

Betrayed!

Psalm 41; Matthew 26:47–56

This message is part of a series based on texts which contain the phrase “that it might be fulfilled.” Today, we come to Matthew’s account of Jesus’ betrayal at the hands of one of the twelve apostles, Judas Iscariot.

To betray is to break one’s promise to, be disloyal to, or be unfaithful to. It is to double-cross or deceive or cheat on a spouse or dear friend. Perhaps you or someone you know has been betrayed by a person in whom you had confided, in whom you had placed trust.

Judas Iscariot was one of Christ’s disciples. Now Jesus had a lot of disciples. This was to be expected. He was a spellbinding speaker who could hold people’s attention. The common people heard him gladly.¹ What he said made sense. It was true to Scripture. It was enlightening. He illustrated his points with illustrations and parables that made his teaching accessible and understandable. People of all ages loved to listen to him—not just old, but young too. Think of the little boy’s lunch, the five loaves and two fishes that through Jesus’ blessing fed a great multitude. That was a little boy who came to hear Jesus. He could have been back home, playing with his friends, but he joined a big crowd to sit quietly and listen to the great Teacher. That was something he wanted to do.

Do our little boys and girls want to hear Jesus? Do our parents take advantage of every opportunity to have their children hear of Jesus? Some children tell their parents that church is boring—they’d rather be somewhere else, enjoying themselves. Some parents take the easy way out. They give in, and let their child skip church. So their children do not hear the story of Jesus week in, week out, every week of their lives, as God intended. They grow up to think that the story of Jesus isn’t all that important. They do not seek him with all their hearts, and they do not live their lives as followers of Jesus. They die, having enjoyed themselves every Lord’s day morning, but they die without Christ. What do you suppose they will say when they stand in front of the Lord at the final judgment? “Lord, I wasn’t much interested in you when I was on earth. Your story wasn’t as exciting as watching videos or gaming.” How do you suppose Jesus will answer them on that day? Will he say, “That’s OK. I should have made my story more exciting”? I think not! The story of Jesus is the best story in the whole world. It is the story of God’s great love to mankind in sending his Son to save us. Every little boy and girl in the whole world ought to hear that story. Every little boy and girl in the whole world ought to know it by heart. Every little boy or girl in the whole world ought to live by it.

¹ Mark 12:37

Yes, Jesus was a good teacher. He had a lot of disciples. Luke 6 records that “he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.” At the end of the list we find two Judases: “Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.” Jesus had *two* disciples named Judas. Judas the brother of James is distinguished from Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus. But notice! Judas Iscariot was not just a casual acquaintance of Jesus. He was in the inner circle, one of the Twelve. He had the great honor of being one of the twelve apostles—men commissioned by Christ to go in his place to preach his gospel. But he threw that all away in the pursuit of monetary gain.

Earlier in our chapter (vv. 14ff.) we read these words: “Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, ‘What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?’ And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.” Judas saw a business opportunity. He knew that the chief priests and temple officials hated Christ. He knew they wanted to get rid of him. But they had a problem, and that was Jesus’ popularity with the common people. They wanted to arrest him, but they needed to do it secretly, so as not to catch the attention of Jesus’ supporters. Judas had his money, but he needed the right opportunity.

Clearly, the temple authorities were corrupt. Rather than faithfully carry out their God-given role, they—like many people in power at all times in history—used their resources to increase their own power and job security. “Arrest the Messiah of God” was not part of their job description. So Judas played into their hands, putting his inside knowledge of Jesus’ schedule to use to serve their evil intentions. The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread that followed were approaching. Jesus and the apostles, as observant Jews who strictly kept the annual feasts of the law, would observe the Passover together. Passover was an annual remembrance of God’s deliverance of his people from Egyptian enslavement—a picture of the man’s deliverance from sin by the atoning work of Christ. Just as the Death Angel spared the households protected by the blood of the innocent lamb smeared on the door posts and lintel, so sinners covered by the blood of Christ shed on the cross are spared eternal death in hell forever. Passover was part of the ceremonial law which has now been abrogated through the coming of Christ. But on this last Passover of the old covenant era Jesus institutes the Lord’s Supper that Passover signified. It is through the precious *blood* of Christ that we are saved—blood commemorated for all time in the wine of Communion.

After receiving the Lord’s supper, Jesus went with the Apostles to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane down the Mount of Olives. He instructed his disciples to wait while he went on further to pray, before his crucifixion.

Consider the setting. Here was the Lord Jesus, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity come in human flesh, entering his hour of greatest need, when he would be

all alone, enduring the full brunt of his Father's just wrath against human sin. He would be doing what no man before or since had ever had to do, or could do, that is, take our sins upon himself. "Christ died *for our sins* according to the Scriptures." He did not *have* to die, for he was innocent. No outside force or authority could require his death. But he came to this earth *for the purpose of dying*. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Nobody else could do this, for all of us are sinners—already condemned, already judged by the law.

The eleven apostles (all but Judas, who had gone to alert the temple authorities) had fallen asleep, for their eyes were heavy, but Jesus awakened them and announced that his betrayer was at hand. How was the large posse of soldiers coming in the dark of night to know who was Christ? Judas had given a sign, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him." So Judas strode up to kiss Jesus. The word for *kiss* used in verse 49 is an intensified form of the word used in verse 48. It means something like *kiss much, kiss again and again, or kiss tenderly*.² Judas didn't just give Jesus a peck on the cheek; he kissed him repeatedly, as though he really loved him.

Judas's kiss appeared outwardly to be a gesture of friendship but was actually evil. For three and a half years Judas had been in Christ's inner circle. He had walked and talked with Christ and appeared outwardly to serve his Lord. He had earned the trust of all the Apostles and served as their treasurer, responsible for managing their finances. But in the end he betrayed his professed master and Lord for thirty pieces of silver. Money meant more to him than eternal joy in the arms of the Savior.

What a contrast to our Lord's conduct! Jesus addressed Judas as "friend" during the betrayal, demonstrating love even in the face of treachery.³ He who is the Friend of sinners endured scorn and deceit to purchase his people's salvation.

Jesus' question, "*Friend*, why have you come?" is reminiscent of a part of our Old Testament text, Psalm 41:9, "Even my own familiar *friend* in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me." Here is a prophecy of Judas's betrayal of Jesus. The language "in whom I trusted" means that Judas was accepted into Jesus' inner circle. He had received the same teaching, the same spiritual care and the same assignments as the other apostles. It certainly does *not* mean that the Lord Jesus trusted in Judas in an ultimate sense, or was caught off-guard by Judas's betrayal. Jesus and the apostles trusted Judas to serve as their treasurer. Our Lord entrusted Judas with teaching his holy Gospel. But in the end, Judas proved to be a corrupt tree bringing forth corrupt fruit. He was *not* "faithful unto death" so as to

² Enhanced Strong's Lexicon, καταφιλέω (Logos Bible Software)

³ DuckDuckGo Search Assist, "response generated based on user prompts," 2-15-26

win “the crown of life.”⁴ His perfidy and unfaithfulness is a warning to all of us to constantly check our own motives as we serve Christ both in public worship and in our daily lives.

The expression “to lift the heel” means to *kick*, and expresses violence and contempt,⁵ to act as a traitor.⁶ Hours before, Judas had lifted his foot so that Jesus could tenderly wash it before he served the Lord’s Supper, as an expression of his undying love; now, that same foot would be used to lead the high priest’s arresting officers to their quarry. It goes without saying that betraying the Son of God was not a legitimate power given to Israel’s priests. It was a *misuse* of the office of the priesthood, which at all times must be used to serve God and his people.

Our Old Testament text continues: “But You, O LORD, be merciful to me, *and raise me up*, that I may repay them” (Ps. 41:10). The words “and raise me up” appear to be a foreshadowing of Christ’s resurrection. Even though our Lord’s “familiar friend” (Heb. *ישׁוּעַ שְׁלוֹמִי* *man of my peace*) betrayed him, resulting in his public execution at the hands of the Romans, the Lord would raise him up. “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”⁷

In the following verses we have the account of one of Jesus’ disciples drawing his sword and cutting off the ear of the high priest’s servant. This disciple is identified in John 18 as Simon Peter. We can be pretty sure that Peter’s target wasn’t the man’s ear, but his head! Peter’s bad aim spared the man’s life. Luke records that Jesus “touched his ear, and healed him,”⁸ his very last healing miracle on earth. Jesus reminds him that if he prayed to his Father, the Father would supply him with “more than twelve legions of angels.” In the Roman army a legion typically consisted of 6,000 soldiers, so “more than twelve legions” would be refer to an army of more than 72,000 heavenly angels—more than enough to protect our Lord from the large multitude armed with swords and clubs who had come to arrest him. But Jesus was not interested in deliverance. He had come to *die* for his people’s sins, and he was not deterred. He says, “How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?” This text is similar to the phrase “that it might be fulfilled,” which Matthew uses some nine times. What Scriptures might he be referring to? One thinks of Isaiah 50:6, “I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.” Or Isaiah 53, which contains such prophecies as “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on

⁴ Rev. 2:10

⁵ *Expositor’s Greek Testament*, cited in <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/john/13-18.htm> (accessed 2-14-26)

⁶ NKJV note at Ps. 41:9

⁷ Ps. 16:10

⁸ Luke 22:51

him the iniquity of us all” (v. 6) and “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities” (v. 11). Scripture had foretold the suffering and death of the Messiah, and Jesus was not going to be deterred from carrying out his Father’s assignment. He would press forward and go to the cross, knowing that everything would turn out for our salvation through the shedding of his precious blood.

So Jesus would be betrayed by one of his own disciples—a tragic incident that brought out the true character of the man Judas. As the story proceeds in the next chapter, we learn that “Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, ‘I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.’ And they said, ‘What is that to us? You see to it!’ Then Judas threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.”

Here, we see that Judas was “remorseful.” He even said, “I have sinned.” Isn’t that what we are to do when we sin? Judas’s being remorseful and admitting that he had sinned are positive signs, indicating that he had come to his senses to some degree. But God’s Word requires that we bring forth “fruits worthy of repentance.”⁹ The word “repentance” here means *a change of mind*.¹⁰ It is not simply regret that one got caught, or that things didn’t turn out as well as one had hoped. God wants all men everywhere to *repent*.¹¹ He wants us to turn from our sins and turn to him in true faith. What Judas did was a good start, but it did not go far enough. When we sin, we shouldn’t just say we’re sorry, then go back to life as before. No! If we’ve really changed our mind concerning our sin, we wouldn’t want to go back to resume our former habits. We should bring forth fruits worthy of repentance, which means at a minimum breaking the chain of addiction, putting off the old and developing new habits of obedience to God’s Word. We need to consider ourselves *dead* to our former sins and “alive” to Christ.¹² When temptation rears its ugly head—whether sexual sin, sloth, wasting time, pouting, boasting, spouting off at the mouth, unbelief, or whatever, we must focus on Christ and the power of his indwelling Spirit. We ought to remind ourselves of the biblical truth that we can obey God through the power of Christ. God doesn’t want us stuck endlessly in old, destructive habits. He wants us to make progress in our faith, to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”¹³ Here is where being part of a faithful church helps, where we have brothers and sisters in the faith who can hold us accountable and encourage us in prayer. Judas’s

⁹ Luke 3:8

¹⁰ Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich lexicon, μετάνοια (Logos Bible Software)

¹¹ Acts 17:30

¹² Rom. 6:11, 13; Gal. 2:19–20; Col. 3:3–5

¹³ 2 Pet. 3:18

betrayal of the Lord of glory was a grave sin. Yet he didn't humble himself, try to make restitution, and seek the help of the people of God. Rather, he added to his sin by committing suicide—self-murder, a violation of the sixth commandment, “Thou shalt not kill.” His name has gone down in history as perhaps the most famous instance of betrayal: the Judas kiss.

Sadly, betrayal is not a rare sin. As I mentioned at the outset, to betray is to break one's promise to, be disloyal to, or be unfaithful to. It is to double-cross or deceive or cheat on a spouse or dear friend. Perhaps you or someone you know has been betrayed by a person in whom you had confided, in whom you had placed trust. Indeed!

God wants us to be men and women, boys and girls who keep our word. He wants us to follow through on the promises we make. He wants us to let our yea be yea and our nay, nay. He wants us to keep the vows we have made publicly and the promises we have made privately. When a person becomes a communicant member of the church he says, in effect, “I believe and confess that Jesus is my Lord and Savior. I am going to follow him this day and always. I am going to live my life *as a Christian*.” Making this vow formally and publicly is part of the process God uses to hold us to our word. When a man or woman enters into the covenant of marriage, the language is, in effect: “I take this person to be my life partner. I promise to be faithful to this person from this day forward, my whole life long, in sickness or in health, for better or worse, no matter what happens up the road—no backing out. I am committed.” Do men and women always live up to this ideal? No. But in the Bible there is no such thing as no-fault divorce. If you divorce your husband or wife without biblical grounds (adultery or willful desertion), then you *are* at fault. Two people cannot just decide, “Hey, we made a mistake, and we both agree we should just call this thing off; we'll have an amicable divorce; it would be better for all parties.” No! Disobedience to God is *never* the better course! This cannot be emphasized strongly enough. Let us continually remind ourselves of the word of Christ “that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment” (Matt. 12:36). *People* may forget—but God *never* forgets. By our words we will be justified, and by our words we will be condemned.

The seventh commandment is “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” What this means, in plain speech, is, there should be *no* sexual intimacy outside of biblical marriage between a man and a woman—none! And when a man and a woman enter into the covenant of marriage, they are to remain faithful—to commit their whole life to make their marriage the best it can be: not just to *tolerate* one another, but to *rejoice* with the husband or wife of their youth. If your marriage is full of bitterness and resentment, it doesn't have to be. As long as both of you are alive, you can commit yourselves to new patterns of righteousness.

How does it feel to be betrayed? One author described it this way: “When you’ve been betrayed, your world flips upside down. Trust is shattered, your sense of safety vanishes, and every part of your body and soul aches with confusion, grief, and anger. [Your] focus shifts entirely to your pain. . . . You’ve been wounded.”¹⁴

Yet there is healing and hope in Christ. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”¹⁵ Amen.

¹⁴ <https://www.roottobloomtherapy.com/blog/understanding-the-unfaithful-husband-a-betrayed-spouses-guide-to-his-emotions-after-infidelity> (accessed 2-14-26)

¹⁵ 2 Cor. 5:17