

Title: Betrayal  
Text: Luke 22.1-6  
Theme: God carries out his plan through the willful decisions of rebellious people.  
Series: Luke  
Aim: I aim to call my people to genuine faith in Christ.

How do you protect yourself from being betrayed? It's actually rather simple. Do not love anyone, or trust anyone, or depend on anyone. And do not expect anything from anyone. Betrayal can only happen where there is love, connection, affection, expectation, trust and hope. These are some of the very best things we can experience in life. The deeper they go, the richer our lives are and the deeper the pain of betrayal is. If you fought along another soldier, risking your life to save his, him doing the same for you, your anguish at finding out that he was a secret agent for the enemy is crushing. If you were married, had children together, built a home, and a family together, then the depth of betrayal by a spouse can just take your very breath away. If only you had known. If you built a business together, sacrificed together, went to b-day parties and weddings together, then to be betrayed is devastating.

When you have loved people, served them, fought for them, prayed for them, and sacrificed for them, only for them to walk out of your life, ghost you, and treat you like a Kleenex used for unpleasanties and tossed away, it's hard. And you are tempted to pull down the shades, turn off the lights, sit in the dark and swear that you will never be vulnerable again. Our text uses that bitter word, betray, twice. But the one being betrayed is Christ. He knew that it would happen. He predicted it. But knowing and predicting it would happen, did not shield him from the sorrow. The prophet Isaiah said that Christ was a man of sorrow, acquainted with grief. We are tempted to think that nobody knows the trouble I've seen, but the old song reminds us, that nobody knows, but Jesus. No one has ever loved as deep as Christ. His affection, connection, hope, commitment, acceptance, sacrifice and future plans are incredibly personal and profound. Jesus was betrayed by Judas, whom he loved, whom he taught, whom he fed, whom he walked with, whom he included and laughed with. We have come to chapter 22. The specter of the cross is creeping like a deepening shadow. This is a hard text. It is a grief to consider and a warning to embrace. But betrayal is not the final chapter and does not have the last word. From this betrayal and its consequences, Jesus creates a new people, a new world, a new kingdom and an eternal hope where betrayal and all of its siblings are not permitted to exist.

Read Text:

1. **Even the wrath of man accomplishes the purposes of God.** (1-2)

The Psalmist wrote, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise you, the remnant of wrath you will put on like a belt." (Psalm 76:10)

Look at the facts in these verses. This is what we can see. *Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover.*" It is Wednesday, April 5, AD 30. The day before the Feast of Unleavened Bread that is also called the Passover. Jesus and the disciples likely stayed

in Bethany that day and did not venture back into Jerusalem. The Mosaic Law stipulated that the nation was to observe Passover at the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell in it." (Deut. 17.6) That was a reference to Jerusalem. Therefore, Jerusalem was bursting with people. *And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people.*" What is public is the massive gathering in Jerusalem. What is private, what is "unseen" is the conspiracy to capture Christ and execute him. The leaders are plotting against Christ and in so doing, are doing the bidding of Satan. They don't know that. They don't believe that. They are so blinded by their hatred of Christ that they do not see what is right in front of them. Neither does Satan.

The chief priests and scribes should have been preparing to celebrate the Passover with their families or helping in the Temple. Instead, these men were secretly meeting in the palace of the high priest (Mt. 26.3) trying to figure out how they would capture Christ and kill him without inciting a riot and facing retribution from the crowds. Luke has been telling us this (19.47-48; 20:19: and now this). What was a general agreement by the leaders turns into specific action to figure out a plan to make it happen.

I will get a bit more into the details of the Passover next week, but here is the irony. The Passover Meal and National Holy Day for Israel originated from the 10<sup>th</sup> plague in Egypt, when the death angel passed over every home that had the blood of a specific type of lamb applied to the doorframe of the house. The death of an innocent lamb provided salvation for those who were covered by it. That sacrifice was a preview of the death of Christ. The death of Christ provides eternal salvation for those who are covered by it. The original Passover was established by God as an annual celebration for Israel because of what it meant in the past AND what it pointed to. By plotting to kill Christ, these leaders were plotting to kill the Lamb of God who would be the offering of atonement (covering) for the sins of everyone who would believe in him. They had no clue! Their hatred of God carried out the purposes of God. They were fulfilling the very plan of God that Passover was a preview of. Even the wrath of man accomplishes the purposes of God. God's wisdom is so far beyond ours.

1 Corinthians 2.7-8 says, *But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*" So, these leaders meeting in secret, hiding their plans (their wisdom) from the people, were fulfilling the secret and hidden wisdom of God.

But they were in a pickle. Jesus was immensely popular with the people. If they tried to arrest him, they risked a riot that would threaten them, and likely motivate Rome to intervene. (Temple Mount Slide) The former Eagles stadium had a police precinct in the stadium for obvious reasons. This is the same thing. They agreed to kill Christ, but were at a loss as to how to pull it off. Their conspiracy was not working, except another conspiracy came into play. They caught a break! In what had to appear to be an answer to prayer, Judas Iscariot, one of the 12, makes contact with them and agrees to betray Christ to them for money. "They were glad." (V.5)

There are 3 interrelated conspiracies: 1) The chief priests 2) Judas and 3) Satan. All 3 come together to pull off an inside job, but all of them were carrying out God's plan for Christ to die for our sins and by breaking the power of sin and death, Christ destroyed the weapon of the Evil One against us. By pushing the execution of Christ, Satan carried out his own demise. We should be comforted and encouraged that no weapon that is formed against the plan of God will work. In the end, God always wins. But while that is a deep comfort, this account has a serious warning that I pray that we take to heart. Here is the warning:

## 2. Casual Christianity is damning. (3-6)

*Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve."*

Whatever all of this means, we can all agree on how serious this is. Later in this same chapter (v.31) Jesus tells Peter that Satan demanded to have him, that he may sift him like wheat, but Jesus said, "I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail." Here, Satan takes over Judas, and clearly one of the reasons why this was possible is because Judas did not have faith in Christ. He appeared to be a follower on the outside, but there was no genuine faith on the inside.

So, let's stop the movie for a minute and consider what is going on here. Who are the enemies of the gospel in this scene? Who are the adversaries of Christ who are plotting for his very death? It is not the atheists. It is not the agnostics. It is not the media. It is not the Roman government officials. It is the people who know their Bibles and the one guy who lived with Christ for 3 years. These are the ones who come together in order to literally kill Christ.

If my timeline is correct, this is Wednesday. Jesus and his disciples do not go to Jerusalem that day, but stayed in Bethany. Judas takes the opportunity to slip away in order to have some conversations without being noticed by the other 11. But look at the language of v.4, 6. *He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them."* This was a deliberate and calculated act. He was not caught up in a sting operation, and trapped in a moment of weakness. He planned his betrayal. I don't know when the idea first hit him, but he is walking for at least 2 miles to Jerusalem in order to do one thing: betray Jesus and hand him over to him. According to Matthew, Judas wanted money from them and asked for it.

"What will you give me?" They agreed on the price. So Judas got what he wanted. He wanted to betray Jesus. They wanted Jesus. Judas was willing to give Jesus up for money and behind it all, was Satan wringing his hands in delight. But even the betrayal and the price of the betrayal had already been prophesied hundreds of years before. God is never surprised at what surprises us.

Judas is a willing participant. Satan takes what is made available to him and while this ends up going further down the road than what Judas imagined, Judas is all in. And this is what casual Christianity does. It masks unbelief. It looks good on the surface. It looks respectable for its association, but casual Christianity wants something other than Christ. It may want respect, power, influence, safety, success, even wealth. But that is not genuine Christianity. Genuine Christianity wants Jesus, no matter what. Luke does not tell us specifically why Judas did this. But there are plenty of warnings here that we need to face. Let's note some of them.

- Everyone assumed that Judas was a follower of Christ.

Judas was not an outlier. He appeared to be so trustworthy that he was entrusted with the money, only to find out that he was helping himself to it. But this is important for us to take to heart. Just because people assume that we are a believer, does not make us a genuine believer. Your standing before God is not based on what others think about you, but what God knows to be true about you. What do you trust in to justify you? It is tempting to look for endorsements from respectable people as the grounding for our assurance, but God is the one who knows our hearts and we need to be willing to be honest and vulnerable to him. This is no game.

- Knowing truths about God is not the same as knowing God.

In fact, if what you know intellectually about God does not move you toward worship, love, genuine dependence and faith-driven obedience, then it will lead you away from God and your knowledge will become a curse and judgment instead of a benefit. I have a rather large book on the Reformation that I think is one of the most thorough works I have ever read on it. The author clearly understands the doctrine of justification of faith alone in Christ alone, and he hates it. Revelation about God that does not generate faith is a curse. Answering the questions is not genuine Christianity. Do you love Christ? Do you trust him? Do you depend on him?

- Seeing miracles or performing miracles is not evidence of saving faith.

Judas not only saw Jesus perform miracles, but Judas was one of the 12 who was given authority over unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction when Jesus sent the 12 out on a short-term mission assignment (Mt. 10.1-4). Miracles create awe. They dazzle. They impress. They generate attention, but they do not cause faith.

- "Serving God" can be a great cover for serving self.

Judas was part of a group and he benefited from it. He was associated with a healer, the Messiah, the Son of God, the raiser of the dead, and the love and delight of thousands. Jesus attracted massive crowds and Judas was one of his 12. The accolades that belonged to Jesus would splash on him a bit. It would have been an ego boost, power-rush and clearly appear to be a ticket to somewhere. But while Judas appeared to be following Jesus, the truth was, Judas wanted Jesus to follow him. Judas wanted to use Jesus to give him what he wanted. Judas clearly sacrificed a lot. He was in the boat in the storm that nearly sank. He was tired and hungry at all the walking. He experienced many inconveniences and fears over the threats. He had the credentials of walking the walk, but he was walking the walk for something that he wanted. He followed Jesus to get something and when he didn't get it, then he was done following Jesus. We are tempted to do the same.

Judas clearly loved money and maybe he followed Jesus in order to get health and wealth. Maybe Judas wanted respect and when Jesus rebuked him for how he treated Mary when she

anointed the feet of Christ, that may have been the moment when he flipped a switch. You can teach a Bible class in order to get respect, and when you don't get respect, you get bitter. You can go on a mission's trip to get accolades, to be affirmed, and to be made much of. How do you respond when that doesn't take place? You can flip a switch and become hard. You can serve on a board, even be a pastor to be esteemed or get the life you deserve. If that is your goal, it will be exposed and when people disagree with you or complain to you or get upset with you, then what you are in it for, will be revealed. Serving Jesus for respect means that respect is your god, not Jesus. Serving God for success or money, or for a girl or a guy means that success or money is your god, not Jesus. (Elisha, Gehazi, Naaman - 2 Kings 5) Anything but God makes for a terrible master.

Here are some good questions for us to ask. What do I want from Jesus? What do I want from serving God? What is my end-game for following Christ? How do I respond when I don't get what I want?

- Satan trashes what he uses

Satan entered Judas. Satan is not omnipresent. He can only be in one place at a time. Judas is a high-level target and Satan does not entrust this to any of his demons. Judas is not speaking with another voice, is not acting incoherently, and may not even be conscious that he has yielded the control of his life to another. That is the nature of following self. In the pursuit of self we become less. Satan does not care about Judas. He uses him to get what he wants, just like Judas is trying to use Jesus to get what he wants, and just like the chief priests will use Judas to get what they want. There is no loyalty, no love, and no hope in that arena. When the reality of what Judas has done begins to settle in on him, Judas has nowhere to go, no one to turn to, and no refuge. The money he craved, now condemns him. He throws it into the temple and left. (Mt. 27) He betrayed the only One who could save him.

30 pieces of silver is about 4 months of salary. Is it worth it? There was a point when Judas flipped sides. He hid it from the others, but on Wednesday, he walked to where his heart had already taken him and while he got paid, the truth is, he was the one who paid for it, forever. That does not have to be your story. Christ alone is worth your trust. When you yield your life to him, when you trust in him as the only One who can save you and forgive you, he enters you, he keeps you and will not let you go.