a behind-the-scenes view into His personal and private ministry as He spends time with His disciples in the final hours before the cross. Last week, Joe Denner talked about the really beautiful lessons found in Jesus washing the disciples' feet. We saw His enduring love for His disciples, His humble service and His patient teaching.

Today's passage jumps right into the middle of that scene. Jesus has again taken His seat at the table and begins talking with His disciples. We'll see how this intimate moment comes to a screeching halt and will feel the air being sucked out of the room when that happens.

I remember when I was a freshman in high school, we got a phone call at the house from the mom of my best friend, Cory. We had been best friends all through elementary school and middle school. He had recently started going to a different school, so we didn't see each other nearly as often as before. So typically when his mom would call the house, she was trying to set up a time for us to hang out on the weekend. So when I knew it was her, I was beginning to get excited. My mom talked to her for a little bit, then came back into the room. Eagerly I asked her if I going to Cory's house for a couple days and should be getting my stuff ready. Mom seemed to have a check in her spirit that I picked up on, so I realized I probably wasn't going to Cory's house. She paused, and as I look back, she was trying to figure out how to tell her freshman son what she knew. Then she said Cory's mom called, not to invite me over, but to tell me that Cory had passed away the night before.

As a freshman, I had no framework for dealing with that kind of news. I remember thinking it wasn't true. She was lying to me. I remember wrestling with God. "God, why? How? What are You doing? How do I make sense of everything in the midst of this?" I'm sure you've had these kinds of questions in similar circumstances, times in your life when you got news you didn't expect and that rocked your world. Things that left you feeling like your life was falling apart around you.

The feelings you felt in those moments, the feelings I felt hearing that my best friend had died, are probably similar to the feelings the disciples had that day with Jesus. They had come to Jerusalem for the Passover and they sat with Jesus behind closed doors. John adds four interesting words at the end of verse 30: "And it was night." These four words give us a glimpse into the seriousness and weightiness of the moment they were in. While these words simply tell us it was nighttime, as we know from reading through John's Gospel, they're also packed full of a deeper meaning. Ten times John uses the motif of light and darkness or day and night in this book. In fact, Jesus Himself uses these words Himself, saying the light would be with them for only a little while, but that the night would be coming.

In John 9:4 He tells the disciples, "We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work." In John 11:9-10 He says, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the

light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” Then in John 12:35 we read, “The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you.”

Throughout John’s Gospel there is a sense that the night is coming. Now, as John reflects back on these moments with Jesus that were unfolding there in Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover, he adds, *“And it was night.”* D.A. Carson calls this “the hour of the power of darkness,” and it has come quite unexpectedly upon the disciples. After all, they were coming for a festival, a time of celebration and remembrance of God’s faithfulness to His people. It was time to celebrate their mighty and merciful God.

However, as the disciples sat there behind closed doors, sharing this special meal together with Jesus, He dropped the bomb on them—not just one, but three. Three things that would leave them reeling, feeling like their lives were about to fall apart.

Night falls with the alarming news of disloyalty

The first alarming news they were given was about someone’s disloyalty. Verse 21 says, *“Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, ‘Truly, truly I say to you, one of you will betray me.’”* Verse 22 tells us this left the disciples uncertain. You can imagine how they looked at one another in their confusion, wondering who Jesus was talking about. They apparently had no way even to guess who that was. It wasn’t that they were nudging each other, saying, “I knew it. It’s Matthew. After all, he had betrayed his people before, now he’s going to betray Jesus.”

They’re not nudging each other and saying, “Well, Peter’s unchecked passion is finally going to get the best of him.” They’re not saying, “It’s got to be James, because how could you watch your brother get all this attention and have to follow him? He needs to get his own place.” We’re told that none of them knew who Jesus was talking about. Peter was sitting across the table from John and you can imagine the look he gave John. He whispered, “Ask him who it is. He’ll tell you. Who’s the guy?” So John leaned back and asked Jesus, “Who is it?”

Verse 26 explains, *“Jesus answered, ‘It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.’ So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.”* In that moment, John and Judas were the only two there who had any idea of what was going on. In fact, we’re told that after Judas took the morsel, Jesus said to him, “Get going; let’s get the job done. What you’re going to do, do it quickly.”

After Judas left, the rest of the disciples still had no idea what was going on. They thought perhaps Judas was going to purchase something else for the feast. After all, he was in charge of the money bag. Or maybe he was going to give some alms to the poor, which would have been a customary practice during the Passover. Of course the reality was much darker than that.

John tells us in verse 27, *“Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him.”* It’s no wonder that John looked back on this and wrote, *“And it was night.”* In that moment there was no day—there was no light—in Judas’ heart. He had been overcome by darkness. As we look at a verse where we read that Satan entered into him, it can seem quite alarming. “Is Satan ever going to enter me and turn me into a puppet for his evil purposes? I don’t want that to happen.” Before we build a theology around one verse, let’s slow down and think about this.

John is not giving us a prescription of how things always happen; he is describing what happened in that one event. It’s important for us to remember that Satan is not omnipresent like God is. We often seem to think that Satan can be everywhere, but he’s only in one place at any given moment. Only God is everywhere all the time.

In the upper room at this moment, Satan was right there. Of all the places he could have been, he was there in that spot, because something significant was going on. This is not describing some sort of norm; it’s telling us about a unique moment in the course of human history. If you remember, Jesus had indicated multiple times that Judas was even chosen for this very purpose. That’s a hard thing to wrestle with.

Back to John 6, great crowds had gathered around Jesus to listen to Him and follow Him. That’s when He gave the “crowd reduction sermon” where He said, “If you want to be part of this, you’ll have to eat My flesh and drink My blood.” The crowds were like, “That’s it. I’m done. This man is nuts.” Jesus then turned to His disciples and said, “If everybody else is leaving, what about you guys?” Peter replied, “Who else should we follow? You have the words of eternal life.”

Jesus told them in John 6:70, *“Did I not choose you, the Twelve?”* He did not say, “Did I not choose you, the Eleven?” then somehow number 12 sneaked in the back door. He said, *“Did I not choose you, the Twelve. And yet one of you is a devil.”* Even then Jesus knew.

In John 13:18 He said, "I know whom I have chosen." Here we have a unique time and circumstance, where Judas was chosen for a unique purpose. Imagine, if you will, Jesus saying to the guys, *"One of you will betray me."* You probably wonder if there wasn't eye contact being made between Jesus and Judas in that moment. I'll admit, that's speculation, but Judas might have been thinking at that point, "He's on to me. I'll abort the mission. I can't do it." Yet in that moment it was the desire of Judas' heart to follow through. We read in James 1:14-15, *"Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."*

We can be tempted to look at Judas and think, "Perhaps he's just a puppet here and had no say in the matter." The reality is that in this moment that is what Judas wanted. Why? It's hard to wrap your head around this, but something significant was taking place. Verse 30 says, *"So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out."*

The rest of the disciples were left in confusion and uncertainty, not understanding what was going on. They didn't realize Judas was going to betray Jesus and I think that uncertainty was by divine design. Can you imagine what it would have been like if the guys had realized exactly what Judas was going to do? Do you think they would have let him leave the room? Do you think fiery Peter would have hesitated for a second before putting Judas on the floor, saying, "Not a chance, buddy; you're not going to do what you're planning to do"?

Jesus gave the disciples everything they needed to know to believe, but He didn't give them everything. There were some things that were above their pay grade and that's okay. There are things that are above our pay grade and that's okay. He has given us everything we need for belief.

Back in John 13:18, Jesus had just told them the Scriptures would be fulfilled. *"He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me. I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he."* He gave them what they needed so they would believe He was the Christ, the Son of God. It was okay to leave them confused, so they wouldn't take the place of God and try to take things into their own hands, not staying within their pay grade. What was happening was the fulfillment of Psalm 41:9: *"Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me."* In that Psalm, David was lamenting how his close friend had turned against him. One who had eaten his bread was not just a casual friend, but someone whom he knew intimately and whom he loved dearly. This was such a stark contrast. How could someone so close, so loved, do something so heinous and evil?

Jesus said, "This is being fulfilled in Me." He gave Judas that morsel of bread and it's important for us to understand the significance of that. For most of my life, I've thought of this as Jesus ripping off a piece of bread similar to the white bread you'll make your sandwich with for lunch, then handing that to Judas. But there was great significance in that bread. To share a morsel of bread in that context would have been a sign of love and honor. It wasn't that Jesus took a scrap. He took the best bite, then scooped up all the herbs, all the best flavors, into one beautiful bite, then gave it to someone else.

For those of you who aren't bread people, it would be like giving the center of the cinnamon roll to someone else. I know that hits home. The best bite. You don't give the center of the cinnamon roll to just anybody. That person means something to you. It's an act of love and honor to do that. This was such a picture of Jesus' love on display, even as He was identifying His betrayer. This is huge.

Jesus told them these things so they would believe. In a few short hours, as the disciples came to realize what Judas had done, they started asking questions. Can you imagine the questions they asked? "We have spent so much time with him. How did I not see it coming? Could I have stopped it? Could I have done anything? How did Jesus not see this coming? Didn't Jesus say He knows His sheep?"

In those moments, when the questions started flowing, they would have stopped and remembered what Jesus had told them. He wasn't shocked by it. He wasn't taken off guard. Rather, He was in control; He knew all along what was happening. He told them so they would believe He was the Christ.

Night falls with the alarming news of departure.

So that night fell with the alarming news of the betrayal and disloyalty, but it also fell with the alarming news of departure. After Judas left, Jesus continued speaking to the disciples. You almost wonder if there was a breath of fresh air in the room, as Jesus turned His attention to those who remained.

³¹When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. ³²If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once.

Just for fun, I'd like to encourage you over lunch today to say that ten times fast and see who can do it the best. Lots of glory here. You can almost imagine them questioning. "Okay, one of us is going to betray you, now You're talking about all this glory." Then Jesus drops the second bomb on them:

³³Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, "Where I am going you cannot come."

Can you feel that second blow hit their hearts? "What else You got? One of us is going to do something terrible and we don't know who it is. Now You're talking about leaving us?" They had to be thinking, "This is not how the Passover meal is supposed to go. Bad news upon bad news." Before they could ask Jesus any questions, He continued in verse 34 saying, "*A new commandment I give to you.*"

I imagine them sitting there in the quietness. There's no chatter going on now. They're trying to make sense of what Jesus just said. Now their Teacher is leaving them, the One they love and follow. He says He has a new commandment for them. My question would be, "Well, what does a new commandment have to do with this? How is that supposed to help me now?"

This commandment is huge. He says, "*A new commandment I give you, that you love one another...*" That's not so new. In Leviticus 19 God gave them the law, saying they were to love their neighbor as themselves. Jesus quoted this in Mark 12:30-31, when He was challenged by the scribe: "What's the greatest commandment?" Jesus answered: "*And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'*"

This wasn't a new commandment. Yet Jesus said there was something new. Look at how He explains it: "*Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.*" He raised the stakes, if you will. Not only are we supposed to love like we love ourselves now we're supposed to love as Jesus loved us. That's totally different. That's the newness. He's changed the model in which the love is supposed to happen. It's not just our selfish love; it's now the selfless, humble, patient love we've seen modeled in the person of Christ throughout His entire ministry. "Love as I have loved you." That's a whole new game. That transforms the conversation. It's not about us anymore. As He has emptied Himself and humbled Himself to serve us, so we should do the same for each other.

Jesus continued, "*By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*" "By this..." He doesn't say it is by your intellect, nor by your apologetic arguments or persistent Facebook posts. He doesn't say any of those things. He says, "The world will know that you are My disciples by your love for one another." The one defining feature of a disciple of Christ that sets them apart from anyone is that they love as Jesus loves. That's massive.

Ray Ortlund writes this in his book *The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ*:

The promise of Christ is that our love will show a skeptical world the difference He really makes. Love is Christ's authorized way for us to be convincing. People today don't care about doctrine, but they do care about love. The world is not impressed by anything about us but the love of Christ—nor should they be.

If we fail to love one another in ways so striking that we actually start looking like Jesus, then the world has the right to judge that we know nothing of Him. They might be wrong. We might indeed be Christians, but the world is right to dismiss unloving Christians as unchristian. Jesus Himself gave them that right.

Man, does he nail it on the head. They have the right to dismiss unloving Christians as unchristian because Jesus gave them that right. If we fail to love in ways that are so strange that we begin to look like Jesus... Holy cow! "Love as I have loved you" is a new commandment.

Jesus in effect is saying, "Yes, guys, I'm leaving you. You cannot follow Me right now. You cannot do what I'm about to do. You cannot come with Me. But in My leaving, the world will see Me in greater ways. No longer will it just be looking at Me; it will now be looking at Me in all of you." Even today, as we love one another as Christ has loved us, the world gets a glimpse of the love of Christ. That's the model He has given—and that's huge.

Going into verse 36, you can almost imagine a moment of silence. Then Simon responds, "*Lord, where are you going?*" Jesus replies, "*Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.*" Peter then asks, "*Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.*"

Before we criticize Peter, I don't think it was so much that he was trying to challenge Jesus. In his confused love and devotion, it didn't make sense. It's clear that the Jews didn't love Jesus or even believe in Him. But Peter loved Him and was willing to die for Him. This reminds us of an earlier scene that evening when Peter told Jesus, "Don't wash my feet." Jesus responded, "If I don't wash you, you have no share with Me." "Well, then, not only my feet, but my hands and my head also." Peter was saying, "I'm all in with You, Jesus. How can You say I can't follow You?"

Night falls with the alarming news of denial.

This is when Jesus dropped the last bad news that would shock them. He replied to Peter in verse 38, "*Will you lay your life down for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.*" Not once, not twice, but three times. Bad news number three was denial.

Imagine you were in that situation. Peter was full of passion and love for Christ, as were the others. But Jesus told him, "Peter, your passion is going to come up short. Rather than going to your death for me, you're actually going to become a coward. You will deny Me three times in just a few hours."

I can imagine Peter's shock in that moment. Maybe he was a little embarrassed. The disciples may have been thinking, "Man, if one of our strongest companions who is closest to Jesus is going to fall, where does that put us?" Their world was falling apart, but not Jesus' world. He knew full well all that was happening. He had resolve and He knew what was to come. But for the disciples, it was all unraveling before their eyes. You can almost imagine in that moment the sense of defeat they must have felt, sitting around that table. There was silence in the room. And it was night. Just feel the darkness, the weight. There was disloyalty in their ranks. Who was going to be the one to betray? Jesus was going to leave them and they would have to wrestle with His departure. Finally, Peter, one of the strongest and closest, was going to deny Him. Everything seemed to be falling apart. But the disciples didn't have the full picture. They were living in that moment, then and there.

By the grace of God, I believe Jesus was giving them a glimpse into what was to come, so that when it happened, they would not be caught floundering. Rather, they would remember His words and believe, therefore they would also have resolve. Yet in this moment, darkness was surrounding them. Chapter 14 hadn't come for them yet. In the next chapter, Jesus read the room and said, "*Let not your hearts be troubled...*"—we'll address that next week. Chapter 20, where Christ rises from the dead, hadn't happened yet. They were living in that moment. They had just received that news and their world was falling apart.

If there's one thing we can cling to today, it's that Jesus knew. He knew that in time the disciples would come to learn that He knew everything. He knew what Judas was going to do. He knew what Peter was going to do. He knew about the cross. He knew all these things. Yet in that moment, Jesus said that truth would be enough to gird their faith, to strengthen their belief and that they would believe He was the Son. "*I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe*" (John 13:19). Jesus knew. He wasn't surprised by Judas. Jesus wasn't shocked by Peter. He wasn't ambushed in the Garden. He wasn't shocked at the cross. In time, they would come to learn and believe that Jesus knew—and that would change things altogether.

John tells us in the beginning of his Gospel, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (1:5). In the darkest hours, the light still shines. In the darkest hours, Jesus can say, "*Now is the Son of man glorified...*" (13:31). The darkness does not overcome the light. But in this moment they were living in the night. In this moment they were feeling the weight of all that was about to unfold, feeling the confusion, feeling the uncertainty. It was night, but the darkness does not overcome the light.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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