

Jason Upchurch - Mark 14:1-11 - The Good News of Betrayal

This morning we come to Wednesday of Passion Week, just two days before Jesus's crucifixion. And this whole section revolves around betrayal. All 3 of these stories that we'll look at this morning are leading up to the betrayal of Jesus that will ultimately lead to his crucifixion.

This is something we need to wrap our minds around: that betrayal is part and parcel of the gospel message. Our redemption and justification came about because God sovereignly used the betrayal of Jesus through Judas Iscariot to lead the Lord to death.

God could have used any number of means to orchestrate the events that led up to the arrest and trial of Jesus. The religious leaders could have stumbled upon Jesus in a quiet alley. He could have been confused for some other criminal. There's a million ways Jesus could have been led to the slaughter. But God in his good sovereignty wove into the story of redemption the betrayal of our Lord.

So what we see this morning is the backstory leading to the betrayal of Jesus that will happen just a little later in the chapter. And as we look at this section this morning I think it's easy for us to read past it because we know the story.

But I think it's worthwhile for us to slow down and be reminded that betrayal is really one of the worst sins because it's at the core of it all is an abuse of trust. We all expect our enemies to do us harm, but the worst pain is when it comes from a friend.

How many of you have been betrayed by someone who was very close to you? I think we all have.

Whether it's a family member, or a friend, a colleague, maybe a pastor or fellow Christian. This is someone you trusted, someone you called friend, someone who you thought was with you till the end. But in the end the trust you had was violated.

That really is the story of Judas in the gospel. He is the quintessential evil doer because of his betrayal of Jesus. The biblical writers often refer to him as "the one who betrayed Jesus" because looking back on his life, that's his legacy. And occasionally they'll even refer to him as "one of the twelve" as though they're still in shock years later.

What makes it even worse is that Jesus is the God Man, the Son of God who is due all allegiance and loyalty and devotion. The eternal destiny of all people hinges on unwavering devotion to Jesus.

Rom 10:9-10: If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart God raised him from the dead you will be saved; for with the heart one believes and is justified and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

We often focus on the inward allegiance to Jesus as the risen Lord for salvation, and that is necessary. But also necessary is the outward allegiance to Jesus through verbally confessing him as Lord in front of everyone, no matter the outcome.

Luke 12:8-12 Jesus says if you deny me before men, I will deny you before my Father. If you confess me before men I will confess you before my Father.

What Jesus calls us to is devotion and allegiance to him no matter the cost. No matter who it offends. No matter what comfort we are called to give up. No matter the price we must pay.

It's that devotion to Jesus that makes the story of Judas all the worse. One of the 12 disciples who was in the inner circle with Jesus. He was their treasurer: the one in charge of the money bag who we find out later was helping himself to the money. He was one of the trusted men that Jesus sent out to preach and teach.

And there's no reason to think he couldn't heal or even cast out demons, they were all given that ability. They would have sat around the campfire together, told jokes, witnessed all the miracles and teaching for 3 years.

And yet the place of Judas in the providence of God was to betray Jesus.

In **John 17:12** Judas is called the Son of Destruction who fulfilled Scripture even as he betrayed Jesus. Nothing is outside of the sovereign provision of God, not even betrayal.

And what I want to do this morning is unpack the betrayal of Jesus. The players involved and specifically Judas. Why do we hate Judas so much? Why do we view him with such disgust and disdain? And as we consider this I want us to consider betrayal in our own lives. So I want to give you 3 realities about betrayal this morning:

1) Righteousness is not immune to betrayal. Read 1-2

So again the point here is that righteousness is not immune to betrayal.

The Jewish leaders hated Jesus and at this point the hatred was boiling over. Twice this week Jesus had absolutely taken over the Temple area which they controlled. Monday he cleared the place out with whips, destroying their whole money laundering operation. He came back for round 2 on Tuesday and made all of the religious leaders look like absolute fools in front of everyone. He answered every question they asked brilliantly, and he asked them questions which showed their obvious hypocrisy.

And so by Wednesday the Jewish leaders wanted him dead. They had sought ways to kill him in the past, but that was all talk. Now they were serious.

But there was a problem. The problem was everyone loved Jesus. The crowds all loved to hear him preach and teach. And it seems like there was even a glee in watching Jesus confound the self-proclaimed wise men of the day. I think there's a part of us that loves evil leaders being dismantled and humiliated in public. So he had the popular support, he was untouchable.

So they couldn't arrest him and kill him in the open, they'd have to do it quietly. But remember Jerusalem and the surrounding area was also packed with people for Passover. So there wasn't much of an opportunity for them to arrest Jesus in secret. And if they arrested Jesus publicly it would start a riot and they might be stopped again.

And so what they needed was a way to arrest Jesus and kill Jesus in secret. They needed an opportunity to get him alone, or where there was just a small group, and arrest him then so they didn't disturb the peace.

And ironically, they didn't think they could do that during Passover week. The city was so packed and the people so numerous they didn't think they could pull it off because the people would push back.

This is vicious and crafty. They are plotting the downfall of Jesus, the Lord of glory. Why? What did he do?

He was righteousness and exposed their hypocrisy. That's what he did. And because of that they wanted him dead.

Can I tell you something? We can expect the same thing. Don't think everyone is going to love you because you seek to love them or do the right thing. The right thing to God is a threat to the world.

2 Tim. 3:12: All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be what? Persecuted.

That's a promise. Just plan on that. It probably won't be to death, but there will be persecution.

Jesus says in **John 3:19-20:** Unbelievers hate the light and love the darkness because their deeds are evil.

Some of the betrayal that we face and deal with is because people hate the things of God. And amazingly, they'll say they are trying to undermine you and the work you're doing because they love God.

You will do righteous things, and like your king, you will be betrayed because of them.

Stand for biblical marriage? Be prepared to be shunned by the world. Did you see the news about the punter for the Kansas City Chiefs this last week? He's a Catholic guy who made a commencement speech upholding biblical marriage, women being homemakers and moms and the world has gone ballistic because he holds a view that basically all of us do - and most of the country did until about 20 years ago.

Do you homeschool? Prepare for visits from CPS.

You refuse to do something immoral for the boss? Prepare to update your resume.

You refuse to co-sign a loan for your irresponsible cousin? You'll be slandered and betrayed.

This is what happened to our Lord, you guys. Not only did he not do anything wrong ever, he only ever did the exact right thing. And it was a lifetime of pushback and controversy and eventually, betrayal.

Righteousness is not immune to betrayal.

2) Betrayal is often very subtle. **Read 3-9**

So betrayal is often very subtle. And I think we see that here. What should be an absolutely beautiful act of devotion and worship is actually tainted with betrayal all throughout.

Here, Jesus is in Bethany, just a mile east of Jerusalem - a short walk. And they are at the house of Simon. Who is Simon? We have no idea. He's called Simon the Leper, but ironically, he's probably not a leper anymore! He's probably someone Jesus has healed and is now serving Jesus and the disciples in his home out of gratitude.

And while he's there a woman comes. We'll look in John's gospel in a minute, but this is Mary, of Martha and Mary fame. And she comes in with an alabaster flask. Alabaster is a white colored stone that was often to store perfumes. And it's filled with nard. Nard is a perfume from India, which would have been very expensive to make and transport. The 300 denarii would have been almost a year's wage for a laborer.

We have no idea how she got it or where it came from. Only that she comes into this house and pours it over Jesus's head and the house is filled with perfume. If you can imagine pouring out a bottle of your favorite perfume in your living room you can imagine the whole place would be filled with the smell.

And she does this as a beautiful act of worship to Jesus. She is lavishing on her Lord this crazy expensive gift. And then she gets the blowback: **Read 4-5**

They're mad! And their accusation is waste. "Why would you do this? We could have sold this for a ton of money and given it all away. We could have given that cash to the poor. Wouldn't that have been better? Hello? Poor people need the money." And so her beautiful act is soured by the pushback.

John gives us an insight about this situation that Mark and Matthew leave out that I think is important. **Turn to John 12.**

Now, as you're turning to **John 12** I want to mention that there's a discrepancy between John and Mark. And the discrepancy is when this event took place. On just a simple reading of Mark, it seems like this happened Wednesday of Passion week. It happened 2 days before the crucifixion.

But John makes it clear that this happened 6 days before the crucifixion - Saturday. How is there a discrepancy?

Well, actually I don't think there is a discrepancy. I think what Mark does is put these 3 events together to help us understand the context of the betrayal of Jesus. On Wednesday the chief priests are seeking a way to kill Jesus and Judas goes to them. Mark tells this middle section about Mary and the perfume to give us context as to why Judas would go to them.

He's not as concerned about giving us the exact timeline. He wants to connect events that help give us context for why Jesus was betrayed.

Here in John we see clearly this event happens Saturday. But notice some very important factors in the event.

Read 1-8

This is interesting. Apparently they came to Lazarus's house. Lazarus was dead, now he's alive and he's living in the house of a man who was a leper and now he's clean. And he's anointed by Mary who was grieving but now she rejoices.

And this nard was spread not just on his head, but also his feet. It was a pound of liquid. A pound of liquid is like a 16oz drink. That's a lot of perfume. And there was so much that Mary anointed his whole body.

And it appears that it was flowing everywhere and rather than let it spill onto the floor, she crouches down on her hands and knees and wipes up the excess perfume with her hair. Just such a humbling and beautiful act of worship.

In the OT we often see the people of God bowing down on their faces before the Lord. Literally prostrating themselves in the dust. To be honest, we don't do that very often. And here's this woman who was in utter despair over the life of her brother whom Jesus raised, is now worshipping at the feet of Jesus giving humble thanks as she wipes his feet with her hair. Just beautiful.

Until the accusations come. John tells us who starts it. Who starts the accusations? Judas. **Read 4-6**

It seems as though Judas started the accusations and the other disciples joined in. And the reason Judas started this was not because he wanted to help the poor. He wanted to help himself. As he watches this nard pour out on the floor what he sees is money he could have had. He sees his opportunity to profit vanish as the smell rises through the room.

Mary is giving what is valuable.
Judas wants to take what is valuable.

And Jesus isn't fooled. He knows. He knows Judas is a thief and liar. He knows Judas has no concern for the poor. And so he rebukes Judas - and the other disciples - in front of everyone. "You've always got the poor Judas. You can rob them later. This is beautiful sacrificial devotion. Leave her alone."

He rebukes Judas and the others publicly; in front of everyone. What I think John does is help us to understand the motive for Judas betraying Jesus. He was a thief and he was rebuked and shamed in front of everyone.

And so when go back to Mark, the issue isn't a strict chronological sequence. I think Mark is putting all the pieces together. The religious leaders are looking for an opportunity. Judas has a motive: he wants money. Jesus cost him thousands, and now it's going to cost Jesus.

Now, as we **Turn** back to **Mark 14** think about how Judas does all this. His betrayal is very subtle. And, you guys, betrayal is often very subtle. We don't know it's coming.

Let me point out just 3 aspects of subtle betrayal.

1) Betrayers mock true worshippers of God. Here's Judas, the hypocrite, mocking Mary the true worshipper. In the moment, Mary is the one taking all the heat even though what she is doing is right, and what he's doing is a lie.

That's often how this goes. Those who are genuinely worshipping are in Spirit and in truth are mocked by those who are actually hypocrites.

Prov. 14:9: Fools mock at the guilt offering, but the upright enjoy peace.

Fools mock someone offering a sacrifice to God for their sin. That's crazy.

I was thinking this week about ways in which people who have abandoned the faith have mocked me over the years. Here's a short list: View on marriage and divorce, reformed theology, Christians getting drunk, legalism, spiritual gifts, sanctification, modesty, eschatology, how many kids I have.

I'm sure you could add to the list the things you've been mocked for by people who went on to betray you.

Apostates will always mock true worship. They've always watched the obedience of the saints and looked at it with contempt. Know that it will happen.

Side: we need to be very careful mocking the people of God. We're going to have differences in theology, differences in preference or what obedience looks like. Some of you guys go to camp or school and serve beside people with different views. Or you have friends or family that have a different view of theology.

Be very careful that you're not in camp Judas heaping mockery on your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Another subtle aspect of betrayal here:

2) Betrayal likes to recruit others. Mark says others joined in **Read 4-5**

You've heard the phrase "misery loves company?" So does betrayal. Betrayal almost has to recruit others to justify the betrayal. Betrayers think they're doing the right thing and so they want to convince others.

Usually when you find someone is betraying you, you find a group who is in on it.

3) Betrayal is often pragmatic. Judas's claim is that the money could have been used for the poor. That sounds like a really good idea. How much food could be bought for the poor in Jerusalem?

Especially when it comes to money and ministry, people get really weird about how we should spend things.

If you're around church long enough you see people warring over how best to spend money. Missions, children's ministry, building funds with thermometers. But beware when people approach ministry and finances with sheer pragmatism.

How we use money and resources for the Kingdom of God isn't always a clear line to the results.

Here, Mary pours this nard on Jesus just out of gratitude for raising her brother Lazarus from the dead. It's just a way to bless him.

And Jesus says it actually has a bigger purpose than even she understood: this was beautiful she was preparing his body for burial. She didn't even understand that he was going to die at this point. She had no idea what she was doing served a bigger purpose..

Remember, this was actually Saturday, almost a week before he died. Jesus had this on his mind. He knew he was going to be arrested and slaughtered and crucified and laying in the tomb for 3 days.

And when Nicodemus and Josphe came and buried Jesus and put the spices all over his body I'm guessing they could probably still smell some of the nard in the hair of Jesus.

True worship isn't always pragmatic. Sacrifices in the OT were never pragmatic: take the best on in your flock and kill it. Take the best of your crop and give it. That's not a winning strategy for building a grain empire. But it's what wanted and what God blessed.

But betrayal is often done in the name of pragmatism.

Now, before we look at this last section, I want to spend a minute on **Vs. 9**. Because it's huge. **Read 9**

This act by Mary is so amazing that it's included in the gospel message. When we first started the gospel of Mark I mentioned that when we hear the word "gospel" we usually think "substitutionary atonement." Jesus died on the cross, in my place, for my sin. He takes the wrath I deserve, and I receive his righteousness imputed to my account. That all happens by grace through faith.

Amen and amen. That's the heart of the gospel. But that's not the whole of the gospel. The whole of the gospel is the entire person, life, ministry, teaching, works, and example of Jesus.

Calming the sea is part of the gospel. Casting out demons is part of the gospel. Feeding the 4,000 and 5,000 is part of the gospel just like suffering and dying and rising is part of the good news about Jesus.

Here, this woman's sacrificial devotion to Jesus is part of the gospel proclamation. How do we proclaim it? I think we proclaim it two ways:

First, this woman gladly gave her most valuable possession to worship Jesus. Are we willing to do that to follow Jesus? Think of your biggest asset right now. Maybe you saved up a few hundred dollars of Christmas money, or your 401K, your business or your house. Would you be willing to give it all up to worship Jesus?

Second, this woman publicly worshipped Jesus despite the ridicule. Are you willing to look the fool in front of others for Jesus? Are you willing to follow him and bow before him when everyone around you is mocking? Mary was.

Mary will be remembered for sacrifice and courage. This is her memory and legacy in the proclamation of the gospel. She is more courageously devoted to the glory and worship of Jesus - get this - than the disciples standing around her mocking her.

The next time we're talking to someone about what it is to follow Jesus, I think Mary is a wonderful example of what a true disciple looks like.

Righteousness is not immune from betray
Betrayal is often subtle.

3) Betrayal is often Petty. Read 10-11

This is crazy. The chief priests don't seek Judas out, he seeks them out! And Mark adds: he's one of the 12. Like, can you believe this?

He goes to them to betray Jesus. The word betray really means "to hand over." He's going to give them what they want: an opportunity to arrest Jesus when there are no crowds. Basically what he does is lead the chief priests to where they're camping at night in the Kidron Valley.

Judas didn't get his money from the perfume, so he gets money from the chief priests. We know from elsewhere it's 30 pieces of silver. In the OT the price of a slave. Maybe it's the amount he thought he could steal from the sale of the nard.

Either way he betrayed the Lord of glory for the price of a slave. So petty. Betrayal is often petty, you guys. What people will do to others for a small win...ridiculous.

But Judas wasn't the only one to betray Jesus the night of his death, was he? Peter, who said he would go with Jesus to death rejected him in front of a servant girl. You remember how much Peter was paid to reject Jesus? Peter did it for free. All the others abandoned Jesus as well. At least Judas got paid.

We need to be reminded that although we will be betrayed in this life, we are also betrayers. We betray Jesus every time we sin. We trade love and obedience to the perfect Son of God for a passing whim of pleasure. We're not all that different than Judas.

You know what the difference between Judas and Peter? Peter repented. He turned back to Jesus. He was humbled, but he was restored.

And if you've betrayed Jesus - and we all have - come back to Jesus. Repent, be humbled, and be restored.

Pray