

Sermon Series “Jesus Then and Now”:

Betrayed by a Friend – Psalm 41:9, Mark 14:10-27.43-45

(Regula A. Brandle, St. Paul's, Edmonton, March 7/2010)

Prayer.

Have you ever been betrayed? At work? At school? By an acquaintance? By a friend? By a family member? By another Christian?

Here are some definitions for betrayal:

play false, break faith (with), inform on, inform against, turn in, commit treason, turn informer, break one's promise, be false to, be false-hearted to, be disloyal to, go over to the enemy, trick, let down, disappoint, deceive.

How did that feel?

What was your response to the betrayal?

Did you lash out? Did you distance yourself from that person/ did you slander them?

Did you betray in return?

Does the experience of betrayal still affect you? (If you are not sure, ask someone who is close to you!)

What did you do/ are you doing about it?

Well, today we are looking at Judas' betrayal of Jesus as we just heard it in Mark's gospel.

Those of you who have been here last Sunday and the Sundays before and after Christmas, know that during our sermon times we have been looking at Old Testament prophecies regarding Jesus and their fulfilment in the New Testament.

I think it is an interesting fact that the vast majority of prophecies about Jesus have to do with the beginning and with the end of his life.

Of course, birth and death are important bookends in anyone's life.

But why are there very few prophecies about all the things Jesus did in his lifetime?

I don't think God made a mistake about what he prophesied and what not.

However, it is certainly worthwhile to reflect on why God foretold the things he did and not others.

Last Sunday, we started on the prophecies about Jesus with regard to his suffering and death.

Michael preached on the Old Testament prophecy about Jesus being spit upon (and rejected).

The indignity of being spat upon, contrasted by the dignity of how Jesus dealt with it.

Today we are going a step back in the unfolding of the passion story.

Today's prophecy from Psalm 41, verse 9, is about being betrayed by a friend.

Why would God foretell the fact that Jesus was going to be betrayed by one of his friends and close followers? What do you think is the significance of having that fact not only told in the gospel but shared many years before it happened?

Why would that be possibly important for us?

Any ideas?

> *ask for contributions*

[e.g. Jesus knows even this aspect of human experience / It shows how deep the suffering was for Jesus on his path to be crucified / Jesus' response is a stark contrast to our human, fleshly inclination to respond with anger, retribution, etc.)

Let me share with you a few initial thoughts on the subject of Jesus' betrayal by his friend Judas:

1. Betrayal by a friend is supposed to be an oxymoron, i.e. 'friend' and 'betrayal' are contradictory words placed together (like 'horribly good', 'open secret' or 'seriously funny').

Betrayal and friend should not exist together!

A friend is someone you trust, and a betrayal is a violation of trust.

And thus, betrayal has a huge potential to leave deep hurts and can easily lead to bitterness, lack of being able to trust again, being cynical, feeling lonely, etc.

2. Jesus never sinned against his friends.
This assumption is based on Scripture's testimony that Jesus was tempted in every possible way but did not sin (Heb.4:15).
And so, why betraying and hurting someone who has never hurt anyone else?
Jesus' betrayal was utterly senseless.
Note this - betrayals are always senseless and destructive in their nature!
3. Jesus' betrayal is a strong reminder for us that just because we may be kind, loving, just and God-honoring people, it doesn't mean life will be fair and no harm will be intended against us or that we will never get hurt.
4. There is significance for us to know that Jesus experienced to the core of his being one of the worst experiences you can have. Jesus certainly understands your pain very well, if you have been hurt through a betrayal. (Heb.4:15).

Now, let's have a closer look at our Scripture reading from the Old Testament and from the Gospel:

The Old Testament passage is from Psalm 41.

We read verse 9 and it sounds like it was a comment made by Jesus after his betrayal through Judas:

"Even my close friend whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me."

Isn't that true?

Well, these original words were written by king David about a 1000 years earlier.

And the context was David's own experience of being betrayed by his friends in a time of need (possibly sickness).
What a horrible experience!

What I find it rather striking is that David, like any of us would likely do, intends to pay back those who hurt him with their betrayal.
> v. 10

Betrayal is such a powerful, hurting experience that it is so easy to want to take things into our own hands and deal with it our own human way!

Well, let's look at to the fulfillment of this prophecy of betrayal in Jesus' life:
By the way, all four gospels recorded the betrayal of Jesus by Judas. It was a big fact, not just a small detail.
And you wonder, why in the world would Judas, one of his 12 closest friends and disciples want to betray Jesus?

It was not, because Jesus may have hurt Judas, which is anyway no reason to betray!!
It was because Jesus didn't seem to living up to what Judas wanted him to be and do.
Judas was looking for a different kind of Messiah than how Jesus went about.
So, Judas took things into his own hands.

Have we not heard that one already?taking things into our own hands.....
What an example of what happens when we take things into our own hands.....the resulting destruction!

How often does it happen in our day and circumstances that we betray because others are not acting as we want them to.
Or, we are betrayed because we are not acting as others want us to!

Betrayal is very closely connected to 'taking things into our own hands'!

Well, hold onto that thought for a moment and let's go back to the description of Judas' betrayal in the four gospels:

In Matthew, Jesus addressed Judas as 'friend' (Mt.26:50) whereas the other gospel writers omitted that title for Judas.
In both the gospel of Matthew and Mark, Judas kisses Jesus, as he had arranged it to be the sign to the soldiers.
In Luke however, Jesus confronts Judas about using a kiss as the sign of betrayal. (Lk. 22:48)

You can but wonder about how utterly devastating it must have felt for Jesus to be betrayed by his friend and betrayed with a sign that is meant to be a sign of friendship not betrayal!!
Could it be any more abnormal??

Inexplicable hurt was heaped upon hurt for Jesus.

But what was Jesus response?.....

Here is the inspiring truth....Jesus did not lash out on Judas nor did he retreat to his personal cave of hurt and bitterness.

What Jesus did instead.....he let God take care of Judas!

The result: Jesus was not consumed by the need to pay back nor did he turn bitter or resentful, nor did he become unable to trust again (see how he entrusted the ministry to Peter).

I believe there is an invitation for us in this....

If you experienced betrayal, you need to give that experience to God or else you will turn bitter, or you will try to pay back, or you simply get bound and engaged by that experience.

I asked the Lord what his word of encouragement was for you and me with regard to betrayal, and this is what I received:

The words from the prophet Zechariah:

“Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit.” (Zech. 4:6)

If we take things into our own hands we will not listen to God nor do things his ways, nor do we see from God’s perspective.

And yet, we so desperately need it when betrayal happens.

“Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit.”

The Lord wants us to truly learn from Jesus and seek out his guidance and let God take care of it.

Let’s pray.

Lord Jesus, I bring to you every single person here who still carries the sting of betrayal in their hearts and lives.

Lord, speak to them, show them what you want them to do with it so that the destructive power of that experience can no longer do its work in and through these people.

Lord, will you please do in their lives what you always specialize in – to turn curses into blessing, to heal the broken hearted, to redeem the lost, to turn death into life.

And for all of us, Lord, give us a holy fear of you so we may not betray any other person, neither you nor people in our spheres of life.

And if we have done so, that we may see the truth of it, repent and follow your direction so you can bring your healing into it.

Amen.