



Sermon Study Guide
The Beginning of the End: The Night Has Come
John 13:21-30
****Study Questions in Italics**

Introduction: “Et tu, Brute?”

- Julius Caesar made Rome a world power. He was a formidable leader with many enemies. On March 15, 44 BC, several traitors murdered him in the halls of the Roman Senate. The one traitor we remember is Marcus Junius Brutus. Julius considered Brutus a trusted friend. Hence, after he was stabbed, Shakespeare imagined Julius asking, “Et tu, Brute?”
- Betrayal hurts. When someone you know and love turns against you—words can’t describe that feeling you get in the pit of your stomach. *Have you ever been betrayed? What was it like? Have you experienced reconciliation?*
- This passage is about betrayal. Carefully read John 13:21-30 and, as you do, write down any questions you have about this passage. In this study, I want to record three questions that stand out.

First, why was Jesus “troubled in his spirit”?

- *At what other times in his life was Jesus troubled? Why was he troubled at these times?*
- In verse 21 we see why Jesus was troubled here. He knew that one of his disciples would betray him. It’s important to understand that Jesus needed people. We tend to emphasize his divinity. As God, Jesus is self-sufficient. He exists as the second person of the Trinity, and is perfectly happy being in communion with the Father and the Spirit. But Jesus also has a human nature. As a man, Jesus enjoyed the company of others and made friends. It was in the face of a friend about to betray him that Jesus experienced grief.
- Why would Jesus befriend Judas if he knew that Judas would betray him in the end? *How would you respond to someone if you knew that he or she would turn on you?*
- Christianity is unique because we are called, like Jesus, to love our enemies. We see everyone as made in the image and likeness of God and worthy of our time, energy, and affection. As Christians we have no right to limit our love to those who look like us, think like us, or even believe like us. There is a universal scope to God’s love that should be reflected in how we live.
- *What does a church look like that loves its enemies? What would it look like for you to love your enemies this week?*

Second, why did Jesus identify Judas by giving him bread?

- Perhaps it seems strange that Jesus identified Judas by handing him bread. He could easily have pointed to Judas or perhaps whispered in John’s ear that Judas was the man. But instead, Jesus utilized the custom of giving an honored guest a sumptuous taste of dinner—in this case, a morsel of bread dipped in sauce. Well aware of his plans to betray him, Jesus served Judas. His serving of Judas was an extraordinary act of compassion. This was Jesus’ last, tender, and real challenge to Judas to repent and believe the gospel. He had already washed Judas’s feet, now he is feeding him bread.
- But why would Jesus do this, knowing that Judas would spur his compassion? It’s important to understand that God really does love the world and even individual sinners who are rebellious toward him. Don Carson explains in his book, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*, how there is a unique love God has for his adopted children and a general love God has for the

condemned world. It is this real but general love that we find in God's appeals to sinners to turn and follow him (see John 3:16, 1 Peter 3:9, and Ezekiel 33:11).

- *Look up the three verses mentioned above. What do you learn in these verses about God's love? How do these verses help explain Jesus' attitude toward Judas? How can God really love someone who will never love God in return?*

Third, why did Jesus tell Judas to hurry up?

- At first glance, the most stunning verse of this passage is verse 27, "Satan entered into him." After months of rejecting Jesus' teaching, Judas has spiritually collapsed, Satan has taken more than a foothold in his life; Satan has filled him. As Christians, we don't need to be afraid of Satan, and we certainly should not consider him to be anywhere near as powerful as Jesus. However, it would be unwise to neglect the reality of Satan. He plotted for years to consume Judas—and he succeeded. Satan surely is plotting against us, too. We must fight against him with everything we have.
- *Read 1 Timothy 6:11-12. Why do you think Paul tells Timothy to "fight the good fight of the faith"? How did Judas fail to fight? What does the fight look like in your life?*
- Verse 27 may be the most stunning verse in this short passage, but it also begs an interesting question: why would Jesus tell Judas to betray him quickly? The answer is simple: to show Judas and Satan and the world and you and me that Jesus is sovereign. Yes, he is God in the *flesh* but he is *God* in the flesh. Jesus commanded Judas to act quickly because Jesus was in charge, not only of this betrayal but of his death.
- Notice what Jesus said in John 10:17, "I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again." Judas did not take Jesus by surprise. Jesus was not tricked to the cross. It was his decision. Read Acts 2:22-23 and notice that though lawless men crucified Jesus, the cross has always been the plan of God. Jesus' death was the most evil act in all of history. On the cross the Son of God died. And yet it was the most holy act in all history because evil was defeated. Judas really betrayed Jesus, but Jesus was at work, through Judas' sin, to bring salvation and peace to an evil world.

Final Words of Encouragement

- First, our God allows for and works through evil to accomplish wonderful things. He can use a wicked brush to paint a holy masterpiece. God is not hindered by the evil, foolish plans of men. God is at work, for your good, through all the tragedies, disappointments, and regrets of life. *How have you seen God at work through your sin or the sin of others? How has God used bad decisions in your life for your good?*
- Second, if you have been betrayed, you are not alone; Christ is with you. Jesus was betrayed. He was tempted to retaliate, but didn't (see Hebrews 4:15). He was patient with Judas, even though he knew Judas would fail him. *How has God been patient with you? How have you, in turn, been patient with others? Are you prepared to forgive those who have hurt you? Why or why not?*
- Third, you are a betrayer, and Christ is your only hope. We should each admit that we are no better than Judas. We betrayed God. We earned his wrath. We don't deserve his grace or mercy. But God, in his unique love and kindness, chose to do for us what we could never do for ourselves. He died in the place of traitors like you and me. Christ is, therefore, our only hope.