

## The Gospel According to Luke

Luke 22:21-30

Reading: Luke 22:21-30

*Parallel Passages:* Matthew 20:20-28 and Mark 10:35-45

Sermon #94

September 27, 2020

### Fighting for Humility

#### Introduction

We all share in the common temptation to seek notoriety, fame, wealth, we desire to be seen as important, to be appreciated by or looked up to by others. You might say to yourself, “I don’t struggle with those kinds of things at all.” However, such a statement reveals itself to be a problem. If you ever think about what someone else thinks of you or have a fear of man, then you do struggle and tend toward these things. **As followers of Christ one is called to fight for humility and to resist pride and arrogance.**

We are shown in this passage of Luke 22:21-30 just how quickly one can get off track and just how much all people need a Savior. The disciples had just listened to Jesus teach on the true meaning of Passover. They again heard the fact that He was about to be turned over to the Chief Priests who would orchestrate the Romans to crucify Him. The disciples had just heard some of the weightiest truths ever heard by human ears and the next thing they focus on is their status in God’s Kingdom; wondering who will be the greatest. Our knowing what will transpire in just a short time; that the disciples deny Christ and flee shows the truth of Proverb 16, verse 18, “**Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.**” To say it in a more modern proverb, “**Pride is the dandelion of the soul. Its root goes deep; if only a little is left behind it sprouts again. Its seeds lodge in the tiniest encouraging cracks and it flourishes in good soil; the danger of pride is that it feeds on goodness.**” Good intentions can easily turn into pride.

In the scriptures one observes human pride in contrast to the humility of Christ. Here in Jesus' last hours we witness He is about to give His life as a ransom for the sins of mankind but we also perceive the disciples jockeying for positions of greatness. What is clear from this passage and from observing our lives is that sin, especially the sin of pride, will consume us if we do not actively fight against it. I hope you will notice with me how this account of the disciple's argument shows mankind's need for a Savior. It is interesting that Jesus' response is to patiently teach the disciples and He even gives them some encouragement even though it is just hours before His death. Jesus teaches them that rather than behaving like the world behaves, His disciples need to learn and exercise humility.

Let me begin our time in God's holy Word with prayer.

### **We Must Fight To Be Righteous** (v. 21-23)

I want to begin by reminding everyone that for anyone including us, there is no sin outside the realm of possibility. We begin with reading about betrayal, in verses 21 to 23, “**But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table.**”<sup>22</sup> **For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!**”<sup>23</sup> **And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.”** My beloved, never think, when you hear of someone falling into some great sin that it could never happen to you. This pride will lead to our own destruction. We must stay alert because when we think we have arrived or when we think we are doing well; it is often in those instances we can fall the hardest.

Here in these verses we have the example of the sin of Judas, it is not really about the other 11 and it does not involve us. We are not all that surprised, after all, the scriptures have previously introduced Judas as a thief and betrayer. We have

learned that Judas' passion was not for Jesus but what he thought Jesus could do for him. He followed the Lord as long as there were prospects of greatness just over the horizon for him. For Judas it was about Judas, not Jesus. As soon as Judas realized there were no signs of personal prosperity for him, he defected and became a pawn of Satan. Judas chose his own path and Satan encouraged him in his sin and used Judas for Satan is the enemy of God to his own destruction.

There is one thing we need to see in this passage. We briefly touched on it last week, but I want to look a little more closely at these verses. Jesus says that the one who is going to betray Him is, in fact, seated with Him around the table. He went even so far as to tell everyone that the hands of His betrayer are on the table. I imagine just about everyone had their hands on the table. So, when Jesus spoke those words, I can see everyone lunging back in order to remove their hands from off the table. It is not I, Lord?

Here, we, as the readers of the Bible, know something that the Apostles did not know. We know who Jesus' betrayer is. We know that it is Judas and we have known this for months as we have worked our way through Luke. Going back to Luke chapter 6, Jesus <sup>13</sup> "called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: <sup>14</sup> Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, <sup>15</sup> and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, <sup>16</sup> and Judas the son of James, and **Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.**" We are clearly told what sort of person Judas was. We know, but the Apostles, at this point, do not know, which is amazing to me that they would not have become aware of Judas' motivations after 3 years. Judas is the height of hypocrisy and he has kept his intentions hidden. It appears no one suspects Judas, with the exception of Jesus who knows what is going to happen. What is it Jesus says to Judas and the other

disciples? Reading verse 22, **“For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!”** In this verse, Jesus makes clear and we are made aware of the fact that Judas is culpable for the sinful acts he is about to commit and God has ordained that they will take place just as Judas will carry them out. On the one hand God’s plan is working just as it always does, **“as it has been determined”** but on the other hand, Judas, in this case, is carrying out God’s plan voluntarily and will be held responsible for the sinful acts he alone commits.

Under God’s overarching plan, which encompasses everything, Judas acts freely, making his own choices. Within certain boundaries man does have freewill. Man can decide certain things, desire certain things, make decisions and act on them. Judas is making choices in line with his sinful nature. He loves money more than Jesus, so he follows his desires for money. Satan uses this and encourages Judas and he sells out Jesus for four months wages. But let me be clear Judas made the decision to betray Jesus and is accountable for his actions.

For centuries theologians have disputed these things, namely; if God is sovereign and His plan always comes to pass then humans cannot be held accountable for their sin that works to bring God’s divine decree about. I realize that is a lot to think about. However, it is true just the same, Jesus knows it is true and teaches the disciples and us that it is true when He says, **“For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!”** God’s plan will come about and woe to Judas who made the decision to betray Jesus.

The Apostle Paul knew this principal is true, as he wrote, **“In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him**

who works all things according to the counsel of his will.” (Ephesians 1:11)

According to Paul, all things are going according to the council of God’s will. I take all things to mean - all things. Everything works according to God’s plan; that means, good things, bad things and in-between things. To say otherwise is to deny the sovereignty of God and to go against multiple passages of Scripture. As we have observed all the different people involved in this drama of the crucifixion, the biblical conclusion is they all were acting out of their own free will to get what they wanted. This is true of Herod, Pilate, the Jews, the Romans – they all were voluntarily acting according to their desires and sinfulness and yet all this was within the divine plan of God.

Peter knew this truth as evident by his address to the **“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—<sup>23</sup> this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”**

(Acts 2:22) My beloved, we must believe these truths. First, we must believe God is sovereign. Understanding, He is sovereign over every thought every person has on planet earth simultaneously and collectively. The second truth is we are held accountable for everything we do and think and yet all of it is within God’s plan. We are not puppets on a string because all we do; we make decisions and follow through because we want to do them. Yet, we are working according to God’s divine plan. God’s eternal plan includes our freedom to choose.

If you doubt whether this is so, as you read your Bible and think of this, you will observe these truths in the scriptures. Once you start looking, you will discover this truth is everywhere. As an example, one particular place to look where people exercise their freewill and fulfill God’s plan is the account of Joseph.

His father Isaac loved him more than his other brothers, that was wrong, it was sin. His brothers contemplated killing him but instead sold him as a slave, this too, was sin. Those who purchased Joseph took him to Egypt to sell, that was sin. He was purchased by Potiphar; to own another person is sin. Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph; this act was sin. Joseph is sent to prison even though he was innocent, so this was also sin. Through these and other events, the Bible clearly says over and over that God was with Joseph. One day through God allowing Joseph to interpret Pharaoh's dream, Joseph was made the King's righthand man. He told the king that a great famine was coming and that the grain needed to be cared for and distributed efficiently if Egypt was to survive. Through these and other God ordained events, including Joseph's brothers first and then his entire family came to Egypt to live and be cared for and Egypt survived the famine. These events moved God's plan for the salvation of mankind forward and yet, these people made freewill decisions. Joseph understood God had a plan and said to his brothers, <sup>19</sup> "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup> As for you, **you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.**" (Genesis 50:19-20) This sounds very similar to Jesus' words to the disciples in verse 22, "**For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!**" The one thing the rest of the apostles, with the exception of hard headed and good-hearted Peter who said he would never deny Jesus, the disciples understood in all that was happening Jesus was saying there was a possibility that any of them could be the one, the betrayer, because of their sin nature.

We too must realize that only through the grace of God are we where we are today. If not for God, we could be someone like Judas. We are capable of committing horrible sins. So, we must be on guard against temptation and

sin. Never stop fighting the battle with sin, knowing the war against sin will not be won until heaven. We may lose some battles with sin, but because of Jesus we know the war against sin is won.

Judas was responsible for his actions and so are we. Did Judas have to sin? No. Did Judas want to sin? Yes. What even makes Judas' sin, if it is possible, even worse was that Jesus had given him ample opportunities to repent and not commit the betrayal. Even with Jesus' words, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed, we see an opportunity for Judas to turn back. Are you on guard today against sin? Are you examining yourself in light of God's Word? Do you love Christ more than the stuff of this world? Not only are we to fight against sin, against pride that leads us to more sin, but at the same time we must battle for humility.

### **We Must Fight To Be Humble** (v.24-27)

Andrew Murray, a South African pastor wrote, "Pride must die in you, or nothing of heaven can live in you." This is what the disciples needed and it is what we need – to slay pride and seek humility. Taking up our passage this morning beginning at verse 24, "A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. <sup>25</sup> And he said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. <sup>26</sup> But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. <sup>27</sup> For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.'" Because the disciples still harbored thoughts of Jesus as the Messiah King and their places of position and power within that kingdom, Jesus has yet, another lesson for them on humility. This is a lesson for us

as well. T. S. Eliot may have been thinking of this scripture passage when he said, “Humility is the most difficult of all virtues to achieve; nothing dies harder than the desire to think well of self.” Just one reason God blesses us with spouses who see us as we are - not as we would like to have people think we are.

Let us examine the flow of this conversation. It begins abruptly and deteriorates quickly. It begins after each of the disciples pulling their hands back off the table and wondering if it could possibly be them that would betray Jesus. Then trying to justify themselves and building an argument as to why it could not be them, the disciples put forth their good qualities and how they were better than the others. They had not listened to Jesus and I am sure they would not have heeded C. S. Lewis either, who said, “Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it’s thinking of yourself less.”

I am very much like Peter; I can see him reminding everyone that he and John were on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus. I can hear Peter saying, “*And might I add, John and I were sent on the top-secret mission by Jesus to find this very house, so we cannot be the betrayer.*” This may have been followed by John describing the reasons why he would not be the betrayer. Each one, around the table begins to speak of their own good qualities and then they transition to the fact that if they are doing so well and that they could not be the betrayer that they must also have a special place in the Kingdom to come. Jesus may have been sitting there shaking His head, thinking perhaps it is time to pick 12 more and start this all over again – that is how I might have handled it. We know Jesus does not do that. We know that He sees what these men, Judas excluded, would become. So, Jesus begins to patiently teach.



The first point the Lord makes is do not forget we are different that the world. Seek humility. Jesus says that kings and rulers fight among themselves to determine who is the greatest. They invent names and titles for themselves to declare themselves great before the people. I remember reading about King Richard the Lionhearted, Gerald the Fearless, Edger, the King of Scotland – the Valiant and Gaius Octavius who choose the name Caesar Augustus meaning divine emperor. Jesus’ point here is that His followers are not to strive after greatness the way the world does, instead, to fight against those natural inclinations and seek humility and servanthood. Jesus tells His disciples in verse 26, **“But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.”** In John’s account he records at this point Jesus modeled servanthood. Reading from John 13, <sup>3</sup>“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, <sup>4</sup>rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. <sup>5</sup>Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. <sup>6</sup>He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, ‘Lord, do you wash my feet?’ <sup>7</sup> Jesus answered him, **‘What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.’** <sup>8</sup> Peter said to him, ‘You shall never wash my feet.’ Jesus answered him, **‘If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.’** <sup>9</sup> Simon Peter said to him, ‘Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!’ <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, **‘The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you.’** <sup>11</sup> For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, **‘Not all of you are clean.’** <sup>12</sup> When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, **‘Do you understand what I have done to you?’** <sup>13</sup> You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. <sup>14</sup> If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have

washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. <sup>16</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.” (John 13:3-16) Can you imagine the contrast that Jesus makes and the potency of His point? Right in the middle of their argument over who's greater, the Greatest of all time, the Son of God, Himself begins to perform the act of the lowest servant. Jesus shows what it means to care for others and to serve. The greatest in God's kingdom then is the one who serves, not the one who can claim the most power or give himself the most impressive title or name. In verse 27 Jesus says, “For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.” The one who serves is the greater. Jesus shows us that He is the greatest of all. In Mark's account he records Jesus saying, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45)

### **We Must Fight To Persevere** (v. 28-30)

Jesus points out that He is really not all that happy with their ambitions of greatness. He gently corrects them and gives them an example to copy. Then He commends them in verse 28, “You are those who have stayed with me in my trials.” Notice that Jesus tells His followers this, right after He has to rebuke them for arguing about who is greater. Our Lord realizes that given the Holy Spirit and time His faithful ones will mature and be leaders of His Church.

Once again, Jesus refocuses the disciples' attention on the coming Kingdom and not their current situation. Reading at verse 29, “I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, <sup>30</sup> that you may eat and drink at my table in my

kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” These apostles will Judge Israel someday. They will share in Christ’s authority someday.

The key that Jesus identifies for their inclusion into the Kingdom is that they persevere. It is not their greatness or even the fact that they have had great ministries but what qualifies them to be included is their proximity to Jesus. They have remained when all others have gone. They love Jesus more than they love material goods. They will still have a momentary lapse in denying Christ, but once Jesus is raised from the dead, everything will change for these men. Their faith will be unshakable and their focus on greatness will be covered over with the greatness of their King.

As followers of Christ we are called to fight for humility and to resist the world’s lure of greatness. We are to model our lives after Jesus who set the example of ultimate humility. The Incarnation is the greatest picture of humility. God took on flesh and lived among sinful man in order to save us. Through this passage, we discover the vital importance of looking to eternity for our final position of greatness. The apostles learned that in the future they would be great leaders, great leaders of Christ’s Church and great leaders in the heavenly Kingdom because they assumed the position of servants of Christ and servants of the Church and servants to God’s people. We too must not seek greatness of the world but seek to be servants.

We are called to live holy, separated apart from the world and we are to live in humility. Jesus told his disciples, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:29) Moses thought less of himself than God did. Out of obedience he grew in his faith and served God and His people. In the Book of Numbers, we read, the

Lord recognized “the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.” (Number 12:3) My beloved, humility is a foundational characteristic of those who are truly God’s servants.

There are two approaches: remembering the parable Jesus taught back in chapter 18 of Luke, <sup>9</sup> “this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: <sup>10</sup> ‘Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup> The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: “God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.” <sup>13</sup> But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” <sup>14</sup> I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.’” The Pharisee trusted in *himself* that he was righteous, prayed with *himself*, thanking God he was better than other people. Note the Pharisee’s emphasis on *self*, exaltation of *self*, and the result is his failure to see his sins.

The tax collector pleaded for mercy admitting he was a sinner. Note the conclusion in verse 14, “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” Humility is the opposite of self-exaltation and self-righteousness. A Christ-like humble person will realize there is nothing good in them and that they must depend on God and submit to Him and His Word. To be humble is to submit to God’s Commands for God is the Creator and we are not. Humility recognizes one becomes a slave to Christ and lives their life to bring Him glory and to serve His people. Our example is Christ Himself, the incarnate Christ, who submitted in all ways to God the Father. We read out of

Philippians, Jesus “being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:8) My beloved the best way to slay pride and become a humble person is to battle the world and your sin nature by submitting to God and obeying His commands. James gives great advice saying, <sup>5</sup>“do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, ‘*God* yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us’? <sup>6</sup>But *God* gives more grace. Therefore, it says, ‘*God* opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ <sup>7</sup>Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup>Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.” (James 4:5-8)

You might be thinking, that cannot be that hard. You know how hard it is if you have tried. The world calls strongly and we remain sinners, but we are saved by God’s grace. Do not dwell on the past, your journey to live humbly before God begins today, it begins with that first step. Do not think of the past or how hard life can be and the struggles of the future. Focus on your Lord and Savior taking one step at a time and soon you will be walking the life path that glorifies Christ more and is centered on yourself less. Jesus reminds us, blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth. My beloved humility and salvation are directly linked. Humble yourself before the one true God who has called you to be His child. Amen!