

**Sermon Series: “Good News for Life”**  
**“And It Was Night . . .”**  
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**Sunday, February 21, 2021**

At times in life things can change. They can go from good to bad, from sweet to sour, from light to dark. E.g., I recall my Dad telling me the day things shifted in his life greatly; he was coming off the golf course on a Sunday afternoon when he heard news that Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor, and everything changed— December 7, 1941. E.g., I recall in the fall of 1980 I was going to school and heard some strange news, and before school officially began I walked in the door to my class and said to my teacher, “I heard John Lennon was killed yesterday, is that right?” The teacher was a child of the sixties, and she was very sad and confirmed what I had heard. Major change for music lovers; December 8, 1980. E.g., I recall after our Tuesday SONrise Prayer & Communion service in the first years of my being at Lake Vista UMC, I went to my office to order something on the telephone, and the woman with whom I spoke mentioned something strange had just happened— a plane had flown into one of the Twin Towers in New York City, and the shortly afterward a plane flew into the other Twin Tower, and things took a dramatic turn in my life and all of our lives; September 11, 2001. You can think in your own life of such dramatic changes, from light to darkness— and perhaps where you were on those three fateful dates. Life is like that at times for you and me, isn’t it? The question for us is how are we to handle such situations in life the right way? We can learn a lot from this morning’s passage, where we see that Jesus knew about such dramatic changes as well.

READ John 13:21-30 (p. 108)

**CONTEXT:** Jesus is at the Passover meal with His disciples, and He knows His end is near. He takes the opportunity to teach them an essential lesson about what it means to follow Him: He washes their feet. In our text last week there are a couple of hints that not all is going well with every one of His disciples. We will find out now more specifics.

READ v 21. “Jesus shared with the disciples some of the worst news He—or anyone— could abide, and He was deeply troubled by it. Cf. 12:27.” This was indeed a troubling time for Jesus. READ 12:27, where we see Jesus troubled by the prospect of His horrific death. Now we see another deeply troubling event He foresaw—the betrayal by a friend. We recall last week in our passage Jesus sees His betrayal as a fulfillment of Psalm 41:9, “Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted his heel against me.” But this of course does not make it any easier. Have you ever been betrayed by a friend? E.g., I recall when I was in high school I would get together with neighborhood friends and play sports— basketball and football. There was one guy who played with us a bit, and I got on well with him— so I thought. One day a mutual friend said to me to watch out for that guy, because one day when I was not there to play basketball with them he was saying some rather nasty things about me, and clearly he did not like me at all. I was surprised—I have misread him, and was saddened by what this person said about me when I thought he was my friend. Jesus felt like this, but much worse. The betrayal of Jesus was by someone whom He had known for three years as His disciple, and it was a betrayal unto death.

READ vv 22-27. “Among the disciples, it seems only the mysterious ‘disciple whom Jesus loved’ was privy to whom this person is, and Jesus’ chief request of Judas was expediency, as Satan had entered him. For the ‘disciple whom Jesus loved’, cf. 19:26-27 (at the cross); 20:1-10 (at the empty tomb); 21:7,20-25 (at the Sea of Tiberias, a resurrection appearance).” Who was this

“disciple whom Jesus loved”? Scholars in general are unsure, but I believe there are good reasons for believing John the son of Zebedee. First, it seems clear that this beloved disciple is an eyewitness to the gospel’s events with Jesus; cf. 21:24. Second, it seems clear from our passage by the disciple laying on Jesus’ breast that he was close to Jesus, which suggests Peter, James, and John from the synoptic gospels— and we know he cannot be Peter (he is distinguished from this disciple in our passage) and he cannot be James, as he was martyred early in the church’s history (Acts 12:1-5); thus, this leaves John. Third, church history after the New Testament in the second and third centuries strongly favor John the son of Zebedee. It is clear that Judas acts here by the influence of Satan. There is a long history in the Church that Satan is responsible for people’s bad actions. E.g., I recall years ago the comedian Flip Wilson used to use the line when he was caught doing something bad, “The devil made me do it!” He once told the story of a minister who had a wife who bought three expensive dresses in one week. After she bought the third one he asked her why she did it— didn’t she have enough? She replied basically, “It wasn’t me— the devil made me do it!” Biblically we can say that the only way Satan can have influence on us is if we open our hearts to his (mis)direction. And this is what Judas does. Have you ever seen people being open to Satan’s influence. E.g., I recall a year or two ago Norwood, Randy, and Roger and I did a prayer table in front of the St. Louis Cathedral on a Saturday afternoon, and there were many fortune-telling tables in front of the Cathedral. You probably have noticed that. It is an interesting juxtaposing, isn’t it? Before perhaps the greatest sign of God’s presence in New Orleans is the occult. I recall approaching one of the persons running one of these tables, and he was hooded and gave off a sense of being sinister, and I asked him if I could pray for him, but he wanted nothing to do with me. Judas was apparently the same way— He knew very much about Jesus, but did not want to belong to His group anymore, and in fact was planning His being handed over to those who would kill Him.

READ vv 28-30. “When Judas left, it was appropriate to recognize that Judas, along with Jesus and His remaining disciples, encountered the realm of darkness. Cf. 3:19-21.” It certainly seems appropriate that our text ends by saying, “And it was night”. A period of darkness had commenced. Jesus had previously warned of such a time. READ 9:4, where Jesus says, ““We must work the works of him who sent me while it is still day; night is coming when no one can work””. E.g., I am reminded of the book by Elie Wiesel called *Night*, which tells of unsuspecting Jews in Europe during Hitler’s reign who heard rumors of mass executions and concentration camps for the Jews, but did not, or would not believe it. Eventually the Germans come to take over their city, and the Jewish people there are still in disbelief, and to their horror they find the rumors to be true; I confess that at that point I had to shut the book— the subject matter was too heavy for me to confront at that time in my life; perhaps I will finish the book. This is the type of night Jesus is entering. But He does so not as one without hope, but with hope and trust in the One who sent Him. READ 12:27-28. And we will see in our text next week, Jesus encountered this night with God’s love.

“How can we prepare ourselves this lent for what Jesus experienced for us?” Let us begin by asking the Lord, “Lord, do I appreciate You enough for what You have done for me?” Also, I encourage us to ask the Lord this week, “Do I trust You in times of light and in times of darkness in my life?”