

The Loyalty of Love
Love the Way Jesus Taught It
By Steve Viars

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Bible Text: John 13:21-30
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Faith Church
5526 State Road 26 E
Lafayette, IN 47905

Website: <http://www.faithlafayette.org/church>
Online Sermons: <http://www.sermonaudio.com/faithlafayette>

If you were asked to write down the worst things that a person could possibly do to his or her country, what would you put on the list? Especially if you were thinking in the back of your mind of men and women who have or maybe who are now serving faithfully in our country's military to protect and preserve our freedoms here and around the world? If you had a loyal veteran as the backdrop, what would you say is the despicable contrast? Well, it probably wouldn't be long until you were talking about those who betray our country in some way, who sell it out, who commit some act of treason or espionage. Why would anybody do that? Why would anybody betray his or her country? This day and age when so many secrets are electronic, all it takes is someone with some computer savvy along with the right kind of access, to do tremendous damage but what would motivate that kind of betrayal?

Scott Shane, who is a writer for the New York Times actually addressed that very question a couple of years ago in an article where he researched this and then he wrote about a spy's motivation. He pointed out that the historical answer is the acronym MICE referring to the four primary reasons a person betrays his country. MICE: money, ideology, compromise or ego. We can probably all think of examples of men and women who committed some form of treason against our country or maybe even another country for one of those four reasons and if you're an American citizen, you undoubtedly know some person who either has or was serving this country. Examples of betrayal strike a raw nerve, don't they? When you think about a person who would do that to his own country?

Shane's point, though, was that we should probably add a fifth letter to MICE and that's the letter "N" for nationalism. He pointed out that a rising number of American citizens are selling out because they had divided loyalties. Yes, they said they loved America, but they really loved another country more. Well, the upshot is, nobody loves a traitor and nobody loves a person who would betray his or her own country. I think we would find universal agreement on that so let's take it up a notch: what about a person who would betray his or her Savior? Who would sell out his or her supposed relationship to the Lord? Emphasis on that centers on "supposed" relationship. Could that ever happen? A person who would actually be willing to betray a Savior? Well, if you know practically anything about the Bible, you know that dynamic figured prominently into the last days

of Jesus Christ where one of Jesus' own supposed disciples sold him out for 30 pieces of silver and when followers of Jesus think about that event, it's not so much to be mentally critical of the man named Judas but, instead, to look deeply in our own hearts and search for tendencies of betrayal that would reside within each one of us, couple with an increasing love and adoration for a Savior who faithfully loves his children to the very end, who would never betray us.

With that in mind, open your Bible, if you would, to John 13. That's on page 84 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you if you need that this morning. Our church's theme this year is "Loving Our Neighbors," and every one of us would say that we have a long way to go in this particular endeavor, don't we? We just all struggle with selfishness. We struggle with apathy. We struggle with pride. We struggle with prejudice. We struggle with hatred. We are not, especially on the Lord's day, in the Lord's house, going to pretend that that just comes naturally, automatically, loving our neighbors because for a variety of reasons and in a variety of ways, it just doesn't. It just doesn't. But we also believe there's hope, don't we? There's hope in making steps of progress in this theme this year because if we've admitted our sin and we've placed our faith and trust in Christ, we can say with confidence that God himself is in the process of remaking us in the image of his Son. That's one of the reasons we come to church, is it not? Paul said this to the Colossians, "We proclaim him, Jesus, admonishing every man," you, me, "teaching every man," you, me, "with all wisdom from the word so that," what? "We may present every man complete in Christ."

So, yes we struggle with innate selfishness but we have a sufficient God who is in the process of empowering us to get to a better place. That's some good news, huh? Which is why Paul said to the Philippians, "For I am confident," are you? "I am confident of this very thing that he who began a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." So, between now and Easter Sunday in the latter half of April when the snow surely will be melted, we're doing a verse-by-verse study of the Upper Room discourse in John 13-17 to learn how to love the way Jesus taught it. If we're talking about loving our neighbors, let's study a passage of Scripture where he teaches and models the matter of love.

Now, before we read these next verses in the text, we ought to have a quick check of the homework, don't you think? You'd be disappointed if your pastor on the previous Lord's day gave you homework and didn't then give you an opportunity to turn it in. Wouldn't you? I'm not going to disappoint you in that way. Last week I encouraged you to read the Upper Room discourse, John 13-17, at least once a week in a variety of versions or translations of the Bible and hopefully in one sitting. So, now I have a question for you, what do you think it is? Did you do that? I hope you did and I probably should have answered, maybe it was implied to you but just to be sure we're on the same page, I would also encourage you as you're reading that passage of Scripture to be looking for immediate take-aways, to be looking for immediate ways to apply what you're reading in real-life that day. And if you're letting the word of God get deeply into your heart and you're looking for ways to act on it each and every day, that's going to help you. It's going

to help you grow in love, loving the way Jesus taught it and as a result it will help you, it will help me, love our neighbors better.

Now, admittedly this next section is heavy and sad, the betrayal of Judas, because some of the events leading up to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ are that way by their very nature but I really believe if we're careful, passages like this can help us if we'll work through the sadness to find the contrast. This is here for a reason: to find the hope and that's our goal today, to think about the betrayal of Judas through the lens of the loyalty of love. You might say, "That's an odd title to use for a discussion of Judas, the loyalty of love." Well, think about the context. Think about the backdrop. Remember how the Apostle John began this entire section, "Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them," how long? "To the end."

In stark contrast to that, let's begin reading John 13 at verse 21. Remember, he's just washed his disciples' feet. We talked about the position of love last Sunday, "When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.'" Imagine that, "The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking. There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved." Who was that, by the way? That was John. He's talking about himself. "So Simon Peter gestured to him, and said to him, 'Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking.' He, John, leaning back thus on Jesus' bosom, said to Him, 'Lord, who is it?' Jesus then answered," and you have to picture though they were all in the room, not everybody could hear every aspect of this conversation. That's really important. "Jesus then 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 and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. After the morsel, Satan then entered into him." That's important. We'll talk about that in a moment. "Therefore Jesus said to him, 'What you do, do quickly.'" That's surprising. "What you do, do quickly. Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him. For 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'; or else, that he should give something to the poor. So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night."

We're talking this morning about the loyalty of love and with the time we have remaining, let's think about three lessons, not for Judas, he can't apply this but for us. Three lessons from the treachery of Judas. Here's the first one, friends: betrayal is often subtle. That is actually one of the big lessons that emerges from what John tells us about this event. The bottom line is: people around may be totally fooled. Betrayal is subtle. How does that come out in this text? Well, according to the parallel passages, the first question every one of the disciples asked was what? "Surely not I, Lord?" They actually suspected themselves before they thought of Judas. Well, you'd better believe if Judas had given them any indication whatsoever that he was heading this direction, they would have ratted him out in a second. Especially, contextually in light of the fact that they had just been having an argument about who was going to be greatest in the kingdom. You

better believe that in a second, they would have pointed to Judas if they had any reason to suspect him. Betrayal is often subtle. But you notice when we read from John, the disciples began looking at one another. They were at a loss. Do you see how subtle it is? They were at a loss to know of which he was speaking. They had no idea Jesus was talking about Judas.

The icing on this particular piece of cake was Peter's response. You have to love Peter, don't you agree? Peter often says or does what you or I would have said or done if we had been there. Right? So, what does Peter do? "There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved." We've already established that to be John, the author of this gospel. So, Peter gestures to John, "Psst, psst." I don't know what it means in the original but that's basically it. "So Simon Peter gestured to him, and said to him, 'Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking.'" Don't you wish you had a video of that moment? John, the writer of the gospel, is leaning on Jesus' breast. Remember that in that culture and a meal like this, they would have had a low table and so they're leaning on one another as they're eating. So, Peter tries to get John's attention so he'll ask Jesus which one he's talking about. Think about that: if Peter had ever had any reason to suspect Judas' loyalty, do you think Peter would have kept his mouth shut at that moment? You know if he had suspected Judas he would have blurted it out, right? As soon as Jesus said, "One of you is going to betray me," Peter would've said, "I know who it is. Ten-to-one, baby, it's Judas." And even if he wouldn't have said it, you know he would have motioned. Right? It would have been, "It's that guy. That guy. The one with the blue robe on." Or he would have plugged in his neon light pointer, "It's Judas. I know it is Judas." He had no idea. Which tells us, frighteningly, how subtle betrayal can be.

Now, perhaps we need to back up and talk about the meaning of the word that Jesus used. He said, "One of you is going to betray me," *paradidomi*, which at its core means "to sell me out." It was used sometimes in the Bible to talk about someone handing someone else over as a prisoner, like Matthew 4:12 where John the Baptist was cast into prison, *paradidomi*, he was sold out. And the amazing aspect, please hear it, the amazing aspect, there is a stunning part of this story and it is Jesus is saying, "One of my own supposed disciples is going to do this. One of my own supposed disciples is about to sell me out." It's reminiscent of a couple of powerful passages in the Psalms, "Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me," the Psalmist said. Or later in Psalm 55, "For it's not an enemy who reproaches me, then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me, who has exalted himself against me, then I could hide myself from him. But it's you, a man my equal, my companion and my familiar friend, we who had sweet fellowship together, walked in the house of God, in the throng." Fast-forward for a moment: what was the sign that the betrayer selected in the Garden of Gethsemane? "Judas, are you betraying me with a kiss?"

He sold out his own Savior which teaches us that betrayal reveals the heart's true values. This is another incredible aspect of this story from the gospel of Matthew. I mean, how did this initiate? "Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests." They didn't have to wine and dine him. "He went to the chief priests and said, 'What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?' And they weighed out thirty pieces of

silver to him. From then on,” they don't blame this on the devil, “from then on he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus.” Think about that: those who had rejected Christ. Remember the outline of the gospel of John that we talked about when we started this series, where John speaks in chapter 1 of how “he came unto his own and his own received him not.” Then, the first 12 chapters of the gospel of John are all about that, people who hated Christ, people who wanted to put Christ to death.

Well Judas, one of his supposed followers, is now going to those who are trying to figure out, “How can we arrest Jesus? How can we have Jesus put to death?” and in walks one of his own disciples. How incredibly delicious that must have been to those who hated the Lord and he actually offers them a deal. It's also important to note the price. I think students of Scripture probably would have caught the symbolism here. This is not the first time that particular amount is found recorded in the Bible. You also find it in Exodus 21:32. You say, “Thirty pieces of silver, Exodus 21:32, what's it about there?” Here's the answer: that's the value that was assigned a slave that had been gored by an ox. How much did Judas value the Savior? About as much value you would assign a slave gored by an ox. And when a person betrays Jesus, that's what they're saying. When a person betrays somebody else in their life, that's what they're saying. When a person stabs somebody else in the back, gossips behind their back, blah, blah, blah, blah, any act of betrayal ultimately reveals how much you truly value that person. Thirty pieces of silver.

Now, most of us just shake our heads and ask, “How in the world could this happen?” Well, there is actually a vignette that's recorded in the previous chapter in the gospel of John. In fact in your Bible, you probably don't even have to turn the page to look back at John 12 and see the contrast. It's the beautiful story of Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, who breaks a costly alabaster vase of precious ointment and begins to anoint the feet of Jesus, preparing him for burial, demonstrating her great love for him, demonstrating her adoration, demonstrating her loyalty. Well, somebody in that room has a comment to make about that and who is it? It's Judas. “Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.” Can you imagine that act of loyalty? That act of adoration? “But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, 'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?' Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor,” John says, “but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.”

Friends, there is a very hard lesson there about betrayal, we dare not miss it: sometimes it's even shrouded in spirituality. If you compare this account with Mark's gospel, it seems to indicate that what Judas said in that moment was not said directly to Christ. We saw that in the Upper Room discourse too. You've got a room of people but not everybody knows what everybody else is saying even though we know. And we think that's probably the case here and that's especially true if you compare this to the way Mark sets it up.

So Mary does what she's doing for Jesus and Judas starts whispering to the other disciples, a whispering campaign that sounds so spiritual, even by a person who is already intending to commit an act of betrayal. Thankfully as a pastor, I have not seen much of this but I've seen enough to know that just because a person talks a good game, that doesn't mean that he or she is the real thing. Let that be a lesson to all of us.

Well, what do we do with an event in the Scripture like this? I think the answer is examining our own hearts. Examining our own hearts. I would assume that there will be people who hear this message today who have never genuinely trusted Christ and, friends, I think I would be less than a pastor if I did not call upon all of us to evaluate the sincerity of our faith. Jesus said it this way on the Sermon on the Mount, "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven, will enter. Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord did we not prophesy in your name? In your name cast out demons? And in your name perform many miracles?" Notice, Jesus doesn't disagree with their actions. He doesn't say, "You didn't," because in many cases they did. "I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me you who practice lawlessness." I thought a lot about that text and I thought a lot about this passage and I realize those are hard words but I've come to this conclusion: it would be better for you to hear hard words now when you have the time to do something about it than to wait until it's too late and your eternal destiny is secured apart from God.

John would later say in his first epistle, "These things I have written unto you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you might know that you have eternal life." There are things you can know for sure. Here is one of them: you and I were born on the wrong side of the tracks, we were born in sin. There is no gray there. I get very weary of pastors who want to talk about all the gray as if there's not absolutes, as if there is no black and white. We have a culture that cannot bring themselves, sometimes, to say, "This is right. This is wrong. This is true. This is false." We can't think antithetically in this culture. Well, here's black and white: you and I are born on the wrong side of the tracks, we're born in sin. We cannot save ourselves. Jesus chose to shed his blood on the cross in our place. That's black and white. In fact, that's red. Therefore, there must be a time when you and I repent. Repent. Turn around. Acknowledge our sin. And then place our faith and trust in Christ as Savior and Lord. That happens at a definite point in time and once that decision is made, Scripture says that you can know for sure that you are on your way to heaven.

Peter said it like this, "Brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about his calling and choosing you." King James Version: "Make your calling and election sure." And if you would say, "You know, I'm not sure." Well, I would encourage you to touch base with your service pastor today. I would encourage you to touch base with any of our pastors. We will be happy, we'll shovel our car out of the snow and get to your house or get to the restaurant. You choose the place, you choose the time and we're not coming with the Faith Church book, we're coming with the Bible and we will try to open up the word of God and answer whatever questions that you would have so that you can get to the place of knowing that you know that you know that you're on your way to heaven. A

message on the betrayal of Judas could be exactly what God would use to jar someone out of their complacency and if that's the case, then so be it. So be it.

You say, "What does this have to do with our annual theme?" Well, here's the answer: if we're truly serious about growing in loving our neighbors, we have to have first experienced the regenerating work of God. This isn't something you can fake long term, at least not in a way that pleases him. Without faith it's impossible to please God. That's why we have always believed in this doctrine: saved church numbers. And I realize some might say, "You know, if you talk about what you just spoke about in an American culture, there are some who are not going to like it and they won't come back to this church." You have to understand, the goal here was never to be big. The goal here was to be authentic. The goal here was to be the real thing. We're trying to create an army here in the sense that we want to accomplish something for God and that requires regeneration. "Make your calling and election sure."

Now, the beauty is, here's the hope: you don't have to be like Judas. Right? One guy was but 11 weren't. Thank God for that, huh? Think about the delightful contrast. Against this incredibly dark backdrop stands a Savior who is faithful and true. That's why we started with this portion of the text as the contrast. The backdrop, "before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world," he did what? "He loved them to the end." He would not betray you. He would not sell us out. That characteristic of faithfulness, covenant loyalty, impacted the Apostle John so much that in the book of Revelation, when he talks about the return of Christ, here's part of what he said. Revelation 19:11, "And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called," the anti-Judas, "Faithful and True." Praise God for a Savior like this.

I think this story also gives us an opportunity to thank the Lord for the many in this church family who are anti-Judases. You see, part of the fruit of the Spirit that God wants to develop in you is faithfulness, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness. God wants to and he is, in many cases, developing faithfulness. It's required in stewards that a man be found handsome? Oh, I'm in trouble, how about you? That a man be found intelligent? No, no, no. Thank God for what it says. "It's required in stewards that a man be found faithful." Unwilling to sell out his Savior. Unwilling to sell out those around him. Praise God for those who have allowed the Lord to work in their hearts that way.

We mentioned a delightful picture of that last week when we were talking about Margaret and Lester Bell. They just celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary. I didn't say 70th birthday, I said 70th wedding anniversary. Think about that. They must have been married when they were like three years old. It's amazing and Margaret and Lester would be the first ones to say, "That's because Jesus helped us be faithful." That's the beauty of that. I like the fact that another older couple came up to me when we were talking about this last week and they said, "We're right behind the Bells." Praise God for that, huh? "We're not quite to 70 yet but we're right behind the Bells." And I hope you would say that too. We're following a faithful Savior and we're following other godly people in this life who

have lived that way for a long time. We're right behind them asking God to help us grow in faithfulness which, by the way, is why I think churches are goofy when they set themselves up just to cater to young people. Seriously? We need old people. We need a lot of old people who God has worked in them to be faithful for a long, long period of time so they can model for us what that road looks like.

You say, "Why is he talking about this? Somebody must have really honked him off this week." No, that's the beauty of working our way verse-by-verse through extended passages of Scripture in the Bible. Right? Why am I talking about this today? It's because it's the next thing in the text and I'm very glad that we have a church filled with people who, in many ways, are anti-Judas. Do you want one example I could give? You may have noticed, maybe you didn't, we've kind of had a snowy January and February. Have you noticed that? A little bit snowy, especially on the Lord's day and I'll just tell you, our attendance year over year, week over week for January and February has been off about 10% and I understand that. There's been a number of Sundays where people, depending on where they live or their ages, their kids, etc. probably should not have come to church. That's why I'm glad we have this online opportunity. So, our attendance has been down over 10% in January and February and that does not surprise me or worry me at all but you might ask this: what has that done to our giving? What has that done to our giving? Do you want to know the answer? Our giving January and February, month over month from a year ago, week over week, is actually up. I mean, there is the secret to church success: snow days, baby! Snow days. And we're right where we're supposed to be with our Faith West capital campaign. Do you know what that means? People realize we still have missionaries to support, we still have utilities to pay, we still have ministries to fund. You are going to church with a lot of people who are anti-Judas, who are the real thing. Not that we're praising us, we're praising the Savior who lives in us that can make that kind of lifestyle possible. If that's true for you, may your tribe increase. Literally or figuratively, you can decide how much you want to even hear that: may your tribe increase.

Well, what else can we see from this text? Betrayal involves spiritual warfare. I have to do business with this or you'll leave in some cases wondering, "Now what about that?" Well, no question about the fact that our adversary, the devil, is clearly involved in this event and I realize we live in a culture that likes to mock the concept of a real devil and his hosts. Look, you're going to have to decide if you're going to derive your working theology from the word of God or from Saturday Night Live. I would recommend the former, just in case you're still up in the air about that. John is really clear. During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas to betray him. Then in the text we read, "After the morsel, Satan then entered into him." You see, our adversary, the devil, is clearly involved in this act of betrayal.

So what do we do with that? Let's think about this theologically. Seek to achieve the balance shown here and in other passages. He's here but he's not given center stage. Did you notice that? John just mentions it but he, Satan, does not get center stage. Jesus knows what's happening and yet Jesus does not give our adversary, the devil, center stage. That's the balance that we're talking about: acknowledge his power but don't give

him more credit than he's due. You see the same thing, by the way, in 2 Corinthians 12, the story of Paul's thorn in the flesh. Paul talks about the thorn in the flesh being a messenger of Satan to buffet him. Then is there a big power encounter? Is that what the rest of 2 Corinthians 12 is about? Absolutely not, because there is somebody greater in that text than our adversary, the devil: the sufficient grace of Jesus Christ and the exact same thing is true of this particular text. Satan is there, there is an influence there but he's not given center stage nor is the person absolved of responsibility. Remember, we learned earlier Judas was already looking for an opportunity to betray Christ. He opened himself up to be used of the adversary, the devil.

The Bible never gives us the ability to know in a given situation, "Am I struggling with the world or the flesh or the devil?" Never, but we certainly ought to be on the look-out. In fact, here's one of the take-aways from this text: be prepared for daily pressure to sell out. From the world, from your flesh and from the devil and it really doesn't matter what the source happens to be at that moment. In fact, that actually, I think, leads to a question: what would it take for you to sell out your Savior? What would it take for you to sell out your Savior either by commission, doing something you know would displease him or by omission, failing to do what he wanted you to do in a given situation? What would it take for you to sell out your Savior? For some it's money. Just like Judas, if you had to lie or cheat in order to make a sale or fudge a report, you would do it. If that's the case, you need to repent. Or for others, it's the approval of man. If in a given situation, it's fidelity to Christ or the approval of your friends, some people would actually sell out their Savior. At some point here's what we need to see: the adversary is involved. It could be something as routine as handling your anger properly. Ephesians 4:26, "Be angry and yet do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger." And hear this, "Do not give the devil an opportunity."

So, what's the balance? Well, be convinced that "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." There is a difference between letting a passage of Scripture like this sober us or allowing our hearts to be gripped with fear. That's why I repeat: our sufficient Savior stands ready to help us grow in faithfulness. On the other hand, he is present and ever wanting us to betray those in our life. Now, I recognize that this discussion could actually open up some rather significant wounds this morning. I've thought a lot about that. Either because you betrayed somebody in the past or because you're betraying someone right now or because you have been betrayed. I want to be sure I've said, be encouraged. There is hope for the betrayer and there is hope for the person being betrayed.

Let's talk about them in that order. Let's face it, on some level, we all have a little bit of Judas in us. Is it okay for me to say that to you this morning? That we all have a little bit of Judas in us. Our stand before God is never perfectly holy in terms of the hearts and the behavior we bring to the table but you can be forgiven of betrayal in the past and you can be delivered from betrayal in the present.

What about the other side? There is a sense, too, in which we've all been betrayed. These are hard words but this is probably about as good a place as any to say them: you can and

should never trust a human being completely. If by that you would say, "I know that person would never blank." Friends, that sentence has to be reserved for he who is faithful and true. If you've gone through the pain of betrayal or even are facing it today, you can learn to trust in and rejoice in the covenant love of your Savior even if right now that's all you have. I had a counselee from another city whose wife is being unfaithful to him who said to me recently, "I'd be happy to forgive her. I'd be happy to take her back." That's the power of Christ working in the life of someone who had been terribly, terribly betrayed.

Well, if Satan could be involved and that ought to motivate us to put on our armor daily. Paul said, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the full armor of God so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil." Last week we saw the importance of adopting the right mindset every morning, presenting yourself for duty to the Lord. "Here I am and I want to serve you. I'm adopting the position of love as a servant of God and others." Well, add this: put your armor on so that you can love others well instead of betraying them.

One last idea from our text: betrayal can never thwart the sovereignty of God. You might say about this text, "Why in the world didn't Jesus try to talk Judas out of it?" Or, "Why didn't he say to the other disciples, Lock the doors. Stop him from doing that." It's so amazing that Jesus said, "What you do, do quickly. Let's stop the games. Let's stop the charades. You're going to do it, do it quickly." Why would Jesus say that? Well, the answer is because Jesus knew that God could sovereignly accomplish his plan in a way that used Judas' treachery. Is that right? While still holding both our adversary and Judas responsible for their part in the equation. Which is why if you've been betrayed, if you're being betrayed, if you're afraid that some day you might be betrayed, on one hand, I certainly don't want to minimize the hurt that brings: always remember that a sovereign God can use bad things to accomplish good ends. What did Joseph say to his brothers? "You meant it for evil," and they did. What are the next two words in that verse? "But God, but God meant it for good."

One last question: what about the person who would say, "Okay, it's true. I'm a Judas. I'm not the real thing and when I have opportunities to betray Christ or betray others in my life, I do. Maybe others don't know about it yet but I am Judas. I'm on that road and I don't intend to do anything about it." Well, the message of Scripture would be that that road leads to a very bad place because those 30 pieces of silver became like gravel in Judas' mouth and he cast them aside and he went out, Scripture says, and hanged himself.

Let's be focused ultimately not on the failure of man but on the faithfulness of our Savior whose willingness to love his own extended all the way to the end. He can help us be like him.

Let's stand together for prayer, shall we?

Father in heaven, thank you for the opportunity to think about this sobering text. And Lord, I'd pray that you would help us to honestly evaluate our hearts and look for

evidences of betrayal and, Lord, for any evidences that we find of faithfulness. We want to fall at the feet of he who is faithful and true and seek to joyfully follow him. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.