

# The Betrayal

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[0:00] But today we're going to take up our reading in Luke chapter 22, and we're going to read from verse 47 to verse 53. Page 882.

But while he was yet speaking, that's Jesus, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him.

But Jesus said to him, Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss? And when those who were round about him saw what would follow, they said, Lord, shall we strike with the sword?

And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, no more of this. And he touched his ear and healed him.

Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders who had come out against him, have you come out as against a robber with swords and clubs?

[1:05] When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay your hands on me. But this is your hour and the power of darkness. Heavenly Father, we bow in your presence.

May your word be our rule, your spirit our teacher, and your greater glory, our supreme concern. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. There are few names more hated in American history than that of Benedict Arnold.

He was a trusted general in the American Continental Forces during the Revolutionary War. But in 1780, Benedict Arnold changed sides and became a traitor toward America.

He who had once fought for America now fought for the British against the country of his birth. So for Americans, Benedict Arnold has become synonymous with betrayal, someone who acts the traitor.

But however notorious Arnold has become, his betrayal pales into insignificance compared to that of Judas Iscariot. No figure in history is associated with treachery more than him.

[2:31] Former friend, disciple of Jesus, who betrayed him to his death. What makes Judas' betrayal so treacherous is that it wasn't faceless, but that he betrayed Jesus, Jesus rather, with a kiss.

Judas, the kiss of Judas, the kiss of Judas goes down as history's greatest act of betrayal. Judas, history's greatest traitor.

Jesus was so common, Jesus was so popular with the common people that he couldn't be arrested in public. It had to happen in secret. To arrest him, the Jewish authorities needed a traitor in Jesus' ranks, and they found it, or they bought it, in Judas.

In the darkness of the Mount of Olives, the Jewish rulers sent a private army, led by Judas himself, to arrest Jesus. It's a very sordid episode in the life of Jesus, but it's a very necessary episode.

There is, among the dirty politics of men, the towering gospel, where a sovereign Jesus triumphs over human hatred.

[3:46] He submits himself to the treachery of Judas, and to the violence of the Jewish rulers. The hero of this story is Jesus, who went willingly with his captors, because on the very next day, he's going to die on a Roman cross, to take away the sins of the world.

I want us to consider this vital episode in the story of Jesus under three brief headings, the kiss, the sword, and the cross. This passage teaches us both the depth of human depravity, but also the heights of divine love, the gruesomeness of human hatred for God, but the glory of God's love for humanity.

As well as learning many other lessons, I do hope that we are left worshipping Christ for his gloriously sovereign love for us.

First of all then, the kiss, the kiss. Immediately before Jesus was betrayed, he'd been praying on the Mount of Olives.

He'd prayed so very earnestly that his sweat was as great drops of blood falling to the ground. We read in verse 44 that he was in agony, because he was fully aware of what would happen to him the next day.

[5:12] Torture, crucifixion, death. And as he rose from prayer, he found his disciples sleeping and said to them, rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.

But even as he said these words, a crowd approached him. The word crowd could also be translated as mob. The idea is of a large group of men, a mob determined to do bad things. They're coming to arrest Jesus. They're coming in secret and at night, because if they'd come in public during the day, the common people would have risen up to defend Jesus. The only way Jesus could have been arrested is if it had been part of a conspiracy of betrayal. So a hostile mob sent by the Jewish rulers is approaching with swords and with torches. They've got one thing in mind. We're going to get Jesus. But the mob needed someone to guide them to where Jesus would be. Someone Jesus trusted.

[6:17] And they'd found it in Judas. Luke's at pains to point to Judas as the betrayer. The man called Judas, verse 47.

One of the twelve was leading them. Luke does not say Judas. He says the man called Judas. He wants it written down in history that it was Judas who was the traitor. He says of Judas, he was one of the twelve. Luke wants to drive home the tragedy that Judas was one of Jesus' closest friends.

Jesus wasn't betrayed by a stranger, but by a friend. The kind of friend who alone could come near to kiss him. Kissing the cheek, of course, was a standard greeting for Jewish men.

Could there be a more tragic betrayal than this? Jesus, who previously had prophesied Judas' betrayal and exactly what was happening, he looked Judas straight in the eye, even as one man looks at another man in the eye, and says to him, Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?

[7:32] Even now, Jesus still loves Judas. Can you imagine the electricity, the static in the air when Jesus looked into Judas' eyes and said, Judas.

I wonder what was going through Judas' mind at this point. Did his heart miss a beat? Did he regret his decision to betray Jesus? As he reached out to kiss Jesus, did he even for one second wish he'd never signed up to this stupid conspiracy?

He betrayed Jesus with a kiss. It is one of the most tragic episodes in human history. Judas had been with Jesus for three years, through thick and thin.

He'd seen Jesus do amazing things. He'd heard Jesus' amazing words. He'd watched what true love consisted of. He knew that Jesus loved him, even though Jesus knew all about his greed and love of money.

To be loved by Jesus and yet to betray him. You're left shaking your head. How could he have done it? But it is the kind of betrayal some people face every day in our society.

[8:48] A seemingly loving husband is having an affair behind his wife's back. His wife knows nothing about it until she finds him with his lover. She's dumbstruck.

The betrayal is like nothing she's ever experienced before. She is flattened. Her whole life is unstuck. How is she going to tell the kids? And how can she ever look her husband again in the eyes?

Surely we have the greatest of sympathy for her. We would not, I would hope, do something to someone to whom we have promised to love anything near as serious as that.

Surely we would never betray that sacred trust of marriage. But Judas did. He betrayed the Son of Man with a kiss. This was no faceless crime.

This crime had a face. The face of Judas. As Judas locked eyes with Jesus, made ready to kiss his cheek, the ultimate betrayal was taking place.

[9:53] Now there's the denials of Peter, which we'll look at next week. Denials which are temporary and owe their existence to weakness and fear.

And there's the betrayal of Judas, which owed its existence to intentionality, not weakness, but to greed and unrighteousness.

Unrighteousness. We have all denied Jesus at one point in thought, word or deed. Under times of extreme pressure, our resolve has weakened. But to betray Jesus, intentionally, because of greed and unrighteousness, I don't believe any of us have done such a gruesome thing as that.

Think of the impact of this betrayal upon Jesus. The Jesus who had only ever loved Judas. Thus we have the onset of Jesus' final suffering, his betrayal.

However, think of this on a wider scene. Judas' betrayal of Jesus was but a picture of Israel's betrayal of its God. Remember how when Moses was on top of Mount Sinai receiving the law and tablets of stone from the God who in love and power had redeemed them from their slavery in Egypt?

[11:19] Remember how when Moses was at the top of that mountain, the wandering Israelites who had been saved and loved by God were at the bottom of Mount Sinai worshipping an idol.

That was betrayal. And now faced with Jesus, their Messiah, the Word became flesh, the God of their fathers. What will Israel do? Again, rather than bowing down to worship Him, they betray Him. They arrest Him with a view to killing Him. In effect, it's Jesus who says to them, Israel, will you betray the Son of Man with a kiss? The God who had loved them and saved them was standing before them.

And He had said to them, I have loved you with an everlasting love. But now they betray Him with a kiss. The sin of Judas was the sin of the Israel of Jesus' day.

Shall it be the sin of the church in Scotland that having been loved by God for centuries and having been showered with the blessings of Christ's redeeming cross, we shall turn our backs on Him and become a pale reflection of the world?

[12:30] Shall the church's desire to fit in with the world be the cause of its betrayal of God? Whom shall the church in Scotland stand?

Christ or Judas? The church may betray Him with a kiss, speaking all the right words, but betrayal nonetheless.

It may cost us much. It may even cost us our lives. But we shall stand not with Judas. We shall stand with Jesus.

With Jesus. So we have the kiss, first of all. But then secondly, we have the sword. The sword. True to the nature of human beings, Jesus' disciples, knowing what was going to happen, that Jesus is going to be arrested and handing over to the Jewish rulers, said to Jesus, Lord, shall we strike with the sword?

Lord, shall we strike with the sword? You know, for all their failings, they were brave men. And even though they were outnumbered by this vast mob who'd been sent to arrest Jesus, they wanted to fight.

[13:42] That's what humans do. We respond to violence with more violence. Look at the news. That's what we do. Earlier in the chapter, when Jesus had told His disciples that He would be betrayed, they offered to take up their swords to defend Him, to which He replied in verse 38, It is enough, or stop it.

Don't think that way. However, the disciples had not learned their lesson, and one of them, we think it was Peter, took out his sword and cut off the high priest-servant right ear.

You see, the sword is always man's default answer, isn't it? The sword is always our answer. The Jewish authorities had sent out a mob to violently arrest Jesus, and now the disciples want to use violence in return.

How far away from the teaching of Jesus, the Jesus who said, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Jesus demonstrates His love for His enemies when in the last of His recorded miracles before His resurrection, He touches the high priest and heals his ear.

Do you know that's the last of Jesus' miracles before His resurrection? He reaches out to touch an enemy to heal him. He doesn't just say, love your enemies.

[15:12] He shows how to love your enemies. He reaches out to His arm, not with a sword to kill, but with a finger to heal. The violence of men met by the love of Jesus, and when He saw that disciple with his sword, He said, no more of this.

It's a message to disciples then and to the church today, no more of this violence. The honor of Christ is secured not with violence, but by love, not by guns, but with the gospel.

If only the church could have heeded Christ's message here, how much less suffering would there have been in the world? And this also divides Christianity from all the other world religions who today expand their influence with the sword, who threaten and intimidate.

By contrast, Jesus says, no more of this. He, the giver of the law, Jesus said, love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength and mind and love your neighbor as yourself.

He did not say, love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind and kill your neighbor. He said, love your neighbor.

[16 : 28] We must never respond to violence with violence. Of course, there are more complicated arguments when it comes to national politics, but as individual Christians and as a church, violence is never an option.

Healing is, mercy is, forgiveness is, grace is, gospel is. People say to us, as one of my nearest indeed has said to me two weeks ago, all religions are the same.

They just cause wars. Oh boy, was I hurt when I heard that. Coming from the mouth of my brother. Oh, all religions are the same. They just lead to wars.

Point to Jesus here in Luke 22 when he says, no more of that. Human religion may cause wars, but genuine faith in Jesus does not, lest it cease to be genuine faith in Jesus.

But what we see here is a picture of mankind's sinful rejection of God. Throughout the Old Testament, prophets who spoke in the name of God were tortured and murdered.

[17 : 39] God's love and truth was met by the nakedness of the sword of human hatred. Once again, the Jesus who came in love was met by the sword of human hatred.

It's going to lead to him being tortured and crucified and killed. all of Jesus' disciples, except Judas, were victims of violence, all but one being martyred for their faith in Jesus.

Throughout the centuries, millions of Christians have followed Jesus into enduring the violence of humanity and its religion against God. Even today, there are millions of Christians who are experiencing physical violence at the hands of those who hate Christ.

as Christians, we can expect violence in one form or another. In Britain, it's not going to be physical, but it will be social or it will be mental.

Jesus said, if they hated me, they'll hate you also. And the Apostle Paul said, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. When faced with violence for the sake of Christ, it's all too easy to give in to hate and to want ourselves to become violent, to seek revenge.

[19 : 02] But this is not the Christian way. The way of Christ is to show love and forgive. The way of Christ is to show mercy and heal our enemies.

Well, of course, it's easier said than done. But it's the way of Christ and the Holy Spirit will help us to be like Jesus in this. Who knows? The way that we handle violence may put those who are violent toward us to shame and start a process of questioning in their hearts which leads them to Jesus. It may have, as it did in the case of Jesus, redemptive value. the sword. But then thirdly and lastly, the cross.

The cross. All the way through this episode, different players are trying to take control. Judas is leading the mob. He thinks he's in control. The mob are crowding Jesus.

They think they're in control. The disciples take out a sword to fight. They think they're in control. But the one who's really in control of this whole story is Jesus.

[20 : 20] It's not so much that Jesus was betrayed as that he allowed himself to be betrayed. It wasn't so much that Jesus was arrested as that he allowed himself to be arrested.

In verse 53, he gives himself to the mob saying, this is your hour. This is the hour of the power of darkness. He is allowing himself to be subject to that darkness.

The darkness never overpowered Jesus. Jesus allowed himself to be overpowered by it, to be taken from the Mount of Olives to the hill of crucifixion.

And the difference is huge. Jesus is always in control. Okay, he stands alone against many enemies, but he's in charge. If he did not want to be arrested, he could have called down the armies of heaven, although one angel by himself would have been more enough to deal with this mob.

If Jesus didn't want to be arrested, he could have caused the sun to stop shining and brought upon the earth a great blizzard to hide him from their view. The Jesus who was standing before them was the God who appeared to Moses on top of Mount Sinai in collapse of thunder in the sound of trumpets and dense clouds.

[21 : 44] He was the God who divided the Red Sea to let the Israelites pass through on dry land while destroying the Egyptian army. He is the God who created the sun, the stars, the moon, the whole universe.

If Jesus didn't wish to have been taken, he didn't need to have been taken. Some of you will have heard about the Stoltzman brothers from Alness in the Highlands. They are the strongest men in the world.

Imagine a group of toddlers, so Rachel's age, okay, and they're surrounding the Stoltzman brothers and in their childish babble tell the Stoltzman brothers, we're here to arrest you.

Really? The Stoltzman brothers could pick up this whole church in their arms and they could pick up every toddler in that mob in their arms and take them back to their nursery where they belong.

In the same way, the Jesus who cast out demons from the demented and still the storm in the Sea of Galilee, if he had not been willing to be arrested, he needn't have been.

[22:55] But as we've seen time and time and time again, Jesus never used his power to harm or destroy but only to heal and restore.

He never uses his power to harm or destroy only to heal and restore. There's also far more involved. Jesus was not powerless here but he willingly gave himself up to the betrayal of Judas and the hatred of the mob.

And we have to ask the question, why? Why did Jesus willingly submit himself to the power of darkness? Why did Jesus, knowing that his arrest was the first stage in the suffering that would lead to his death, why did he allow himself to embrace that suffering?

It was because Jesus knew that this was why he had come in the first place. He had come, as he said earlier in the Gospel of Luke, not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

He had come for this very purpose. To be arrested, to be tortured, to be crucified. The plan of God was all was that Jesus should give himself up willingly to death for our sins.

[24:06] Not as a helpless victim of the hatred of the world but as a willing sacrifice to overcome the hatred of the world. Here's God's ultimate victory.

Not through force but through the apparent weakness of the cross. Jesus did not come in force but in love.

The infinite, eternal, and unchangeable love of God who because of his love planned our salvation before we were even born. Before the stars began to shine in the sky, before the tides began to turn, Jesus knew that this is what he had to do in order to save us from our sin and our guilt.

He came to set us free from the power of darkness and despair by himself for a short while becoming subject to that power. But having, for this hour, allowed himself to submit to this world's darkness and hatred, he rose on the third day to new life.

In three days from his betrayal, from the story of this darkness and hatred, the dawn of his victory rose and shone the light of the resurrection continues to grow even to this day.

[25:39] As the gospel of the love of Christ, the Son of Man who loved me and gave himself for me is proclaimed, the hatred of men and women for God which we see in our world today is overcome and overwhelmed.

The dawn of God's love breaks through and breaks down the darkness of our despair and our guilt and our misery and our sin. Judas and his mob come to arrest Jesus.

I wonder, I wonder, did any of that mob after the resurrection of Christ become Christians?

Did any of them who for the first time understood why Jesus had allowed himself to be arrested and crucified, did any of them then realize just how much Jesus loved them?

Did any of them realize that that fateful night it wasn't so much that they were arresting Jesus but that he in his love and by his spirit was arresting them?

[26:53] This morning we're not coming to Jesus. He's coming to us. It's not in secret, it's not in darkness, it's open, it's in the daytime.

He comes to us through his word and he comes to us by his spirit. He comes and allows himself, and I find this amazing, he comes and allows himself to be subject to our judgments and decisions. Will you betray him by your rejection of him? Or will you accept him as the Lord of love and the Lord of life, the Lord of hope through whose cross and resurrection you can have forgiveness and eternal life?

Jesus will never force you to believe in him at the point of a sword. He will never force you to believe in him at the point of a sword. He will attract you with his love.

Will this morning you accept him as your Lord and Savior? Will you put your trust in him as your master and friend? Will you?

[28:05] Let us pray. Our loving heavenly Father, we can scarce believe these things were they not written down, that your glorious Son, before whom the angels fly and before whom they sing, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.

That very Jesus, betrayed by a sinful man called Judas, arrested by this mob, allowing himself to be arrested so that he could die on the cross to take our sins away.  
And we can scarce believe that if we place ourselves in that story like us not, we'd be among the mob, not the disciples, but the mob. Well, Lord, we don't want to be among the mob.  
We want to be among the disciples of Jesus, loving him, following him, and even though it may cost our lives, we want to commit our lives to him now. In Jesus' name.  
Amen.