

Matthew 26:17–75

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[0 : 0 0] 26, verses 17 to 75. Please remain standing as you are able for the reading of God's word. Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus saying, Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover? He said, Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, The teacher says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover. When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve, and as they were eating, he said, Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me. And they were very sorrowful, and began to say to him one after the other, Is it I, Lord? He answered, He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him. But woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been better for that man if he had not been born. Judas, who would betray him, answered, Is it I, Rabbi? He said to him, You have said so. Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it, broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat, this is my body.

And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

I tell you, I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Then Jesus said to them, You will all fall away because of me this night, for it is written, I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered. But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee. Peter answered him, Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.

Jesus said to him, Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times. Peter said to him, Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you. And all the disciples said the same. Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, Sit here while I go over there and pray. And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.

[2 : 4 8] Remain here and watch with me. And going a little farther, he fell on his face and prayed, saying, My father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.

And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, So could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed. My father, if the this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done. And again, he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Rise, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand. While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him.

And he came up to Jesus at once and said, Greetings, Rabbi. And he kissed him. Jesus said to him, Friend, Do what you came to do. Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. And behold, one of those who were with Jesus struck out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, Put your sword back into its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled that it must be so? At that hour, Jesus said to the crowds, Have you come out against as against a robber with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But all this has taken place that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples left him and fled. Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered. And Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest. And going inside, he sat with the guards to see the end. Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death. But they found none, though many false witnesses came forward.

At last, two came forward and said, This man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days. And as the high priest stood up and said, Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you? But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, I adjure you by the living God. Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus said to him, You have said so. But I tell you, from now on, you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest tore his robes and said, He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need?

[6 : 51] You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment? They answered. They answered, He deserves death. Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, saying, Prophecy to us, you Christ. Who is it that struck you? Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant girl came up to him and said, You also were with Jesus the Galilean. But he denied it before them all, saying, I do not know what you mean. And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, This man was with Jesus of Nazareth. And again, he denied it with an oath, I do not know the man. After a little while, the bystanders came up and said to Peter, Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you. Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, I do not know the man, and immediately the rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times. And he went out and wept bitterly. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Thanks, Amy. Never have you been more grateful to take a seat after scripture reading.

You know, as one who's given his life to train preachers about preaching, by necessity, I'm a big fan of words. Like, take the word betrayal. It's a rather interesting word. There's the betrayal, as we kind of typically take the term, an act of disloyalty. I'm sure all of us have both been betrayed and betrayed others. Like when mom comes rushing into the room, screaming at the top of her lungs, which one of you started the fire, started the fire, started the carpet. And all of the boys kind of shrug, except you, who's standing in the back. And you pointed at the kid who started the fire. It's that one. That's the little arsonist you raised, mom. Act of betrayal. Act of disloyalty. But there's a very different sense in which you might take the word betrayal as well. It's when we reveal something about ourselves without intending to. Like when your mom comes walking into the room and goes, it's time to go to school. And you go, oof, that's true. But the thing is, I am deathly ill. So your mom walks away and goes, okay, we'll see about that. And then your brothers are playing Nerf basketball in the room next to yours. And since you're the oldest, you have to show them that you can dunk on them. So you get up and dunk on them. And your mom comes walking into the room and goes, so is your backpack ready? Oh no, I'm deadly ill. No, you have just betrayed the fact that you're doing just fine. Get out of my house. Betrayal. Our text this morning is a story about both kinds of betrayal. All revolving around three main characters. Judas, Peter, and Jesus.

Our text is a long one full of twists and turns, but it takes place over just a few hours one evening. Taking place just a few days after the day you've heard about multiple times today, Palm Sunday. I wish I would have gotten that text. That would have been a much easier one to preach. But no, on Palm Sunday, I've got the events of Maundy Thursday or Holy Thursday. Palm Sunday is a beautiful event. Jesus rides into town as the long-hoped-for hero of the people of God.

Our text is about the betrayal that took place just a few hours and 31 verses away in the Gospel of Matthew from Jesus' public execution. Before we get to Good Friday, we've got to deal with the betrayal of Thursday night.

The length of our text over such a short period of time demonstrates how profound these actions are. The actions of Judas and of Peter and of Jesus. We are faced with both betrayal and boldness.

[11 : 37] On the first hand, there's the boldness of betrayal. But also the betrayal of boldness. All along the way, we are left asking, what does it look like to betray Jesus?

And whether you're a believer or not this morning, we should all be asking the question, why should I care about this Jesus guy anyways? Did you do something unconventional this morning?

We're going to run through this insanely long text twice. You might go, oh no. I mean, it's Palm Sunday.

I got lunch waiting for me. Don't worry, we're going to make the trip quick. The first trip, we're going to be looking at the boldness of betrayal, looking at the actions of both Judas and Peter, followed by a second trip looking at Jesus and the betrayal of boldness.

And before we start, we have to kind of set the scene. We clearly just jump into the middle of a story. Last week, in the passage right before this, we saw that the religious leaders are done with Jesus, seeking a way to kill him.

[12 : 48] Jesus knows that his time is short. And we know that because a woman comes and anoints him. And Jesus interprets the action as his preparation for burial.

And then there's Judas, doing something quite different, agreeing to be the betrayer of Jesus for a measly 30 pieces of silver. The stage for betrayal leading to death is set.

Our text focuses on the boldness of that betrayal. Right before this passes, we're told in verse 16 that Judas sought for an opportunity to betray Jesus.

And in our text, he finds one. But as we see, Judas isn't the only one who betrays Jesus. So does Peter. If Judas is the worst of us, then Peter is the best of us.

And yet both betray Jesus. Judas does it actively, but Peter does it passively. What about us? These acts of betrayal take place during one of the most important celebrations in the life of Israel.

[14 : 01] Passover. The celebration of God's mighty deliverance from slavery in Egypt, leading him to the promised land. During the meal that commemorates that freedom, Jesus, in verse 21, lets the crew of disciples know that one of them will betray him.

And crazily enough, each one of the disciples goes, well, is it me? Well, is it me? Well, is it me? See, here's the thing, friends. Betrayal is never far from any one of us.

And just in case you're sitting here going, I would never. Well, you got a friend in Peter, so you better just slow down. Somehow, in verse 25, Judas has the boldness to ask if he will be the one who will betray him, knowing in verse 16 that he was looking for an opportunity to do so.

Jesus responds, you have said so. The crazy thing is that Judas doesn't change his mind. While Judas' boldness is on full display, so is Peter's.

After the meal, Jesus lets the disciples know that they will all abandon him. And Peter, with all boldness and foolishness, declares in verse 33, though they all fall away, I will never fall away.

[15 : 21] In other words, I am better and bolder than all these other chumps you decided to pick to follow you for the last three years. Not like them.

I'm so much better. I'm so much bolder than them. This isn't the first time that Peter's been so bold. Chapter 14. Jesus is walking on the water and Peter cries out, Lord, if it's you, tell me to come out to you on the water.

Jesus says, come. So he starts walking real good, but then he starts to doubt and then he starts to drown and Jesus has got to play lifeguard. He was bold there for a second, but it didn't really last.

And there's chapter 16 when Jesus lets his disciples know that he's going to die and Peter goes, never, Lord! Lord! And ends up getting the nickname Satan from Jesus, which I don't know what your nickname was growing up, but you probably don't want that one.

We could go on. Peter has what we might call a chronic case of foot-in-mouth disease. This one might be the craziest example, especially because he doesn't just do it once, but then when Jesus lets him in on a secret, no, you're actually going to deny me three times tonight before the rooster crows.

[16 : 47] Peter, even if I must die with you, I won't deny you. Rarely were sadder words spoken in retrospect. Can you imagine? There's, of course, every indication in this passage that Peter might not be as bold as he claims.

I mean, shoot, he can't even stay awake with Jesus as he is lamenting and praying the night before he dies. He falls asleep not once, not twice, three times.

Peter's betraying just how much of a hero he isn't. Then Judas comes back on the scene. He boldly betrays Jesus with a kiss.

Not exactly sure why Jesus is a rather prominent public figure by this time, but whatever the case, the betrayal is bold. Amy couldn't even read the passage without crying.

There's a reason for that, because rarely was there ever a betrayal so personal and so poisonous. Of course, Matthew focuses on Peter and Judas, which is why we're doing the same this morning, but the other disciples also betray their lack of boldness.

[18 : 15] Verse 56, bailing as soon as Jesus is arrested. It does look like for just a second. Maybe Peter is better than everybody else.

Just maybe. Because while they all run away initially, we learn verse 58 that Peter alone shows up for the ridiculous trial of Jesus.

Maybe, maybe now Peter will demonstrate just how bold he really is. but his actions quickly turn into the saddest betrayal of all.

As he watches the event, he can't even claim to know Jesus. In short succession, he denies Jesus once, twice, and three times, cursing himself in the process.

leading him to weep at just how bold his betrayal had been. You see, the actions of Judas and Peter are as painful as they are personal.

[19 : 36] I mean, it's one thing to stand at a distance and be like, these chumps, how could they have ever denied Jesus like that? What bold betrayal? Just think about it this week, friends.

Don't you see yourself in the mirror of at least one of them, if not both of them? The active betrayal of Judas. I'll give him up, I'll sell him for whatever I gotta sell him for. I gotta get a job.

Or the passive betrayal of Peter. Me? I don't know this Jesus. Here's the crazy thing about each and every one of us this morning. While at least hypothetically for somebody in this room, up until this moment you could have said, I don't know Jesus.

Truly from this moment on you will never be able to say it again. From this moment on every single person in this room will either be Judas actively betraying Jesus, Peter passively betraying Jesus, or something else.

there's little question that these guys are self-evidently wrong. Like if you don't know anything about the Bible, if this is your first time in church, you hear about Judas and Peter and you're like, these guys are idiots.

[20 : 57] How dare they do something like this? Who wants friends like this? In a world of friends like this, who needs enemies? Come on, man. They are self-evidently bad. question is, what should we do?

We should do the opposite. You and I ought to stick with the Son of Man. You and I ought to stick with Jesus. Instead of betraying him, stick with him.

That's what this text, I think, is arguing. It's arguing primarily by way of negative example. Don't be like Judas actively betraying Jesus. Don't be like Peter passively betraying Jesus. No, stick with the Son of Man.

Stick with him. But why should I stick with the Son of Man? What does that even look like? I'm glad you asked because that would require us to take a second run through the text.

No longer looking at the boldness of betrayal, but looking at the betrayal of boldness. Looking at Jesus himself, the one who betrays just how bold he really is.

[22 : 05] I mean, from the top of this text to the bottom of this text, Jesus is bold. It's nothing new in the Gospel of Matthew. We have walked through this text, this whole book, for a long time. And if you've been here, you've seen Jesus just like dominating the whole time.

He is actively displaying how bold he really is. You have to think back to those failing attempts of boldness we mentioned earlier by Peter. I mean, shoot, in chapter 14, how bold is Jesus?

He's just walking on the water. Why? Because he happens to be God. In chapter 16, Peter gets that nickname Satan.

Why does he do it? Well, it's simply this, because Jesus has just said, listen, here's what's going to happen. I am going to be arrested, I am going to be killed, and then I'm going to rise again, so don't worry about it.

Jesus knows exactly what is going to happen, and boldly continues forward. But in our passage, the boldness of Jesus is betrayed in unique ways.

- [23 : 09] His boldness is betrayed in verse 21, as he lets his disciples know that he knows exactly who's going to betray him. His boldness is betrayed as he takes the bread and says, this is my body.

He takes the cup and says, this is my blood, and then says, I'm going to drink it again when my father's kingdom comes. His boldness is betrayed when he predicts the betrayal of his disciples in verse 31.

Not only that, but also his resurrection. And that Peter will go so far as to betray him once, twice, and even three times that night.

His boldness is betrayed in grand fashion when he puts his fate in his father's hands, praying in the garden, not my will, but your will be done.

His boldness is betrayed as he wakes his disciples to confront Judas the betrayer and the mob that came after him. His boldness is betrayed as he stops the violence of his disciples and tells everybody there, look, I don't know why you came out like this to arrest me.

- [24 : 28] I mean, here's the thing, you're just fulfilling the scriptures, so why don't you go ahead and do what you're going to do? to do what But the greatest betrayal of boldness is when he's brought before the kangaroo court.

They try and figure out any kind of way to get this guy arrested. Can anybody make anything up to get this guy and nothing seems to be working? So finally, the high priest does something rather bold himself.

Having exhausted all of his options, the high priest asks him straight out in verse 63, I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.

And it is here that Jesus betrays just how bold he really is. Here's what you've got to know up to this point, Jesus has kept this truth under wraps.

He's never denied it, but he hasn't publicized it. And yet here at this moment he comes out swinging, betraying who he is in verse 64.

- [25 : 36] You have said so, but I tell you from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven. In other words, you got that right, I'm the king of everything and there's nothing you can do about it.

how bold is this betrayal? Well, it gives the religious leaders all the ammo they need to kill him.

Got you. But here's the thing, friends. You can't stop the Son of Man. You can't stop him. so stick with him. Don't betray him like Judas and actively work against him.

You can try, but you're going to lose. Don't betray him like Peter and claim you don't even know him because now you do. Stick with the Son of Man.

- [26 : 43] Why? Because he is exactly who he says he is. The Son of Man who is the King of Everything. Yeah, they're going to kill him, but you can't stop the Son of Man. His resurrection from the dead betrays that Jesus' boldness was not misplaced.

And one day there will be no question, friends, because when he returns bringing his father's kingdom with him, his boldness will be betrayed for all of time.

So stick with the Son of Man. Let's pray. I would thank you for this opportunity to consider one of the saddest and darkest moments in the life of Jesus.

The boldness of the betrayal. I pray for the Judases in the room. who have worked for a short time or maybe a long time to actively betray Jesus.

Would you change their hearts? I pray for the Peters in the room who have claimed to not even know him. I pray for the help them realize that the Son of Man is exactly who he says he is and that there's no denying who he is.

[28 : 31] Help us stick with the Son of Man. Today, tomorrow, and every day of our lives proclaiming boldly that we do know him and that he is exactly who he says he is and that he will do exactly what he says he will do.

It's in his name that we pray. Amen.