Betrayal and Denial ... and Great Love

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[0:00] Good morning. We're continuing the series in John's Gospel this morning. We're in chapter 13.! And we're going to be talking about betrayal and denial.

! And I guess there are many of us here who have been betrayed or betrayed someone, who have denied someone or been denied by someone or something. It might be a boyfriend, a girlfriend, a husband, a wife, an employer, a work colleague, a teacher. We'll all know, I think, betrayal or denial in some way, either done to us or done by us. I know that I've done that in the past, that I have betrayed people, whether as a child or as an adult. The reading is from John's Gospel, chapter 13, and from verses 18 to 38. We're moving on from John's sermon last week when Jesus washed the disciples' feet. And now we're moving into the next part. They're still in the upper room before they go off out to the Garden of Gethsemane.
I am not referring to all of you, Jesus says. I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the Scriptures. The Scripture. He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me. I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen, you will believe that I am he. I tell you the truth. Whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me, and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me.
After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me. His disciples stared at one another at a loss to know which of them he meant. One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, and this is John, who would later write this Gospel, was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, ask him which one he meant.
[2:15] And you can just see Simon. He's always wanting to be, you know, know what's going on, be at the heart of things. And you can see him across the room going, you know, a little word in his ear, a little word in Isaiah. And leaning back against Jesus, the disciple of Damascus, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, it is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish. Then dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. What you're about to do, do quickly, Jesus told him. But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the feast or to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out and it was night. When he was gone, Jesus said, now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself and will glorify him at once. My children, I will be with you only a little longer.

You will look for me and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now. Where I am going, you cannot come. A new command I give you, love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.
Simon Peter asked him, Lord, where are you going? Jesus replied, where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later. Peter asked, Lord, why can't I follow you now? I'll lay down my life for you. Then Jesus answered, will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times. Waiting for a technical hitch to clear here. Sorry. I beg your pardon, Josh. So, betrayal and denial, and between the two, a great love.
A great love, this new commandment that Jesus gave. So, between the two. Next slide, Josh. There have been some great betrayals in history. Brutus and Caesar, they were great friends, almost like brothers, it said, and then Brutus was one of the betrayers who murdered Julius Caesar.
[5:06] Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, they signed a pact, a non-aggression pact, and then Nazi Germany broke the pact and invaded the Soviet Union in the Second World War. Vidken Quisling was the leader in Norway, a Nazi, and he was the leader of the government in Norway,

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and his name became known for someone who was a traitor. People are called Quislings. And of course, William Joyce, Lord Hoorho, who broadcast from Germany to Britain, betrayed Britain night after night, Germany calling, Germany calling, betrayed Britain, a great betrayal of his homeland. And then there are great denials of history. The Holocaust is probably the most infamous denial of all. Tobacco. Tobacco was once promoted as a health product. And we know the consequences of tobacco. And Richard Nixon, when President of the United States, is famous for saying, I'm not a crook. But actually, he was a crook, and he had to give up the presidency of the United States because of it. Great betrayals in history. Next slide, Josh, please. And we've talked about personal betrayals and personal denials.

Should be no surprise that Jesus suffered betrayal and denial. Probably the biggest betrayal and the biggest denial in history. Jesus suffered betrayal and denial. Next slide, please.
A betrayal is an active, calculated violation of trust. And a denial is a reactive rejection of truth, often driven by fear or self-preservation. I've got three contexts. I was looking this up, and it's the third one that we're going to focus on. A declaration that an allegation or statement is false or a direct contradiction of a fact. For example, I deny ever saying that. When people have heard you say it, if you say, I deny ever saying that, that's a clear false statement. Next slide, please.
So we have the beginning is the darkness of betrayal. Judas would actively and calculatedly violate Jesus' trust. He'd spent three years with Jesus. He'd been sent out by Jesus with the other disciples. They'd preached. They'd healed the sick. They'd raised the dead. The disciples and Jesus had shared bread and fish and wine and other food together. They'd shared fellowship together.
And yet, and yet, Judas would betray Jesus, even after all that. And I think it's important to say, when Judas went out, he had a valid testimony. Andy talked about this, Andy Sawyer, a few weeks ago, where we've had people that have preached to us, who've given us a valid testimony.
[8:03] And since then, maybe they've backslidden, they've left the Lord, but their testimony was valid when they gave it to us at that time. And so with Judas, he was out with the disciples, healing the sick, raising the dead, preaching the Word of God, telling people about Jesus and the kingdom of God coming. How would we react if we knew that someone who'd been with us like that for three years, as close as that, as intimately close as that, was going to betray us?

Jesus treated him kindly, treated Judas kindly. He washed his feet. He didn't get to Judas and say, well, I know you're going to betray me, so I'm not going to bother with your feet. He washed his feet. He gave Judas the position of honor at the banquet. Tradition says that John, the disciple who loved Jesus, was on his right, and that Judas was there on his left in the place of honor. He gave him the place of honor. He treated him kindly, this person who would betray him.
Jesus was troubled in spirit. He'd loved Judas for three years, but was anticipating betrayal.
I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me. Next slide, Josh. Jesus never publicly identified Judas as his betrayer, never said to the others, it's going to be Judas that's going to betray me. Judas had a chance to change his destiny.
[9:41] He was never publicly named in front of the other disciples, but he didn't take that chance to change his destiny. Judas was exposed by his deeds. He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me. This was fulfilling scripture from Psalm 41 and verse 9. This referred to Ahithophel, Ahithophel. I'm hoping that's the right way to say it. Ahithophel, who was a counselor to David, King David, who was an ancestor of Jesus. He was a great counselor to David, but he betrayed David.

He went with Absalom, David's son, who had a rebellion against David. After that, Ahithophel went out and hanged himself. These are the only two people in the Bible specifically who go out with remorse and hang themselves after betrayal. Ahithophel and Judas. And so that's why this scripture is foretelling what Judas will do. Sometimes we will be shocked by betrayal, just as were the disciples.
Judas has been a successful hypocrite who fooled all the others. They didn't know this was coming. They had no idea that this was coming. You can hear them asking one another, well, who's it going to be when Jesus says one of you is going to betray me? Who's it going to be? It can't be Judas. Do you think it's Matthew? Do you think it's James? Who do you think it'll be? They didn't know. But one of them was going to betray Jesus. And they were shocked. They would be shocked when Judas betrayed Jesus.
Judas had the devil in him. Earlier in John's gospel it said, yet one of you is a devil. Now Satan has gained full control of Judas. Getting the names right, Judas and Jesus. Gained control of Judas.

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The point of no return. As it says in James, sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death. This was it. This was the moment of decision. The moment of no return. You might be at this point today. You might be hearing this today.
You might be hearing this online later. You might be at a point where you think Jesus is speaking to you, calling you into his kingdom, calling you back into his kingdom. Don't let this moment pass.
[12:12] Don't let this be your point of no return. Stop and make that decision. Make that decision to say, Jesus, I need you in my life. I want you to forgive my sins. I want you to be my Lord and Savior. Or I want you to come back into my life. I want to draw close to you again. Don't miss.

The point of no return. Don't let sin, when it is full grown, give birth to death. Next slide, please.
Finally, Jesus gives up on Judas. And the disciples thought he was on treasurer duties.
They thought that Jesus had given Judas some task to do with regards to the money because he controlled the pot of money that the disciples. That's where they thought Judas had gone. So Judas goes out into the night, the darkness, the time and place of evil. This is this use of darkness again to signify evil, to signify the darkness, the spiritual darkness that is there. It would have been good for that man if he'd never been born, it says in Matthew. For Judas, remorse, when it comes, comes too late.
Judas would be remorseful later on that he'd betrayed Jesus, but it came too late. The betrayal had happened. Jesus was on his way to the cross. Judas demonstrates the wickedness of sinners, the unrepentant heart, the heart that is hard as stone, that will not respond to the call of Jesus.
That's the wickedness of sinners, that it will not respond, that it rebels, it will not turn to Jesus. Next slide, please, Josh. And so then we have this light of great love. Light returns. Judas departs, he goes off into the darkness, and Jesus begins to speak. Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. Jesus is going to be glorified, is being glorified, through everything that's going on, and through everything that will go on. The victory of the cross is coming.
[14:24] Jesus will be glorified through the victory of the cross. Now Jesus has the final chosen eleven. There they are. I know those who I have chosen. And now he wants to strengthen the faith of the disciples. And by so doing, so strengthen our faith 2,000 years later. Next slide, please, Josh.

Jesus gives a new commandment. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. Love one another. Moses was given the commandment, love your neighbor.
That's what Moses was given. Jesus gives it, love one another. Not just your neighbor, but one another. Love one another. The racial barriers are broken down.
We're to love one another. When we are Christian brothers and sisters, we are to love one another. Because that's how the world will recognize us. Love one another as I have loved you.
Not your neighbor as yourself anymore, but we should love one another as Jesus did. Selflessly, sacrificially, powerfully, personally, individually, unconditionally.
[15:44] All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another. There we are, back in that upper room. Jesus saying that to those disciples. That's still relevant to us today as his disciples.

We have to love one another as Jesus loved us, so we make a difference in the world. People will see the difference if we love one another. How different to the world.
Next slide, please. And then we start this darkness of denial. Soon, Peter will make a declaration that is a direct contradiction of a fact.
Jesus has said, where I'm going, you cannot come. Darkness returns when Peter opens his mouth and looks to his own strength and guidance. In Mark's gospel, Peter boasts, he declares, even if all fall away, I will not.
Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you. There we are, the big boast. I'll never give up on you. I'll never deny you.
[16:50] Next slide, please, Josh. Peter prays too little. Simon, he said to Peter. This is Jesus when they're up in the garden.

He asked them to pray and he came and they fell asleep. Simon, he said to Peter, are you asleep? Watch and pray so that you'll not fall into temptation. Peter later again acts too quickly and uses a physical weapon in a spiritual warfare.
He drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, cut off his ear, we're told. There's impetuous, impulsive Peter cutting off the ear of Malchus, the servant.

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And we're told in Luke's gospel that Jesus healed the servant. But Peter, acting impulsively, acts in a physical way in what is a spiritual battle.
And he's too late to reverse his actions. And he goes on to deny Jesus. When somebody says later, this fellow is one of them, again, he denied it.
[17:57] He made that statement that was a contradiction of fact. No, not me. No, I'm not one of them. He made that statement.

He denied Jesus. Next slide, please. Jesus kept Peter as one of the inner circle of three disciples with James and John.
As they then would go out into the Garden of Gethsemane. And he would use this moment alongside the transfiguration. Now, for those who perhaps are new here, the transfiguration had been when, again, Jesus with John and James went up to a mountain.
And he was transfigured. His glory shone. It literally shone in front of the three disciples. It shone so brightly that it was just the perfect representation of who Jesus was.
And Moses and Elijah were seen with him on the mountain. Now, obviously, Moses died. Elijah ascended to heaven, we're told. He didn't die.
[19:14] He ascended to heaven. But it symbolized Jesus fulfilling the law and the prophets. Moses was given the law. Elijah was one of the prophets.

And here they were on the mountain with Jesus glowing and his father saying, just as he said when he was baptized, this is my son in whom I'm well pleased.
This is my son. So Jesus was transfigured on the mountain. And this was one of those moments which Jesus was using for Peter to teach Peter humility.
He would remember this later on when Peter became one of the first leaders of the church. No question about it. He would remember this and remember how humbled he'd been.
And so he was able to teach that humility to others in his life, I'm sure. Jesus forgave Peter and made him one of the founders of the church.
[20:15] And here's a few words that really for any pastor or minister or leader of the church. Feed my lambs. Take care of my sheep. Feed my sheep.

What more for a pastor or a minister? Feed my lambs. Take care of my sheep. Feed my sheep. Peter couldn't follow Jesus at that time.
But he did follow him later. Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later. Peter did follow. He did follow Jesus to crucifixion.
Nero, Emperor Nero had Peter crucified. And again, history tells us, or legend tells us, that Peter has to be crucified upside down.
Because he felt it wasn't right to be crucified in the same way as his Lord upright. He has to be crucified upside down. But he followed Jesus eventually.
[21:14] Peter demonstrates the weakness of saints. The weakness of us all. That there are times when we may deny Jesus.

Or do some other thing where we don't live the life that we should live. We betray Jesus.
We deny Jesus. We show, when we deny Jesus, the weakness of saints. We're human. We make mistakes. We say the wrong things.
We do the wrong things. And then afterwards we think, why did I say that? Why didn't I say that? Why didn't I do that? Why didn't I say that? And that's when we need to repent.
To confess our sin. And to say, I'm sorry Lord. Forgive me. Help me to turn away from that sin. From doing that. And to turn back towards you.
[22:13] Next slide please, Josh. So what can we learn? Do not boast. It is easy to make a statement or a commitment when things are good.

But when the heat is on, not so easy sometimes. But we all make boasts. We all stand and say things where we boast in our own strength.
And scripture says, let him who boasts, boast in the Lord. Give glory to God. When we say something, don't boast in our own strength.
Give glory to God. Boast in his strength. In his grace. In his love. In his power. Don't be impulsive. When you have an important decision to make. Or you want to say something that is important. Don't act without taking it to God first.
[23:15] Even if it is just a quick prayer. If you are in a discussion. Just in your head saying, Lord you have got to help me here. Don't make me say something I am going to regret later.

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Don't make me act too quickly. Don't be impulsive. Because if we act in our own timetable. In our own way. Oh dear. We are in trouble. We are moving away.
From Jesus. The plans of the diligent. It says in Proverbs. Lead to profit. As surely as haste. Leads to poverty. And that is as true.
Whether it is financial. Profit. Or financial poverty. As it is. If it is. Spiritual. Profit. And spiritual. Poverty. The plans of the diligent. Lead to profit. The diligent. The careful. The thoughtful. Not the impulsive.
[24:13] Haste. Leads to poverty. Next slide please. We need to be on our guard. Satan is described as the father of lies.

In John's gospel. An angel of light. In 2 Corinthians. The God of this age. Again in 2 Corinthians. A roaring lion. In 1 Peter. The tempter.
In Matthew. All of those things. It's. It's sometimes difficult. To get that balance. Between. Not concentrating.
Too much. On Satan. Being out there. And concentrating. Too little. We need to be aware. Because he can come to us. And he can speak to us. In many.
Many different ways. It can be a lovely. Whisper in our ear. A pleasant. Whisper in our ear. Or it can be the roaring voice. Of a lion. It can be as an angel of light.
[25:09] How difficult is that to spot? And that's really difficult to spot. An angel of light. Someone who looks. Who seems. Who feels. Who we believe is good.

Is full of goodness. Can be Satan. The tempter. Jesus was tempted. He was tempted. Out in the wilderness.
And we'll be tempted. In the same way. Different ways. No doubt about it. But we'll face temptation. And we need to know. And be ready. For that temptation.
We need to put on. The full armor of God. And it's one of those things. Somebody else has said this. Some time ago. About. A good practice to get into.
Is to put on. Each morning. The full armor. Of God. The belt of truth. There it is. Fastened around your waist. The belt of truth. The breastplate.
[26:06] Of righteousness. That breastplate. Protecting your heart. A breastplate. The armor. Protecting your heart. From Satan. Sandals.

Fitted with the gospel of peace. The sense that you put on. Your sandals. Ready to walk. Ready to. To take action. To go out with the gospel. The sandals.
The shield of faith. There it is. You're holding. The shield of faith. Like a warrior. Which extinguishes. The flaming arrows. Of the evil one. There's Satan again.
Extinguishing his arrows. His arrows will come towards us. Hold that faith. Hold on to your faith. Don't let your faith waver. Hold that faith. The helmet of salvation.
There on the top of your head. Not a little helmet. But can you imagine one of those Roman helmets with the plume. Or one of the big helmet. There it is. The helmet of salvation.
[27:05] My salvation. The helmet of salvation. And the sword of the spirit. Our offensive weapon. Which is the word of God. We can go out with the word of God.

The sword of the spirit. Put on the full armor of God. Every morning. Don't miss the chance. To change your destiny.
Today if you hear his voice. Do not harden your hearts. As you did in the rebellion. Again. I've said this before. Don't miss the chance.
If this is your chance today. Take the chance. Talk to somebody after the service. Talk to John. One of the other leaders. Talk to me.
But don't miss the opportunity. Don't miss the opportunity. It might be the last opportunity you'll have.
[28:02] Next slide please Josh. Remember. We have a great rule book. And a practical guide to living. The Bible. Memorize scriptures. And call them to mind. I really.

I struggled. And I do struggle with this. Two ladies in the church in Scotland. Where we lived at one time in Pitluckery. Two Marys. By the way.
We thought they were elderly. They were probably younger than I am now. By a long way. But we thought they were elderly ladies. They had been missionaries in Bangladesh. Or as they used to talk about.

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Bangladesh. So they had been to Bangladesh. As missionaries. And I remember saying to them. I really struggle to remember scripture. We'll pray for you.
We'll pray for you. And I'm sure they did. And I'm sure it's one of the reasons. Why. That I have been able to memorize scriptures. And can call on scriptures.
[28:58] Not sufficient I'm sure. Not all. Not as many as I would like to. I'll put it like that. But at least I can call on scripture. When I need to. So use the rule book.

Use the guide. If you're going to make something. Use the instructions. Use the instruction book. Get your Bible out. Get into it. And memorize those scriptures. Never abandon prayer.
Andy again. A few weeks ago. Talked about going up your mountain. That might be a mountain. It might be your bed. It might be your sofa. It might be a chair in the garden. But find somewhere that you go.
Your mountain where you go to pray. Always look after your own spiritual well-being. And that of the church. Are we praying Christians? Are we praying Christians?
Are we a praying church? Yes I believe Whitby Christian Fellowship is a praying church. We pray before the service. We have a prayer meeting. We have a prayer chain where people's prayer requests are put on.
[29:59] So yes. I do believe Whitby Christian Fellowship is a praying church. And I hope that we are praying Christians. And I speak of myself too in that regard.

Never put your ultimate confidence in people. And never be over self-confident. There was Peter. Over self-confident. Putting his trust in himself.
Don't put trust in people. Put your trust in Jesus. 16% of the disciples betrayed or denied Jesus. 16%.
That's 16 out of every 100 if you want to take a congregation here. So don't put your trust in people. Put your trust in Jesus. Next slide.
Please. Jesus' love demonstrated makes a difference. By us showing compassion. Compassion. Forgiving those who cause us harm.
[30:54] And serving the community. We offer a practical demonstration. Of the love for one another. That makes a difference.

By displaying the fruit of the Spirit. Those fruit of the Spirit need to be displayed in our lives. Love. Joy. Peace. Patience. Kindness. Goodness. Faithfulness.
Gentleness. And self-control. We need to demonstrate those fruit of the Spirit in our lives to people. Because that's one of the things that will speak to people.
That will speak to people's hearts. It's a contrast to the strife and the lawlessness in our world and in our culture. Love is a huge contrast, isn't it?
To a society, a culture that would set us at odds with one another. Old and young. Strong and weak. Politically to the right. Politically to the left.
[31:59] The rich. The poor. Man. Woman. Man. Society would have us at odds with one another. Jesus doesn't want that. He wants us to show love.

And compassion. And the fruit of the Spirit to people. That's quite different to the way the world and our culture behaves. And by creating opportunities for conversation.
Through demonstrating God's peace and hope. Through Jesus. To a suffering world. We've sung about hope several times. We're going to sing about hope again.
Pep Guardiola. I read a headline. I didn't go on to read the article. But I read a headline. Pep Guardiola. For those who don't know. Was the manager of Manchester City.
Very successful. And when he left. And when he left. At the end of last season. He said. Nothing is eternal. Hands up. Who doesn't believe that?
[33:08] Nothing is eternal. He said. Well I'm sorry Pep. You got that one wrong. God tells us. That we will have eternal life.

If we turn to Jesus. We will have eternal life. But beware. Because. If you don't turn to Jesus. And death comes.
You will have eternal life. Without God. Without hope. So again. It comes back to that. Decision point.
If you are in that position. Please. Don't. Leave here. Today. Without. Speaking to someone. Or without. Making. That. Decision.

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Because we want you to have. Eternal life. With Jesus. So please. Or if you've. Fallen away. Come back to Jesus.
[34:07] Just say. I'm sorry Lord. Take me back. And he will. He'll take you back. Just look at the example. Of Peter. Peter denied Jesus. Three times.

Jesus took him back. Made him a leader. Of the church. Got him to feed. The lambs. And the sheep. So there's the example.
He's not going to turn you away. If you go back to him. Or if you turn to him. But don't miss. That. Pick up. Pick up. Take up.

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