



Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, **He it is, to whom I shall give a sop**, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, **That thou doest, do quickly**. Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night. (John 13:21-30)

The great American poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, penned these words in Hymn to the Night:

Look, then, into thine heart, and write!
Yes, into Life's deep stream!
All forms of sorrow and delight,
All solemn Voices of the Night,
That can soothe thee, or affright,--
Be these henceforth thy theme.

There are two themes represented in these lines – sorrow and joy. The two are mutually incompatible. There comes a night to all of us, and we must know before the light fades to which night our souls shall be relegated. We all know, and we know with the certainty of Holy Writ, which night awaits us! The only side of that equation that settles the rest is this: Are we born again? All who are born again know that fact with a certainty. St. John of the Cross wrote in Dark Night of the Soul (though Roman, he possesses some insight of interest):

1. On a dark night, Kindled in love with yearnings—oh, happy chance!—
I went forth without being observed, My house being now at rest.
2. In darkness and secure, By the secret ladder, disguised—oh, happy chance!—
In darkness and in concealment, My house being now at rest.
3. In the happy night, In secret, when none saw me,

Nor I beheld aught, Without light or guide, save that which burned in my heart.

4. This light guided me More surely than the light of noonday

To the place where he (well I knew who!) was awaiting me— A place where none appeared.

5. Oh, night that guided me, Oh, night more lovely than the dawn,

Oh, night that joined Beloved with lover, Lover transformed in the in the Beloved!

Imagine, if you can, a night of horrors that is unending through the annals and halls of Eternity. That is the night of the soul without God. But for the Christian, such a long night does not exist. Remember Kings Saul and David – both inveterate sinners. One (Saul) went down to the dust of the earth as the beast of the field to endure an eternal night apart from God – the other (David) raised to the very portals of Heaven by the simple act of Grace and contrite repentance. We have far too many examples of such men in Scripture to miss the point. Remember Peter who, by his thrice denial, betrayed Christ on the night of His mockery of a trial; and Judas Iscariot who betrayed His Lord for Thirty Pieces of Silver. What is the difference in these two? One, Peter, went out and wept bitterly following his failure of courage and loyalty, and repented for three days before the breakfast with the Lord by the Waters of Galilee; Judas, on the other hand, “repented” – not to God – but within himself and was bequeathed the Potter’s Field for his treachery. He suffered, and suffers, an endless night of misery. *“He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.”* Judas would never again behold the beauty of a glorious sunrise. That very night into which he fled became his eternal heritage.

Our friend, the beggar, Lazarus, suffered all the days of his life under the sun for want of food, comfort, and love. The Rich Man (God gives no name to those who have none in Heaven) died and was buried. What kind of morning did Lazarus enjoy, and what of the Rich Man?

Lazarus: *“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.”* (Luke 16:22)

The Rich Man: *“. . . the rich man also died, and was buried; 23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.* (Luke 16:22-23) The rich man was cast out into that Eternal Darkness which is the plight of all who separate themselves from God; but poor Lazarus received an Angelic Escort to Abraham’s Bosom. *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”* (Gal 6:7)

Now, I am well aware that there may be some who take umbrage at this kind of biblical emphasis on the disposition of the soul. There are, perhaps, three different primary kinds of reaction:

1. Resentment at being reminded of one’s greater care of pleasure than the care for their own souls;
2. Fearful acknowledgement of one’s need to come to the Throne of Grace and seek the Lord’s mercy and grace in contrition of one’s sins; and
3. Comfort and satisfaction in the provision of the Lord for all who know Him as Redeemer, Savior, and Friend. I believe we all fall into one of these categories for the most part.

I hope there is no reader of this devotion that falls into the first category mentioned above, for such were the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees who were satisfied by their own righteousness and sought the death of the One they KNEW to be the Messiah.

The second category is a hopeful one for *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”* (Prov 1:7) The latter category is also one of hope and surety. God knows and judges the heart. He already knows your disposition, and it is evidenced through endurance in the faith: *“he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”* (Matt 24:13) and a salient value of endurance in the faith is a dedication to study the Word – not just on

the Lord's Day, but daily. *"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."* (2 Peter 1:5-11) We are not to become biblical 'couch potatoes' relying solely upon the once-per-week sermon and a five minute reading of the Gospel. How would we know if the preacher gives a false message? Too many are puny and malnourished because of that failure.

The day is coming to every reader of this devotion – a day of God's own choosing – when the gentle Angel of Death shall spread his finders over our brow and close our eyes in the sleep of death. With immediate dispatch, we, like Lazarus and the Rich Man, will open our eyes either in Eternal Darkness, or the Glorious Morning of Eternity. *"... in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."* (Psalms 30:5)

Will there be a glorious Morning of Light for you, my Friend; or shall you awaken in the company of Judas and a host of other sinners who have neglected their souls in feeding them with the Word of God?