

The Kiss of Betrayal
Matthew 26:45-50
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I have been taking us through a special series of sermons on these Lord's Days when we partake of the Lord's Supper. The focus of these sermons has been the suffering of our Savior. Our sermon today is about Judas and his kiss of betrayal. The reason I have included this in this series on the suffering of Jesus is because Judas' betrayal is one of the sorrows endured by Jesus as the Man of sorrows acquainted with grief. Included in that bitter cup of suffering which our Savior drank as the atonement for our sins was a betrayal of the basest sort, a betrayal involving both ingratitude and treachery. Since humanity in its sin has betrayed God, it is fitting that Jesus in His perfect and complete atonement for humanity's sin should experience betrayal as a part of His vicarious suffering.

Before going on, let's consider sin as betrayal. When the first Adam sinned against God in the garden by eating that forbidden fruit, he broke covenant with the God in whose very image he had been made. He broke covenant with the God who had given him dominion over the earth and who fellowshiped with him in the cool of the day. He broke covenant with God and sided with God's enemy the devil. In like manner, all of our sins are also betrayals of the very God who made us for Himself, who provides for us and upholds us.

It was necessary for Christ to experience betrayal so that His atoning suffering might be a complete payment for our sin, so that His punishment in our place might fit the crime of our race. It was also necessary for Christ to experience betrayal so the He might indeed be a high priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses because He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Jesus warned His followers:

Luke 21:16-17

- 16 "You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death.
- 17 "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake."

We should not be surprised when the fiery trial which tries us includes slander and ingratitude and even betrayal by someone we thought we could trust. When we experience such sore trials, we can come to Jesus in full assurance, for He experienced these trials as well and in the very worst degree. We can cast all our cares upon Him, for He cares for us. He is a sympathetic High Priest.

Let us now examine the betrayal by Judas Iscariot under three headings: man of doubt, man of deceit, and man of darkness.

We will begin by looking at Judas as a **man of doubt**. I don't believe Judas was originally a man of doubts. All twelve of the disciples including Judas were no doubt drawn to Jesus with great hope and expectations. They had seen the great revival in Israel under John the Baptist, and the growing following of

Jesus. They had seen Jesus' miracles and had heard him preach with great authority. Judas' doubts began to grow later on as Jesus began to make more clear the true nature of His ministry. A climatic point occurred near the Passover of the third year of Jesus' public ministry, the Passover one year before Jesus went to the cross. This was when Jesus fed the five thousand and the crowd wanted to make Him a political king over Israel. Jesus refused, and then multitudes deserted Jesus because He did not meet their misguided political expectations regarding the Messiah. It was at this point, when many Galileans deserted Him, that Jesus first stated that one of the twelve whom He had chosen was a devil. Jesus mentioned together those followers who deserted because they did not truly believe and the apostle who would eventually betray Him:

John 6:64

64 ... For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him.

After this event Jesus began focusing on instructing the twelve disciples about Himself. He took the twelve to the north to Caesarea Philippi, which is near the northern tip of that area we today call the Golan Heights. It was there that Peter testified that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Messiah. And it was there that Jesus began to explain to the twelve what He would have to do as the Messiah:

Matthew 16:21

21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the

elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

From this point on, Jesus stressed this point again and again to the twelve. Here is what Jesus said to the twelve shortly after He came down from the Mount of Transfiguration:

Matthew 17:22-23

- 22 ... "The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men,
23 "and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up." ...

Here is what Jesus told them as He began His last trip to Jerusalem:

Matthew 20:18-19

- 18 "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death,
19 "and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again."

Then after Jesus' Triumphal Entry and after He gave the Olivet Discourse, on Wednesday of the passion week, Jesus said this:

Matthew 26:2

- 2 "You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."

During this time, Jesus was emphasizing two truths to the twelve: He was indeed the promised Messiah and He was about to be crucified. Peter on occasion protested this teaching. James and John gave indication that they did not fully understand what Jesus was saying, when their mother requested positions of authority for her two sons in Jesus' coming kingdom. Yet it is Judas alone who was never able to accept these two truths in combination, though he never voiced his opposition. The cross was to him a stumblingblock and foolishness. As opposition to Jesus grew and as Judas came more and more to accept that Jesus was going to be crucified, the more Judas also came to doubt that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

I am reminded of the great challenge to Abraham's faith which we read about in Genesis 22. That is where God commanded Abraham to take Isaac to Mount Moriah and to offer him as a sacrifice. God had promised Abraham that he would have many descendants through Isaac and that God would establish His covenant through Isaac. How could God fulfill that promise if Abraham obeyed God's command to sacrifice Isaac upon Mount Moriah? Abraham did not dwell upon such questions. He simply obeyed God and trusted God. As Abraham and Isaac left Abraham's servants to go up Mount Moriah, Abraham said, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you." Hebrews comments on this event in the chapter of faith:

Hebrews 11:17-19

- 17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

18 of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called,"
19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from
the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative
sense.

The command to sacrifice and God's promises regarding Isaac appeared to contradict, but Abraham believed God.

Judas Iscariot did not have Abraham's faith. Judas' hopes regarding the promised Messiah and Jesus' statements about crucifixion appeared to contradict and so Judas had growing doubts. He lost faith that Jesus was the Messiah.

Judas was the only one of the twelve disciples who was not a good ground plant, to use the language of the parable of the sower. Judas was a stony ground plant with no depth of root. And so when the blazing sun of persecution and trial arose as Jesus predicted His crucifixion, Judas withered away spiritually. Without a regenerate heart, Judas did not persevere.

That brings us to our second point, which is Judas as a **man of deceit**. When others lost faith in Jesus, they deserted Him. Judas lost faith in Jesus, but he pretended still to believe. None of the other disciples knew about his hypocrisy. When Jesus stated at the Last Supper that one would betray Him, the other disciples said, "Is it I?", not "Is it Judas?" After all, Jesus had entrusted Judas with the job of treasurer, as the one who dispensed money to the poor on their behalf. Judas stayed on in spite of his disbelief and began stealing from the common money bag entrusted to him. If he was not to earn political power and

prestige from His loyalty to Jesus, he would get what he could by stealing. He continued this until the Wednesday of our Lord's last week, two days before our Lord's crucifixion. This is when Judas went to the chief priests and asked what they would give him if he would hand over Jesus to them and enable them to arrest Jesus discreetly and quietly. They gave Judas thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave in the law of Moses.

The next day, Thursday at the last supper, Jesus revealed to Judas that He knew his plans. Jesus told the apostle John that the one who would betray Him was the one to whom He would give the piece of bread He held in His hand after dipping it into sauce. Jesus then gave the bread to Judas, a sign to Judas that Jesus knew his plans, a warning to Judas of the enormity of the crime he was planning, and an appeal of friendship for Judas to repent. Judas did not repent but went out into the night both literally and symbolically. Jesus went to Gethsemane where He prayed and was strengthened for the coming ordeal.

Judas went to notify the chief priests that the time of opportunity was at hand. The chief priests had to get together the temple guard and a Roman cohort to accompany Judas. Judas perhaps first led this armed band to the upper room where he had left Jesus. When he found that place empty, then he went to Gethsemane as the most likely place to find Jesus. When the armed band arrived and Judas saw Jesus there as was His custom, Judas said that he would identify Jesus for arrest with a kiss, a sign of friendship. Thus Judas fulfilled the prophecy found in Psalm 41:8-9:

9 Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.

The kiss of Judas was hypocritical, but Jesus' response was sincere. Jesus said, "Friend, why have you come?" When Jesus voiced that word "friend," He did so with a sincerity rooted in the free offer of the gospel. Jesus has a genuine desire that people keep covenant and submit to God's revealed will even in those cases when Jesus knows that is not what God has decreed. Jesus knew from the beginning that Judas was destined to betray Him, but Jesus also knew that God's decrees did not lessen Judas' responsibility to do what is right. As Jesus said in Luke 22:22:

22 "And truly the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!"

As it says in Romans 11:33:

33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

In Luke 22:48, we read,

48 But Jesus said to him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"

This was a sincere warning to Judas, a warning also rooted in the free offer of the gospel. Jesus was warning Judas that

although Judas was about to sin against Jesus in unbelief, Jesus really was the Messianic Son of Man, the One who would ascend to the Ancient of Days and receive all authority in heaven and on earth.

That brings us to our last point, Judas the **man of darkness**. That sincere offer of friendship and that sincere warning were the last gospel opportunities given to Judas. Judas rejected these sincere invitations to repent and continued with his planned betrayal. The pain of this rebuff to Jesus was just as real as was the sincerity of Jesus' word "friend" which he had addressed to Judas. This was Judas' last gospel opportunity. When a person persists in rejecting the gospel, there can come even before death a point of no return when God gives him over to a debased mind. Judas as He rebuffed this last gospel offer went beyond the vale of gospel opportunity. He had trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace. This is evidence of a heart so hardened in its unbelief that the day of opportunity has ended.

When Jesus was condemned to crucifixion, Judas would regret the consequences of his betrayal. This was the legal repentance of regret which, still rooted in sinful pride, leads only to despair. It was not that repentance which is the fruit of faith in Jesus, not that repentance that is a part of our reconciliation with God, not that repentance which is joined with the peace of forgiveness. Judas, the man of inner spiritual darkness, went out into the night and hung himself.

Judas did not believe that crucifixion and Messianic glory could ever be reconciled. As a result, Judas became a part of that conspiracy against Jesus, the conspiracy which led to Jesus' crucifixion. As it turns out, Jesus' crucifixion was no obstacle to His Messianic glory. In fact, Jesus' crucifixion was the ordained path to Jesus' glory. God the Father rewarded Jesus for His humble obedience to the point of death, even the death of the cross. God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name. God raised Him from the dead in a glorified body and seated Him at His right hand in the place of all authority. God gave Jesus the nations for His inheritance and the ends of the earth for His possession.

Our response to Jesus should not be the hypocritical kiss of betrayal. Our response should be the reverent kiss of submission to His rule. We should come to Jesus in faith, trusting Him alone to make us right with God. We should take up our own crosses and follow Him, knowing that if the world opposed Him, the world will also oppose His followers. We should follow Him in faith, believing that just as surely as He rose from the dead, His cause will prevail. And He will reward us, both in this life and in the life to come.