

Thy Will Be Done...in strategy

Shepherd's Grace Church

Thursday April 17, 2014 (Maundy Thursday)

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this [world](#) and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ²The devil had already put it into the heart of [Judas](#) son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³Jesus, [knowing](#) that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵Then he [poured water](#) into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. ⁶He came to [Simon Peter](#), who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." ¹¹For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." ¹²After he had [washed](#) their feet, had put on his robe, and had [returned](#) to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³You call me [Teacher](#) and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶Very truly, I tell you, servants are not [greater](#) than their [master](#), nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

¹⁸I am not [speaking](#) of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But it is to fulfill the scripture, 'The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.' ¹⁹I tell you this now, before it [occurs](#), so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am he. ²⁰Very truly, I tell you, whoever [receives](#) one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me." ²¹After saying this Jesus was [troubled](#) in spirit, and declared, "Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me."²²The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. ²³One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was [reclining](#) next to him; ²⁴Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. ²⁵So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" ²⁶Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have [dipped](#) it in the dish." So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷After he received the piece of bread,

Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "Do quickly what you are going to do."²⁸ Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him.²⁹ Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was [telling](#) him, "[Buy](#) what we need for the festival"; or, that he should give something to the poor.³⁰ So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

³¹When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the [Son](#) of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him.³² If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.³³ Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13: 1-35)

Have you ever played the game of Risk? Have you ever played the game to its full conclusion? The reason I ask is because many people play but it is a long game! It is not really like monopoly where you can come back to it after a time and pick up where you left off. Risk is a game that can be played either one of two ways. It can be played to an agreed upon quitting point where everyone walks away feeling good because they didn't lose, or it can be played all the way to the end, the way the rules tell us, where there is only one winner. That is the way it is intended to be played but most people do not take the time or are not willing to invest the time to play all the way to the end!

When we go down to Dallas to visit the girls, every once in awhile, we play a game of Risk. It is a dice game played with different colored pieces which are designated as armies. Each piece represents an army and when one player attacks another they roll the dice. The highest number wins. The lower number loses an army. The strategy behind the game is to move your armies into position to attack weaker or more vulnerable opponents and defeat them so you take over their country. Eventually, one person takes over the whole world and is the winner.

When we play there are usually 6 of us; My wife, my daughters, my sons in law, and me. We start playing about 10 at night and by 2 in the morning, the girls are done! They haven't lost but they are ready to head for bed and call it a night. It happens this way every time we play and every time they promise they will hang with us till someone wins. It has gotten to the point that we expect them to drop. At some point they seem to signal each other and they intentionally start to lose! By 3 in the morning they are all gone and are all off to bed. The guys however are just getting started.

See...while the girls were losing, the guys were strategically trying to gain the best countries and get control of continents where they could get bonus pieces so that when the girls dropped, we could be in a position to move against one another.

In a sense, this strategic planning is much like the planning God does to accomplish His will in John's gospel. Very early on, God shows his prize. John the Baptist proclaims in the first chapter, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" The lamb is the prize, the one who comes into the world to redeem the world. The people know it, those who just want to play for awhile, those who want to claim total power, and the few who are willing to play all the way to the end.

As Jesus reminds us tonight, there are only two who are willing to play to the end. All the disciples will betray Jesus and desert the game. All the religious elite and the Roman powerful will willingly forfeit their armies to Satan in exchange for what appears to be an easier life, sleep, food, drink and security! Jesus knows the stakes. The battle is for the whole world! Will the world live according to the trappings of Satan or will the world accept the riches of God; salvation, forgiveness of sin and eternal life free from guilt, shame and tears?

Tonight, Jesus rolls the dice. God has demonstrated earlier that God can free people. He did it with the Egyptians. After that victory, God showed the people how he did it. He used the blood of a lamb to mark the faithful and to guide Him as he passed over their homes. Now God has sent that lamb into the world again. The rules however say that the world has to invite the lamb into its home in order for God to be able to offer it as a perfect sacrifice. God's strategy is to get someone to extend the invitation. He knows that Peter will not do it. Peter is blindly loyal to Jesus and loves him as a little child would. Some of the other disciples, James and John, will not do it. They want positions of power in Jesus' kingdom.

Jesus says in verse 18, I know who I have chosen. I have chosen only one and I tell you now so that when the world recognizes my victory through this choice you will know that I did it strategically before the other side even knew what hit them. Jesus chose Judas. It is hard for us to believe that Judas is so essential to the success of God's plan. It is hard for us to believe that any one person is so essential to God's desire to win the world, but it is true. In John 6 Jesus says, I came not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me, and the will of Him is that I lose none of those who have been given to me!

All of creation is essential to God's plan for redemption and each one is essential to God's work! "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that who so ever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life!" That Judas should be one whom God loves should come as no surprise! Judas is part

of the plan. In other Gospels, Judas is condemned for his actions. He is characterized as an evil villain who attempts to thwart God's plan. We in the world want to believe this. We want to think there are things in this world more powerful than God's plan for our redemption and that those things can somehow influence us and get us off the track! This gives us an excuse for not seeking God's will for our lives. It allows us to take an easy way out of discipleship!

John's gospel offers no such easy way out. Remember way back in chapter 3 when Nicodemus came to Jesus at night? Nicodemus was looking at first for an easy way out. He wanted Jesus to acknowledge the "Law" as the supreme gift of God to God's people. When Jesus showed him grace, he was forced into a new reality. Nicodemus came to understand that God's love extends beyond our ability to follow rules. Jesus' teaching is that God's love is unconditional. He says, "The Son of Man did not come into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be redeemed through Him." (John 3: 17) John's Jesus teaches even those trained specifically in the "Law" that the law must be tempered by our willingness to understand that God's love transcends every situation and makes possible a new relationship with our creator!

In Chapter 4 Jesus makes the same point to the woman at the well. "Go and get your husband," Jesus says. "Sir, I have no husband!" she replies. When the woman admits a truth, she makes herself available to God's grace. If the woman had denied the truth about her life, she would have continued to live a life that was not as fulfilling as possible. When she acknowledged the truth and brought that truth before God, she was able to move beyond her current situation and into a possibility she had never previously considered. "She went into town and told everyone!" The woman became an evangelist for the Lord because she was willing to allow herself to be used! God cannot use those who live in a lie! In chapter 18, Jesus says to Pilate, I came to testify to the truth. Pilate asks, "What is truth?" Truth is God who is the creator of the world and desires to be in a relationship with us! Truth knows us and the truth will set us free!

Judas operates in truth. It is not a truth that we are comfortable with but it is a truth we must acknowledge. Judas is looking for someone else in John's gospel. He is looking perhaps for a military messiah or an economic messiah. He does not believe a religious Messiah will have the power to overcome the Roman empire. He acts out of his convictions which are different from those of Jesus. Jesus instructs him to do what he must do quickly, knowing his strategy will accomplish God's purposes.

Judas is the army of Satan and is positioned to attack Jesus greatest vulnerability, his love for the world. God uses Judas weakness as God's strength. God plays Judas and by doing so, gets Jesus invited into the

House of Israel where people can examine him and find him without blemish. Three times in chapters 18 and 19, Pilate says, "I find no case against this man." Jesus, the Lamb of God, is without blemish and thus worthy of sacrifice, however he had to be examined and become loved inside the house according to God's rules. These rules were detailed in Leviticus 23 more than 15 hundred years before the birth of Christ. God is playing the game but always by God's rules and always according to God's strategy!

In Revelation 19, the final victory for God is claimed. The battle of Armageddon is waged. The description of the battle is like the game of Risk. The world has lined up all the armies of the world; greed, lust, avarice, guilt, shame, sin. On the face of it, these armies seem insurmountable. God, however has positioned only one army against all these foes. That army is Jesus Christ!

All the other armies of God, the faithful witness lined up behind the Lord are kept from engaging. The world rolls the dice against just this one army! This one should be easy to defeat! They wage a great battle, rolling time after time as gradually, all the evils of the world are overcome. At last, the world crucifies the One, thinking that gives final victory...and it does! It gives victory to God.

When Jesus goes out from the meal He has with His disciples, his willingness is the final victory. God's strategy all along has been to pit the one whom He loved so much against the world which He sought to redeem, knowing the world would reject and ultimately kill Him! God's victory comes in their willingness to do God's will. When Jesus goes out and becomes the crucified Christ, God claims victory over death, death which is the wage of sin; death which is the scourge of the world; death which is the ultimate fear of humanity is now overcome because of God's willingness to risk every thing against the faithfulness of Jesus.

Jesus has left us a new command! What he has done for us, we are to do for one another. We are to love one another! This is his message this Holy Thursday. Our love for one another is God's ultimate victory and God has strategically used even Judas to accomplish this love! As Jesus goes out into this night strategically prepared to do the unthinkable, all we can say is *Thy Will Be Done! Amen!*