

DEVOTION 12

Jesus Reveals His Betrayer

Mel.: Wer nur den lieben Gott läßt walten

Lord, am I one who loves Thee truly,
Who clings to Thee in times of woe?
Who is to Thee devoted wholly,
And in Thy ways alone doth go?
Am I the one? The truth display:
O Light of life, say yes or nay!

Am I the one who 'gainst Thee liveth,
Who coldly turns his back to Thee?
Am I the child that with Thee striveth,
That loves and hears Thine enemy?
Am I the one? The truth display:
O Light of life, say yes or nay!

Have I become a Judas-brother,
Who hath for money sold his Lord?
Is now the murd'rous foe my father,
Am I among the wicked horde?
Am I the one? The truth display:
O Light of life, say yea or nay!

Let his days be few; and let another take his office. . . . He desired the curse, so shall it also come unto him; he delighted not in the blessing, so shall it also abide far from him. And he put on the curse like as his garment, and it came into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. So let it be unto him as a garment that he weareth, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually.

Psalm 109:8, 17–19



And they began to inquire among themselves which of them it was that should do this, and to say unto Him one by one, Lord, is it I? He answered and said, It is one of the Twelve that dippeth with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me. The Son of Man indeed goeth, as it is was determined and written of Him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It were better for him if that man had never been born. Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou sayest it.

Now there was among His disciples who sat at table one leaning on Jesus' bosom, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him that he should ask who it should be of whom He spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto Him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And He dipped the sop and gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. Now no man at the table knew for what intent He spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. He then having received the sop went immediately out. And it was night.

Matthew 26:22–25; Mark 14:18–21; Luke 22:22–23; John 13:23–30

The question of the disciples, “Is it I?” reveals their *honest, upright heart*, for they were not conscious of such betrayal. But this also shows their *fearful heart*; for although they were not conscious of this frightful sin, they were worried out of mistrust in their own heart that they themselves might somehow have committed this sin unconsciously, since the heart of man is corrupt and filled with mischief. Conversely, Judas' question displays his *shameless and brazen heart*; for he had sold himself to the high priests for money, lay in wait for the opportunity to betray Jesus, and carried in his heart the devil of murder; yet he is so brazen as to sit among the apostles in good humor, as though the words of Christ concerning His betrayer had nothing to do with him; yea, he is so shameless, he even asks the omniscient Jesus to His face, “Is it I, Rabbi?”

But we see here how Judas fell deeper and deeper into sin and hardened himself against God's Word; for just as in the godly, faith and the fear of God are accustomed to grow, so in the children of wickedness, ungodliness and unbelief have their increase and growth, as it is written in Proverbs 4:18–19: "The path of the righteous gleameth as a light that goeth forth and shineth unto the fullness of the day; but the way of the ungodly is as darkness and they know not where they shall fall." Accordingly, when the evangelist says here that after the sop, Satan entered into Judas, it does not mean that he had not been in him before, since it was reported above that he had entered into Judas Iscariot, nor that the sop which the Lord gave him was so harmful and wicked. Rather the evangelist John means to indicate that Judas devoted himself more and more deeply to his ungodly intent, and that the devil raged far more vehemently and powerfully with the suggestion and performance of betrayal than ever before, and that Judas also cast to the wind all the Lord's admonition and entirely despised the riches of the goodness, patience, and longsuffering of Christ, so that with seeing eyes he did not see, and with hearing ears he did not hear. For because he despised all Christ's admonitions and warnings, and willfully followed the devil, the Lord withdrew His hand from him and forsook him, and thus his heart was hardened.

This, then, is the right way to understand Christ's saying, "The Son of Man goeth, as it is written of Him" (i.e., Ps. 41:9–10) "and was determined of Him" (that is, in the counsel of the eternal divine Majesty; Acts 4:28); "but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!" etc. So although Judas' betrayal was also foreseen in the counsel of God and foretold in the Word of God, it was performed neither secretly nor openly by God, but Judas betrayed the Messiah without any divine impulse, only by the instigation of Satan and his own will. Thus the cause of this sin and hardening of Judas is not God's foresight and prior announcement, but the only cause is the wicked will of the devil and of Judas.

"Thou art not a God whom ungodliness pleaseth; he that is wicked abideth not before Thee," it says in Psalm 5:4. And James 1:13 testifies that God is not a tempter unto evil. Therefore Judas is by no means to be excused by the fact that his betrayal was foreseen in the counsel of God and announced beforehand in the Word of God, nor that by his betrayal the salutary sufferings of Christ and thus the salvation of mankind was advanced. For as his betrayal was the work of him and of

Satan alone, so the outcome thereof was the work and intention of God alone. Although God according to His judgment and fatherly will toward us ordained that His dear Son should be the ransom for our sins and for those of the whole world, yet the traitor's intention was in no way that we men should be saved, but rather out of malice and despicable greed he hoped to deliver Christ to the high priests and to scrape money from His hide. It was in this case as it was with Joseph, as the type of the Lord Christ, who says to his brothers, "Ye meant to do evil with me, but God meant to do good, that He might do as it is now this day, to save much people" (Gen. 50:20). Our God is a God who can direct and govern according to His eternal wisdom and omnipotence the wicked endeavors of the devil and his minions in other ways, so that they serve the glory of His name and the good of the church.

A similar sense is also met in the words of Christ, "That thou doest, do quickly." For these words are not to be understood as an imperative, as though the Lord encouraged him to sin—no, by no means! Rather, it is a retention of the treachery and announcement of the punishment. As when a father says to his wayward son, "My son, since I can draw thee by neither good words nor bad, simply go thy way to the gallows as thou wilt; God will certainly find thee." St. Augustine writes about this passage, "Christ said this more out of longing according to His suffering than out of consent to the treachery." And in another place: "Christ does not command the error to be committed, but hereby announces to Judas his evil, which attains to the good of us Christians and believers; for what would be more harmful to Judas and better for us, than that Christ should be betrayed by him?"

Finally, Judas' example is to be a *warning* to us, that we may guard ourselves against the children and works of darkness. Judas was a child of the night and of darkness; therefore he rushes out into the night to carry out his ungodly work in the darkness; for "he that doeth evil hateth the light" (John 3:20). In the process, he came into eternal darkness, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth. But we as the children of the Light are to put on the weapons of the Light and to cling to Christ, the Light of the Gentiles; then in His Light shall we see the Light everlasting.

Prayer

"Lord, is it I?" Now I too come to Thee, O my Jesus, and ask Thee, "Lord, is it I?" Even if my heart tells me it is not I, and would persuade me who and what I am,

yet I ask Thee, O Knower of hearts, “Is it I?” Although my own conscience is aware of nothing, yet I do not count myself justified, but ask Thee, all-knowing Jesus, “Is it I?” Yet here I turn my question into a frank confession, and say to Thee, my meek and gentle Savior: Lord, is it I? Have mercy upon me! I confess unto Thee with contrition and sorrow that it is I who have betrayed Thee in my life, not once, but often and much. For as often as I committed knowing and intentional sins, so often have I been Thy betrayer. It is I, who with Judas loved the riches of this world. It is I, who ate bread with Thee and yet trampled Thee underfoot. How can I tell all the betrayals which I have committed against Thee in the time of my life? Oh, turn to me, and I will be turned, and let me not be hardened with Judas, nor afterward doubt Thy grace; but help me to be truly freed from the vile service of this world and thus from the betrayal of Thee, and to give myself to Thee as wholly Thine own from henceforth. From now on, O Lord Jesus, I will come before Thee every evening and in earnest examination of my heart I will ask Thee, “Lord, is it I?” Who have I been through the course of this day? Search me then on every occasion, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know what my intention is, and see whether I am in the evil way, and lead me in the right way for Thy faithfulness and truth. Amen.

Mel.: Das Jesulein soll doch mein Trost

Or: Was mein Gott will das gscheh allzeit

Be true to God, O man, and keep
 Within His cov'nant rooted;
 Rely on this foundation deep,
 To Him alone devoted.
 Recall how He
 Laid claim to thee,
 His Word with water blending,
 A binding oath,
 Conferring both
 His love and grace unending.

Be true to God, who evermore
 Is faithful, kind, and gracious,
 And as His vassal wage the war,
 Nor suffer sin rapacious
 To steal the rein
 Of thy campaign;
 Yet if thy heart be riven,
 Do not forestall;
 Confess thy fall,
 And fight as one forgiven.