

## Who Do You Betray? 4-5-20

When we watch some of our favorite TV crime dramas, we sometimes are surprised at the twists and turns that occur as the drama plays out. We find ourselves picking the killer usually at the beginning of the program, and sometimes we are correct but sometimes we are surprised. There are characters who seem very sweet and innocent and those we generally have learned to peg as being someone they were not expected to be till it all plays out. Yet, at times, it really is the butler who did it or the maid.

When we read about Judas Iscariot, we are fairly sure he was the most logical one of the twelve to betray Jesus. He showed all the signs it seems. We know he was corrupt as a tax collector which did not seem to bother Jesus at all, and he already employed Matthew as one of his disciples. He had a zealot, a person who caused trouble between the Jews and the Roman government. The one who betrayed Jesus could easily have been one of them as well. Or how about the doubter, not there yet in the story, but Thomas must have previously showed some signs that he was a show me type personality. The most unlikely of suspects would have been John, who frequently called himself the beloved disciple in his gospel. If the time would have allowed it, perhaps another suspect could even have been Mary Magdalene. What though would she have gained for betraying the Master? A lot of suspects, thirteen in fact were you to have counted a woman, but in that time that was not a thought.

Some ask the big question, why did Jesus allow a man to be so close to him whom he knew would betray him? Many thoughts on that are from he already knew and had to allow it to play out to insure the outcome would be his death to maybe Jesus thought Judas could change and not go through with it, but then someone else would have been cast as the bad guy, and that would not do since Jesus knew the future before it occurred. What good did Judas really do in his time as a disciple and did he have to end his life as he did by his own hand?

Do we or have we ever betrayed someone close to us? I am sure, if you think about it, maybe not as hard as you think, you have. How often did you tell a secret to someone when asked to keep it just that, a secret? That's a betrayal. How many times

do you betray yourselves when you make lofty promises about what you will do in the New Year and by this time have completely forgotten that promise or failed at it completely? We don't always just betray others, we betray ourselves. We often hurt ourselves most during any betrayal, because usually it ends with the loss of a friend, a relationship, a love, property or many other things. We think we are doing the right thing when we take actions we later realize were poorly thought out. Do you think Judas took his actions too quickly when he finally realized what he had done? Do you think he would have been able to seek forgiveness for his actions and had it granted? Jesus was many things to Judas just like he was to the other disciples.

Who have you betrayed? Yourself, your parents, your friends, your partners, your job, your finances? It can be a lengthy list when you sit down and think about it. And who are you to other people? Are we all not a friend to someone? Are we not children to parents somewhere here or gone on to glory? Are we responsible for others and have to realize our actions and how they will affect those we have in our care? So many avenues of thought to take, so many twists and turns, it really is a real-life drama being played out each day of our lives.

When the Last Supper is ongoing and Jesus tells the twelve that one of their own would betray him, it never says in the gospels that everyone looked to Judas and pointed the finger. It never tells us many thought it but never said it. Not even when Matthew writes this story of how it all happened that night, does he say we all knew it had to be him. Judas, just like the other eleven left behind his former life to follow Jesus. Just like the other disciples, he openly accepted Jesus as the Messiah, the long-awaited Savior. Judas left his own money and life behind. He may have had family too, and more than likely did. Judas has become a name no one names children, yet in the time he lived it was common. Just two centuries before this time, Judas Maccabaeus was a hero who liberated Judah from the Syrians. People must have been naming their children after him for a long time, and perhaps even Judas Iscariot was named after the legend. When Jesus was still a boy, a man named Judas the Galilean led a tax revolt against the government. So, the name was popular and in fact, few know that Thaddeus another disciple whom we know little about was in fact named Judas Thaddeus and also referred to as just Jude. Jude is a shorter version of Judas like Bob today is to Robert,

and Jude was one of the names of a brother of Jesus, so actually named Judas. No one pointed the finger at Judas during the Last Supper, but Judas knew already in his heart that the plan was in motion.

When we make the ultimate decision to betray someone, we don't think it through very well. Many times, we act in haste, let things slip out, or just find a reason that it has to be done, a justification for our decision. It is usually only later maybe just hours, maybe days when we realize we have indeed betrayed someone. It didn't take long for Judas to realize the full extent of what he had done, how he could never take it back, and how he also could not live with himself. Many say Judas was never a real disciple and always had sin within his heart. We cannot see what was in Judas heart, but Jesus would have detected it. Again, did Jesus take no action because he knew his Father in heaven was orchestrating the entire events of what had to occur, even if Jesus himself knew the pain and agony that was coming his way.

Who have you betrayed and how did it end? Judas may have been someone we have known who committed suicide for his actions, because he could no longer live with himself. Yet others have their reasons for it. One thing we feel is clear is that it was not all about the thirty pieces of silver. We cannot exactly determine its value, but most historians say about \$200 or thereabouts. In Exodus thirty pieces of silver was paid to someone who lost a slave as reimbursement. When Joseph was sold into slavery his brothers were paid twenty pieces of silver, this being in Genesis and is said to compare to the thirty in Matthew in value. A shepherd was paid thirty pieces of silver as is noted in the book of Zechariah for a day's work. So, let's face it the thirty pieces of silver although noted as would give Judas money to start a new life with, was not all that in value. It certainly would not have meant much to a man who knew money and the value of almost everything. Judas complained about the expensive nard or ointment the woman who washed Jesus feet used saying it could have been used for something better than nard. Judas was known to pocket a little of the money he kept for the disciples as their treasurer. And he was their Treasurer, they trusted him with what little funds they had when they travelled. Why give the guy you distrust the job of keeping your money? So, we clearly know the disciples did not point the finger at Judas or had any idea or feelings that he would betray Jesus.

Peter betrayed Jesus too by his denial. He denied knowing Jesus at all. He looked like one of the disciples and he spoke with that funny Galilean accent in a land of Jews, and he told the people who thought they recognized him as one of the twelve after the arrest of Jesus that he did not know the man. Peter was the Rock. Peter began the Christian church. Peter was a big mouth, a fighter, arrogant at times, but his purpose even after his sin of denial was to fulfill his mission and he did.

Betrayal is a hard word to hear. If someone says to you that you have betrayed them, it hurts you right in your heart. You look for a way to make amends, but sometimes there is none. Even if you mend your ways and are forgiven, it always lies deep within you, a constant reminder of what you did. This sermon today just is about the betrayal. The entire sermon began as you read or listened to the recorded audio of the gospel. This is just one very important part chosen today to think about. Judas Iscariot committed a great sin, one Jesus would have forgiven, but one he chose to take and make judgment upon himself. Judas was a disciple, chosen by Jesus, and did good work. Someone had to set the events into action, and it ended being Judas.

We may have betrayed people in the past, even ourselves, but we can be forgiven. Even if people will not forgive us, God will. It is still so important to think first, act later. Who do you betray is the big question – just humans or God, too? No one is perfect but how we handle our mistakes can make us better people. Amen.