

The Night He Was Betrayed

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[0 : 00] I believe in the prayers of God's people. I don't know that I was that succinct 30 years ago, I was a very poor decision to even ask me. But I remember as I deliberated on that question, one of the things that was a clincher for me as I debated the question was this, who will pray for me? I couldn't imagine leaving people that I knew prayed for me. So here I am.

Doing what I have done from month to month and week to week, asking you to pray and having confidence in the power of the Word of God to make a difference in your lives.

Turn your Bibles to Matthew 26, verse 14. Let me read to you.

[1 : 27] Matthew 26, verse 14. Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?

And they paid him 30 pieces of silver, and from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him. 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, and 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 another, Is it I, Lord? Let's pray.

[2 : 44] Father, for us, prayer is a recurring declaration of your sufficiency and your goodness in our dependency.

And we ask that your spirit would quicken our hearts to behold wondrous truths in your word, and that through the enabling of the Spirit of God, that we, beholding as in a mirror the face and truth of our Lord Jesus Christ, would be affected by that, and we would grow to be more like him.

And that those who are here today, that do not know the Lord Jesus Christ, would be drawn to the cross and recognize the darkness of their soul and their complete inability to save themselves, and that they would cry out upon the Lord Jesus, in whom alone is salvation.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. If you were to ask me to explain in a single sentence what really the purpose of preaching is, and I'd confess that on various days I may say it with a slight different perspective, I would say fundamentally that at the heart of preaching is this goal, preaching aims to make much of Jesus.

Underneath the little glass top here, there's a little note that I have to myself that has often reminded me when I stand here with the responsibility of being a messenger of the Lord of hosts, it says, how does this sermon testify to Christ?

[4 : 29] It is a summary of John chapter 5, verse 39, where Jesus, when he was identifying the issue of his person and his work, he said, listen, at the heart, the Scriptures bear witness to me.

And so when a man stands before you, whether it is Pastor Shearer or Tim Knoyer, the truth of the matter is, as we read the same book, we love the same Lord, and our task is fundamentally the same.

It is to make much of Jesus. And so here we are, just in front of Resurrection Sunday, and we're having the Lord's table, and as we gather together, and as I've been praying and thinking about this, actually, if you would say, how many of you remember what Last Communion Service's text was?

Does anybody remember here? It was Matthew chapter 26, and when he had broken the bread, he gave it to the disciples and said, take this, eat, this is my body, and he took the cup, and when he'd given, do you remember now?

When he'd given thanks. We're backing up a little bit, and I want you to ponder with me, just for a moment, the unbelievable picture of what we find here, and its testimony to the love of Christ for us. [5 : 56] We're going to look at a passage that really displays and brings to forefront an unbelievable and a striking picture of the hearts of mankind, and including mine and yours, and the love of Christ, which, as it says in Ephesians, transcends and surpasses what we can imagine.

So as we step into this verse, let's begin, first of all, by recognizing that what we're going to read here in this passage is an indication of the most vile betrayal of all time.

As you look at the passage, we take up the text there in verse 14, and we find that Judas Iscariot is offering to the chief priests and the leadership of the Jews an opportunity to betray and ultimately bring about the death of the Savior.

The other Gospels help us understand that the hatred that the Jews had for Jesus had reached this fever pitch that they wanted to do everything they could to destroy Him, and yet there was this tension and this uncertainty.

They were afraid that they couldn't pull it off because the crowds thought very much of Jesus, and He had done so much for so many people that there was a real hesitancy on their part to do it publicly.

[7 : 21] And so they, seeking a way, and Judas evidently aware of this, I mean, it must have been a buzz going around, hey, listen, does anybody know how to catch them privately and cause problems?

And here's Judas. He knew their hatred. He knew their hesitancy, and so he comes to them privately, and he says, listen, I'll do it. I'll do it. And I want you to stop and recognize that here was a disciple, one of the 12, that Jesus had chosen to walk with him, and observe every bit of his ministry and his heart.

It was one of those 12 that was going to willingly betray Jesus and lead ultimately to his death. You know, when we do something in ignorance and we do something without a full knowledge of what is taking place, in some sense what we do is less offensive than what we do intentionally and against the grain of the reality of what we've experienced.

Remember when Jesus said, woe to you, Jehorazin, woe to you, Bethsaida, because if the miracles that have been done in your presence had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they'd still exist.

The point he was making is that unto whom much is given, what? Much is required. There is an amplification of the consequence of sin proportionate to the blessing that we have received.

[8 : 50] And here was Judas against the backdrop of all that he had experienced and seen, willingly setting the plate for the betrayal of Christ.

He was doing it against the background of a close relationship. He'd been one of the 12. He had enjoyed three full years of the presence and the love of Christ.

One of the things that we read in the book of John as we were working our way through it is that Jesus loved them to the end. He never changed his mind about his unconditional love for those 12. And here was Judas, knowing our Savior, knowing what he had done, knowing every one of his good, kind deeds and his sensitivity, here was Judas ready to betray him and doing it intentionally against his friend.

I want you to understand also that it was done with premeditation. He had thought it out. He pondered about the time in which he could pull this off. And so quietly and on his own, he snuck away and he presents this opportunity to enemies of Christ and he says, listen, I'm ready to do it, but how much are you going to pay me for this?

[10 : 07] Can you imagine negotiating with someone to betray your best friend or your wife? Here's Jesus. The one who had in every case, there was never a question of his love and his concern and his sympathy for Judas and yet here was Judas so darkened in his heart that he was dickering with these leaders about how much money he was going to get for this.

You know, a sin of passion is offensive and more than once we have acted in a fashion that really has shown a very poor heart but I would have to say, you know, it wasn't well thought out.

It wasn't something that I pondered and did over a period of time. Let me give you an illustration.

You're on a long road trip. We used to travel, Judith and I, her parents were in Florida.

It was about a 20-hour drive from where we were in Northeastern Ohio to Florida and we were in a Datsun 510 station wagon. It's much smaller than you can imagine.

We had four kids and two adults in that car and it was a, that was before vans had been invented. How many of you are of the generation where you remember the station wagons?

[11:23] Well, we didn't have one of those Land Cruiser boat station wagons. We had this little dinky, dinky Japanese knockoff and we put the four kids in the back with all of our luggage and the first thing that would happen is that they'd start asking, are we there yet?

That was not a problem to me. No, we're not. But when I was blessed, I have been blessed with two boys and two girls and guess what? You know, you'd have the seating going on. It's one thing to hit your brother in the back of the car on a 20-hour road trip. It's another thing to hit your dad. Now listen to me carefully.

I don't want you to miss this. There's not a Bible verse that really talks about hitting your brother in the back of the car that I can think of.

Maybe I text me later and let me know. But there is, paying attention, you listen to me, there is a Bible verse that says, woe to the person who raises his hand against his father. I was full of vinegar when I was younger.

[12:28] Still have some. But, you know, I remember my dad and I having a rather animated conversation. I was 20. And I thought that I could win the argument.

I remember reaching a point of raising my voice and he said, you say another word and I'll slap you. That was the last word I said that day.

It never crossed my mind to raise my hand against my father. Do you follow that? And here was Judas willing to raise his hand against his savior.

An unbelievable act by a profoundly wicked heart. And as we look at the horror of what Judas was ready to do, there should be, in all of our hearts this morning, there should be a sobering, I can't believe Judas would do that.

Do you follow that? That's a dark heart. I want you to look at the second piece that I really want you to dig in on.

[13:48] Verse 21. And as they were eating, he said, truly, now how many of you know that the little words truly or truly, truly are like, it's like a highlighter or a yellow marker on something.

It's like, it's bold, right? Hey, wake up everybody. I know you've got food in your mouth, but listen, right now I want you to pay attention. One of you here is going to betray me.

There are several things that I want you to ponder and one of the things that I would encourage you to do, listen to me, one of the things that goes with being faithful in our Bible reading is asking ourselves the question over and over again, why is this here?

Right? Make sense? Why did the Holy Spirit put that in there? Why is it there? I think there are some things that we need to recognize as we look at this passage and Jesus is making a profound statement when he says, hey, one of you is going to betray me.

Why is it there? For one, Jesus' announcement shows his deity yet again. How many of you know what's going to happen tomorrow?

[15:10] I was looking at my calendar and, you know, and, okay, this is going to happen and that's going to happen and I reminded myself there's a little phrase from James that sticks in my mind that says, if the Lord wills.

Okay? I don't know what's going to happen tomorrow for sure. I have some ideas. My schedule kind of mapped out and I, okay, this, this, this, but I thought, you know, if the Lord wills.

Here's Jesus saying, this is what's going to happen. One of you is going to betray me and only God can know the future and speak to it accurately and intelligently.

But there's another thing that I want you to recognize. The announcement is also a deep lesson on our sinful hearts. Jesus knew exactly who his betrayer was going to be and yet his opening statements were rather general.

He could have said, hey, everybody listen up. Just a little while, Judas is going to walk out of here and he's going to betray me. It is significant that he said, one of you is going to betray me.

[16:19] The thing that I find very interesting is the response of the disciples. Look at it.

Look at it. These are 12 men that had spent three years in the presence and under the teaching of Christ.

Stop just for a moment. How many of you have ever listened to a conversation in which someone said, well, so-and-so committed such-and-such a crime.

He left his wife. He ran off with blah, blah, blah. Or he robbed a bank or he got involved in drugs and he's in rehab now. Any of you, don't raise your hands, any of you ever thought to yourself, never happened to me.

Not me. Won't happen to me. Here is Jesus speaking to the 12 and he says, you know what? [17:23] One of you is going to betray me. What happens next? Look at it. Look at it. And they were very sorrowful.

Who was sorrowful? Peter, John, James, Andrew, Nathaniel. Do you follow me? They were sorrowful.

They were very sorrowful. They were... And they began to say to him one after another, underline these words in your Bible.

I want you to have them stick in your mind. Is it I? Do you know what that reflects? I think we make very little of just how dark our hearts actually are.

Here is Jesus speaking of the supreme betrayal and every one of the disciples have the spiritual discernment.

[18:35] Pay attention. To ask a logical, practical question. Am I the one who's going to do it? Do you know what that tells me? For a brief moment, these disciples were thinking with clear theological understanding of the darkness of the human heart.

You know, we sing the words, good song, it says, prone to wonder, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave, the God I love. And at the very time we are singing some of these words, our minds are engaged in unforgiveness, our minds are engaged in bitterness, our minds are engaged in lust, our minds are engaged in self-idolatry and we are not as fearful of the darkness of our own heart as we ought to be.

Take just a moment and turn over to a passage that should help us in relationship to this. Psalm 19, verse 12 and 13, here's what the psalmist says in this unbelief, my wife is not in here, she's working in a nursery, but if I were to ask her today, so how did it go?

She would say you used the same words over and over again, so unbelievable is off the table. It will not be said again, thank you, today. Psalm 19, a psalm about the word, that always gets me excited.

But look at 12 and 13, who can discern his errors? Hey, everybody look up. Your heart is an absolute pit. And the sooner you come to grips with the darkness of your own heart, the more you will cling to the remedy of the work of the Spirit of God and the word of God in helping you stay anchored.

[20:41] Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. Keep back your servant from presumptuous sins. You know what a presumptuous sin is?

It's a sin of my arrogant, proud heart. I gotta tell you. I remember a conversation not too long ago with an individual who's explaining the sinfulness of their behavior and arguing with me about the justification of it.

But I gotta tell you, I've done the same thing. Judas is in the nursery so I can tell you this. Every now and then I wake up with a surly spirit. Do you know what I mean by a surly spirit?

I mean just kind of self-focused, a little irritated and I remember we were having coffee together and I let a little of my sarcasm go. It's like, there it was and she said, I didn't deserve that.

You're right. It's just my black heart. You know, it's like, God help me. And here is the psalmist saying, you know, your word is what's gonna help me to not be so self-focused and presumptuous.

[21:49] And he says, then I shall be blameless and innocent of the great transgression. But coming back to the passage, here we are, Jesus explaining that one of them is going to betray him and I am struck by the fact that every one of the disciples, I am stuck.

Everyone says, is it I? And I gotta tell you something, listen to me carefully, until you have that level of respect and regard for the sinfulness of your natural inclinations, you are dancing close to the edge.

It's interesting as well that what Jesus said brought a very interesting response from the disciples. They all ask a question, is it I?

What they were doing was they were seeking the counsel of the word of God, namely the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, to help them identify, is it me?

Is my heart the one that's going to do this? Instead of being flippant and say, I'd never do that. And by the way, lest we give the disciples too much credit, you do want to remember that just a little

while later, remember Jesus said, you're all going to abandon me and what do they say?
[23 : 11] Hey, there's Peter. Not me. They all step up. No, not me. But just for a moment, we find some good theological thinking in these 12.

They're concerned about sin. Hey, are you concerned about sin? Are you really concerned about sin? I was speaking with someone not too long ago about the advantage of being 68.

There aren't as many as I wish, but one of the advantages of this is that, you know, it's like I was complaining with someone else. I wasn't complaining. I was listening to them talk about what it was to get old, and I thought, yeah.

But anyway, one of the advantages of being 68 is that God has dealt firmly with Tim Kenoyer repeatedly over sin. And I'm at the point where all he has to do is kind of tap me on the shoulder and say, do you remember where your parents would say, my dad would say this, you're cruising for a bruising.

Something about the poetry of that just kind of impressed me immediately. It's like, my dad gave me the luxury of choosing which belt was going to be the instrument of destruction.

[24 : 26] It's like, he had about eight or nine and I never found the right one. It's just, but I did experiment regularly. The advantage of being 68 is that Tim Kenoyer has a pathological fear for the darkness of his own heart.

Is it I? Oh, Lord. Keep me from sin. Keep me from sin. And here are the disciples crying out to Jesus, you know, am I the one that's going to do this?

I wonder how often you actually do that. Where you, because you have an abiding fear, an abiding fear, try that proper grammar here, you have an abiding fear for sin, you engage other people in helping you with the darkness of your own heart.

Hmm? I want you to recognize one other thing here in this passage. The announcement that Jesus made to the disciples was in a final appeal to the betrayer to stop in his tracks and repent.

I'm struck by that. Did Jesus look forward in one sense to the cross and what's the answer? No.

[25 : 52] I mean, what does it say? In the garden, how was he praying? If it be, what was he praying? All right, Lord, bring it on. I'm ready for this one. Now, one of the problems we have is we are, we're not able, we're not able to focus on true truths at the same time.

It kind of frustrates us a little bit because we like everything to be logical, but here's Jesus. If it be possible, let this cup pass from me. And on the other hand, in Hebrews chapter 12, it says, who for the joy that was set before him, you know, despising the shame and during the cross, we can't do the two things together.

Here is Jesus with this tender heart in the midst of knowing full well that just within hours he is going to be crucified.

one more time, one more time, one more time, he reaches out to Judas and gives him an opportunity to repent.

I've got to stop just for a second. If more of God's people understood how gracious and patient and forgiving Jesus is and God is, they would be more inclined to forgive and forbear with one another.

[27 : 20] here is Jesus facing his crucifixion and he asks his disciples to think very carefully about the sin in their own hearts.

I've got to say this, in the face of this scriptural evidence, we ought to be profoundly humble in admitting our spiritual frailty and our need for grace. So here's a little practical little test as to how you're doing at that.

Everybody listen because this is important. This is the takeaway. Are you ready for this? When was the last time you willingly received admonition from a brother or a sister, a wife or a husband, a father or someone else when they admonished you scripturally and said, that's wrong and you said, thank you.

Let the righteous strike me, I will count it a healing oil is what the psalmist says. Bring it on, I need it because I have a dark heart that desperately needs the grace of God, the word of God and the family of God.

Let's come to some closing implications before we come to the table. I have to tell you, you look here in verse 23 and says, He answered, He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me.

[29 : 01] The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man, many, that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed, it would have been better for that man if he had not been born.

And Judas, who would betray him, answered, Is it I, Rabbi? And he said to him, You've said so. I want you to write down a word and hold on to this.

The word is antinomy, A-N-T-I-N-O-M-Y, antinomy. Here's what I mean. I'll explain it this way.

An antinomy is two opposing, seemingly opposing laws that you have trouble putting together.

Right? How could Jesus be all man and all God?

How many's got, who's got that figured out? Raise your hands and wave at me because I want to consult with you afterwards. How many of you understand that our God is Trinitarian?

[30 : 09] We have here a picture that brings together Scripture often puts divine sovereignty and human responsibility side by side.

And one of the reasons it does that is so we don't miss the challenge. And when you don't keep those two truths in humble balance, you end up on one side or the other to your harm and sometimes to others.

And so, I want to kind of remind you of a passage in Deuteronomy chapter 29 verse 29 where it says this. It says, the secret things belong to the Lord our God.

What's that saying? There's some things that I don't get. Do you get it? There's some things that I don't get, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever that we may do all the words of this law.

So let me close out with this. In this passage, we see the heart of our Savior as being profoundly merciful, profoundly instructive.

[31 : 26] He says to the disciples, Men, I want you to understand that your heart has the profound darkness that can readily betray me and live with humility and dependence upon the Word and dependence upon the family of God to protect you from the natural inclination to drift into darkness.

Second, here is Jesus reaching out to one who is going to betray him in just moments, gives him one last opportunity. Can I pose a question?

There's not an answer to it, but just imagine Judas said, Man, it's me and I'm going to stop this.

Would Jesus have granted forgiveness to him?

What's the answer? Absolutely. By the way, if he was willing to forgive Nineveh and he was willing to forgive Ahab, right? Now, don't get wound up around the axle on this, but I got to tell you, here's what we know about our God.

He is forgiving and patient and he appeals to sinners to repent. And so, this morning as we come to the Lord's table and I would ask the deacons to come now, we take the elements that remind us why Jesus can offer us complete forgiveness for all of our sins.

[33 : 04] It's because he died for us and died in our place and has granted to us the blessing of an offer of salvation because of his finished sacrifice for us.

Let us pray. Our Father God, this morning as we take this bread and we take the cup, we're very thankful that the scriptures tell us that this is a reminder of what you did for us.