

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
February 21, 2018
2nd Midweek Lent

Passion History: Institution of Lord's Supper; Psalm: 1
Hymns: 148; 159; 154; 554:5,6

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Matthew 26:47-50

And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and elders of the people.

⁴⁸ Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him." ⁴⁹ Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed Him.

⁵⁰ But Jesus said to him, "Friend, why have you come?"
Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our Crucified Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Loyalty

Loyalty is a trait that we look for in all friends. Betrayal is one of the worst failings that strikes to the heart. Of course there do arise circumstances when loyalty is tested, such as when two opposing forces, both close to one's heart, demand loyalty. This was not the case with Judas. It is important for us to comprehend what actually happened and how it was that this took place. We need to understand that we also may find our loyalty to Jesus tested, as did all the disciples that night, as do all believers in Christ. As we look to the events that took place on the Mount of Olives that fateful night, may we also understand that this was --

THEME: The Redeemer of the World Betrayed.

Our text records --

I. Judas' Betrayal of the Lord.

They were still in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus had roused the three closest of His disciples, Peter, James, and John from their drowsiness with the announcement "He who betrays me is at hand." (Matthew 26:46) With that Jesus went forward to meet the mob that was fast approaching. It appears that they had Judas go ahead of them, at least at first so that he might fulfill his treachery. He was to indicate by the prearranged sign which of the people that were out there in the olive grove was actually Jesus, lest in the dark they end up detaining the wrong man and Jesus remain free. So it was that Judas came forward and approached Jesus, greeting Him as if all was well and he had finally caught up with the rest of the band of friends at their camp site on the Mount of Olives. He came up to Jesus saluting Him as His Master and smothering Jesus with kisses. Yes, the Greek indicates that it wasn't a single kiss, but kiss upon kiss, upon kiss.

So it was that Judas had kept his part of the deal with the enemies of the Lord who had come out in force to take Jesus prisoner. There were servants of the High Priest, and temple guards, and very likely a squad of Roman soldiers along so that all conformed to the law of the land. The real drama is right there in the actions of Judas in his betrayal of the One whom he knew to be the Christ who was to come into the world. We know how one's own mind can trip one up into thinking that what one is doing is not so terrible. It is part of the devil's deceit, and surely that happened with Judas because we know that just hours later he came to the realization that he had betrayed the innocent blood. One might speculate that Judas thought that Jesus would slip through somehow, but that does not appear to be the case since he told the soldiers that they should take him securely, that they should seize Jesus. Perhaps, and this does seem likely, Judas had not thought through the consequences of his betrayal and how it all might turn out with Jesus being condemned. Indeed his apparent shock and dismay at seeing Jesus condemned would appear to support that proposition. But what was it that caused Judas to despise Jesus to the point that he would betray Him? And yes, in his betrayal Judas did despise Jesus.

I don't think Judas thought about it that way. He didn't realize that his betrayal was a despising of his best and truest Friend. That too is part and parcel of the devil's fiendish deception of those who would claim to be Jesus' disciples. Let us recall where it all began. It was with Judas' love of money. He had been chosen by the band of disciples to hold their money and buy for the group the things they needed. Judas coveted that

money. Judas was a thief and stole from that money for himself. Paul wrote to Timothy: *“The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”* (1 Timothy 6:10)

Judas was among those, and indeed he did fall from the faith, and he did pierce himself through with many sorrows. His covetous heart was so shocked and dismayed the previous Sabbath in the home of Simon the leper when Mary of Bethany poured that expensive ointment out over Jesus head and feet. To see all that money dripping down onto the floor! Judas could not dismiss the loss of that money but went and sold his Master, his Lord, his Savior. His end was destruction. Jesus had warned and warned Judas, even concluding, *“It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.”* (Matthew 26:24)

But we wouldn't ever do anything to betray the Lord! Judas was simply being true to himself, pursuing his own heart's desire. That is exactly what the world encourages each of us to do. **“To your own self be true!”** Where does that take one but down the path that will lead away from the Lord, down the path where by our words and actions we also would betray the Lord, even as we would put on a show of loving Jesus and showering Him with affection. When our first loyalty is to self, then “my happiness,” “my desires,” “my personal fulfillment,” “my life,” all come before the Lord. We can all too easily forget that the Lord Jesus taught us self-denial not self-fulfillment. He said: *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”*²⁵ *For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”* (Matthew 16:24-25)

How easy it is for any of us in the weakness of our flesh to go down that path of betrayal, and yet we see --

II. Jesus the Loyal Friend of Sinners.

Sometimes the simplest words speak volumes. Jesus response to Judas, even as Judas was betraying Him was: *“Friend, why have you come?”* (v.50) Yes, He also challenged *“Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”* (Luke 22:48)

These words of our Savior were not false or sarcastic. He was still reaching out to His *friend*. He would have Judas pause in his horrible act of betrayal and realize that he was betraying a Friend, a true and loving Friend. But Judas was not thinking about Jesus as his Friend. Jesus didn't stop thinking of Judas as friend. He reached out to Judas in love that he would turn from his sin and live.

We like to think of Jesus as our Friend. Even so we are all disloyal to Him in one way or another, to one degree or another pretty much every day. That is not to grant us any slack that we might think it some small thing, or inevitable anyway. It is such a tragic, sad thing that we fail Him so every day while He remains faithful and true.

Jesus is our best and truest Friend. We sing of Jesus, “What a Friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear!”(The Lutheran Hymnal; 457:1) That first line of that cherished hymn says so much about the depth of Jesus’ love for His friends. That is the depth of love we see in the Garden of Gethsemane as Jesus reached out to turn Judas from his sin. That is the depth of love we see in the judgment hall as Jesus stood quiet as He was accused of crimes that we have done. That is the depth of love we see on Calvary where Jesus bore our sins on the cross, and died. That is the depth of love Jesus still holds in His heart for you and me so that “*while we were still sinners, Christ died for us!*” (Romans 5:8)

Hear Jesus call to you. Hear Him say, “Friend why have you come?” and let us hold to Him as our best and dearest Friend. May the Spirit grant us the strength to respond to Jesus’ faithfulness and love with true loyalty all the days of our lives.

“Oh, draw us ever unto Thee,
Thou Friend of sinners, gracious Savior;
Help us that we may fervently
Desire Thy pardon, peace and favor.
When guilty conscience doth reprove,
Reveal to us Thy heart of love.
May we, our wretchedness beholding,
See then Thy pardoning grace unfolding
And say: “To God all glory be:
My Savior, Christ, receiveth me.
My Savior, Christ, receiveth me.” (The Lutheran Hymnal 386:5)

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.