

## **Table Talk on Trouble and Triumph, Part 1**

Luke 22:21-30

42-270

I want you to take your Bible now and open it to the twenty-second chapter of Luke's gospel. This beloved history of the Lord Jesus Christ has occupied our lives for so many years. We are finally coming to the climactic part of this wonderful history. The death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the events leading up to His death, immediately in the days before His crucifixion. And, of course, then His glorious resurrection and subsequent commission, so we are at the climactic point in this great book.

The text before us Luke chapter 22 and verse 21 and following. In fact, you need to take verses 21 through 38 as a unit. It's a long section and we'll divide it into two parts...one this morning, and another next Lord's day morning. But I've entitled this entire section from Luke 22:21 to 38 as "Table Talks on Trouble and Triumph....Table Talks on Trouble and Triumph." And I need to say, by way of introduction, that all the way through salvation history, God triumphs over trouble. Job says, "Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward." Trouble defines a fallen world. Sin entered the world because of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3, and the world was cursed and trouble abounds.

The whole history of redemption is the history of God triumphing over trouble. All the way through salvation history, God gathers His elect people. And in order to achieve that redemptive purpose, He has to overcome constant trouble. The ever-present reality that dominates the world of fallen persons is the reality of sin. Sin is in every Adam and every molecule of this created universe. So that the history of redemption, if God is going to achieve His glorious salvation purposes, is the history of the power of God overcoming the power of sin and the power of evil.

Jesus summed this up in His own words in John 16:33 when He said, "In this world you will have trouble, but I have overcome the world." In fact, God is constantly overcoming the evil that stands in the way of His purposes. He does not need a perfect world to achieve His ends. He will achieve His ends in an absolutely imperfect world. He will achieve His ends though His enemies are in the way, and though His friends are in the way. It is the sins of those who are against God that endeavor to obstruct Him. It is even the sin and failures of those who are for Him but nonetheless weak and vacillating and sinful that attempt even to thwart Him, none succeed.

Saints stand in the way, and sinners stand in the way. But God always achieves His purpose. Salvation history is His story. God will do His will in His way in His time. So that the story of the Scripture and the story of history is God overcoming trouble...triumph over trouble. God is sovereign. God has infinite power, infinite wisdom and works His will through all the evil contingencies that exist in this fallen world. He is the Master of triumphing over trouble.

As our Lord Jesus faces the cross, which is the high point of redemptive history, He must overcome trouble to triumph. And the trouble in this particular text is identified with certain persons...Judas, the Apostles, Satan, Peter and the unbelieving, persecuting world. They are all presented in these

verses as obstacles, threats, hindrances to the purposes of God which are overcome. Constant thread then through verses 21 to 38, this entire section, is the thread of triumph over trouble...trouble from the betrayer over which God triumphs...trouble from the selfish Apostles over which the Lord triumphs...trouble from the destroyer, Satan, over which the Lord triumphs...trouble from Peter over which the Lord triumphs...and trouble from the persecuting, hostile world over which the Lord triumphs.

God accomplishes his work again by triumphing over trouble. He has no choice because the whole world is fallen and full of trouble. And that trouble comes, as I said, from saints and sinners. First of all, let's look at a sinner who posed trouble, and then we'll look at saints who posed trouble.

Verses 21 to 23, trouble and triumph with the betrayer...trouble and triumph with the betrayer. Verse 21 to 23, "But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Me on the table. For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed. And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing."

Now remember, it is Thursday night of Passion week. The Lord in the Upper Room with His disciples has just celebrated the Passover, a commemoration of God's deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt. He has also left the Passover behind so that this is the last official legitimate Passover and He institutes the Lord's Supper, taking the bread and the cup from the Passover and saying, "From now on, the bread and the cup will point to the cross where I've given My body and My blood." The disciples have been with Him through the Passover and the institution of the Lord's table.

For hours that evening, in and around the meal, there has been discussion. The Lord has been speaking, addressing issues, giving instruction to His Apostles. It is a prolonged period of time that goes on for hours and hours and hours. This is His last time before the cross with them. The full record of what He said is in John 13 through 17, that whole section. Luke gives us a more abbreviated account, but it is nonetheless a critical account. And Luke seems to point us in the direction of how aware the Lord was of the immediate trouble but how aware He also was of the coming triumph.

First, the trouble with the betrayer. Having eaten the Passover, having instituted the Lord's table, at least in Luke's chronology, Jesus then says a shocking thing. Verse 21, "But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Me on the table." "But behold" indicates an exclamation. Behold is a strong exclamation indicating surprise and shock. Now remember, the disciples knew Jesus was hated by the Jewish leaders. They had known it for a long, long time. That hatred had manifested itself years before in His ministry. They knew that Jesus coming to Jerusalem was very, very dangerous. Before Jesus came to Jerusalem to celebrate this Passover, one of the Apostles said, "Well, let's just go and die with Him, because inevitably that is what will happen when we get into their territory where they have access to Jesus."

They knew the leaders wanted Him dead. They knew that Jesus had protected Himself from being taken by the leaders during the day by staying in the middle of the temple area, surrounded by masses of people, the leaders being afraid to arrest Him in that environment for fear of a riot. They also knew that at night that Jesus went away clandestinely with them into the Mount of Olives in the darkness of night in the density of that wooded area with all of its olive trees to hide Himself as much as rest from the Jewish leaders.

They knew also that they were meeting in a room which none of them knew about until they arrived, in a home of a person who was unidentified, that Peter and John had been led there first by an unidentified man carrying a pitcher of water. It was all secret. It was all clandestine. It was after dark so that no one would know where He was. They were very aware of the danger of Jesus being arrested in that situation.

They also know full well that He has confronted the leaders of Israel, that He has indicted the leaders of Israel that just prior to this on Wednesday He had told them their system was apostate. He had blistered them in the diatribe against them recorded in Matthew chapter 23, in which He repeatedly pronounces damnation upon them as spiritual hypocrites responsible for the worst of things that were happening to the purposes of God. He had set Himself finally against them by pronouncing doom on their whole system, saying that the entire temple was going to be torn down.

So they knew Jesus was in a very dangerous place. Safety was critical. Thus the "But behold," because here comes shocking news. When you think you're safe, when you think you're in the protective place, when you think you're only surrounded by your loyal loving friends, here comes the shock, "The hand of the one betraying Me is with Mine on the table." There are only thirteen people there. Eleven faithful Apostles, Judas and Jesus. The one betraying, present participle. The one in the process of betraying. He had already negotiated the deal that he would deliver Jesus at the appropriate time when he could pull it off for 30 pieces of silver...the price of a slave. It was in process.

Satan had already put it in his heart to do it. He was only looking for the most ready moment. He was trapped, however, was the betrayer, because now he is there, he can't leave, he didn't know where the Passover was going to be so he couldn't tell the authorities so they could come and arrest Jesus. He is caught for the moment there. And Jesus reveals that He knows the betrayer and that his hand is on the table.

On the table? Shocking in itself because when you ate with someone, that was the symbol of friendship. That was the place of security and safety and protection and peace and friendship and loyalty. In that culture it was unthinkable that you would be betrayed by someone who ate bread with you. But that was what Psalm 41:9 prophesied, that one who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me. That is the most heinous kind of betrayal, the betrayal of one who is in the place of the loyal friend.

As I said, in Luke's chronology, they have begun the Passover. The Lord has instituted the Lord's table, the Lord's Supper, and so Judas has been there for all of that. He has been there for the celebration of the Passover, as they memorialized again the redemption of God in Egypt. He has been there for the hearing of the fact that Jesus will go to the cross and from now on the body and blood of Christ given on the cross will be the new symbol of redemption, the real redemption that will be marked out by the bread and the cup in this special service. Judas has been there through all of that. His hypocrisy is so deep-seeded, so hard-hearted, he is unmoved by any of this or any other conversation going on around the table. Satan has put it into his heart to do what he is going to do. He has locked him up permanently.

And so, when Jesus says, "Behold the hand of the one betraying Me is with Me on the table," it

doesn't move Judas at all. It doesn't frighten him at all. It doesn't melt him at all. It does have an effect on the others, but not on Judas. He is fixed in his purposes. The eleven...shocked...too shocked to be outraged and are not at all suspicious of Judas. He is the quintessential, archetypal model hypocrite. Here's the trouble, a betraying Apostle secretly striking a deal to have Jesus arrested and murdered.

For many unbelieving critics, Judas brought down Jesus. For many pseudo-theologians and New Testament students, Judas brings an end to Jesus' noble effort at Jewish renewal. Judas is the anti-hero who brings Jesus to His death. And for the critics, the resurrection is just a fiction of apostolic imagination, not to be believed. Judas' trouble really was trouble and spelled the end. Jesus never planned on it. Some even said He never expected it. But that couldn't be more wrong because no longer do you see the trouble then you see how Jesus viewed the triumph over the trouble, verse 22. "For indeed...for indeed," there's no hesitation there, there's no equivocation there, there's no questioning there, there's no doubt there, "For indeed, absolutely, it is so..." here is the more startling reality..."the Son of Man is going," you can add "to death," "Is going to death as it has been determined."

By Judas? By the Jewish leaders? By the Romans? By Herod? By Pilate? Who determined this? Acts 2:23, "This man, Jesus, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God you nailed to a cross." It is predetermined, not by Judas, not by the Jewish leaders, not by any humans, or collection of humans, not even by Satan, but by God. This is really a stunning revelation.

The Son of Man, by the way, is a Messianic title taken from Daniel 7 which Jesus applies to Himself consistently through His life. And the Messiah, the Son of Man, the one promised in Daniel 7 is no victim of human devices. He is going as it has been determined. By whom? By God. The early preachers of the gospel knew it full well. I read you Acts 2:23, that's what Peter said. Listen to Acts 4:28, and here you have those who are the disciples of our Lord praying to the Lord, "And they lift up their voices to God with one accord," in Acts 4:24, "and say, 'O Lord, it is Thou who didst make the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them, who by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of our father, David, Thy servant did say, why did the Gentiles rage and the peoples devise futile things? The kings of the earth took their stand and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ, for truly in this city they were gathered together against Thy holy servant, Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel...listen to this, verse 28...to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur.'"

None of them acted on their own. They all acted within the framework of God's predestined, predetermined plan. He is no victim. Trouble from the betrayer? Absolutely. Triumph over the betrayer? Absolutely. He is going to death as it has been determined. Judas acts like an atheist. He acts like all atheists act, as if there is no God and they are actually operating in some kind of isolation from any sovereign, divine strategy or plan. The atheist is foolish enough to think he's in complete control of his choices, foolish enough to think that he determines not only choices but outcome of choices and effects of choices. The atheist, the practical atheist or the theoretical atheist thinks he acts freely on his own will, thinks he's in charge of his own destiny invictus(?)... "I'm the captain of my soul, I am the master of my fate."

Nothing could be further from the truth. But Judas is acting like an atheist. He thinks he can make his own decision, choose his own path, decide his own outcome and therefore his own destiny. He acts,

he thinks in isolation from any greater power. No one acts apart from the sovereign plan of God. Every choice, every act, every decision made by every human in the world including the most evil, heinous behavior against the truth and against the Lord, God overrules and fits into His plan for His own ends and His own glory. There's not one rebellious molecule in the universe that operates independently of His purpose.

Of course the whole Old Testament pointed to the death of Messiah. He is the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. He is the crucified one of Psalm 22. He is the true Passover Lamb pictured by all the other lambs slain through the whole sacrificial system. Matthew 26:54 He says He has to go to the cross that Scripture be fulfilled. This is not some kind of breach, some kind of violation, some kind of invasion into the plan. This is the plan and the plan was that there would be a betrayer and Judas would be that betrayer. The sovereign power of God weaves every good and evil contingency into His plan, even working through Judas' treachery.

This is how it is. No sinner ever operates independently of God. God is sovereign. God takes every act, every choice and every effect made by every sinner and every saint and weaves them perfectly into His sovereign purpose. And when I think about the wisdom and the power of God, that's what I think about. That to me is staggering. A miracle, parting the Red Sea, that's relatively a minor act. All you have to do is reverse the laws of nature for a while, pile up water. Even flooding the whole earth, that's a rather minor act, you just release whatever holds the water in the air and it comes down and you crack the earth and the water in the earth comes up and you have a flood. That's fairly simple on a relative level.

But how in the world can God take every decision, every act with all its implications by every human being on the planet, leaving them a certain amount of limited autonomy to make their own choices for which they are culpable and overrule all of that so that it all comes together perfectly into the tapestry of His own divine purpose? And with all the contingencies incalculable, infinite contingencies, everything ends up exactly the way God designed it to end up before He created anyone. That is a massive, massive mind and inexplicable, incomprehensible power.

So, Judas...trouble. But triumph. Yes, Judas will betray Him. Yes it will lead to His arrest. Yes it will lead to His execution...exactly at the very time God established He should die the next afternoon during the slaying of the Passover lambs so that He would die as the true Passover lamb. All in God's plan.

Atheists are the ultimate fools. That's why the Bible says, "The fool has said in his heart there's no God." Everything fits by God's purpose and power and providence into His plan. And God does all His work through fallen creatures...except that which He does by the holy angels. No one acts independently of God, no one. Everyone fits into the sovereign purpose of God. And yet we might say, "Well wow, that kind of removes responsibility from us, doesn't it? If it's all in the sovereign plan of God?" And that's why Jesus went on to say this in verse 22, end of the verse, "But woe to that man by whom He is betrayed."

Woe? Damnation, cursing, consignment to hell to that man by whom He is betrayed. Divine predestination, divine providence, divine power, divine purpose, divine planning does not void human responsibility. Judas is cursed. Judas is damned. And he fully deserves it. He chose of his own wretched heart to do what he did and he's fully culpable for doing it. This statement is judgmental, no question, it is vindictive, no question, but it is also suggestive of grief because God finds no pleasure

in the death of the wicked.

No, he is not exonerated. He is fully culpable, and fully guilty. This is the ultimate paradox, is it not? The paradox between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. This is an apparent paradox, not a true paradox, but an apparent paradox which faith accepts while reason rejects. Faith accepts because faith acknowledges that we don't have all the information but we trust God. Faith accepts this. Reason rejects it and that's because reason is finite.

Is it reasonable to say he is responsible and yet God predetermines that? To Him it is, to God it is who has infinite mental capacity. But to us with our finite mind, we accept it by faith though we reject it by reason.

And so our Lord identifies the betrayer, the trouble from the betrayer is imminent. And then immediately affirms that this is all in the predetermined plan of God and so again as always, always, always, God triumphs over the worst trouble. While Jesus is speaking about Judas, by the way, Judas is basically unmoved...unmoved.

Listen to Matthew's account of this moment. Matthew 26:20, "And as they were eating, He said...verse 21...Truly I say to you, one of you will betray Me. And being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, 'Surely not I, Lord.' And He answered and said, 'He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me. The Son of Man is to go just as it is written of Him as it's been determined and prophesied but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed, it would have been good for that man if he had not been born.'" Better to never exist than to exist forever damned. And Judas...writes Matthew...who was betraying Him answered and said, 'Surely it is not I, Rabbi.' He said to him, 'You said it yourself.'"

Nobody else knew who the betrayer was. They thought it might be them. Jesus knew who it was. Judas was so confident that Jesus didn't know that he was an emboldened hypocrite. He could have sat there and said nothing, so as not to call attention to himself. He was so confident that Jesus couldn't know that he said, "It's not I, is it, Rabbi?"

He is spurred then to a bolder hypocrisy. Jesus said of him, "He is a devil." And that's how it is. The sinner who acts like an atheist, theoretical atheist or practical atheist, who thinks he makes all his own choices and determines his own direction and his own destiny in the outcome of his own life is a fool. It all fits into God's purposes and apart from Jesus Christ, in the end you will be a betrayer of the truth and of Christ and end up in the same judgment with Judas. Judas is unmoved, that's how deep his hypocrisy went.

But the others are not so unmoved. Verse 23, "And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing." We just read in Matthew, "Is it I?" They said, "Is it I? And this discussion is launched among them who it might be who was going to do this thing." The buzz, they began to look at themselves.

There's some honesty in that. They knew they were weak. They knew they were failing. They knew they were vacillating. They knew that they were poor students. They knew that they had struggled with doubts. They knew that their hearts were sinful, even though they belonged to the Lord and had been forgiven and were His true followers. They knew their weaknesses. They knew they were

capable of anything. And it was only a matter of hours from here that they all forsook Him and fled and that Peter openly on three occasions denied Him. They knew they were capable of that. They knew how weak they were. And in a display of some level of initial honesty, they're grappling with the fact that their own doubting, struggling, vacillating hearts could be capable of that.

In John, I want you to look at chapter 18, we get a little more detail into this discussion. In verse 21, when Jesus said, "Truly, truly I say to you, one of you will betray Me. The disciples began looking at one another at a loss to know which one He was speaking about." And then there was reclining on Jesus' chest, which is not literally that, but they were with their chests toward the table and their feet away on those kind of couches where they reclined, and the one nearest to Jesus is the one referred to here. This is John who had never uses his name in his gospel but always another way to describe himself, here it is, "One of His disciples whom Jesus loved." Which seemed to him a lot more important than his name.

"Simon Peter therefore gestured to him...to John...and said to him, 'Tell it is who it is of whom He's speaking.' He leaning back thus toward Jesus said to Him, 'Lord, who is it?'" They had no clue Judas was so adept at hypocrisy. "Jesus therefore answered, 'That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.' So when He had dipped the morsel, He took it and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot."

So at least John knew. "And after the morsel...verse 27...Satan entered into him." Satan had put it in his heart to betray Jesus earlier, and now he enters into him to pull it off. "Jesus therefore said to him, 'What you do, do quickly.'" Verse 28, "No one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him." Nobody could figure it out. They completely trusted the integrity of Judas' profession of being a true follower of Christ.

Some were supposing because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, "Buy the things we have need of for the feast." Go get some more food. "Or else that he should give something to the poor. And so, after receiving the morsel, he went out immediately and it was night." What a comment that was. It was really night. It was night outside and it was night inside. Satan took up a place in his heart, led him to the betrayal and led him to hang himself inadequately so that he fell and his body was burst on the rocks below and he was catapulted into everlasting torment, always and eternally, to remember that he had betrayed the Son of God. Indeed it was night.

Well the eleven are left wondering. They don't suspect Judas, even though Judas is gone. Jesus dispatches him, he goes, and as we will see, sets up the betrayal in the Garden on the Mount of Olives, leading to the trial, execution and death of Christ. Meantime they're still struggling with, "Is it I? Is it I?"

But this discussion starts to go the wrong direction. And we move quickly from trouble and triumph by an enemy, Judas, to trouble and triumph regarding friends, the Apostles. Point two, trouble and triumph with the Apostles. God must do His work through His enemies as well as through His friends, sinners and saints. Now you would think that the Apostles would have said, "Lord, You're going to be betrayed, tell us more, tell us more. What can we do to help You? What can we do to protect You? What can we do, Lord? Please, Lord, we want to sympathize with...we want to show compassion, help us know what to do." They don't. They don't. They're just trying to deal with the incredulity of this whole concept. They're just trying to sort out who would do this. And they're caught up in this discussion. And you can understand the discussion would go like this, "Well you know what? He

might do it. I always had suspicions about so-and-so over there. Thaddaeus or Philip or Andrew. I would never do it. I would never do that. There would never be a time I would do that.” Well there’s for sure one who would say that and he does say that and that is Peter. So the discussion begins to deteriorate into this dialogue about who is capable of doing this. And in the meanwhile, Jesus suffers alone without sympathy, without consideration. And as they talk about who might betray Jesus, they make a transition to a very familiar subject, they start talking about themselves and their relative evil capabilities. And that leads them to a discussion about themselves and their relative righteous perspectives.

So, they start out wondering who of them would be so sinful to do this. And eventually in their own self-defense, they start thinking about the fact, “Well I wouldn’t do that. He might. She might. But I’m too devoted to do that.” And the discussion then goes to which of them is the greatest.

Verse 24, “There arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be the greatest.” This runs down to verse 30. This is the only account of this. Only Luke tells us this. How easily they are distracted. How easily they turn away from the Lord who is about to be betrayed to themselves. How easily they lose sight of what He will suffer and start to think about what they deserve. They have already basically abandoned the idea that Jesus is about to be betrayed, which means arrested and led to death. And instead of being captivated by the Savior’s plight, they want to argue about which of them is going to be the greatest when He sets up His Kingdom. Is not this the most insensitive and oblivious self-centered group ever? This is embarrassing.

Jesus will be betrayed by one of them. They have no sympathy for Him. And their conversation eventually becomes an explosion of ambition and pride. And you would wonder whether the Passover meal with all of its directed worship toward God and the Lord’s table with all of its directed attention toward Christ as the sacrifice meant nothing to them. All they can think about is themselves. Same old, same old. We saw it in Matthew 18, Matthew 20, Mark 9, Mark 10. This is the old argument that they always get into. There was a dispute. That word is *philoneikia...philo...phileo...love, love of arguing, love of strife*. That’s what it was. This...they just...they just love to get into arguments about their relative greatness. Which of them is the greatest? You can see it in Luke 9 also, 9:46 to 48.

Selfishly they fall back to their old typical sinful pattern and at this point you say, “This is some serious trouble, folks, this is serious trouble.” Look, Jesus is going to go to the cross. His life is over. It’s going to...He’s going to be raised from the dead, going to go back to heaven and the whole future of the redemptive plan of God is in the hands of these eleven guys. This is not good. These are not world changers. Their devotion to Christ is questionable, it’s suspect. This is big trouble. This is where you expect the Lord to sort of say, “I’m getting a new group in the next few hours.” This is really embarrassing, humiliating stuff.

They’re still anticipating the Kingdom. Their eschatology was correct. They are still expecting an earthly Kingdom in which the Messiah reigns in Israel, in Jerusalem, over that nation and over the world in which God blesses Israel with all the promises given to Abraham and David and New Covenant salvation promised to Ezekiel in Jeremiah. Their eschatology is right. They expect the Kingdom. And they know that in the Kingdom there will be honor and there will be blessing. Their eschatology is correct. They’re having a hard time understanding it. Before there can be a Kingdom, there has to be the suffering and the dying. And that the Kingdom is a long time away, as our Lord told them, you remember in chapter 21. This is very troubling selfishness. It’s sound eschatology but it’s very troubling selfishness.

How can such a shallow self-centered group with a history of weakness and vacillation and failure, how can they possibly be used to change the world? And what is our Lord going to say in response? His response is amazing. Verse 25, "And He said to them," that phrase Luke repeats seven times in the remaining verses in this section down to verse 38. Jesus does a lot of teaching. "And He said...And He said...And He said...And He said." Important time of instruction. There's a lot more than just this, this is Luke looking at some of it. John gives us the full instruction from 13 to 17 in his gospel. "But He said to them," In fact, Matthew and Mark record, "He said to them, 'You know that...'" And then went on to say, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them and those who have authority over them are called benefactors, but not so with you. But let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest and the leader as the servant. For who is greater? The one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you is the one who serves."

His answer is so gracious, so kind, so gentle. John 13 begins...chapter 13 verse 1...with this, "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them *heis telos*," He loved them to the max. He loved these men to the maximum capacity that He had to love. He loved them to the infinite level of divine capacity. He really loves His own even though they are so troubling to Him. He loves His own and love having loved them to the max shows up in His answer. He could have rebuked them again, He could have blasted them. He could have replaced them. They were His. He loves them. And so He responds in three magnificent ways. First He says, "You need to change the way you think. You need to change the way you think."

The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them. Those who have authority over them are called benefactors. Not so with you. You can't think like the world thinks. The world operates on autocratic power." That's how the world operates. It operates by dominance, by dictatorship, authoritarianism, despotic rulers lord it over people by threat and force...*katakurieuo*...lord it over them, a compound of lording. Very strong, tyrannical. That's the world's way. You have a pecking order, you have a hierarchy, you have somebody at the top who dominates everybody. They knew this. This is how life was in the ancient world. In fact, there were no democracies anywhere in sight at that time in human history. This is the world's way. Somebody is the greatest. Somebody is on top. Somebody has the authority. Somebody dominates. The kings of the Gentiles, the nations, that's their approach.

And then He adds, "And those who have authority over them are called benefactors...are called probably a middle voice...call themselves benefactors." These are the people...the word "benefactor," *energeti*(?), energizers. These are the ones who think all the influence lies with them. All the power lies with them. They're responsible for being the source of everything that happens. It all flows out of them. They're the energizers. They have authority, meaning total absolute authority.

So in the world, you have dictators and kings and rulers and Caesars and monarchs and Pharaohs and all the rest. They dominate by power and force and threat and rule by fear. And they call themselves the influencers, the energizers, the benefactors, that is to say they're the source of all the good that comes. This is how the world operates with this kind of hierarchical structure.

Verse 26, "Not so with you." This isn't how the Kingdom works. By the way, benefactors you see, a capital B, and some quote marks, because it was an actual title used by Ptolemy I, Ptolemy II, used by Nero, used by Caesar Augustus, so it was an actual title that they did apply to themselves. But it's not this way with you. In the Kingdom of Christ, leaders don't dominate by force and fear. They don't

see themselves as the source, the Benefactor, the source of all good and influence. In this Kingdom, the one who is the greatest among you must become like the younger or the youngest. You must become like the youngest.

The youngest person in that culture was the least honored, age and honor went together. If you were the youngest, you were the least honored. In My Kingdom, the greatest is the one who sees himself as the least honored. This is reminiscent of Matthew 20:26 and 27, "Whoever will be great, let him be your servant. Whoever will be chief, let him be your slave." Same thing. In My Kingdom it's about slavery and service, it's about humility. It's not about power. Just as Matthew 20:28, "The Son of Man didn't come to be served, but to serve and give His life a ransom for many." You just need to think differently.

Then He says this, "For who is greater? The one who reclines at the table or the one who serves?" Well that's easy to answer. Whoever reclines at the table is the guest, or the host. And the one who serves is the waiter who is a slave. Obviously the one who sits and eats at the table is greater than the slave who serves him. And that's the answer. "Is it not the one who reclines at the table?" Of course. And then the Lord turns that around and says, "But I am among you as the one who serves."

So, first He gives them a new principle they need to understand that governs life in the Kingdom. If you want to be the greatest, seek to be the lowest. And then He gives them an example. "I am among you as one who serves." And then what was He talking about at that point? What did He mean by that? To what was He referring? John tells us. God to John 13. John 13, verse 3, "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hand that He was from God and going back to God rose from supper." He gets up from the table. Laid aside His garment. Taking a towel, girded Himself about, poured water into the basin...they must have been watching and thinking what is He doing? And began to wash the disciples feet and to wipe them with a towel with which He was girded.

When Luke says Jesus said I am among you as one who serves, they knew what He was talking about. This is what He did to demonstrate it. I washed your filthy feet. There was usually a slave in a place like this because you didn't go to the table with filthy feet, especially when you feet were elevated. They were always washed by the lowest slave. That was the lowest slave job there was. But there was apparently no slave to do it. The disciples who were all concerned about which of them was perceived as the greatest would not stoop to do it. So Jesus seals the point of humility by doing it Himself. "I am among you as one who serves."

Peter can't handle it. He comes to Simon Peter. He said, "Lord, You wash my feet? This is ridiculous. Jesus answered and said to him, 'What I do you do not realize now but you shall understand hereafter.'" He is simply saying, you've got to understand My humiliation. This is simply a symbol of My humiliation, you haven't seen the full humiliation yet. Wait until I get to the cross. Peter said to Him in his normal brash way, "Never shall You wash my feet." He doesn't mind commanding the Lord of glory. "Jesus answered, 'And if I don't wash you, you have no part with Me.'" Simon Peter reverses and says, "Lord, not my feet only, but my hands and my head." Give me the full deal.

And then in verse 12, "When He had washed their feet and taken His garments, reclined at the table again, He said to them, 'Do you know what I've done to you? You call Me teacher and Lord and you're right, for so I am. I am the honored guest. If I then, the Lord and the teacher, the Master and the teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet, for I gave you an example

that you should do as I did to you because truly, truly a slave is not greater than his master, neither is the one who is sent greater than the one who sent Him. If you know these things, you're blessed if you do them."

So Jesus says, "Look, I'm going to triumph over this trouble. I'm going to give you a principle to live by. It's a different principle than the way the world operates. I'm going to give you an example so that it's unmistakable what I'm talking about. Loving humble service to one another in which each considers himself lower than the other."

And thirdly, I'm going to give you a promise...a promise. Verse 28, I love this. Just quickly, "And you are those who have stood by Me in My trials." What wonderful affirmation, isn't it? Isn't that gracious? Instead of saying, "You blockheads, you never ever rise to the occasion." You are those who have stood by Me at My trial. You're still here. You're still here. John 6, right? "Many of His disciples walked no more with Him." Not these, they're still here. They're still there. You...you endured. You're true. You're Mine. You've been transformed. You are those who have stood by Me in My trials.

It's as if to say, this is what I've got, you're Mine. And it's always going to be this way. My work is always going to be done in spite of the work of My enemies, and even in spite of the weakness of My friends. But you're Mine. In spite of their troubling, discouraging pride, indifference, ambition...in spite of their relentless tendency to fail to live up to every opportunity, the Lord says you are Mine...you've remained and endured. So...listen to this...just...verse 29...as My Father has granted Me a Kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Wow...what does that say? That says this, that in the end when all of redemptive history is done, these eleven men, Judas absent, Matthias added in Acts 1, will become the Twelve who will rule in the Kingdom over the twelve tribes of Israel because they are worthy to be honored.

What does that mean? That whatever appears to be weakness at this point, whatever appears to be vacillation, pride, selfish ambition and even a few hours after this, the scattering of the Apostles and the denial of Peter, they will all recover, they will all be restored. They will be empowered by the Spirit. They will carry the gospel and they will start the flow that will take it to the ends of the world. And not until it is preached to the ends of the earth will Christ come to set up His Kingdom. But when He does, they will be appropriately honored. We know their history. We know they for the most part died as martyrs, faithful to the very end. Instead of berating them, He gives them a principle to live by in the Kingdom, it's humility. He gives them a model to follow, to show what humble loving servants looks like. And then He promises them a glorious reward in the future. They looked doomed to fail. They looked weak. They looked ignorant. That's not how it would end up. You stood with Me in My trials. You're the ones who have been called and saved and given an enduring faith. You are My true disciples.

It's a monumental difference between you and your weakness and Judas and his betrayal. Grace is at work in you. This is the reverse of the Judas issue. Judas is responsible and damned for it. Though God planned his role. The Apostles are responsible and rewarded for it. Though God planned their role as well.

In spite of their weaknesses, as I tried to point out in my book, Twelve Ordinary Men, God achieves

His ends. "My Father has granted Me a Kingdom." The messianic Kingdom is coming, it is coming. It has not been canceled, though it is postponed. God has granted, that's *diatheke*, covenant language. God has covenant with Me a Kingdom and I covenant with you, I grant you, same term, I covenant with you that when that Kingdom comes, you will eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom. You'll be the guest of honor in that Kingdom. The highest place of honored noble guests at the table of the host, you'll be there with Me in that Kingdom. Which is to say, you will do what I commission you to do. You will accomplish what I send you to do. God's power in you by the Spirit will triumph over all your human weakness. And beyond that, each of you will sit in a position of power, ruling over one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Which means in the future Kingdom, all the tribes of Israel will be there. And each of them will be ruled by one who stands as the representative of Christ to whom Christ mediates His rule to that tribe.

Same promise was given to the Apostles in Matthew 19:27 through 30. That in the regeneration you will sit on twelve thrones.

So Christ faces the cross and the obstruction of Judas from the purpose...in the midst of the purposes of God are overcome because it's all a part of the plan. The obstruction posed not by the enemy but by the friends and their weakness is overcome and it's all a part of the plan. God plans to use the weak and the vacillating, the not many, the not mighty, the not noble, the nobodies and the nothings so that He can get all the glory. So Christ faces the cross but triumph over trouble is on His mind. That's not all. Yet to come trouble from Satan, trouble from Peter, and trouble from the unbelieving world over which God will also triumph. Let's pray.

This is such a far-reaching and glorious reality, Lord, and it comes all the way down to our lives. Nothing that happens in our lives is random either. You cause all things to work together for good to those that love You and are called according to Your purpose. Father, You're working everything to Your end, to Your plan, achieving Your purpose. And yet we are responsible and accountable to You for what we do. We thank You, Lord, that You are sovereign but that You have chosen to use the weak in order that all glory might go to You. We can't even understand how we can be used. We thank You that You so use us. And we thank You and we rejoice that Your plan is on schedule perfectly. Be exalted, be honored, Lord. Lift up the Lord Jesus Christ and use us in whatever way we can be used, to Your glory. Amen.

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