It Was Dark, and He Gave Thanks

You may not know this about Jesus: He gave thanks before the dawn, knowing what the dawn would bring

PASSAGE · JOHN 13:21–30; MATTHEW 26:26–29

21 *When Jesus had said this, He was troubled in spirit, and openly said, "Most certainly I tell you that one of you will betray Me."* 22 *The disciples looked at one another, perplexed about what He meant.* Mk14:19-21 *A dark sadness overwhelmed them and each of them asked Jesus, "Am I the one?"*

"It's one of the twelve who dips his bread with Me in the dish. L22:22 *For the Son of Man will go to His death as it has been determined,* Mk14:21 *just as the Scriptures say He must. But how terrible for the man who betrays the Son of Man. It would have been better for that man if he had never been born."*

J 23 *One of His disciples, whom Jesus loved, was at the table, leaning against Jesus' chest.* 24 *Simon Peter motioned to him, and said, "Tell us who He's talking about."*

25 *Reclining at His side, he asked Him, "Lord, who is it?"*

26 *"It's the one I give this piece of bread after I've dipped it in the dish." After He had dipped the piece of bread, He gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.* M26:25 *And Judas, who betrayed Him, said, "Is it me?"*

Then Jesus told him, "Hurry and do what you must!"

J 27 *After he took the piece of bread, Satan entered Judas.*

28 *Now nobody at the table knew why He said this to Judas.* 29 *Some of them thought that since Judas had the money box, Jesus told him to, "Buy the things needed for the feast," or "give something to the poor."* 30 *Having received the morsel of bread, Judas immediately left.*

And it was night.

M26:26-29 *As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and gave thanks* L22:17 *to God* M *for it. He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take this and eat it. This is My body.* L22:19 *Do this in remembrance of Me."*

M 27 *Then He took a cup, gave thanks, and handed it to them, saying, "All of you drink it,* 28 *for this is My blood which ratifies the covenant and is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.* 29 *I tell you I won't drink of this fruit of the vine until the day I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."* Mk14:23 *And they all drank from it.*

From *The One: A Blending of the Four Gospels* by Bill Perkins

DEVOTIONAL

Around the table sat the friends Jesus loved.
Judas, one of His twelve,
had already taken money to hand Him over.
Peter, His closest friend,
would soon swear he never knew Him.
The rest would run before morning.
— Luke 22:3–6, 34; Mark 14:50

Jesus knew it all.
Still He took some bread
and gave thanks to God for it.
"Take this and eat it. This is My body.
Do this in remembrance of Me."
— Matthew 26:26; Luke 22:19

Having received the morsel of bread,
Judas immediately left.
And it was night.
— John 13:30

You may not know this about Jesus:
He gave thanks before the dawn,
knowing what the dawn would bring.

Ahead lay the garden
where His sweat fell like drops of blood,
the whip, the crown of thorns,
the mocking, and the nails.
— Luke 22:44; John 19:1–2

Gratitude remained His posture
as suffering closed in—
an ember glowing brighter in the face of wind.

The bread in His hands pointed to His body.
The wine pointed to His blood, poured out—
a river that never runs dry.
— Luke 22:20

The pain was not what He thanked God for.
He thanked the Father for His love
and for the chance to set us free.
Beyond the cross He saw victory over sin and death—
the joy set before Him.
— Hebrews 12:2

Like a gardener planting grain
that must die to rise again,
He held the bread and gave thanks.
— John 12:24

The table wasn't pure.
The room wasn't safe.
But Jesus didn't wait for perfect people
or a peaceful night.
He was welcoming friends
He knew would wound Him.

And the dawn came.
First the cross.
Then, very early on the third day,
an empty tomb.
— Luke 24:1–6

This Thanksgiving,
I'm remembering His heart—
a heart that could give thanks
with the cross ahead
and betrayal at His side.

I want to give thanks like that—
not because everything is right,
but because Jesus is.
Not because the table is perfect,
but because He sits at it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Around the table sat Judas, who had taken money to hand Jesus over; Peter, who would soon say he never knew Him; and the rest, who would run. Jesus knew it all. How would you treat friends if you knew they were about to let you down?

2. "He was troubled in spirit" (John 13:21). Jesus felt the pain of betrayal. Why does it help you to know He felt it, and still gave thanks?

3. Jesus dipped a piece of bread and handed it to Judas (John 13:26). At a meal like this, that was a way to honor a guest. What does it tell you about how Jesus treated the man who betrayed Him?

4. Jesus thanked the Father for His love and for the joy set before Him, not for the pain (Hebrews 12:2). What is the difference between thanking God for a hard thing and thanking Him in a hard thing?

5. "The table wasn't pure. The room wasn't safe." Are you waiting for better people or a calmer season before you give thanks? Where?

6. Judas went out, "and it was night" (John 13:30). Yet the dawn came: first the cross, then an empty tomb. When has God brought light out of a dark night in your life?

7. Where is it still dark for you right now? What would it look like this week to give thanks before you see the dawn?

PRAYER

Father, thank You for Jesus—
for the bread He gave,
the cup He lifted,
and the love He poured out.
Teach me to give thanks in the dark,
before I see the dawn.
In Jesus' name. Amen.