

Well we've had the passage read but what's going on here?

Jesus and his disciples are at what we know as the last supper. The disciples though they are reclining round the table are anything but relaxed. They know some thing's happening but they are not sure what but are pretty sure it's not good.

Some years back we visited Universal Studios in Hollywood and during the visited went into one of these Haunted house type things and it seemed as almost at every corner someone dressed in a scary costume would leap out and frighten the life out of you. So you went ahead with great trepidation. The disciples were experiencing a real sense of foreboding and trepidation – hence Jesus' words to them at the beginning of Chapter 14 “do not let your hearts be trouble”.

Well here Jesus was aware of what was going on in their minds and was trying to explain, not just to settle them down but as we see in v19 so that later as they reflected on all that had happened they might understand his nature as God.

However mention of betrayal in v21 only raised more questions from the disciples including the obvious one of who was the betrayer. V22 seems to sum up the disciples at this point in that they were “at a loss to know”!

So Jesus revealed the traitor at least in a way that later readers would understand. He took the morsel of bread usually given to the guest of honour and gave it to Judas who then left the room but still as we see in v28 the disciples didn't understand.

That's what happened in this passage as we continue our series in John 13-15.

Here we see Jesus' disciples at a loss to know what Jesus was saying and doing.

Here we see Judas who despite all Jesus had done for him went out to betray Jesus.

Judas was very much the spectre at the feast as we see from v2, “The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus.” John sets the whole meal in this context of Judas. It shows he understood what Jesus said in v19.

Satan, the devil was at work in Judas and it raises a tricky question.

In v18 Jesus referred to the words from Psalm 41:9 and spoke about Scripture being fulfilled. The cross was Jesus destiny. His hour as Jesus put it in 12:23 has come. There was an inevitability about the cross. So the question comes was Judas simply a cog in the wheels of the devil's action or was he acting of his own volition in standing against Jesus? Answers on a postcard please. Certainly the devil was at work, John leaves us in no doubt about that but also we see that Judas has his own self determination. Despite having taken the bread from Jesus, which was a sign of special favour, he chose to step out into the night. Words from earlier in the gospel come to mind, “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.” (John 3:19)

Friends this is a warning to us in that we can be at the centre of Christian things but not linked to Jesus, not part of him. Judas was there amongst the 12 but he had no part of Jesus. In the same way we can be helping in adventures, part of a homegroup, even on Council and yet not part of Jesus and actually working against him. It is not a matter of doing a job or being on a rota. It is a matter of walking daily with Jesus, of growing in him and allowing him to be our all in all our saviour and Lord.

However while we may look at the 11 disciples and at Judas the gospel points us clearly to Jesus. This passage is about him. Seven times in the first four verses we get the word “I”. It is about Jesus and about who he is.

Back in May Ledley King, the Spurs and England footballer, was refused entrance to a nightclub because the bouncer said he was too drunk.

King's response to the bouncer was the immortal line “don't you know who I am?” He's not the only one to use it.

Jesus doesn't ask the question, he tells them and us clearly and we can see that in v19, “I am he” is simply two words ego eimi, I am. Jesus simply says he wants them to believe “I am”, the ancient words for God. He is God and so in this as in every situation he is the one who is in control. If we look back to v11 he knew that Judas was going to betray him. Then here he prompts Judas into doing it. In his response to John it is as if he is unmasking the betrayer and saying to Judas, “I know what you are thinking and you cannot keep it hidden for much longer.” Then in v27 he as it were tells him to get on with it. It was not Judas who decided when Jesus would die, it was Jesus. He was in control. This was his hour. Here we see Jesus as God and God is in control.

But though he is God and in control in no way is he separated from his disciples.

We see this in v20.

Jesus is God and he is the master but not in the way that we think of when we think of master and servant. You can think of the maid who has a function and does what she's told without perhaps understanding why or the old retainer or nanny who become part of the family and yet not part of the family or even Jeeves with Wooster where you wonder who is in charge. Here Jesus is talking of the unique relationship he has with his disciples where as he and the father are one so that whoever knows him knows the Father so he is one with them so that whoever accept them accept him. In other words they share not just his mission but his authority and his nature.

Look with me at the words Jesus used here which help us see more of his relationship with them and with us.

Let's go back to V18 “I know those I have chosen”

The first thing here is that these disciples had been chosen by Jesus.

We know that. We have probably read or heard the stories of Jesus by Lake Galilee calling the fishermen Peter, Andrew James and John. It was through that call that a relationship began which has brought these disciples to this point in time just hours before the death of Jesus. This is how discipleship begins for all of us, with Jesus calling us to follow him. For some the call is a growing awareness over many years. For others of us, we may be able to remember the time, date and place where we heard that call of Jesus to follow him. But for each of us who count ourselves as followers of Jesus it is because he chose us and called us.

This was the experience of John Wesley in May 1738. Prior to then, Wesley had sought assurance of his sins forgiven, but he was unable to obtain it through his many pious works.

During his trip to Georgia, where he would serve as a missionary, the ship on which he was sailing encountered a terrible storm . . . right in the middle of their time of worship. But the thing that caught Wesley's attention was that, while the English on board were screaming for fear of their lives, the Germans simply continued singing. Wesley asked one of them, “Weren't you afraid? Weren't your women and children afraid?”

The man simply said, “Thank the Lord, we were not afraid; we are not afraid to die.”

Later, Wesley met with one of the German pastors for advice. The pastor asked him, "Do you have the witness within? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?" Wesley was caught off guard. And so the pastor asked, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" Wesley said, "I know he is the Saviour of the world." The pastor replied, "That's true, but do you know he has save you?" Wesley said, "I hope he has died to save me." "But do you know?" And then comes those powerful lines from John Wesley, "I said, 'I do.' But I fear they were vain words." However, what was to happen to Wesley on May 24, 1738 would forever change his answer, and forever change the world. John Wesley, himself, describes what took place that evening in his journal as follows: "In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death."

Friends this is what God wants for all of us. If you are here this morning and know that you have not heard that call, have not allowed Jesus' death to remove the sin which separates you from our heavenly Father then let me encourage to do it this morning. As you listen hear the call of Jesus to come and follow him, to allow him as God to be the ruler of your life.

Jesus as God chooses and calls us to follow him

But then secondly he knows his disciples.

As he looked round the table he certainly knew them. He knew what was in Judas' heart and mind. He knew Peter and what lay ahead for him and we'll think about that a bit more next week with Nigel Foster. He knew John who was close beside him and Matthew and Simon and so on. But also he knows the disciples who sit in this room this morning. Now that is comforting. It is comforting in that we see how Jesus knew those first disciples with their various weaknesses and fallibilities and yet really cared for them. They, warts and all, were important to him. Earlier he had described himself as the shepherd who knew his sheep. The same is true for us. He knows us through and through and we are valuable to him as sheep to a shepherd. He knows us by name and cares deeply about us. Many of us at times feel inadequate disciples. But here is Jesus saying that he knows us and all our weaknesses, sins and failings and he still cares for us. We are his sheep. He does not cast you off or turn you away please don't cast yourself off as if he doesn't or won't care for you. He does care, you do matter yes you.

But the fact that Jesus knows us can also be alarming in that we can't pull the wool over his eyes. We might be able to pretend to others but not to Jesus.

I'm always intrigued by impressionists. Rory Bremner, Alistair McGowan and the like, though I have to admit that sometimes I haven't a clue who they are impersonating. However I think we all are at times guilty of impersonation. Today Matthew I'm a holy Vicar, good and upright, or a loving father patient and kind, or a generous Christian who gives of his time, talents and money gladly. What good impressionists we can be. How many different faces we put on! Of course these may well be things we seek to be and simply fail but sometimes we are guilty of presenting a charade, of hiding our true selves from each other. But we can't hide ourselves from Jesus. He knows us and if we are not truly his he knows it. If we are cold towards him he knows it, if we are drifting away from him he knows it. If our lives are denying him or betraying him he knows it. This morning as you sit here Jesus who is God sees and knows you – how do you feel about that?

As I speak the Holy Spirit will be bringing his word home to us in different ways. For some he will be bringing to us the comfort of knowing that we belong to Jesus despite our many failures, assuring us that we are his. But for some the word will bring rebuke for our waywardness, our lack of love for Jesus, our selfishness. But the one thing we can be sure of and

the third point Jesus makes here is that he tells the truth.

It's there in v20 and v21. As he spoke to those disciples there in the upper room his words were true as they always had been and always will be. He is God and cannot lie. So what is the truth that Jesus is bringing to you this morning, the truth about your relationship with him? That I can't answer for you, only for myself. But I do know that if you are here this morning the Jesus wants to speak to you. I know he wants to tell you the truth. If you are not a follower yet he wants you to hear him ask you to follow him. Will you listen? Will you do that? If so then speak to me at the end or to a friend here.

But if you are a follower then he wants to tell you he has chosen you and he knows you but he has something else specific to you about your relationship to tell you so that you may be rooted and built up in him. He wants you to be moving on in that relationship, growing as a disciple. Will you listen? Will you respond? If so then again speak to me or to a friend afterwards.

But a fourth thing about this relationship of Jesus who is God with his disciples is that

he loved them.

That, as Lionel Graves, pointed out to us last week, is the underlying context of the whole of this last part of John's gospel. John 13:1 says, "Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love." All that Jesus said and did there in the upper room was done in love. V21 says he was troubled in Spirit. There may be many reasons why that was so but coming as it does in the context of betrayal which he has mentioned in v18 and knowing something of the nature of Jesus I feel sure that in part at least it was because he loved Judas and felt for what Judas would go through. This is the full extent of his love, love which is concerned for his betrayer.

When I say Jesus knows us and tells us the truth it has to be in the context of love, of always wanting the best for us. We'll pick up this love of Jesus later in our series but for us this morning as I encourage us to be listening to what God is saying to us through his word I want us to know that whatever it is God is speaking out of love for us as his children.

Jesus is here relating to his disciples he is God, he is the Lord, the master and they are his disciples. He has chosen them, knows them, speaks the truth to them and loves them.

In this passage we see the disciples at sea and not sure what was going on. We see Judas as he steps out to betray Jesus but above all we see Jesus. We see the one who is God and we learn of how he as God relates to us as his disciples today, he chooses us, he knows us, he speaks the truth to us and he loves us.