

April 23, 2023

THE SON OF MAN GOES AS IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED

Luke 22:1-38

(9 of 16 in a series through Luke 16-24)

I've been reading a novel for the last week or so that I think is actually bad for my health. It's historical fiction, set during World War II, and the plot consists of a man charged with sneaking his way into a concentration camp in order to rescue a physicist who they believe can help in the race to develop the bomb. The book has been fine (nothing I'd recommend), but it seems like every time things look like they might finally work out, either things get more complicated or they make decisions that serve only to increase the level of difficulty for what already felt like an impossible task. And at each of these moments, I say, "You've got to be kidding me," as I feel my anxiety, frustration, and blood pressure increase. I just need a footnote every few pages that says, "But don't worry. Everything is going to work out as planned."

That's how you can feel when you get to Luke 22. Dale Ralph Davis speaks of this chapter as a moment in Luke's gospel where you've been walking along an asphalt road when all of the sudden the road turns to crushed gravel. You don't have to look down to know things have changed. You just *feel* it. And as you come to Luke 22 and we're getting closer and closer to the cross, you can feel the change.¹ It's as if the intensity increases. Every decision and every moment feels like it comes with weightiness.

Really, as this chapter begins, it feels like everything is going wrong. It feels like the enemy is gaining the upper hand. The chapter starts out with the chief priests and scribes seeking how to kill Jesus. They've wanted to see him die for chapters now, but there's always been an obstacle that kept them from it. And, as the chapter begins, there still is. They feared the people. How could they put someone to death in the midst of people who'd seen and heard of his miracles? They couldn't just go take him out as he was publicly ministering. The crowds may well turn against them. But how in the world would they be able to track him down privately? And then a solution appeared. We're told that Satan entered into one of Jesus' disciples named Judas Iscariot. No doubt Satan was able to enter him because Judas opened the door with his unbelief and desire to do evil. And he approached the chief priests with a plan to betray him. He could let them know when and where Jesus would be away from the crowds and hand him over. They agreed and gave him money. And, as I mentioned, it sure looks at this point like the enemy has won.

Jesus has seemingly had the upper hand in all the exchanges with his enemies. He's outwitted them at every turn. But now it looks like things could finally begin turning against him, as if things are starting to spin out of control. And yet, this is precisely the point Luke addresses in the text we're looking at this morning (22:1-38). He's showing us that Jesus is in utter control,

¹ Dale Ralph Davis, *Luke 14-24* (Ross-Shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2021), 159.

directing everything to its appropriate end. I think there are largely two themes that this text highlights for us: Jesus' control over all things and his love and care for his disciples. Let's look at them each in turn.

Jesus' control over all things

It's at the end of verse 6—the very moment where you feel like things are finally getting out of control and the enemy is getting the upper hand—that Luke shows us Jesus' first demonstration that all is under his control. Remember from verse 6 that the blessings Judas' betrayal brings to the scribes and chief priests is that they could get to Jesus “in the absence of a crowd.” And it's time for the Passover, a meal that Jesus would eat privately with his disciples. Talk about a perfect time for Judas to betray him and the chief priests to swoop in and grab Jesus apart from any crowds. But notice what happens.

Jesus sends Peter and John to go prepare the Passover to get everything ready for Jesus to eat the meal with his disciples. But, of course, they don't know where Jesus wants to eat this meal, and so they ask him, “Where will you have us prepare it?” (v. 9). Now, this is a moment, I'm sure, when Judas leans forward a bit to make sure he can hear the answer. If Jesus says, “At so and so place,” then Judas can pass it on to the chief priests, and here we go. But Jesus doesn't answer that way because it isn't appointed for him to be betrayed and arrested before partaking of this meal. So, here's his answer to Peter and John about where to go. He says, “Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters and tell the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there” (vv. 10-12). If Judas had a plan to seize that moment, Jesus has thwarted it. There's no way he could relay that information to the chief priests. Peter and John didn't even know where they were going until they walked into the city and found the man carrying the water.

And, I don't know if Jesus was showing his supernatural knowledge here or if he'd arranged all of this ahead of time. It really doesn't matter. The point is, he's in control, and things are only going to happen—even his death—in the manner and in the timing that he sees fit. His life isn't going to be taken from him. He's giving himself over to death, which is the theme of the next scene in our text.

In verse 14 we're now in that upper room where Jesus is with his disciples, sharing the Passover meal. And I'll go into some of the details of the actual meal in a second, but two things I want to note about the meal. First, Jesus will speak in terms of his body being given for his disciples (“given for you” – v. 19) and his blood being poured out for them (“poured out for you” – v. 20). This is one more reminder that Jesus' life isn't being taken from him. He's giving it. He's choosing to die for us. But, second, note how in control Jesus shows himself as he declares that he knows he's being betrayed. He says in verses 21-22, “But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!”

It may have felt like, in Judas' mind, that he was being so clever in betraying Jesus, but Jesus not only points out that he knows what Judas is doing but that he's simply doing what's been determined. This is how Peter will preach later, saying in Acts 4:27-28, "For truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place." All was happening with Jesus according to the predetermined plan of God. That's why Jesus says that the Son of Man goes "as it has been determined" (v. 22). And yet, clearly we're still responsible creatures as Jesus reminds Judas that he'll face judgment for his actions. When Jesus says, "Woe to that man by whom he is betrayed," "woe" is a term announcing condemnation before God.

But Luke wants us to see clearly in this moment that it's not the devil (who entered Judas), or Judas himself, or the chief priests who are in control. Jesus is utterly in control of every event that is happening, even as we head toward his death.

Yet, Jesus' control of all things in the present and in the future continues to be declared by Jesus when, after the disciples argue for a bit about which of them is the greatest, Jesus turns and addresses Peter specifically. He says to Peter in verses 31-32, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." Peter, of course, responds with the kind of bravado we might anticipate, telling Jesus that he's ready to go to prison and to death for Jesus (v. 33) before Jesus tells him that Peter will deny him three times before the rooster crows (v. 34).

But notice all that Jesus says in his declaration to Peter. Jesus is utterly aware that Satan has requested to sift Peter, just as he'd requested to attack Job. Peter doesn't know what's coming, but Jesus does. And the enemy does not act apart from Jesus' knowledge and the Lord's permission. Actually, the "you" there at the beginning of verse 31 is plural, indicating that Satan had asked to attack all of the disciples, and he'd show that they were weak as Peter would betray Jesus and they'd scatter.

Yet, even here, we see Jesus' control. He tells Peter that he has prayed that Peter's faith will not fail and that when Peter turns again, he'll need to strengthen his brothers. In other words, Jesus is saying to Peter that he'll deny him. He'll sin and need to repent. But Jesus also tells him that he's certain he will repent because Jesus has prayed for him that though he sins, his faith won't fail. He'll turn and continue to follow Jesus, and in that moment, he'll strengthen his brothers who would have had their own failures.

Now, we know Peter must have been crushed when he denied the Lord and the rooster crowed, reminding him that he'd done just what Jesus told him he'd do, despite Peter's objections. But we can also imagine, can't we, how encouraged Peter must have been when he remembered that Jesus prayed for him, declared he'd return, and strengthen his brothers.

Even as Peter denied Jesus, the disciples scattered, and Satan let out a shout of victory, no doubt thinking he'd flexed his might, it wasn't the devil who was in control. Jesus had already told Peter in that upper room all that would happen and how he'd lead the other disciples—as we see him doing in the early chapters of Acts—because Jesus, who is utterly in control, had prayed for him.

And, finally, let me point out Jesus' control in the final section. Jesus ends the section reminding them of how he cared for them in the former days as he sent them out. He says, "When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?" And they answer, "Nothing" (v. 35). But, now, he tells them, they're not going to be going into as welcoming of a time. He says, "But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' For what is written about me has its fulfillment." (vv. 36-37). And then they hold up two swords they have with them and Jesus says, "It is enough," or perhaps better, just, "Enough."²

You see, Jesus wasn't telling them literally to arm themselves with swords so that as they go out they can slay those who attack them. He'll make that clear only a few moments later as Peter draws a sword and slashes off a guard's ear while Jesus responds, "No more of this!" (22:51). But Jesus is using this imagery to communicate to them that as they go out after Jesus' death and resurrection, they won't be received so warmly. People won't be eager to support their ministry or even to let them be in peace. They'll feel as if they need a moneybag and swords, as compared to their earlier missions when sent out by Jesus. And it's because Jesus will be numbered with the transgressors, as Jesus says.

That is, Jesus will not be considered a hero by most after his death but as someone who got what he deserved. He'll be seen as a transgressor, a blasphemer. And, therefore, his disciples will suffer for being his followers as well. Jesus tells us elsewhere that if they hated him, they'll hate us as well.

And yet note here Jesus' control. He notes that what is happening with him is nothing less than a fulfillment of the Scripture. He says that twice in verse 37. And he is telling his disciples what will happen with him—reminding them that their suffering won't be outside of his control either, which is precisely what we see in the book of Revelation as Jesus reigns over all, holding the keys to death and hades and telling his martyred brothers to rest a little while longer before judgment comes "until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been" (Rev 6:11). Just as his death wasn't outside of his control, neither is ours.

So, in a chapter that begins with everything seemingly spiraling out of control against Jesus, Luke reminds us that Jesus is utterly in control. Neither Satan, nor Judas, nor the chief priests will

² So David Garland, *Luke*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 872.

determine what happens to Jesus. All is happening according to the divine predetermined plan, in fulfillment of the Scriptures. Jesus is laying down his life, and he'll take it up again. But it's not only Jesus' control of all things that we see. We also see Jesus' love and care for his disciples.

Jesus' love and care for his disciples

Jesus' love for and care for his disciples shows up all throughout this text as well. First, as Jesus gathers with his disciples to eat the Passover meal, he tells them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (vv. 15-16). That is, he's going to eat with them now, and then they'll eat again at the resurrection. But notice how Jesus says he'd earnestly desired to eat this meal with them. I mean, think about how dense these men are. They're weak men, who so often don't get what Jesus is saying, and so often look foolish, and you'd think that he would think, "I've earnestly desired to get away from these bumbling, dense, weak men. But instead, he wants to be with them and share this meal with them. Isn't this a reminder of how Jesus doesn't break a bruised reed? He doesn't want to distance himself from us though we're weak and bumbling? He loves and cares for us.

But he expresses his love for them most clearly in the meal. He takes the cup and the bread, telling them that this is his body and the new covenant in his blood. Now, obviously this doesn't mean that he's telling them that the bread has become his body. And no one at the table with Jesus would have thought that. If I hold up a picture of my child in my wallet and say, "This is my son," no one is calling the department of child services because you think I carry my child around in a plastic sleeve in my wallet. You know that I'm saying that this picture *represents* my child. The disciples know the same thing.

And Jesus tells them that from now on as they eat this meal, it will have new meaning. They'll eat the bread and remember that he gave his body for them, and they'll drink from the cup and remember that his blood was poured out for them—that is, for their salvation. This meal will remind his disciples—and us—of the clearest picture of Christ's love for us. If we ever doubt his love we need only remember the cross.

And yet, his demonstration of love for them and care for them continues. After he told them that one of them would betray him, Luke tells us, "A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest (v. 24). I can imagine how that might have gone. We're told in verse 23 that "they began to question one another, which of them it could be" who was going to betray Jesus. So, you could imagine them beginning to accuse one another, and then defending themselves. "I bet it's you, Peter, you always do brash things." "Me? I'm the one who was on the mountain where he was transfigured. I bet it's . . ." and then this spiraling into "Well, I'm the one who . . ." until it breaks out into an argument over who is the greatest.

But even if we might understand how this *could* happen, it's ridiculous that it *did* happen. I mean, Jesus tells them that he's going to be betrayed, and they begin arguing with each other about which of them is the greatest. If there's ever a time for Jesus to come unglued and go off

on these guys, telling them that they're the worst, this would be it. But instead, note what he does. He first instructs them on how to strive for greatness in the kingdom, telling them in verses 25-27 that they need to think differently than how the rulers of this age think—where you show that you're greater by lording over them. As a follower of Christ, we pursue greatness in the kingdom by serving others, even as Jesus is serving his disciples.

Ok. That makes sense. But now he's going to let them have it, right? He's going to say, "Do you all realize how selfish you are, arguing about which of you is greatest when I just told you I'm being betrayed?" But instead, he praises them, encourages them, and tells them how he intends to exalt them in his kingdom, saying, "You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in the kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (vv. 28-30). What do we do with that? These men have shown themselves to be so prone to foolishness, selfishness, and weakness, and yet Jesus praises them as those who have walked with him and who will receive places of honor in the kingdom. Here's what we make of it—our Lord is gracious to his people. We don't deserve it, but he loves us, cares for us, and lavishes grace on us.

Even how he handles Peter next, after telling Peter that he'll deny him, he doesn't lay into Peter. He tells him that he's prayed for him, that Peter's faith won't fail, and that he'll use Peter to strengthen his brothers. And then he ends our section by reminding them that just as he provided for the disciples when he sent them out with nothing, so he'll uphold them as they go out into hostile territory to bear witness to Christ. Jesus loves and cares for his disciples.

Now, let's put these two themes together. Jesus was not only in control that night, but he reigns from heaven right now with all authority in heaven and on earth. Nothing happens apart from his direction and allowance. And that one who reigns as king is our savior who loves us and gave himself for us. He's the one who cares for us and deals with us graciously as his redeemed people. So, let's turn from sin and run to him. Let's trust him and obey him. Let's love him and worship him with our lives, remembering that he loved us to the point of living, dying, and being raised for us. And let's remember that now as we come to the table. Amen.