



Luke 22:1-38

“Eating On A Battlefield”

(14th in a series on Luke’s Gospel)

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“Following Christ From City Center!”

LUKE 22:1-38 "EATING ON A BATTLEFIELD"

2 Levels Of Power Struggle, High Drama!

1) vv.1-7 JUDAS' COOPERATION WITH SATAN AND ISSUE OF MONEY.

14 Nisan, **FAREWELL TESTAMENT**

1 a Now the feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover./ **Jews Liberated From Egypt**

2 b And the chief priests and the scribes were *seeking* how to put him to **DEATH**; for they feared the people./ //v.33
22:52-53, **Satan Appears! Solves Their Problem!**

3 b' Then **SATAN** entered into Judas called Iscariot who was of the number of the twelve; //v.31, 4:13, Jn. 13:27, Acts 5:3

4 he went away and conferred with the chief priests and officials how he might betray him to them. **6:16, 9:22, 18:32**

5 And they were glad (delighted), and engaged to give him money. **Judas' Weakness, Acts 1:18a, Jn. 12:4-6**

6 So he agreed, and *sought* an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of the multitude./ **DEATH NEAR (1)**

7 a' Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. **Ex. 12:6,21; Jesus Is Lamb Conspiracy/Betrayal Together, Mk. 14:3-9 Omitted**

2) vv.8-13 DISCIPLES SERVE IN MEAL SETTING: PROPHECY FULFILLED.

8 a So Jesus sent Peter and John saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." **1st Evening**

9 b? They said to him, //Entry Into City, 19:28-48
"Where will you have us prepare it?" **GATHER FRIENDS FOR MEAL (2)**
In Control, Jesus The Prophet/Seer

10 b'A He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city,
a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; **Odd: Women Usually Carried Water**
follow him into the house which he enters,
11 And tell the householder, 'The Teacher says to you,
Where is the guest room, where I am to eat the Passover with my disciples?'

12 And he will show you a large upper room furnished; there make ready." **Secure Lamb, Roast It**

13 a' And they went, and found it as he had told them; **Tells The Truth, Trust Him In Subsequent Prophecies!**
and they prepared the Passover. **Disciples As Table Servants, Roast Lamb, Meal, Good Jews**

3) vv.14-23 JESUS' TEACHING IN THE CONTEXT OF PASSOVER MEAL.

a) v.14 Introduction: Jesus And Apostles At Table.

Eat Passover (6x)

14 And when *the hour* came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. Symposium Style, Jn. 13:1
Includes All Jesus' Meals, Hospitality

b) vv.15-18 Two Kingdom Sayings (L), Vows. **FAREWELL SPEECHES (3)**

Not Passive, Passover As Himself, Looks To Future

15 And he said to them, **Saying Predicts Death Before Speech, 24:26, 46**

16 "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; 4 Cups, Toasts To God!
17 for I tell you I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."
And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, **His Future(a)**
18 "Take this and divide it among yourselves; **Abstinence Vows**
for I tell you that from now on I shall not drink **Last Passover Wine**
of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. **14:15, In His Resurrection?**
Assumes Gap Of Time, 24:1-12

b') vv.19-20 Two Symbolic/Memorial Sayings.

Jesus As Martyr: New Covenant In Spirit

19 And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them saying,
"This is my body which is given *for you*. **Longer Text, //I Cor. 11:23-25**
Do this in remembrance (anamnesis) of me." **Repeat/Recalling/ Memorial (b)**

20 And likewise the cup after supper, saying, **Foundational Act Not Forgotten**
"This cup which is poured out *for you* **Is. 53:12, Benefits Of New Covenant**
is the new covenant in my blood. **Ezek. 36:26-27, Jer. 31:31 (Inside Urge: Spirit)**
Luke Alone Reports Discourse After Meal

a') vv.21-23 Conclusion: Jesus And Betrayer At Table. Meal Has No Magical Power

Prophecy, God Uses/Overrules Evil

21 *But behold*, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. **Possible To Eat, Yet Betray**

22 For the Son of man goes as it has been determined (by God); **Freedom/Accountability**

23 *but woe* to the man by whom he is betrayed!" **Wailing Over A Dead Man**
And they began to question one another, which of them it was that would do this. **Not Clear**

2') vv.24-28 DISCIPLES SERVE IN MEAL SETTING: PROPHECY UNFULFILLED.

Infected Already With False Assumptions

a) vv.24-27 Dispute Over Status And Servanthood.

Jesus As Hellenistic Philosopher

9:46, 14:7. 20:46, Placement Is Lukan, Not On Journey as Mk., Mt.

24 A dispute (rivalry) also arose among them,
which of them was to be regarded as the greatest.

Bad Timing, Not A Complimentary Scene!

Honor/Shame Culture **EXHORTATION (4)**

25 And he said to them,

No Magic: Disciples Can Be At Meal, Then Involved In Strife
Discipleship: How Authority Is Exercised In This Community

"The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them (the nations);
and those in authority over them are called *Benefactors*."

Pagan Grandees! Caesar, Top-Down
Titles, Honor Culture For Gift-Givers

26 But not so with you;

Lit. "But you not thus!" Not For Disciples

rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest,

One With Least Status In That Culture

and the leader as one who serves.

//v.13, Disciples As Table Servants, Upside-Down Values, Jn. 13:1-17

Youngest/Servant/Jesus!

27

1 For which is greater, one who sits at table

2 or one who serves?

Culturally: One Who Sits

1' Is it not the one who sits at table?

Jesus Is True Benefactor

2' But I am among you *as one who serves*.

Who Follow? Reversal Of Cultural Expectations

To Be Friends With Jesus, Swim Again Status Assumptions

b) vv.28-30 Prophecy Of Their Future Exalted Status, Comforts Them.

Out Of Secure Futures, They Serve In The Present

28 "You are those who have continued with me in my trials;

4:13, 8:12, 15 **THEIR FUTURE (5)**

29 and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom,

Legal Realm Of Authority, Included

30 that you may eat and drink at *my* table in *my* kingdom,

1:32-33, 52, Messianic Banquet, 13:28-29, 14:15

and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Amt. 19:28, **THEIR FUTURE AUTHORITY (6)**

Confidence: Those Who Walk With Jesus Will Be Vindicated In Kingdom, Mt. 19:28

1') vv.31-38 PETER'S TESTING BY SATAN AND ISSUE OF PROVISION.

a) vv.31-34 Peter And The Sifting By Satan Of Them All.

Further Prophecies Of Satanic Attack

Back To Spiritual Warfare Issue

31 "Simon, Simon, behold, **SATAN** demanded to have you (plural = *you all*),

5:1-10 Simon **PREDICTIONS (7)**

that he might sift (all of) you like wheat,

//4:1-13, Job 1-2, Judas Failed! Will Peter?

32 but I have prayed for you (sg. = Peter only) that your faith may not fail;

6:14, His Intercession Protects From Apostasy

and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren.

Leaders Are Humbled, Goal Of Christian Leadership

Peter Is A Model Not Because He Did Not Fail But Because He Turned Back!

33 And he said to him,

"Lord,

I am ready to go with you to prison and to **DEATH**."

34 He said,

"I tell you, Peter,

Personal Prophecy Of Frailty

the cock will not crow this day until you three times deny that you know me."

Falls Into Trap, Bragging

b) vv.35-38 Provision And Protection In Changed Circumstances, Is. 53:12, (L).

There Is Renewed Mission Beyond Testing

35 And he said to them, "When I sent you out with no purse or bag or sandals, did you lack anything?"

Vulnerability

They said, "Nothing."

36 He said to them,

Rough Times Are Ahead!

1 "*But now*, let him who has a purse take it, and likewise a bag.

Peaceful Conditions Of First Mission No Longer Apply

And let him who has no sword sell his mantle and buy one.

Symbol, Self-defense, Traveling Mission, 9:1ff, 10:1ff.

37 2 For I tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in me,

4:21

3 'And he was reckoned with the transgressors.'

22:52, 23:22, Jesus Labeled A Criminal, Isaiah 53:12

2' for what is written about me has its fulfillment."

38 1' And they said, "Look, Lord, here are two swords."

22:51 (rebuke), J.W. 2.8.4.124, Rev. 13:10

And he said to them, "It is enough."

22:50, Not Understand, Jesus Warns Against Conflict, Apostasy, Denial, Suffering

Comfort: Death Seals New Covenant Through The Spirit, Jesus' Prays For Us, Ultimate Vindication Promised

They Simply Do Not Understand; They Are *The Lawless* He Is Found Among

A Brief Treatment of Luke 22:1-38

Luke 22:1-38 is a large thought unit within the passion narrative of the third gospel. That it should be treated as a whole is indicated by two complementary structures. The surface structure is a 5:1 chiasm or concentric pattern (1-2-3-2'-1') with the words *death* (v.2//v.33) and *Satan* (v.3//v.31) functioning as verbal brackets and terms of inclusion. The outermost sub-units 1) vv.1-7 // 1') vv.31-38 feature spiritual warfare. The next inmost layer, 2) vv.8-13 // 2') vv.24-28, portrays leadership as obeying Jesus by serving others at table, first in a positive (vv.8-13), then in a negative example (vv.24-28). The prophecy of vv.10-12 is fulfilled immediately in v.13; the prophecy of vv.28-30 remains future, and if Jesus did the first, he can accomplish the second! The center of the thought unit, 3) vv.14-23, has its own concentric pattern (a-b-b'-a') with *at table* (v.14) // *on the table* (v.21) as brackets and two sets of kingdom sayings (b. vv.15-16, 17-18) parallel to two sets of institution sayings (b' v.19, v.20) which transform standard Passover symbols. Thus the surface structure indicates a carefully formed, conscious set of parallels that sets 22:1-38 off from what comes before and after and gives internal organization to the flow of thought. Luke intends it to be read as a whole because in his theology sacraments, service, spiritual warfare, and missions are united in Christian experience. Jesus models humble service and realism about both personal evil and human frailty.

In addition to insights derived from reading the surface structure, Luke incorporates the genre/literary type of the *last will and testament* of a leader or hero (see footnotes 3-6). Just before death a leader gathers followers at a meal for farewell speeches on a list of standard topics including exhortation on lifestyle, warnings, and promises. That Luke could take the traditions he received from Mark, weave in his own research and pour the whole into a unified structure that is aesthetic and faithful to the testamentary tradition is a great feat. Jesus is the Son/Lamb/Prophet who sees what's ahead and is able to provide for his followers physically and spiritually as he looks forward to the joys of the coming kingdom. He fulfills and surpasses the riches of Judaism in his new community and their coming mission to the world. His new meal is a place of assured contact.

The first scene (vv.1-7) with its references to *Unleavened bread* and *Passover* (v.1//v7) makes the yearly remembrance of the Exodus the setting for evil among temple leaders (v.2) and a treacherous insider Judas (vv.3-6). The question how to arrest Jesus away from the crowds is answered as Satan sends Judas. After negotiations, he takes money and joins the plot. Providence and appointments are not always divinely arranged; evil always finds accomplices. The second scene (vv.8-13) is framed by the phrases *prepare the Passover* (v.8) and *prepared the Passover* (v.13). In between are a question of Peter and John (v.9) and Jesus' visionary prophecy (vv.10-11). Jesus is a true seer and prophet who can be trusted. These two disciples act here as faithful servants. The central scene (vv.14-23) presents the company of Jesus and his disciples at a Passover feast where there would likely have been four cups or toasts, only two of which Luke highlights. The first two parallel sayings (vv.15-16, 17-18) are future oriented and show Jesus exercising abstinence and making formal vows. The second pair (vv.19, 20) show Jesus investing the bread and cup with personal meaning to seal the new covenant fulfilled in his self-giving sacrifice. Jesus is the division point of the cosmos, and those who do not acknowledge him face peril (vv.21-23). The fourth scene (vv.24-28) call followers to counter-cultural servant leadership and promise fantastic rewards (vv.28-30). We return to leadership issues in the finale scene (vv.31-38) where spiritual testing is promised to all and Peter is warned he is not who he thinks. He will lead from brokenness. That plans are made to restart of the mission in vv.37-38 mean Jesus has plans for his friends after the crisis. Now that he is judicially labeled a *criminal* and *transgressor*, the mission will be tougher.

EATING ON A BATTLEFIELD

“But not so with you.”

Jesus distinguishes his style of leadership from the world.

LUKE 22:26

Giacomo Puccini was stricken by cancer in 1922 while working on his last opera, *Turandot*, which many consider his best. Puccini said to his understudies, "If I don't finish *Turandot*, you finish it for me." He soon died. The Master's students studied the score carefully and soon completed it. In 1926 the world premier was performed in the Milan opera house with Puccini's favorite disciple- Arturo Toscanini- directing. Everything went beautifully until the opera reached the point where Puccini put down his pen. Toscanini stopped the orchestra, laid down the baton, and turned to the audience, "Thus far the Master wrote, but he died." Silence filled the house. Toscanini then picked up the baton, smiled through his tears and announced, "But the disciples finished the work!" When *Turandot* ended, the applause was thunderous.¹ Puccini's music continued in the life of his disciples.

That is the church. Jesus died. But since he is alive through resurrection, he is not absent as we study his scores and continue his work. The music continues in his students, and that's us!² The songs we sing and the sermons we preach and the good works we offer are not tributes to a dead master as with Puccini but to a living Lord. It is no longer his ministry *among us* in flesh and blood but his ministry *in and through us* by the power of the Spirit. We study the four gospels as our classic texts, just as Puccini's pupils studied the score of *Turandot*. Why? So we can understand

¹ Edited, Brian Cavanaugh, *More Sower's Seeds* (New York: Paulist, 1992), 81.

² On the neglect and recovery of discipleship, see Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006); Eric Geiger, et. al., *Transformational Discipleship* (Nashville, TN: B & H, 2012).

the music-maker. Our master is not dead and gone but dead and alive again; he is among us. The ministry of Jesus has not ended; only the form has changed.

The Testamentary Tradition

There is a type of literature in the Bible appropriate to such a transition. It's the farewell address in which a leader prepares for his departure by speaking of his life and telling followers how to live after his exit, a kind of last will and testament.³ In Jewish literature near the time of Jesus, the pattern is predictable.⁴ The death of the hero draws near; the leader then summons family and followers for a meal. It is a continuation of other meals they've shared, but different in that it's the last one and filled with significance: a time to celebrate, a time to grieve, a time to remember, a time to listen. There are warnings of dangers and promises of blessing.⁵

This is precisely what we find in Luke 22. When Luke researched and edited the story of the Last Supper, he framed it as a farewell address. Moses addressed the children of Israel with a farewell address in the Book of Deuteronomy; Socrates addressed his students before drinking the hemlock in Plato's *Phaedo*, and here Jesus has a religious and philosophical symposium with his circle of twelve,⁶ one of whom is now freshly spiritually infected with evil. We know what a *sit-com* is, what a *documentary* is, what a *game show* is. They knew what a *farewell meal and last*

³ Xavier Leon-Dufour, S.J., *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1987), Chapter 12, "The Testament of Jesus According to Luke," 230-247, where clear parallels are drawn between Luke 22:1-38 and the *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs*.

⁴ Biblical examples are Moses in Deuteronomy 29 through 33, Jacob in Genesis 49, and Paul's final speech to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20.

⁵ Carolyn Oseik, a Catholic scholar, alerts us to additional parts of such farewell speeches: "Usually, there is also a component of prophecy, both warning of coming dangers and especially the promise of good things to come. Sometimes a successor is explicitly appointed. Often, the testament concludes with a prayer, a blessing, or both." ("The Prayer of the Departing Jesus," *The Bible Today*, May 1994, 151).

⁶ On the Greco-Roman symposium and its Jewish adaptation, see Ben Witherington, *John's Wisdom* (Louisville, KY: WJK, 1995), "Excursus: Greco-Roman Meals And Their Jewish Practice," 232-234; Dennis Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet In The Early Christian World* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 2003).

testament was, a chance for a beloved teacher to pass on the teaching and lifestyle they would continue in his name. It was a reminder of who he was and who they were to be. At such times you don't teach new stuff; you make old stuff memorable.

As was the custom at such meals, the twelve disciples recline on couches to celebrate the Passover, the yearly remembrance of the Jews ancient deliverance from Egypt. This is foundational material about the identity of the community. It is about continuity in an uncertain world where evil and human sin are strong, but where Jesus is stronger still because he gives himself to those who continue with him in his trials. This is the deepest script of our Christian faith: *who we are* (we are disciples), *whose we are* (we belong to Jesus) and *what we are to do and be* (we are to serve one another, knowing that all- even the leaders Jesus gives- are subject to spiritual warfare, greed, cowardice, ambition, failure, and sin). What would you say and do if you knew you were eating your last meal? Last words carry special weight.

Cosmic Realities And Spiritual Warfare (vv.1-7, 31-34)

As I analyzed this story I was startled to find it opens and closes with cosmic spiritual warfare. Among the rich cast of characters is an invisible angelic participant- the Evil One, Satan himself- who's been circling the twelve looking for a soft spot.⁷ Were ever more chilling words spoken than verse 3? "Then Satan *entered into* Judas called Iscariot who was of the number of the twelve." It wasn't that the cell wall of his soul was punctured by an attacking virus; Judas opened the door from inside. How could one who knew the pure goodness of Jesus for three years do this?

For some reason- and the details are hidden- Judas was the weak link in the chain. Our best guess is love of money and the security it promised. In John's gospel we find hints of greed and dishonesty. Here in Luke we find him negotiating to agree on a fee.⁸ Some speculate he wanted the Jesus to be more political in a this-worldly sense and tried to force his hand. All twelve were deeply flawed: James and John with maternally-fueled ambition, Peter with impulses to bravado, Thomas a skeptic, but Judas was perhaps most vulnerable to the lure of money and politics- *influence*.

With Judas, discipleship may have started as a great adventure, then over time wondering if the Jesus-thing would work out as opposition increased, then of having a little side bet of skimming money in case it didn't, then seriously thinking that Jesus

⁷ 1 Peter 5:8-9.

⁸ John 12:4-6.

and his non-violent kingdom were off course, and finally making contact with those who want to do him in. Judas was more drawn to *me* than *we*; he was not inwardly surrendered to Jesus; he kept secrets; he was an easy mark. Judas had the same history as the others, heard the same teaching, ate from the same loaf, drank the same cup, listened as a warning aimed at him was announced that the traitor's hand was even now *on the table*, was warned that all would be sifted by Satan, and yet continued on his way to destruction, which is the dark side of human freedom. Judas was not fated; Jesus could have arrived at the cross some other route.⁹ Judas did not fail for lack of grace. It was in the citadel of his will that the problem lay. He welcomed deception and became a partner with evil in history's ugliest betrayal. Judas ended poorly and stands as a warning to us all.

Or how about the sobering words at the end of the passage? How would you like Jesus to call your name twice to get attention? Verse 31: "*Simon, Simon*, behold, Satan *has demanded* to have you all, that he may sift you like wheat...." Evil is not just exterior to the human soul; in can be invited in.¹⁰ And even when it remains exterior to the personality, it can bring great pain, as with Peter and his friends. We are not alone. Behind the appearances of this world a constant battle rages round the issue of loyalty to Jesus Christ. Our enemy's greatest tool is to hide his existence.

There is one, Jesus and the apostles and the church fathers and John Wesley taught, who can penetrate the defenses of human personality if allowed and who orchestrates the persecutions through which the church passes.¹¹ To omit him from the drama is to change the play. This is not some comic book character, but a fallen angel of immense power bent on resisting the kingdom of God at every point. The Evil One works through religious and political structures, in this case the chief priests

⁹ On alternatives, see David Garland, *Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 873).

¹⁰ Here two books of the late psychiatrist Dr. M. Scott Peck deserve attention. *People Of The Lie* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1983); *Glimpses Of The Devil* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2005). He considers *evil* a diagnostic category.

¹¹ The Standard Sermons of John Wesley are counted as official Doctrinal Standards for United Methodists (*The Book of Discipline 2012*, 62ff.). See his Sermon 42, "On Satan's Device" found at www.umcmission.org/Find-Resources/Global-Worship-and-Spiritual-Growth/John-Wesley-Sermons/Sermon-42-Satans-Devices. Wesley's spiritual realism is sobering. On Wesley's experiences with deliverance, as recorded in his Journals, see Dan Jennings, *The Supernatural Occurrences of John Wesleyohn Wesley* (Sean Multimedia, 2005, 8-37).

and scribes and elders who plot Jesus’ death and then miraculously find a man walking in their office with the key to unlock their problem of how to arrest him apart from the protective crowds. There is divine providence or guidance from God, and there is infernal providence from the other team. Seek to do good, and doors will open; turn away from the light, and other doors will open. To stay surrendered to Jesus and pursue all the good things he puts before you is the best protection.¹²

Satan cannot destroy the church, but is allowed to test and sometimes wreak havoc in our midst. And though Satan thrashes around to deceive and divide, he remains within the bounds of God’s over-ruling sovereignty. There is nothing he can do God cannot remedy, no card in his hand God cannot trump. Satan is not the equal of God but only of Michael or another archangel.¹³ He remains a creature, of a different order than ourselves, but definitely on our side of the line of separation from God. We are to be wise in his ways, but we are to fear only the Father, follow only the Son, and fellowship with only the Holy Spirit. We are not his match, but we belong to One who has overcome his deadliest weapons and who prays for us- as for Peter- that we not collapse as did Judas. Have you ever noticed that when you choose to sin and violate your conscience, there are always forces that cooperate with the worst that is in you? I have, and it’s him, or one of his annoying little friends.¹⁴

The New Testament is realistic about human ignorance and frailty and cussedness and sin, but it also teaches that the sheer enormity and virulence of evil in this world cannot be explained apart from an organizing intellect behind it all. Butchery in Bosnia and Rwanda, the plague of drugs and violence in our cities, the

¹² John Wesley wrote, "The best means of resisting the devil is to destroy whatever of the world remains in us, in order to raise for God, upon its ruins, a building all of love. Then shall we begin, in this fleeting life, to love God as we shall love him in eternity" (*A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection*, www.gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/perfect3).

¹³ C.S. Lewis wrote, "The commonest question is whether I really ‘believe in the Devil.’ Now, if by ‘the Devil’ you mean a power opposite to God and, like God, self-existent from all eternity, the answer is certainly No. There is no uncreated being except God. God has no opposite...Satan, the leader or dictator of devils, is the opposite, not of God, but of Michael" (*The Screwtape Letters* [New York: Macmillan, 961], p. vii).

¹⁴ On the larger issues of spiritual warfare and world view, see Clinton Arnold, "The Kingdom, Miracles, Satan and Demons," Chapter 6 in C. Morgan, R. Peterson, *The Kingdom of God* (Wheaton, ILL: Crossway, 2012), 153-178.

expanding porn industry, corruption in government as well as the personal vices that dog and shame us all. Behind the excess of human torment is one who delights in smearing and slandering all God has made good. What a dark coincidence it was that just as leaders were plotting Jesus' death, Judas fell into their lap as an already-prepped inside informant. Those who seek to do evil will always find opportunities opening and resources coming their way. Not all coincidences are benevolent.

In the past decades there was been an explosion of books, both popular and scholarly, on spiritual warfare.¹⁵ Some of the pop material is pure silliness; much of it is a genuine recovery of a neglected biblical doctrine that the church does not operate on just a visible but also an invisible level. Reality is interactive and multi-layered, visible and invisible.

Perhaps the fatal weakness of modern liberal theology is its refusal to acknowledge invisible spiritual reality. It has no place for the supernatural and chooses to live in a closed cause-and-effect universe as taught in the old physics and the new secularism. In its desire to make human beings responsible and accountable (a good motive), it has ignored the insight that we are not only actors with a measure of freedom; we are also living behind enemy lines and in need of liberation. And what you do not acknowledge, you cannot resist. Satan and hell are theological truths the church cannot jettison without changing our character and thus losing our connection with the apostolic church. That sober fear is meant to drive us to the only one whose prayers are strong enough to protect us, Jesus Christ. "I have prayed for you," said Jesus to Simon and the others.

Luke knew human strength was not sufficient. He opens and closes his farewell account of Jesus' last meal with a sober acknowledgment of the one who orchestrated Jesus' betrayal, destroyed Judas, and ran Peter and the rest through a blender. Satan is not nice and doesn't play fair. Radical evil is a cosmic conspiracy. Therefore the Christian life means entry into real conflict, within and without. In line

¹⁵ Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Devil: Perceptions Of Evil From Antiquity To Primitive Christianity* [New York: New American Library, 1977]; Ed Murphy, *The Handbook on Spiritual Warfare* (Nashville: Nelson, 1992); Clinton Arnold, *Powers of Darkness* (Downer's Grove, ILL: Inter-Varsity, 1992;; Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus The Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993); Charles Kraft, *I Give You Authority* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 1997); Dennis McCallum, *Satan And His Kingdom* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany, 2009); Charles Kraft, *Two Hours To Freedom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010).

with ancient Christian practice our first United Methodist baptismal promise make this explicit, “On behalf of the whole church I ask you: Do you *renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness*, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin?”¹⁶ Who do you think it’s talking about? Someone once asked the nineteenth century revivalist Charles Finney how he- an educated lawyer and minister- could believe in the devil. His replied, "Why don't you try opposing him sometime and you'll find out whether he exists or not."¹⁷

The church is right. Human existence is complex, and we meet resistance at every level: the invisible cosmic level (the spiritual forces of wickedness), on the earth (the evil powers of this world), and deep down in our own souls (your sin). There is no neutral ground, no uncommitted place on which to stand. Everyone is on the battle field, whether they like it or not, whether they know it or not. At their last meal together, at the very institution of the Lord’s Supper, at a holy moment when grace is given, at the birth of a sacrament a spiritual battle is raging. One of their number, *the twelve*, has surrendered to darkness. Peter will be soon be exposed as a coward, and all are to be sifted. In the midst of it all is Jesus, offering grace, giving prophecies, secure in a future they cannot conceive.

It ought to sober us that we have such an adversary who has access to those who follow Jesus. Eating at his table and participating in his ministry are no guarantees of faithfulness. Judas had both. Only the intercession of Jesus, and our prayers joined to his in the power of the Spirit, are protection against the deception and destruction that press around our borders. Outside the fellowship of the church we are unprotected; even inside we take sniper fire. That's just the way it is in a world where Satan still has maneuvering room, though, in the words of Martin Luther’s famous hymn *A Mighty Fortress*, “his doom is sure.” The church has been and will always be involved in invisible battle, and our weapons are spiritual. We fight with forgiveness; we resist with repentance and toil with the truth; mercy is our battle plan and prayer our secret weapon. A church without casualties is a church that has retreated from the battle lines. As my uncle James Hord, a B-17 rear gunner, once said at a family reunion, “If they're not shooting at you, son, you're not flying over the target.” And if you think all this is mythology and superstition and primitive and easily dismissed, you mark yourself as a modern skeptic who’s spent way too long in the rear areas instead of the front where the fire is live and the casualties numerous.

¹⁶ “The Baptismal Covenant,” *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 34.

¹⁷ Albert Wells, *Inspiring Quotations*, (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1988), 56.

Serving One Another (vv.8-13, 24-30)

The next inmost layer of the story takes up a different concern, which is how we live and eat together as the new community of Jesus this side of the kingdom on battlefield earth.

The account in verses 7 through 13 is a miracle story in which Jesus functions as a seer, as one who knows what others do not.¹⁸ He takes the initiative to recruit two disciples to go into Jerusalem to prepare for the Passover meal- an extensive process.¹⁹ When they ask where this is to be done, he gives detailed instructions as if reporting a vision- which he is! Some rationalists have said Jesus made secret arrangements unknown to the others, but the simplest sense is that here Jesus functions as a prophet through the spiritual gift of knowledge, same as with the colt and entry earlier.²⁰ Jesus, through the selective revelation of the Holy Spirit, has access to his Father's wisdom on instant download, and this is why his prophecies are always true. It would be an odd sight to see a man instead of a woman carrying a jar of water; this was a sign to the disciples. Jesus empowers Peter and John to serve the community by arranging Passover hospitality; for them it's a spiritual adventure to find things just as he had said, a real faith-builder. Jesus can provide! A church that learns to listen to the Spirit's nudges will move into styles of ministry that look more like what we find in the New Testament. God is still speaking. Are we listening?

What a delight for Peter and John to share with the others one more instance of Jesus being on target. Such faith-builders are important to remember, especially in the midst of failure. The Jesus who predicted the man with the jar also predicted Peter's denial and restoration. The Lord not only knows more than we do but more about ourselves than we do. We learn to trust his opinion of us rather than our opinion of ourselves. "I am a brave man," said Peter. "You are a coward," said Jesus, "but one I could still use after you know the truth about yourself." Not only the finding of the room but three other prophecies are here as well:

- 1) Jesus knows that the hand of his betrayer is on the table;
- 2) Jesus has inside knowledge that Satan will shake his friends, and

¹⁸ For the classic passage on Jesus' mode of operations, see John 5:19-30.

¹⁹ David Garland, *Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 852-853.

²⁰ 19:28-48.

- 3) Jesus foresees that Peter will deny him three times and afterwards be restored.

Jesus' is not naive, either about Satan's strategies or our own sin and frailties. His knows we are as prone to the games of status as the world around us. It's not a pretty picture. One minute the twelve are questioning each other about who the slime bag who betrays Jesus and the next arguing about which one of them is the greatest. They are locked into a pecking-order mentality that is only satisfied is someone else is at the bottom of the ladder and they at the top. But in verses 24 through 30 Jesus turns the whole scheme upside-down. After three years they haven't learned the most basic lessons; they have bad manners and are infected with worldly minds.

Christian leadership as taught by Jesus is not the privilege of *top-down* but the call of *bottom-up*. Not lordship or authority over others as with the despotic kings of Jesus' day but *servant leadership*, to use a term coined by Robert Greenleaf. In a time where age brought the privilege, the disciple was to become as the youngest who was required to serve. It is choosing to be downwardly mobile, of doing the thing that appears at first beneath your dignity and status because that is what Jesus did and where he is to be found.

Everyone knew the answer to the question, "For which is greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves?" The greater is the one served, not the one who serves. "But I," said Jesus, in a dramatic reversal of conventional wisdom, "am among you as one who serves," turning the world's understanding upside down. Service is not servitude, nor is it a servile mentality. It is not *have to*. It is not thinking poorly of yourself. It is the freedom to follow Jesus in serving. And to those who continue in this path, there is promised a fantastic reward, perpetual communion with Jesus: at his table, in his kingdom, sharing his rule over all the people of God in the new world. And when you think of it, this is where real authority comes from, not from claiming status, not from dominating and being rude but in serving and empowering. In her book *Neither Slave nor Free: Helping Women Answer the Call to Church Leadership* Patricia Gundry lifts up the example of the famous evangelist D.L. Moody:

"In a day when clergy were the intellectual upper crust, he was an uneducated man who dared to believe that he could serve God by simply doing the obvious to the best of his ability. He noticed that the poor people of Chicago were not present in the rented pews for the clean and starched, moneyed churchgoers. So he started his work among the

slums. His ability to reach people by 'just talking to them,' was a startling contrast to the stuffy orations of most preachers of that time, causing people to crowd in to hear him. He never sought ordination, believing it would restrict his ability to reach a wide range of people. He thought he didn't need it. And, of course, he didn't. Moody began small with what he could do. He did that well. That was his ministry.... If you find your ministry that way, the restrictions of form and structure will not stop you or shrink your possibilities."²¹

If we, like Peter and John, are not willing to strike out on ideas that seem crazy to the world (i.e. looking for a man with a jar on his head), and if we are not willing to begin with simple service to the community, there is no hope that we will find our ministry and enjoy the fellowship Jesus promised to those who continue with him in his trials. Simply put, if we are not willing to look a bit foolish and give up the perpetual games of status seeking, we cannot be close to the Lord, now or later. We must all be de-toxed!

At The Table (vv.14-23)

This brings us to the center of the farewell in verses 14 through 23. Christians are divided over the words Jesus spoke at the Passover meal, and particularly over the bread and wine. Roman Catholics teach a very concrete understanding of real presence in which the bread and wine are transformed in their essences into the body and blood of Christ and remain so even after the service so that Jesus may be adored in the reserved sacrament. This doctrine of transubstantiation can easily slip over into a magical understanding of the sacrament as having power in itself rather than as a means of continuing relationship with Christ. Among Protestants there is also disagreement. Is Christ actually present in the elements (as Anglican and Lutherans teach) or is his presence primarily in our minds through memory or in our hearts through faith (as Calvinists teach)? As Methodists we affirm real presence yet refuse to try to locate it too exactly or explain it philosophically as if we could thereby manage or control it. As Charles Wesley teaches in his great hymn on communion: "O the depth of love divine, the unfathomable grace! *Who can say how bread an wine God into us conveys?* How the bread his flesh imparts, how the wine transmits his blood, fills his faithful people's hearts with all the life of God!"²²

²¹ San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1987, 71-72.

²² *The United Methodist Hymnal*, No. 627.

We experience through the Holy Spirit what we cannot fully explain. A sacrament is more than a symbol; it not only points to another reality but actually participates in it and thereby offers grace to all who come in faith. Beyond that we plead ignorance before the mystery.

What is more important than if we get the doctrine right is that we actually do as Jesus commanded for his remembrance and recalling. That in simple ways, and sometimes with elaborate ceremonial, we do what he said: we take and bless and break and give and go again into the world to serve one another and continue the struggle against evil and injustice in whatever forms they present themselves. This meal is a foretaste and appetizer for the messianic banquet, an appointed communications link with the risen Lord, a chance to taste and see that the Lord is good, a place for sinners to meet the Savior. There sat Judas the traitor. There sat Peter the coward. Is any more evidence needed that the table is open to sinners? Charles Wesley wrote, "Come, sinners to the gospel feast; let every soul be Jesus' guest. Ye need not one be left behind, for God hath bid all humankind."²³

Our Praxis

The table for Methodists is therefore open to member and non-member, young and old, baptized and even to the unbaptized who wish to come as a first act of faith in Jesus Christ. Other communions have other practices, but we know that ours is not to set the guest list. All who desire to repent and to do business with Jesus are welcome.²⁴ What fear have we of putting people in touch with the Savior in such a concrete way? Where is evangelism ever more clear than when one sinner serves another with the words, "The body and blood of Christ, given and broken for you"? Here we see the joyful self-giving of Jesus: in the incarnation, in the ministry, in the death and resurrection, in continuing heavenly intercession, and in his anticipated coming again displayed for all the world. So gather the people, keep the festival, praise and prayer, read from the Book, break the bread and drink from the cup, serve one another and resist the Evil One. These are the deep rhythms and practices that sustain us in the faith and by which we are carried away from the kingdom of darkness towards the kingdom of God. Thus Jesus' farewell is not a farewell at all, but the very means by which he continues with us and us with him. It is a meal on a battlefield.

²³ Ibid., No. 339.

²⁴ Ibid., "Invitation," 12.

Conclusion

Have you seen it? The well-known painting of the Vietnam Wall on the mall in Washington? It depicts a young widow and her daughter reaching up and touching the name of the husband and father who died. However, the reflection in the polished granite is not of the mother and daughter but of the husband and father reaching out his hand to touch theirs. This is the Lord's Supper. We arrive at the table and reach out to take bread and cup. In response to our reaching out into the invisible, the risen Jesus touches us, hand to hand and heart to heart. We matter to him, and the stakes are very, very high. Come to the table with whatever faith you have and all your problems. Surrender to him today. It is enough.

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Main Street UMC
March 3, 2013

