

of a betrayal as Judas' kiss. Peter's three-time denial of being a friend and follower of Jesus is also a moment of betrayal. There are no soldiers, no arrests, no others around but there is still a turning and betrayal. Peter knew it so he walked away weeping and in shame.

It would be after the Resurrection that Jesus would forgive and restore Peter. Who knows what would have happened had Judas not gone to self-destruction? But this we know. In the other story of betrayal Jesus forgives. Jesus restores the relationship.

My friends let us admit it, that forgiveness in the moment of betrayal is difficult. What can help us?

Congregational Church pastor, L. Alexander Harper, makes a remarkable observation about Johann Sebastian Bach's musical representation of the Passion story in the Saint Matthew Passion: "Judas' question to Jesus had always been a solo in other cantatas, because Judas is an individual. Not so for Bach. Breaking all tradition, he has the whole chorus instead sing that guilty question, 'is it I, Lord?' The chorus represents you, me, the whole world. Judas is within us all, not 'out there' or 'back in history' somewhere comfortably remote. Judas is our brother." --L. Alexander Harper, "Judas, Our Brother," *St. Luke's Journal of Theology* 29 (1986), 102.

Judas and Peter are us. When we realize that we all betray, then maybe we find the ability to accept it, trust God in it and learn to forgive.

A student once asked Dr. Carlyle Marney, "Dr. Marney, where was the Garden of Eden?" Marney answered, "215 South Elm Street in Knoxville, Tennessee." "Ah, c'mon, you're kidding me," said the student. "It's supposed to be somewhere in the Middle East, isn't it?" "Well, you couldn't prove it by me," Marney replied. "For it was there on Elm Street, when I was a boy, that I stole a quarter out of my Mama's purse and went down to the store and bought some candy and ate it, and then I was so ashamed that I came back home and hid in the closet. It was there that Mama found me and asked, 'Why are you hiding? What have you done?'" Donald J. Shelby of Santa Monica, California (28 February 1993), who tells this story, invites each of us to locate our own Eden "where we first betrayed our highest, discovered that there was a shadow-side within us and tried to hide from the reality of our duplicity.

When was the time when you and I first discovered that we too betray?

It is true betrayal may be the most hurtful moment we experience, but when we experience it we must remember... we betray... sometimes with a kiss, sometimes with a broken promise, sometimes when a curse, sometimes with a turn and walk away... but we betray. When we have been the one who betrayed, then surely we are thankful for forgiveness. Surely, then we might find it within us with God's help the one who knows betrayal to learn to forgive.



THE WAY OF THE CROSS

A Moment of Betrayal

Mark 14:43-52, 66-72

TRINITY PULPIT

Et Tu Brute? Those are famous words of betrayal uttered by Julius Caesar as his friend Brutus joins the others in his own assassination. There are other famous lines and sayings that surround the act of betray. We might say you are a Benedict Arnold or we might say that was the "kiss of death", referring to Judas' kiss of Jesus. There may be no more painful moment in life than that of betrayal. We of course expect our enemies to harm us but when a friend harms us, a confidant, one that we trust, then that is the cut that goes the deepest, as another saying proclaims. It has been said that before there can be betrayal there has to be trust and thus, that is the painful part.

We are drawn to the theme of betrayal. Some of the most popular movies, musicals, plays and television shows are based on the premise of deception and ultimately betrayal. The creator of the most successful reality T.V. Show, *Survivor*, said recently in a television interview "if you cannot lie, be deceitful and learn betrayal, you cannot play this game."

There are many who not only are drawn to this theme of entertainment, but the truth is there are many of us who think that this is the way we must live. Get them before they get you. It does not matter whom you have to climb over to get to the top, it is just getting to the top that matters. In fact, our cultures seemingly applaud the ruthless that gain the world while losing their souls in the process. That is just business. That is just the way it goes. That is life.

However when one is betrayed, then we change our tune. We all know the pain of betrayal in some form or fashion. It can be in family when one we trust seems to do something so selfish that we are pushed to the side, not considered or forgotten. It can happen obviously in marriage, when a spouse disregards the vows made and commits adultery, or even chooses another to be their confidant and closer friend and there is betrayal. It can happen at work when someone

we have worked with for years and confided in uses that information to belittle us and in turn propel him or herself forward.

It can happen in the church. A pastor who does not meet an expectation a member has placed upon him or her can not only disappoint, but leave someone feeling betrayed. A church member can leave the church and a minister can feel betrayed, "after all I did for them", they say. Another member might feel betrayed by another simply because promises go unmet or expectations are not fulfilled. Even in the church there is the experience of betrayal.

We all, like Jesus, know the sting of betrayal. Just like Jesus, we know this pain not from an outsider, but from one of our own. It is interesting when we really look at the Bible we have a hard time pinning down Judas as someone who is the obvious traitor from the beginning. The first three gospels only mention Judas as one of the twelve that is belonging to the group chosen by Jesus, and then later in the scene in the upper room and then in the garden arrest. It is only John's gospel that describes Judas in negative terms earlier in the process of following Jesus.

Judas, who would betray Jesus, is described as Judas Iscariot. There have been many interpretations to Judas' name, and in doing so seeking to understand just who is this one who was so close to Jesus and yet, he would betray Jesus. Judas Iscariot, it has been suggested, is simply a man from Kerith. He would have been the only non-Galilean in the band of Jesus' 12. Meaning, from the beginning, he would have been the odd man out. From the beginning, he would have been the different one.

Others suggest the meaning is simply a leather worker. That he and his father were leather workers and that he might have worn a leather coat, which would have had many pockets, which would mean he could carry the money. Others believe the word is much more



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akin to Sacari or the dagger carriers. The Sacari were essentially religious radicals of Jesus' day. They would carry daggers in their cloaks and they would kill Roman leaders whenever possible. In this way, Judas would have been a revolutionary and one who was looking for a way to bring in the earthly kingdom of God. That meant the Romans had to go and God could then set up the true kingdom. There are many who believe that Judas was part of this group or at least was supportive of the rebellious movement. Thus Judas' betrayal was more of forcing Jesus to make his revolution of the Kingdom of God come at once.

There is some support for this idea. William Barclay points out the two moments when Judas is described as traitor or betrayer come at crucial moments in Jesus' life. The first comes on the heels of the people seeking to seize Jesus and make Him King. In John 6 the people want to make Jesus king, that is make him the King of the Jews, but Jesus resists. It is on the heels of this experience that it is said that Judas was a traitor.

The second moment is right after the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. As Jesus rides into Jerusalem fulfilling the very picture of the promised and coming of Messiah, Judas is to be found making his deal with the rulers and priests for the 30 pieces of silver to identify Jesus. In both cases, there is a glimpse of the earthly kingdom that Judas and others like him wanted, and in both cases we get a glimpse of the heart of Judas.

The other motive for Judas betrayal can simply be money. We know that he is the treasurer of the group and the accusation is that he would pilfer from the funds that the group shared in common. We should not be surprised then that money was a part of the bribe and betrayal.

We can never really know what was in the heart of Judas. We are told that Satan entered him as he made his deal for Jesus' betrayal. Are we to assume that somehow he was demon possessed and could not control his actions, or should we assume that what is meant by that phrase is that he was tempted to betray and betray he did.

Even with the prediction of Judas' betrayal in John 6 and the term Satan entered him in the text, we still find Judas with Jesus and the others at the last supper. What is amazing is that Judas is not only there, but Judas is still in a place of honor. William Barclay suggests that at the Last Supper, the Passover meal Judas was seated at Jesus' right, which means Judas of all the 12 was in the place of honor the very night he would go and finish his deal with the authorities.

At the Passover meal the disciples would have been

reclined leaning on their left arms. Which means that the one on your right would essentially be at your chest. In other words, where you could whisper words and have a private conversation. It is suggested, that the one who had sat at His right in honor betrayed Jesus, just hours before He was betrayed. He had been the one that was physically closest to Jesus in that moment. He was the one who was in whispering distance hearing secretive words.

Only a little while from this place of honor and closeness to Jesus would Judas enter the garden with soldiers and kiss Jesus to identify him, so he could be arrested. Although Jesus knew it was coming the betrayal is close and personal.

There are many things we can say about this betrayal. It was part of God's plan and it was. It fulfilled prophecy and it did. However, the other things we can say about this betrayal are that is a human experience and Jesus experienced it. This was not His only moment of betrayal. There would be the desertion of the others and there was of course Peter's denial. Betrayal comes in many forms. It can be overt like Judas and it can be subtle like Peter. They both were moments of betrayal.

We find some common emotions in the betrayal of Jesus that we too, might feel when we are betrayed. There first is anger. Not so much from Jesus, but from the others. It is reported that Peter is so angry that he takes a sword and slices off the ear of one of the high priests servants. Only for Jesus to remind them they are not to live by the sword or they would die by the sword. Violence was not the way to respond. Yet, anger is present.

Anger is a common response to betrayal. It is almost impossible for us not to experience anger toward the one who betrays us and sometimes we even want to seek revenge. We feel compelled to act. Anger is present at the betrayal of Jesus.

There is not only anger, but there is resentment. What we notice is that resentment remains in regards to Judas. Judas is called traitor throughout the New Testament. In Acts he is referred to as the traitor. He goes down in history as the one who betrayed Jesus and that is his identity. Remember the gospels are written years after this event and even years after the event you can almost hear the resentment in the words of the writers, he was a traitor, a thief and of course died a horrible death.

All of this is true but resentment for what Judas had done even though it is part of God's plan and God uses Judas' weakness and sin to still work and bring about His plan of salvation.

Anger is a common response in our moments of betrayal and of course resentment. When we think of those who have betrayed us, it is hard to ever change our view of that person. There is in even the mention of their name a cringe. There is a sense of resentment toward them. Once we are betrayed it is hard to trust again.

The third element in Jesus betrayal is abandonment or desertion. We miss this part of the story because we are so focused on Judas, but we are told that at the arrest everyone deserted Him, and Mark includes this odd story about a young man who ran off so fast he ran out of his clothes. Speculation of who was this young man has filled many a debate. Some think it to be the author himself, John Mark. John Mark would have been a young man at this time and it could have been he was with a larger group of disciples. Not part of the 12, but tagging along. Others say it is John, the beloved disciple. There is really no way of knowing, however the picture here is more of the urgency of desertion and abandonment.

When we are betrayed there is many times we feel all alone. We feel that we have been abandoned by friends and left to ourselves. So, in the betrayal of Jesus we find the very emotions that we might face when we are betrayed. Anger, resentment and abandonment.

Yet, in Jesus' betrayal we get a glimpse of how we might respond. Jesus does not respond with anger, resentment or feeling of being alone. Jesus instead responds with acceptance, trusting God and forgiveness.

First, Jesus accepts the moment of betrayal. Yes, we can say that this was God's plan and Jesus knew it and so he could accept it, but it was still the betrayal of one close to Him. As Jesus is coming out of the garden praying He simply says, "behold my betrayer is here. My time has arrived." When the arrest is happening, Jesus says something interesting. He looks at this heavily armed group that has come for Him and says, "Who have you come to take? I have been teaching in public and you have come for me like I am a revolutionary. You have come to arrest me like a thief and troublemaker." Then Jesus says, "The scriptures must be fulfilled."

Jesus saw His betrayal as part of God's plan and something He expected and accepted. Now don't hear me wrong this morning. I am not suggesting that when someone betrays us, it is God's will. That is when we betray and

are betrayed it may not be what God intended, but what we chose out of sinfulness. However, we can accept that there will be times when we feel betrayed. Sometimes it was not the intent of the other, but I think if we live long enough we can accept the fact that there will be moments when we feel disappointed in others and sometimes even feel the pain of betrayal.

Jesus accepted His moment of betrayal, but he also trusted God in the midst of it. According to Matthew, in the moment when His disciples responded with violence and revenge, if you draw the sword you will die by the sword. Do you not think I could call on the Father and He would send twelve legions of angels? But how would the scriptures be fulfilled it has to happen this way?

There is acceptance, but more than that trusting God. Jesus trusted the Father in the very moment of betrayal.

When we are betrayed we can let anger fester, we can let resentment take over or we can choose to trust God. My friends we cannot control the actions of others, but we can control our actions and our reactions. Here Jesus in the midst of betrayal simply says I can trust God is still at work.

The last thing we can say about betrayal is that Jesus offers forgiveness. Now the truth is we just don't know about what happens in regard to Judas in this matter. Matthew records Judas coming the High Priest with remorse and confession. Judas even says I have sinned against innocent blood. There are many who say that Judas' confession was not to God, but rather to the high priest. However, it is hard for us to deny that Judas confesses his wrongdoing and he returns the money. In his great remorse he reportedly hangs himself.

Now of course Acts describes the end of Judas' life differently. In Acts, it is said Judas fell head long, that is committed suicide by falling head long and his intestines spilled out. Both descriptions of Judas' death are tragic and horrible. They are not exclusive, but they are different. The scripture just does not tell us if Judas' confession was toward forgiveness, so we just don't know in Judas' case. We can assume that Jesus would have offered him the same forgiveness as he offers to all of us. Can we assume that Jesus would offer forgiveness to the thief on the cross, a stranger, and not to the thief who walked with him for three years?

Where we find forgiveness is in the other story of betrayal. That is in Peter's denial. Peter's denial of Jesus is as much

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