

## **THE UNSEEN HAND OF GOD (Providence) – Part 2**

### **Mark 14:17-21**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

##### **Consider this illustration:**

A wise old Chinese gentleman lived on the troubled Mongolian border. One day his favorite horse, a beautiful white mare, jumped the fence and was seized on the other side by the enemy. His friends came to comfort him.

“We’re so sorry about your horse,” they said. “That’s bad news.”

“How do you know it’s bad news?” he asked. “It might be good news.”

A week later, the old man looked out his window to see his mare returning at breakneck speed, and alongside her was a beautiful stallion. He put both horses into the enclosure, and his friends came to admire the new addition.

“What a beautiful horse,” they said. “That’s good news.”

“How do you know it’s good news?” replied the man. “It might be bad news.”

The next day, the man’s only son decided to try riding the stallion. It threw him, and he landed painfully, breaking his leg.

The friends made another visit, all of them sympathetic, saying, “We’re so sorry about this. It’s such bad news.”

“How do you know it’s bad news?” replied the man. “It might be good news.”

Within a month, a terrible war broke out between China and Mongolia. The Chinese recruiters came through the area, pressing all the young men into the army. All of them perished—except for the old man’s son, who couldn’t go off to war because of his broken leg.

“You see,” said the gentleman, “the things you considered good were actually bad, and the things that seemed to be bad news were actually for our good.”

The tides of life can send us in different directions – some positive, some negative, some good, some bad. As Christians, they all fall under the umbrella of **Romans 8:28**.

In today’s scripture, we read about a pivotal point in the ministry of Jesus Christ. At the center of this passage is the incredibly powerful dimension of God’s hand governing all things.

Last week, we saw the exact fulfillment of prophecy. Peter and John find the man with the pitcher of water that Jesus told them they would find. Then, they find the exact room He described. Some could look at that and say “It’s a miracle!” No, it is something greater.

#### **This is God’s Providence.**

This is something greater. This is the omnipotent, ever powerful Providence of our Creator. This is not miraculous in the Biblical sense of the word.

**Recall from last week:** God’s Providence in **Mark 14:12-16**

Three identified components of the Providence of God:

- |                             |                           |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1) Preservation – Existence | God <b>Keeps it going</b> |
| 2) Concurrence – Activity   | God <b>Uses us</b>        |
| 3) Government – Guidance    | God <b>Directs it all</b> |

**READ Mark 14:12-21**

**Proposition: The Passover, The Prophecy, The Protest, Providence.**

## **I. The Passover**

**Mark 14:17 – “And when it was evening He came with the twelve.”**

**“came with the twelve”**

- last trip from Bethany back to Jerusalem in His life
- John and Peter have returned after their preparation announcing all is ready
- After sunset, Friday in Jewish reckoning (Thurs evening to us)
  - **the Passover** is eaten at night and must be concluded by midnight

**Understand: 2 Passovers**

This takes place on Thursday night of Passion Week. It is in the Jewish calendar the fourteenth of Nisan. And on this Thursday night is the Passover celebration for all of the **Galilean Jews**. In the north, Galilee, they celebrated their Passover on our Thursday because they mark the day from sunrise to sunrise. The **Judean Jews** in the south celebrated their Passover on our Friday because they mark the day from sunset to sunset.

This is important because this allows Jesus to celebrate the Passover on Thursday night and still be the Passover on Friday.

- Now, it is essential that our Lord be the Passover on Friday and die at three o'clock - exactly the time the Judeans were slaughtering the lambs for their Passover - for He is the Passover Lamb.
- The Lord needs to celebrate this final Passover because it allows Him to fulfill all righteousness.

**Take note:**

Some may say about the 2 Passovers → “That’s a Miracle!” No. It’s not a miracle. It is something much greater.

→ It is the Guiding, Preserving, Sustaining Providence of God.

Divine Providence accounts for any and every authentic incident of divine guidance, provision, answer to prayer, striking bit of random knowledge, and extraordinary providence that has ever occurred.

## II. The Prophecy

**Mark 14:18** – “And as they were reclining *at the table and eating*,”

The original Israelites ate the original Passover in haste, while standing in traveling attire (**Exod 12:11**). They celebrated it this way to commemorate how God delivered them in haste from the enemy. The tradition changed over the centuries.

In **John 12-17**, we have the Upper Room Discourse.

Another argument between the apostles over who is greatest ensues

- This is truly unbelievable!

**John 13:1-20**

- Jesus humbled himself and washed the feet of the apostles as an example of self-sacrificing humility (**John 13:15**)

In the society of that time, foot washing was reserved for the lowliest of servants. Peers did not wash one another's feet. They are shocked when Jesus washes their feet. Jesus teaches the lesson of selfless service.

We see His Humility!

**Consider this illustration:**

Have you ever noticed that only the smaller birds sing? You have never hear a note from an eagle, a turkey, or an ostrich. But you hear from the canary and the sparrow.

- The sweetest music comes from those Christians who are small in their own estimation and before the Lord.

After the foot washing,

**Mark 14:18** “Jesus said, “Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me-- one who is eating with Me.””

- Jesus previously told them - four times - that He will be betrayed.
- Now He tells them a detail - He will be betrayed by one of them!

**John 13:21** – “He became troubled in spirit” – Jesus became troubled in spirit

“one who is eating with Me.”

Christian fellowship around meals is special. There is something that bonds people who eat together.

- the most intimate form of trust and relationship → brings out the horror of the betrayal

Jesus declares with David (treachery of Ahithophel – in **2 Sam 16** turned traitor against David and ended up strangling himself)

**Psalm 41:9** “Even my close friend, in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me.”

**Psalm 55:12-14** “For it is not an enemy who reproaches me, Then I could bear *it*; Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me, Then I could hide myself from him. <sup>13</sup> But it is you, a man my equal, My companion and my familiar friend. <sup>14</sup> We who had sweet fellowship together, Walked in the house of God in the throng.”

Jesus points out → Disloyalty!

Consider this quote by Charles Spurgeon:

“It is no stranger; it is no bloodhound of the Pharisees who sniffs him out in the garden; but Judas ... Betrayed with a kiss! ... Handed over to them who seek his blood by one who should have defended him to the death.”

#### **Take note:**

- Judas had heard all the teaching.
- He has seen all the compassion.
- One whom Jesus called, taught, and loved turned against Him and will deliver Him into the hands of His enemies.
- There is little human suffering more overwhelming than that caused by someone close and dear who violates the intimacy and trust of friendship to the **point of treachery**.

One ancient commentator says this

“This is especially characteristic of extremely evil people – to plot against those with whom they have shared bread and salt, who would in no way injure them?”

**Transition:** The **Passover**, The **Prophecy**, now ...

### **III. The Protest**

**Mark 14:19** – “They began to be grieved and to say to Him one by one, “Surely not I?””

They express uncertainty about themselves, aware of their own weaknesses

Jesus hears:

- 10 questions of wholesome hesitation – “Surely not I?”
- 1 question of childlike trust (**John 13:25** – “Lord, who is it?”)
- 1 question of loathsome hypocrisy (Matt 26:25)
  - Judas embraces the obscurity by lying through his teeth – “surely it is not I, Rabbi?”

**Mark 14:20** – “**And He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who dips with Me in the bowl."**

Judas is nearby, sitting very near to Jesus. There is a side dish which would be used together by three or four at the table – contains a sauce of dried fruits, spices, and vinegar into which pieces of the unleavened bread and bitter herbs are dipped.

- Jesus emphatically restates the traitor is present.
- Doesn't identify him by name.

**Recall:**

- Judas is a Master Deceiver
- Jesus and Judas lived and traveled together for 3 years
- They ate together, slept together, taught together, and ministered together

Consider this quote from Cyprian:

“His wonderful patience . . . He was even able to tolerate Judas to the end with enduring patience. He could eat calmly with his betrayer. He could patiently be aware of his enemy at his own table and not let on.”

**Consider another illustration:**

In the frigid waters around Greenland are countless icebergs, some little and some gigantic. If you'd observe them carefully, you'd notice that sometimes the small ice floes move in one direction while their massive counterparts flow in another. The explanation is simple. Surface winds drive the little ones, whereas the huge masses of ice are carried along by deep ocean currents.

When we face trials and tragedies, it's helpful to see our lives as being subject to two forces-- surface winds and ocean currents. The winds represent everything changeable, unpredictable, and distressing. But operating simultaneously with these gusts and gales is another force that's even more powerful. It is the sure movement of God's wise and sovereign purposes, the deep flow of His unchanging love.

**This is God's Providence.**

**IV. Providence**

**Mark 14:21** “**"For the Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him;"**

Recall from last week:

- Divine Intent
- Divine Fulfillment
- Divine Timing

**Romans 8:32** “**He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all**”

- Jesus gave Himself for people's sin.

**Ephesians 5:25** “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her;”

From Gregory of Nazianus:

“He is sold, and cheap was the price – thirty pieces of silver; yet He buys back the world at the mighty cost of His own blood. A lamb, He is led to the slaughter – yet He shepherds Israel and now the whole world as well.”

“**as it is written**” – perfect – “it stands written”

- Jesus is not a helpless victim!
- He accepts His coming suffering as the will of God as revealed in Scripture (**Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; whole OT sacrificial system!**)

**Luke 22:22** “the Son of Man is going as it has been determined;”

That is according to God’s Purpose! At the hand of God’s Providence!

**Mark 14:21** ...“**but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! *It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.*”**”

- one of the most Powerfully clear statements in Scripture!
- Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility!!!
- God’s Providence doesn’t lessen the culpability of Judas’s guilt
  
- “**woe**” – intense hardship or distress - 'disaster, horror.'
- “**the Son of Man**” – Messianic Sacrifice!
- Literally: “good for him if he had not been born – that man!”

Judas has no interest in the salvation of the world or the coming of the kingdom. He is a consummate thief, a disillusioned, selfish mercenary who will sell out his teacher and friend for thirty pieces of silver.

**Take note:**

An unholy man in the hands of a holy God is used to accomplish a holy purpose.

→ **Concurrence!!!**

- *You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good.*—Joseph, in **Genesis 50:20**
- *All things work together for good to those who love God.*—**Romans 8:28**

**Consider this illustration:**

**Genesis 15:16** “**Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.**”

- This is the OT counterpart to Mark 14:21
- Captures God’s Providence in a beautiful way
- Genesis 15:13 – 400 years – forgot Joseph, enslaved in Egypt

- God will rescue His children
- He came at the exact and perfect time – His judgment will fall on Amorites

**Acts 2:22-23** “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know-- <sup>23</sup> this *Man*, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.”

### Consider This Illustration:

Ask any child in school, ‘Which way does the **Mississippi River** flow?’ He will say, ‘From north to south.’ If you fly over the Mississippi there are times and places where the Mississippi River will due west. There are times and places where the Mississippi River will flow north, but it ultimately and finally flows south.

“So the elective purpose of God in Christ Jesus is frustrated, turned, twisted, but it is God’s purpose of the ages that the reign and kingdom will belong to Him.”— W. A. Criswell

- Dictators may plan, armies may march, and the governments of the nations may think they are adjusting all the affairs of the world, but the mighty men of the earth are only: the dust of the chariot wheels of God’s providence.
- *He knows, and foreknows, all things, and His foreknowledge is foreordination; He, therefore, will have the last word, both in world history and in the destiny of every man.*—J. I. Packer

### Application:

We must have confidence in the Providence of God Produces:

→ **Patience** and **Trust** in God’s timing.

### CONCLUSION

**Luke 22:15-16** “And He said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; <sup>16</sup> for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.””

- the kingdom is a present, personal experience.
- it is also a future, historical event.

“**never again until**” → Jesus the Passover Lamb was slain to ransom people from every tribe and tongue and nation. The Passover won’t take place again until the kingdom is established. We are part of His unfolding plan of redemption.

In God's plan of Redemption it is necessary for Jesus to keep the Passover. It is His last opportunity to teach them (Upper Room Discourse). But, more importantly even than that, it is the time of His transforming the Passover supper of the **Old Covenant**, marked by the shedding of lambs' blood, into the Lord's Supper of the **New Covenant**, which is marked by the shedding of His own blood. → The Lord's Supper, Communion – **Mark 14:22f**

- God has the Last Word!
- He has the last word for His glory!
- God wrote the plans
- God unfolds the plans
- God keeps it going
- God uses us
- God directs it all.....with His unseen hand.