

The Great Sayings in the Gospels
Message 140
Betrayal
Matthew 26:14-16

Matt 26:14-16

- 14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,
15 And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they
covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.
16 And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

Introduction:

Matthew and Mark chose to link this account with that of the incredible worship of Mary that we discussed in the last message. It is as if they wanted to draw the greatest possible contrast between the two events. They are, indeed, the very opposite of one another.

Among people who love honor, dignity, and integrity, betrayal has always been seen as one of the most heinous of all crimes. And, indeed, it is.

For a long time in American history, the name Benedict Arnold was despised and used to offer the most profound insult that one person might cast at another. "You are just a Benedict Arnold," meant that one was being accused of betraying a sacred trust. The man betrayed not only his oath of allegiance to his commander but it was viewed that he had betrayed every citizen of the country.

At the same time those who have no honor or dignity have realized that if a person could be pressured, tormented, or even tortured into betraying what they believed in the deepest, that person would be broken internally in a way that no torture could match.

Often when Christians have been tortured for their faith their tormentors have attempted to force them to disavow Christ, the Bible, and the Church. Christians know that the ultimate test of the reality of our faith is to abide faithful to the end no matter what. Those who have folded under the pressure have been totally broken hearted and ashamed for their weakness.

If you ever read the famous book '1984' you will recall that the lead character, after being drawn into a relationship with a young woman whom, he supposed, was a part of the resistance movement like himself, was taken and forced to betray not only the movement but also the woman. Their relationship was forever changed by the betrayal and he was broken back into an obedient citizen.

There is probably no one here except maybe for the young ones who has not been stung at least once in his/her life by serious and profound betrayal. You know by experience that this is an offense like no other. It is almost impossible to describe the breath-taking pain that is caused

when one whom we supposed we could trust turns on us in an evil way.

There is scarcely a culture on earth that does not regard betrayal as one of the worst of all sins that one might commit. Human society, for the most part, is structured around trust and loyalty, and betrayal is the violation of that. It is for a profound reason that traitors are viewed as some of the most despicable of all people.

And, also connected with that idea is the principle that the more intimate the relationship or the more important the entity to whom one is presumed to have loyalty, the more profound the betrayal is. Disloyalty to a childhood club or to a college fraternity is far less serious, in our eyes, than a husband's betrayal of his wife, or desertion under fire in the military.

Therefore, it is simply impossible for us to comprehend with any real sense of understanding the profundity of Judas' betrayal of Jesus.

I. But Judas did betray Jesus.

Jesus had been telling them that someone would.

In that famous passage in John 6, He had declared both the fact of the future betrayal as well as the ultimate loyalty of the betrayer.

John 6:64-71

- 64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.
- 65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.
- 66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.
- 67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?
- 68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.
- 69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.
- 70 Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?
- 71 He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

It has always been remarkable to me that Jesus had chosen Judas in the first place. Notice that He said, "one of you *is* a devil." He was a devil when Jesus chose him as well as when he preached the gospel with the other twelve. It seems that Jesus even gave him power to work miracles like He did to the rest.

Mark 6:7-13

- 7 And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;
- 8 And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff

- only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse:
9 But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats.
10 And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.
11 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city.
12 And they went out, and preached that men should repent.
13 And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them. KJV

Think of it! He had worked miracles (apparently) and cast out demons in the name of Jesus. How could he betray Him?

But he did. He agreed to sell the Lord of the Universe, Who had proven Himself to be so in the very presence of Judas, for the price of a common slave. Now, certainly, this was more than an insignificant amount but it was far from being a fortune, some grand and significant prize.

As the story will unfold Judas will eat the Passover meal with Jesus and the rest of the disciples. It seems that Jesus actually washed Judas' feet along with the others. Judas had even been there as Jesus had proclaimed that one of those present would betray him and asked, along with the rest, "Is it I?" He had departed before the Lord instituted the Communion celebration, we think, and went to arrange the final stage of the betrayal. Then, as Jesus labored in sweat, tears, and agony there in Gethsemane, he had come and identified Him to the soldiers as Jesus by kissing the Lord on the cheek.

On the one hand, it astounds us that a human could sink to such depths, or, then again, maybe not.

But he had already been practicing betrayal. He had been carrying the money bag for the group. The contributions that people made so that these twelve could eat as they traveled about were his responsibility...and Judas had been stealing from the bag. Every time he put his hand in the bag to take something for himself, he betrayed the trust that had been placed in him. Every coin he spent on something he desired was a betrayal of the profession of faith that he had made at his baptism.

You see, he who professes faith also professes repentance from sin. And he who professes repentance from sin does not continue in it. He cannot be a thief. The scripture is quite clear about that.

1 Cor 6:9-10

- 9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,
10 *Nor thieves*, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall

inherit the kingdom of God.

And Judas was a thief, not just someone who had once taken something not his, but a practicing thief, one who stole regularly, consistently, and habitually. He could honestly be called ‘a thief’ for that was the life that he lived.

In doing so he secretly betrayed all that he claimed to be and the Lord he pretended to serve. And, there are no secrets with God. This betrayal was just as real as the receiving of the 30 pieces of silver or the kiss on the cheek in Gethsemane.

Secret betrayals are betrayals just the same.

II. You will recall that Peter also betrayed Jesus the very same (Jewish) day.

As they were making their way out to the Mount of Olives, Jesus told him,, very emphatically that he would betray Him, and, just as emphatically, Peter had denied that he would.

Matt 26:30-35

- 30 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.
31 Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.
32 But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.
33 Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.
34 Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.
35 Peter said unto him, ***Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.*** Likewise also said all the disciples.

After initially running away there in the Garden, Peter had followed the band of soldiers to high priest’s palace where he sought to watch the proceedings while making himself inconspicuous among the servants around the fire. But he was recognized and called out for being a Galilean and a follower of Jesus. Peter had lost all of his bravado and his professed courage melted into cowardice. Three times he denied that he knew Jesus and the third time he invoked an oath to that effect.

When the rooster did crow and Jesus turned and looked at him Peter realized what had just happened and left to bitterly weep over his great sin. Legend has it that he would, for the rest of his life, often weep when he heard the crowing of a rooster.

This, too, was a betrayal. It was just as profound as the betrayal of Judas. He, for just a moment, repented of his repentance and cast aside his faith. He identified himself once again among the unbelievers and sided with those who were scheming to put Jesus to death.

The reactions of the two men were similar in some ways and yet very different. Both of them

were profoundly sorry about what they had done. Both of them were completely undone and distraught over their actions. Judas went and hanged himself but Peter simply went and wept out his repentance before God. Judas continued down that road away from God but Peter sought and found the way home.

III. In reality, they all betrayed Jesus.

They had all affirmed, like Peter, that they would die with Him, yet, when push came to shove:

Mark 14:50 And they all forsook him, and fled.

John, it seems, was the first to get hold of himself and return to stand with Jesus.

John 18:15

15 And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.

So far as we know, he remained close to Jesus throughout the ordeal, even standing at the cross when He was crucified.

Thomas, it seems, was the last to return, only affirming again his faith a week after the Resurrection.

Think of it, every one of the twelve that had been with Jesus through the last 3 ½ years, had seen all the miracles, heard all of the teachings, vowed never to forsake Him, betrayed Him.

Can you imagine the shame they all felt, the humiliation, the embarrassment? Can you imagine the tears that came to their eyes every time they remembered that awful night and the following day? Each one of them, in turn, would have another day of testing, another day when they would be faced with the prospect of dying for Him or denying Him. Except for John (and, of course, Judas) they each one went to his death rather than betray their Lord ever again.

IV. And, this brings me to my last point, we have all betrayed Him.

I know, we like to think of ourselves as better than Judas, better than Peter. We like to think that we would never run away, never betray Him for money, never curse and swear that we never knew Him.

But the reality is that we betray Him every time we willfully sin, every time we should say something to affirm that we know Him and do not.

And, here is the really sad part. Every time we pass by the opportunity to do something to help one of His brothers or sisters we betray Him, deny Him, act as if we do not know Him.

Matt 25:41-45

- 41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:
- 42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:
- 43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.
- 44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?
- 45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. KJV

We live in a day when people who call themselves ‘Christian’ glibly give one another a ‘pass’ concerning sin. “Well, we are all sinners,” we say with a smile.

But when we realize that every sin, particularly ever conscious and willful sin, is a betrayal of Jesus, no less profound, no less wicked, no less severe than Judas’ kiss, or Peter’s oath, suddenly the smile should disappear.

In fact, we should never be able to say, “I am a sinner,” without tears coming to our eyes and shame darkening our heart.

There is a famous quote of Paul that is often repeated.

1 Tim 1:15

- 15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. KJV

Can you imagine how Paul must have felt as, all those many years later, he remembered how he had persecuted, murdered, and tortured the people of God, how that Jesus had intervened from heaven to say, “I am Jesus, the One you are persecuting?”

I may be proven wrong one day but, until I am, I am going to keep the picture in my mind of Paul wiping those old fading eyes with his sleeve as he confessed, one more time of thousands, that he was chief of sinners.

In Conclusion:

Oh, my dear friend, let us repent of treating sin lightly. Let us labor to see every sin as a violation of the most profound relationship that we have ever or will ever have.

Let us seek to see all sin as profound wickedness and cast it from us.

“Well, nobody is perfect,” we glibly say. But, let me ask you this. Which of your sins do you

want to keep? Which of the betrayals of your Lord and Savior seems so attractive to you that you would hold on to it? Which of your denials of Him seems like a good idea to continue?

If you can honestly say, “none,” then, guess what? You want to be perfect!

Our culture is so wicked and perverted that the open desire to be holy and godly is soundly ridiculed in every direction. If we are going to survive as believers, if we are ever to hear the words, “well done, good and faithful servant,” we are going to put all betrayal of the Savior, all denial of Christ, all fear of man and all terror of suffering behind us.

Heb 12:1-2

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. NASU

And yet, with all that said, who was it to whom Jesus appeared the very day that He rose from the dead? Was it not to the ones who had betrayed Him?

And who was it that He took aside at the Sea of Galilee and asked “do you love me?” What is not Peter? And wasn’t it Peter to whom Jesus said, “Feed my sheep”?

And who was it upon whom God the Father poured out His Spirit on the Day of Pentecost? Was it not these same people?

Judas came to the conclusion that there was no future and no possible recovery for the one who betrayed Jesus. He was wrong.

Once you and I have truly faced up to our betrayals of the Lord, there is a day of starting new. Let us seek it until we find it.