

Sermon Text: John 13:21-30 - EHV

After saying this, Jesus was troubled in his spirit and testified, “Amen, Amen, I tell you: One of you will betray me.” ²² The disciples were looking at each other, uncertain which of them he meant. ²³ One of his disciples, the one Jesus loved, was reclining at Jesus’ side. ²⁴ So Simon Peter motioned to him to find out which one he was talking about. ²⁵ So leaning back against Jesus’ side, he asked, “Lord, who is it?”

²⁶ Jesus replied, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread, after I have dipped it in the dish.” Then he dipped the piece of bread and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷ As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. So Jesus told him, “What you are about to do, do more quickly.”

²⁸ None of those reclining at the table understood why Jesus said this to him. ²⁹ Because Judas kept the money box, some thought that Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the Festival,” or to give something to the poor. ³⁰ As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.

Dearly loved by Jesus,

If I say the word “betrayal” or “betrayed”, what is your reaction? I’m guessing it doesn’t bring up good thoughts. Why is that? It is most likely because this word means that someone has deceived you by breaking your trust. Because the world is full of sin, the Bible records many cases of betrayal or broken trust and disloyalty. One obscure case of betrayal is with King David. Ahithophel was a close friend and trusted confidant. He was a man who dined at David’s family table and a man whose counsel David trusted. Yet when David’s son Absalom attempted a coup, Ahithophel betrayed David and joined Absalom’s cause. For David, that betrayal must have been particularly biting. Although it’s unclear whether he was talking about Ahithophel or not, David lamented his betrayal by various people in his life in this prophetic psalm, “**Even my close friend, someone I trusted, who shared my bread, has turned against me**” (Ps 41:9).

Is there anything more biting than betrayal? We might expect our enemies to betray us, but we expect our friends to be loyal. When we’re close with someone and we have shared our deepest secrets and trust him or her completely, and then he or she betrays that trust, that is very painful. Betrayal seems to hurt a lot.

David certainly wasn’t the first person to have been betrayed, and he wasn’t the last either. Neither was his sad psalm isolated to his own situation, because Jesus seems to speak similar words to the ones David wrote to predict his own betrayal by Judas. Did you catch that from Psalm 41:9? Like Ahithophel, Judas was close with Jesus and was even part of the inner circle, one of the Twelve. He was a trusted friend who broke bread at Jesus’ table. And like Ahithophel, Judas had lifted up his hands in betrayal.

Theme: The Hands Of Betrayal

If you just welcomed a son into this world, Can you think of a worse name than Judas for your newborn son? The name Judas is so synonymous with “betrayed” that many wonder if he was distinctively evil or especially wicked from the womb. Why would anyone do something like this to Jesus? It’s true that Judas was sinful when he came out of the womb, but in the same way everyone is born sinful. Judas was just

as sinful as Andrew or Philip, just like you or me. And just like those other sinners Andrew or Philip, Jesus called Judas to be a disciple. He listened to Jesus' invitation to follow. He went on missionary trips with the Twelve and the 72, and served alongside the others. Earlier in this chapter, Jesus washed his feet, and now he was present on Maundy Thursday as the disciples gathered to celebrate the Passover with Jesus one last time.

The Bible also makes it clear that Judas had a greedy heart that he brought along with him to the Passover table. Do you remember when Mary anointed Jesus' feet with perfume? Mary's perfume was expensive—worth a year's wages! Judas argued Mary's deed was a waste of money. The perfume should have been sold to help the poor. The Holy Spirit lets us in on Judas' real motives. **“He did not say this because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief. He held the money box and used to steal what was put into it.” (Jn 12:6).**

The love of money was a terrible temptation for Judas, and the devil knew it. Satan was determined to wave that sin in Judas' face. When you've already sold out to dipping your dirty hands into the disciples' petty cash to use as your personal piggy bank, it's a pretty easy sell for the devil to suggest, *“And what exactly would you be willing to do for 30 pieces of silver?”* Judas didn't predetermine his betrayal. He didn't flip a switch. Simple greed that was unrepented and unchecked, was the sin that corroded his soul over time, and eventually put Judas' betraying hands at the table. **“By the time the supper took place, the Devil had already put the idea into the heart of Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.” (Jn 13:2).**

Betrayal hurts intensely because it's personal. But another part of what makes betrayal so brutal is that it's done in secret. Judas was living a double life. He was promoting himself as a disciple but letting his greed run wild in his soul. The rest of the disciples were fooled, and they thought of Judas as a friend and ally. They didn't see the greedy darkness in Judas' heart, but Jesus knew. Jesus chose the Passover meal, before the institution of the Lord's Supper to reveal his betrayer. **“After saying this, Jesus was troubled in his spirit and testified, “Amen, Amen, I tell you: One of you will betray me.”**

When you invite your friends or family over for your big family Christmas get together, there is an understanding that you check your hard feelings at the door. This is not the time to say hurtful things about each other. There is to be no fighting or arguing. You're expected to be civil. This is supposed to be a time of celebration! But here is Jesus celebrating with thanksgiving God's deliverance of the Israelites from slavery with his disciples for last time. His accusation brings instant tension to the room. The disciples react the same way everyone reacts when accused. They are defensive. They deny. They deflect. **“The disciples were looking at each other, uncertain which of them he meant.” “They were very sad and began to say to him one after another, “Surely, not I, Lord?” (Mt 26:22).**

There is more in the disciples' words than defensiveness and denial. Jesus hadn't identified the betrayer by name. He said, **“One of you will betray me”**, and that sent the disciples' minds spinning into in all different directions. Was there a disciple who argued in self-righteousness that he'd never, ever do such a thing? Remember, Peter said he'd never deny Jesus—and we know how that turned out. Was there a disciple who went soul searching in self-doubt? “Is he talking about me? Could he be talking about me? I know he's God, and he knows everything and can see my soul. He sees something in one of our hearts that nobody else sees. What does he see in my heart? Am I capable of this?”

Well, are you? What secret sins do you have hiding in your heart? Have you ever sold God out for money? Have your secret sins gone unrepented and unchecked for so long that they eat away at your faith and corrode your soul? Is greed the sin that is crouching at your door? What is the secret sin that you fight to hide from everyone else, but the devil waves it in front of your face because he knows it brings you to your

knees? Ask yourself honestly, because this devotion will do you no good if all you take away is that Judas was a bad guy. Nobody wakes up in the morning determined to fail God—but we better know that we are all sinners, and sinners sin and fail God every single day. Anyone is capable of any sin, especially if left unchecked and unaddressed. What does the all-knowing Jesus see when he looks in your heart? Will you still answer, **“Surely not I, Lord?”**

As the accusation hung in the air and the disciples scrambled to avoid blame, Peter signaled to John who was sitting next to Jesus. **“Jesus replied, ‘It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread, after I have dipped it in the dish.’ Then he dipped the piece of bread and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. So Jesus told him, ‘What you are about to do, do more quickly.’”**

The Bible teaches how to deal with someone caught in a sin. **“Brothers, if a person is caught in some trespass, you who are spiritual should restore such a person in a spirit of humility, carefully watching yourself so that you are not also tempted.”** (Gal 6:1). Jesus taught that gentle restoration first requires a private conversation. **“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his sin just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have regained your brother.”** (Mt 18:15). Throughout the years that Judas was a disciple, Jesus exercised pastoral care for Judas with a gentle touch. During this last moment, Jesus was trying to jar his conscience and dislodge the greedy grip sin had on his soul by calling Judas out publicly. At least three times Jesus confronted Judas in the hearing of Twelve. At the end of his Bread of Life discourse, Jesus said, **“Jesus answered them, ‘Did I not choose you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!’** (Jn 6:70,71). When Jesus washed his disciples’ feet, he said, **“You are clean, but not all of you.”** (Jn 13:10). Now at the Passover table, Jesus dips his hands into the bowl with Judas’ betraying hands. Jesus was reaching out to Judas. He was telling him, “Resist Satan. Don’t do it.” Even to his own betrayer, Jesus showed love and pastoral concern for Judas’ soul right to the end.

We know that Judas went ahead with his betrayal by identifying Jesus with a kiss. Jesus went ahead down a path that led to another “betrayal” even more amazing. Jesus went to the cross, where in painful anguish he called out to a faithful Father who had abandoned him. **“At the ninth hour Jesus shouted with a loud voice, . . . ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’”** (Mk 15:34). God treated Christ as though he had committed Judas’ betrayal, as though he had turned traitor like Ahithophel. God banished Christ to suffer hell’s punishment for our sins of greed, for our idolatrous love of money, for our sin of self-righteousness, and for every embarrassing secret sin we insist on hiding. They’ve been punished in full, and they’ve been paid in full. And as Isaiah says, **“By his wounds we are healed”** (Isaiah 53:5).

How could Jesus love and forgive traitors like Ahithophel or Judas? Jesus did love them, and he did forgive them, but those stories had unhappy endings. Ahithophel and Judas were so distraught over their own betrayals that they reasoned God’s only move was to treat them in the same way they treated God, and they were certain God would never be able to forgive them. In an act of unbelieving despair, both men took their own lives which resulted in their own eternal damnation.

But the gospel teaches us that God doesn’t betray sinners; instead he turned his back on his own Son. He forsook Christ! He reconciled the world! Never live with the thoughts of guilt that God will leave us for our sins, and don’t let Satan or anyone convince you otherwise. God has forgiven us in Christ. Ask not then how God could love and forgive a traitor like Judas. Ask “How could God love and forgive a traitor like me?” In Christ alone we know the answer that God has loved us and died for us and by his blood forgiveness has been won for all our sins. Go in peace as forgiven children of God! Amen.