

Written Copy: John 18:4-9 "Return from Betrayal"

Midweek Lenten Service #2

Wednesday, March 3rd, 2021

Text: John 18:4-9

⁴ Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" ⁵ They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. ⁶ When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground. ⁷ So he asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." ⁸ Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go." ⁹ This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one."

The text's intent

To describe the plotting and purposeful betrayal from one of Jesus' own Disciples who had walked with Him intimately for the past three years. To show that Judas knew in some way this was wrong, was fearful of Jesus' authority and power, and afraid He might strike back. Despite all this it shows that Jesus' remains in complete control. While this is the time of the power of darkness Jesus will be betrayed and handed over because He allows it as all part of the Father's will. He demonstrates His continued authority by the force of His words and the affect they have on those who gather in opposition to Him. Peter sinfully is still trying to counter what he has clearly been told is God's will through his own sinful actions, which Jesus commands he stop. Jesus clearly states He has the divine power to end this at any time, but this is the hour that the power of darkness is allowed to do it's worst, which must in the end only serve God's plan of salvation.

Focus Statement:

All that happened in the Garden must happen so that God's great plan of salvation would be accomplished. Not even the powers of darkness working against Jesus could stop Him from accomplishing the salvation of all mankind. His death by betrayal and His resurrection are the answer and salvation for all who betrayed Him, betray their statement of faith in God, and betray one another.

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

For our own sinful selfish reason we betray confidences and promises when keeping them is averse to our own personal well-being. Others betray us and we call for them to be punished. We betray God every time we confess the Creed and then live lives that testify against it.

What the hearer should do as a result:

Realize that, those who fail to repent of their sin of betrayal such as Judas will be condemned to life without God's comfort now and eternal separation from Him. But those who do repent, like King David, may suffer consequences in this life, yet are forgiven and restored to communion with God and His Church and will receive eternal life.

Subject Sentence: Jesus died to forgive betrayal, so should we forgive.

Introduction: What is Betrayal?

When it comes to the idea of betrayal, especially thinking of myself as a betrayer, I had to spend time in introspective thought. “Betrayal is not a part of my normal vocabulary. It’s not a sin that I normally focus on in my life. Now that’s not to say that I haven’t committed it, I just haven’t really focused on it. We all know Judas infamous role as “the Disciple who betrayed Jesus”. Well, I haven’t sold Him for 30 pieces of silver any time recently, have I? Then again, not so fast Pastor Mark.

In our daily lives and culture betrayal is when someone who’ve you put your trust and confidence in betrays that trust and confidence, usually to benefit themselves or avoid suffering on their own part. The classic example would come from any of the spy movies. One that comes to mind is the first Mission Impossible Movie starring Tom Cruise. He plays secret agent Ethan Hunt who works for a secret undercover task force that goes on spy missions for our country, missions that don’t officially exist. At the beginning of the movie, he watches helplessly as most of his fellow team dies horribly, having been betrayed into the hands of the enemy by some unknown agent. Because he is the only survivor, the head of the agency accuses him, an innocent man, of being the betrayer. In the end we find out that the real betrayer is Jim Phelps (played by Jon Voight), the leader of Ethan’s team, and a man that was a close friend of Ethan’s, his personal mentor. In the movie, as in real life, we see that betrayal not only hurts outwardly but inwardly. It breaks the heart.

Looking back on my life, I can see the times when I have betrayed the confidence of others. Back in my time before becoming a Pastor, when friends confided in me, I remember on occasion I betrayed that confidence when it was inconvenient for me to keep quiet. In a work situation it was always too easy to throw a fellow worker “under the bus” in order to lessen or avoid negative consequences on myself. And then there are the matters of love schoolyard love. You promise to go steady with a girl, you tell your guy that he is the only one. And that turns out to be true only until someone newer or better comes along. All of us at one time or another are guilty of betraying the confidence or love of another.

Story of King David’s Betrayal

Not even the one who Scripture identifies as “the man after God’s own heart”, King David, is innocent of this sin. Let’s take a look at King David in our Old Testament Lesson. The story presented is a familiar one where David commits the grievous sin of adultery followed by another grievous sin, that of murder. But did you ever look at this tale from the aspect of betrayal?

David was a married man. He had as many as 7 wives before the Bathsheba incident happens. And while leaders before and after engaged in polygamy, that was never God’s plan or design. So, David’s lusting after, going after, and sleeping with Bathsheba was a betrayal of his marriage vows before the LORD. And Bathsheba, being married to Uriah the Hittite, betrayed her marriage vows with David, who was complicit in this sin.

Now let’s consider who Uriah was to David. He was one of David’s Mighty Men, a group that professed loyalty to David personally. They fought with him and protected him even

before he became king. They pledged their lives in loyalty to him and he to them. We see Uriah's loyalty to David and his position as a warrior defending David's kingdom when David calls him home on leave. David is hoping that while he is home, he will sleep with his wife Bathsheba. Then it will naturally be assumed that Bathsheba's pregnancy was caused by her husband. But he refuses, citing the fact that the rest of his comrades are giving up their comfort to defend David's kingdom. Uriah's focus is on loyalty to the LORD God and the king who the LORD's anointed. Not even food and drink can move him from this commitment. So, David's scheme fails. And how is Uriah repaid for his loyalty to God and to David? David plots to have him killed. David even sends the message ordering his murder back with Uriah himself instructing Joab, the commander of David's army, to arrange it. So it is that Uriah, faithful to David and David's kingdom rule, a good soldier, one of David's Mighty Men, leads the charge against a fortress where there was fierce opposition, only to have his contingent pull back, leaving Uriah alone to die.

Perhaps even more tragic and troubling is the response of Uriah's betrayer! With a very glib response that lacks any remorse or acknowledgement of guilt (**2 Samuel 11:25**) **David said to the messenger, "Thus shall you say to Joab, 'Do not let this matter trouble you, for the sword devours now one and now another. Strengthen your attack against the city and overthrow it.' And encourage him."** David's response to the death of this man who dedicated his life in defense of David and his kingdom was, "Oh well, war is hell and men die. Don't let it bother you. Fight on harder with renewed vigor while I remain back here in comfort and peace and enjoy my adultery at the expense of betraying my friend to death." And how did God look down upon this? **2 Samuel 11:27b** **But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.** It was enough that David deserved eternal death.

Jesus Betrayal in the Garden

Betrayal hurts, and our Lord knows exactly how it feels to be betrayed. He experienced it firsthand in His humanity in the Garden of Gethsemane. He experienced it at the hands of Judas, one of the Twelve. Judas, one of His handpicked chosen group who for three years followed Him, ate with Him, slept with Him, and experienced miraculous things that no other eyes experienced. One of the Twelve who experienced the camaraderie hanging out and traveling with Jesus. Judas, one of the Twelve who shared with Jesus times of sadness and grief such as at the beheading of John the Baptist, and at the tomb of Lazarus. And Judas was there in the Upper Room when Jesus revealed that one of them, one of His close personal friends, was destined to betray Him. And here in our Gospel Lesson we see that betrayal unfolding before us.

This was not just a momentary flash of anger or impulse on Judas part. It involved careful planning beforehand as he met with the chief priests. It involved him selling His master in betrayal for 30 pieces of silver, the price of a slave. It involved Judas departing the final

gathering of Jesus Disciples in the Upper Room in order to put his plan into action. It involved Judas assembling a large group of Roman soldiers equipped with swords, led by a trained Roman officer. It involved the recruitment and assembly of the Temple Police force armed with clubs. All these and more Judas recruited just to arrest an unarmed Galilean Rabbi and his untrained and lightly armed band of 11 civilians. What does this tell you? He knew this was wrong. He also knew that Jesus had power, and He feared he might use it. He wanted serious backup for this mission.

Jesus had the foreknowledge of this that could've prevented it from ever happening. He knew what Judas was doing and planning. Yet instead of hiding out where Judas couldn't find Him Jesus led His disciples purposefully to the place where they regularly bedded down for the night. He purposefully prepared Himself in prayer and encouraged the Eleven others to do likewise in preparation for what was to come.

And when they did come, He demonstrated that He was in control throughout the whole scene. **John 18:4-6** ⁴ **Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?"** ⁵ **They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth."** **Jesus said to them, "I am he."** **Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.** ⁶ **When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.** Instead of hiding, or even waiting for them to come for Him, He came forward to meet them. Not included in John's Gospel but mentioned in the other 3 Gospels is the kiss on the cheek from Judas. How bittersweet is that? The sign of love and friendship is instead here the sign of betrayal from the betrayer.

Perhaps in wonder of Jesus courage in coming forward and facing this armed band by Himself, or perhaps just by the Jesus divine power of control, this kiss doesn't galvanize anyone into action. So, Jesus moves this whole scene forward with the authoritative question **"Whom do you seek?"** Now remember, they have come to arrest the one who in their minds is a criminal, an enemy of Rome and an enemy of the Jewish ruling council. The answer you would expect is "You! You traitor!" Instead, the answer they give is official and respectful, as if in a court of law where a person who has not been officially found guilty is being addressed. Jesus clear response breaks the inaction of these soldiers and the rest of the mob. But instead of rushing forward to take Him, they fall backward, and then fall to the ground. It's one thing for any civilians and slaves among them to be taken aback, but not trained and seasoned Roman soldiers taught to stand tall in the face of any adversity without fear. Why do they fall back? Jesus has answered using the divine name of the Triune God: **"I am"**. But it's not as if the name itself had some magical properties. The name is the true identity of the One who said it. He is the almighty all-powerful Lord of the Universe in the flesh. His word alone has amazing power. His word brought the whole world into existence. From Him comes all life, even the life of these men. What we have here is a glimpse into the future of how all mankind, even those who betrayed Him, will react when faced with our Lord in all His glory on the Last day. They will all fall on their knees and confess who He really is.

The inactivity continues. They get back up, but still, no one is moving to arrest Him. **John 18:7-9** ⁷ So he asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." ⁸ Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go." ⁹ This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one." Jesus, as He faces the beginning what will be the most horrible suffering and death that any man has ever faced or will face, at that moment thinks not of himself, but these 11 men around Him. These 11 scared men, who promised to stand by Him no matter what, who will instead betray Him by running off and leaving Him to face what is to come all alone, Jesus thinks first and foremost about them and their safety. By His powerful authoritative words, He assures that they will not be arrested or harmed, just as He promised earlier in His High Priestly prayer to the Father. Jesus will not betray the promises He has made to His Heavenly Father.

It should be over. Jesus should then be taken away and the Disciples spared and saved from the mob. Except Peter has to take matters into his own hands. **John 18:10-11** ¹⁰ Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) ¹¹ So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?" Peter, perhaps with a mind to live up to his promise he made to stand beside Jesus and fight for Him no matter what, does a stupid impulsive thing. Note that he doesn't attack a Roman soldier or an armed Temple Guard. He attacks an unarmed servant, perhaps one who was finally sent to bind Jesus to be taken away. Keep in mind this is still a very tense situation, with trained soldiers at the ready to do what they've been trained to do. This impulsive action by Peter could've resulted in a blood bath with all the Disciple's dead. Except it won't. Not with Jesus still in charge of all things.

He tells Peter sternly to "Put your sword away! This is the cup of wrath I told you I must drink from the Father. And to all who are assembled He says (**Matthew 26:52b-54**) ^{52b} For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. ⁵³ Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴ But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" And then addressing those who have come out after Him as if He was a criminal, (**Luke 22:53**) **When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.**" He tells them that this is happening not because you've chosen it or because you've overpowered me. It's not happening because of any imagined authority of the chief priests of the ruling council. This is the Son of God who is the Son of Man giving Himself over to the power of darkness, and the prince of darkness who is the devil, to finally have His way with Jesus. And yet, it is still Jesus Christ who remains in control over it all.

What Happens to those guilty of Betrayal?

So, what happens to those who are guilty of the sin of betrayal? King David was guilty of betraying his wives, his good friend Uriah, and His Lord. What happened? When the LORD confronted David with the Law through the prophet Nathan, he confessed, repented and was forgiven. What happened to the 11 who betrayed their promise to stand beside Jesus and ran off? He came to them on Easter morning, the glorified Word Incarnate, and they confessed, repented, and were forgiven. What happened to Judas? He was beset by guilt over what he knew in his heart was wrong, but never repented. He had given up his faith. He tragically ended his life by suicide.

How could any of them be forgiven? How can we who betray each other be forgiven? How can we, who confess the Apostle's Creed on Sunday and then live as if it doesn't matter Monday through Saturday be forgiven? Because of what Jesus said must happen that night in the Garden. He must be taken prisoner, suffer at the hands of the Jewish leaders and the Romans, and be put death. He must die, but not for His own acts of betrayal, because He had none. He must suffer and die for all those involved, including Judas and the Romans. He must die you and for me. He died to forgive all the times we have betrayed our fellow man. He died to forgive all the ways you have betrayed your faith in Him. He suffered your temporal and eternal punishment. And He rose again so that you might know for certain your shame and guilt has forever been taken care of. So that you might have the hope of eternal life to come.

Conclusion

What's the takeaway for us? We are all guilty of betrayal. All those without repentant faith, who refuse God's call to see their sin, confess, and believe in His forgiveness that comes only through Jesus Christ, all those will be condemned to an eternal fate worse than Judas temporal one.

But all of you who regularly confess before your God, both of those things that you know of, realizing there are plenty more things you have forgotten. Those of you who confess the things you have done and the things you've left undone; all of you who Return to the Lord in repentance are saved, both now and unto eternal life. You are the reason all these things must happen, so that your eternal salvation can be assured. And you and I, who have been forgiven of so much, how can we not forgive the lesser sins of betrayal that have been committed against us? And, perhaps in doing so, we can be the means, the tool of the Holy Spirit, to save others from that fate worse than Judas. To all you who have committed the sin of betrayal: **Joel 2:12-13** ¹² **"Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; ¹³ and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.** Amen.