

Theme: The Actions of Christ's Passion – “Betrayed”

Text: Luke 22:47-54a

And while He was still speaking, behold, a multitude; and he who was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them and drew near to Jesus to kiss Him. 48 But Jesus said to him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" 49 When those around Him saw what was going to happen, they said to Him, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" 50 And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. 51 But Jesus answered and said, "Permit even this." And He touched his ear and healed him. 52 Then Jesus said to the chief priests, captains of the temple, and the elders who had come to Him, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs? 53 "When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness." 54 Having arrested Him, they led *Him* and brought Him into the high priest's house.

Is there anything more despicable than a *traitor*? The heartlessness, the betrayal of trust, the lack of loyalty, and the selfishness and greed that are usually involved when someone turns traitor can make us shudder at the depths of evil within the human heart. History does not look kindly on men or women who do such a thing. Take our country's most infamous traitor, for example: Benedict Arnold. His name is still used today as a synonym for "traitor." However, there is no more infamous traitor in human history than the disciple in our text: Judas. His name will forever be synonymous with "traitor." Thirty pieces of silver: the equivalent of about four months wages, or the common price for a slave. That was the betrayal price for the Son of God. It makes you sick just to think about it, doesn't it? That Judas could have betrayed His friend and Savior for nothing more than the price of a slave! What could drive a man like Judas to do such a thing?

During this Lenten season we'll been looking at some of the "***Actions of Christ's Passion:***" Some of the actions that were done by, or done to, Jesus in the days leading up to His death and resurrection. This morning we will examine the second "action" in our series: He was "**Betrayed.**"

As we read through the accounts of Jesus' passion (or "suffering") in the four Gospels, many enemies of Jesus rise to the surface: the scribes and Pharisees, the Sadducees and the rest of the Jewish Sanhedrin, and of course, Pontius Pilate and the Roman soldiers. But none of these enemies of Jesus stick out as being as despicable as Judas. We are told in Matthew that the chief priests and Jewish leaders didn't even have to come looking to bribe one of Christ's followers to betray Him. Judas came to them! **Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him [Jesus] to you?" And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him (Matthew 26:14-16).**

It's very easy for us to villainize Judas, the physical betrayer of our Lord and Savior. It's very easy for us to be sickened and horrified by his heartless act of greed and unbelief. What's not so easy to see is the lesson for our daily faith life, and the warning signs found in the story of Judas that should make us realize we tend to be more like him than we think.

If you estimate the modern day value of those coins—approximately the equivalent of an average worker's wages for four months—they would have been worth at least a few thousand dollars today. That kind of money certainly would have improved Judas' financial situation, but it would not have made him rich. In the grand scheme of things, however, it really doesn't matter how much money Judas betrayed Jesus for. Would his sin have been any less shameful had he done the treacherous act for thousands or even millions of silver coins, instead of thirty? No!

What is shameful to realize as we examine Judas' actions is that we have "**betrayed**" Jesus in our lives many times for a lot less than 30 pieces of silver! Now before you protest and say, "Pastor, you would never!" Or, "I would never!" Think about what sin is—no matter how "big" or "small." Sin is choosing to side with the enemy, instead of Jesus. Sin is choosing to put someone or something—anything else—above our Savior. Sin is choosing to do the very things that Jesus tells us (for our own good), "Don't do it!"

In a sense, every sin is a **betrayal**. However, we must admit that some of our sins feel an awful lot more like a true betrayal than others. Sometimes we've "**betrayed**" Jesus for nothing more than a laugh from our coworkers, for popularity, or simply to avoid an uncomfortable confrontation with an acquaintance. Sometimes we have "**betrayed**" Jesus for money or material things, but usually it's just to save or earn a few extra bucks—not for one third of our yearly income. We've betrayed Jesus for the sake of outward "peace" among our family members and friends. We've betrayed Him for pleasure...and even for just a few extra hours of sleep on a Sunday morning. (At least Judas got four months wages out of the deal!) When we consider the depths of sinfulness and unfaithfulness within our own heart, Judas' actions don't seem quite so unthinkable.

Judas was at one time a faithful follower of Christ, just like us. He was chosen by Jesus to be one of His 12 closest followers and was even made treasurer of the group's finances. His road to unbelief and betrayal most likely did not happen overnight. We can assume from what we know of Judas from the Gospels that Satan used greed as his temptation of choice to lead Judas to steal from the disciples' money box (**see John 12:4-6**). Being a petty thief is still a far cry from hardened unbelief and betrayal. However, Satan is the master at taking our "little pet sins" and using them to consume our thoughts and actions to the point where they become the driving force in our lives. Satan used Judas' love of money to eventually see Jesus—not as the focal point of His life as His Lord and Savior—but as the ultimate quick cash opportunity!

We all have particular weaknesses to certain temptations; sins that frustrate us because we just can't seem to stop doing them. Satan wants nothing more than to get his filthy claws on our hearts through these temptations until we are consumed by them. Many times we are blinded to the seriousness of our situation and the deadliness of our "pet sins" so we brush them off each time. Maybe we realize that we're in danger and that these temptations have gotten the better of us far too often, but we're too proud to seek help from our fellow Christians or our pastor. Or maybe we are even too ashamed to turn to Jesus and His comforting words of strength, encouragement, and forgiveness which He has spoken to us in the Bible. If this describes us, then we need to look at how Jesus reacts to those who **betray** Him.

In our text we read that when Judas **betrayed** Jesus with a kiss, Jesus didn't respond by crushing Judas with His wrath. Instead He reaches out to Him to try and lead Him back to repentance. He lets Judas know that He is fully aware of what He is doing, and asks Him the soul-searching question, "**Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?**" (v. 48). In the Gospel of Matthew we read that Jesus even says to Judas, "**Friend, why have you come?**" (**Matthew 26:50**). Even here at the bitter end Jesus still extends the helping hand of friendship and love to His betrayer in an effort to bring Him back into the fold. Judas had betrayed Jesus and now His enemies were about to arrest Him and take Him away to be crucified. Judas couldn't change that. However, he could have *repented* and been *forgiven* for His betrayal and that is why Jesus reached out to Judas even to the end. He wanted to save His soul. Judas soon afterward would be overcome by guilt and despair over what he had done. But instead of turning to Jesus in faith for forgiveness, He hung himself in unbelief.

This is the other lesson we need to learn from the story of Judas: Jesus is always extending His arms in love even after the many times we've **betrayed** Him. He doesn't want us to push Him away in our guilt and shame, like Judas did, and pay for our "betrayals" with our own soul. He wants us to realize that He extended His arms in love on the cross to pay the punishment for our "betrayals." He shed His blood to wash away the guilt of our loveless, treacherous acts—all of them! He is not an angry judge who is waiting for the chance to condemn us and punish us. He is our *friend* and *Savior* who confronts us with our sins—

“Friend, have you betrayed the Son of Man?” –for the purpose of turning us back to His love: **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).**

Benedict Arnold. Judas. Pastor Luke. (Insert your name here). Traitors, all of us. Yet Jesus still calls us His **“friends,”** His **“brothers and sisters” (Matthew 12:49-50).** That is the incredible, faithful, unending love that Jesus has for us. Even though we have **“betrayed”** Him many times, He will *never* betray us. Amen.