

Jason Upchurch - Mark 14:43-52 - The Good News of Jesus in the Garden

This morning we are looking at the most infamous passage in all of Scripture. This is the actual betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot. We've known that this is coming for some time, of course. But this morning we see the deed actually happening.

When you think about betrayal, there are a few examples of betrayal that come quickly to mind. Benedict Arnold comes to mind for many Americans. We know he betrayed George Washington even though most people don't remember how.

Roman Caesar, Julius Caesar, was infamously betrayed by his close friend Marcus Brutus, leading to one of the most famous lines in all of literature in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar: Et to, Brute? "Even you, Brutus?"

But even if someone isn't a fan of America history or classic literature, they know about the betrayal of Jesus Christ by Judas Iscariot, one of his close friends. Thoughts the gospel we are told "he's one of the 12" - Mark makes that clear in **Vs. 43**. Almost as though years later there still is shock: it really, really was the same Judas that was part of the inner circle of disciples. One of the most trusted disciples.

And interestingly, Mark paints a more deceptive picture of Judas than the other gospels and I think this is on purpose. If the only gospel you ever read was Mark's gospel, you would have no idea up to this point that Judas had even the group during the Lord's Supper and the Upper Room scene. Because Mark never mentions that Judas left.

The last we knew, he was at the Lord's Supper dipping his hand in the dish. **Read 20-21**

But there's no mention here of Judas's exit. John's gospel says that during the Lord's Supper Peter asked Jesus directly who would betray him, and remember Jesus says the one whom I give the bread to. Remember that? And then he hands Judas the bread. So only Peter knew and it seems like even then he didn't understand it was going to happen right away. Judas did leave right after that, but John makes it clear no one thought anything about it. His departure isn't a big deal and we're to understand that he sneaks out quietly.

But in Mark, we're never told that Judas leaves. The story just flows and out of nowhere Judas shows up with a band of soldiers confronting Jesus. And I think this sudden surprise adds to the treachery. I don't think Mark is missing elements. I think what Mark is doing is giving us the persecutive of most of the disciples that night.

I mean, when you're in a group of a dozen people it's easy to lose track if someone leaves or sneaks off or goes to the bathroom or something. You might not even notice they're gone. I don't think most of the disciples even noticed that Judas had left. Or if they knew he left they didn't notice that he never came back. John's gospel says that when Judas left some of the disciples thought he was just going to buy some more food or give a little money to the poor (**John 13:29**).

I think they just assumed everyone was in the group when they went out to the Garden.

So here when they see Judas come up to Jesus with a band of soldiers, everyone is in shock. Why is Judas coming with soldiers? When did he even leave? What is going on? The whole situation is surreal. They knew someone would betray Jesus but they didn't know who or that it would happen this quick.

Added to this whole equation is the fact that Jesus is God the Son, perfectly innocent of all wrongdoing. Jesus is not only sinless, but he is perfectly righteous. So this betrayal is all the more egregious because Jesus is the holy one.

We talked several weeks ago about betrayal, but here we are again, watching it unfold. And it is a good thing to be reminded that Jesus's fate is not unusual. It's not as though Jesus suffers betrayal and no other believer ever faces that issue.

Abel was betrayed by Cain.

Jacob betrayed Esau and took his blessing.

Jacob himself was betrayed by his own sons committing sexual immorality in his own home.

Jospeh was betrayed by his brothers and sold into slavery.

Moses was betrayed by Aaron and Miriam.

David was betrayed by his son, Absalom

Nehemiah was betrayed by Jews and Gentiles alike.

Daniel was betrayed by other advisers to the king.

If you follow Jesus long enough you will be betrayed. And you'll be betrayed by those closest to you. Or you will experience the effect of betrayal in some way. Sadly, this is part of the storyline built into the Bible. There's part of it where through betrayal we understand the suffering and betrayal of Jesus more.

And dealing with betrayal is not really a matter of if, it's a matter of when. **Turn over to 2 Timothy** for a minute. There have been many times in my life that I've been betrayed. And I come back to **2 Timothy** over and over because I think it's instructive to us. When we think about the apostle Paul and the way God used him to plant churches, and preach the gospel and build up the Kingdom we often forget how Paul's life ended.

At the end of Paul's life - and this is probably the last letter he wrote weeks before being beheaded in Rome - he had been betrayed by everyone. Just take a look. **Read 1:15-18**

Everyone in the entire province of Asia turned away from Paul. Asia in Paul's day referred to the area we call Turkey - it's about the size of Washington state. And this was the primary area where Paul planted churches. He says that whole region has turned away from me - apostrepho: to reject or repudiate.

The very region where Paul spent most of his Christian life preaching and planting rejected him. Just a couple of years earlier, Paul could say to the Corinthians: All the churches of Asia send you greetings! (**1 Cor. 16:19**). But now they've tossed Paul out. And it seems like these two jokers - Phygelus and Hermogenes - are part of coup.

There were some who were loyal like Onesiphorus. But most abandoned. **Turn to 2:16-19. Read**

Here are two more traitors. Hymanaeus is someone who Paul had to do church discipline on. In **1 Tim. 1:20** he says he handed him and Alexander over to Satan so they would learn not to blaspheme. Handing over to Satan is a way of saying church discipline. They were part of the church, and it seems as though they were leaders and teachers in the church but turned to blasphemy. Here they are saying that there is no future resurrection. "It's already happened - the resurrection is just a spiritual thing, not bodily." They were full preterists saying there is no future bodily resurrection.

They've swerved from the truth. They were walking in the truth and now they've veered off into a heretical ditch. **Turn to 3:1-9**

This passage is often used to talk about end times. "Things are getting worse" because we've got all these lovers of self and lovers of money. But notice **Vs. 5**: avoid such people. Timothy, this is happening now, you avoid them.

This has always gone on. And these people look godly on the outside. They claim to be Christian, they say they follow the Lord but in reality they follow their sinful sexual desires. Jannes and Jambres are thought to be Pharaoh's magicians who could do secret arts. Just like them there will always be people who oppose God's servants.

Read 3:12-13 We usually are reminded of this promise - and it is a promise - that if you strive to live a godly life you will be persecuted. And evil people and imposters will go from bad to worse. Notice, imposter. What is an imposter? An imposter is a fake. A phony, a poser. Someone who appears to be genuine but is fake.

There's a whole underworld of fake Rolexes. Rolex was initially designed not as a luxury watch, but as a super durable watch that would last a lifetime and something you could pass on to your kids and grandkids. Now it's a luxury item and people want to fake them. They fake them to get money, to deceive people and cheat them.

Paul says plainly: this is what we can expect but keep going anyway. **Read 14-15**

The Christian is called to keep going even if subjected to imposters and cheats and betrayers because this is to be expected as part of following Jesus in this age. **Turn to 4:3-5 Read**

This is interesting. They won't put up with sound doctrine any more. They'll endure it for a time. They hang out but it makes them more and more uncomfortable. And then all at once they abandon the truth and get people they like to hear. They get the YouTube preachers who preach prosperity and feel goodness. They get the Joyce Meyer books and Benny Hinn books and Joel Osteen books because their itching ears want to hear something their flesh agrees with.

They abandon the truth and turn aside to myths. Look at this. This is the closing words of the apostle at the end of his life. **Read 4:9-18**

Everyone is gone. Mark - the guy who abandoned the mission field and caused the infamous split between Paul and Barnabas - he's now valuable. But in all the world Paul has Luke and he has Jesus and that's it.

He ends his life just like Jesus ended his life. Abandoned by basically everyone.

Betrayal is common in the Christian life, you guys. And here's the deal:

You can either become bitter toward those who betray you or you can move on in grace.

You can either pull away from fellowship, you you can draw near all the more.

You can either look back on your hurt and fester in it, or you can forget what is behind and press on to what lies ahead.

Notice that although Paul has been abandoned by basically everyone, there's no bitterness in his tone. No whining. Why? **Read 18**

You know how he was brought safely into the Kingdom? Through being executed. Safety for the Christian isn't lack of pain or betrayal. Safety for the Christian is the promise of eternal life despite all the pain and betrayal we might face here.

This is the reality that we face. And it's nothing less than what Jesus faced. **Back in Mark 14** we see that the scene of the betrayal is just an utter mess. In every conceivable way, it's goes badly. **Look back.**

Jesus's betrayal is something of an outline for what we can expect as well.

1) Expect that people are petty. Read 43

We saw this before, so I won't dwell on it too long. But the only motive we have for Judas betraying Jesus is that he was humiliated by Jesus earlier in the week. Remember when they were at the house and the lady poured perfume all over Jesus and Judas was mad? He said they should have sold the perfume for a bunch of money - money that he wanted to steal? That's really the only incident we have where there was any friction between Jesus and Judas specifically. John says when he was at the Supper Satan entered into him but we have no other motive for why Judas would hand Jesus over.

So here's Judas, who was simply rebuked by Jesus, now leading a large crowd to arrest Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. What's he thinking? Is this some sort of revenge for Jesus calling Judas out? Judas was in sin: he was stealing and lying about it. And the revenge is hundreds of soldiers who are arresting Jesus.

It's unbelievably petty and disproportionate. But this is how betrayal often goes. Something small is blown up into a massive situation that is over the top.

We see this all the time in kids where one kid bumps another kid, so that shoves back, the other kid throws something and before you know it they're in an all out battle over an accidental bump.

That's really no different than grown adults. We're just meaner and craftier and more treacherous. I was talking with a guy who had a property dispute with someone who kept trespassing on his property. It ended in a massive legal battle and restraining orders being issued.

I've seen marriages where people struggle to just talk nicely to each other and it becomes so petty they end up spending tens of thousands of dollars in legal bills as their whole lives dissolve in divorce.

Betrayal is often very, very petty.

2) Just like Jesus we can expect that people will disproportionately react. **Read 43**

So here's Jesus with these 11 guys. And Judas comes with what is likely hundreds of people. The language used in the other gospels indicates that this was probably a Roman cohort. **Look at John 18:1-7** for a minute.

This is the same basic narrative but John adds some interesting elements. **Read 1-7**

That word "band" of soldiers in **Vs. 3** a specific Greek word meaning a cohort which was a 1/10 of legion. A legion was 6,000 men. So a tenth of that was about 600 hundred soldiers. On top of the religious leaders as well as other people who seem to be part of the crowd. It's a massive group to come get Jesus.

And I love what John records. They come up to Jesus and he asks "Who do you seek?" He says I am he - which is likely the Greek way of saying the divine name "I am" or "Yahweh." And what happens? They all get blown backward and fall to the ground. And then he asks them again: "Who you looking for?" Jesus.

Who's in control here? Jesus is control. And with 600 soldiers he negotiates for his own disciples to run away. **Read 8-10**

This is amazing. Not only do the disciples run away, just ensures they are let away safely even as they betray him after just an hour ago after swearing over and over they'd stay til the death. And Jesus let's himself be arrested.

Back in Mark's gospel Jesus even calls them out on the disproportionate response. **Read 48-49**

Have you come against me like I'm a robber? Robber is actually a bad translation. Because it wouldn't take 600 soldiers to put down a robber. The NIV gets pretty close to the idea when it says "Am I leading a rebellion?" Really the idea of this word is insurrectionist. Someone who is influential enough to cause an uprising and try to take over the government.

One thing that Rome had no mercy for were people who tried to start uprisings. If you remember, the Roman governor for the area of Jerusalem at this time was Pontius Pilate. We'll see more of Pilate later in the book, but part of the difficulty with Pilate when Jesus is standing before him is that Pilate had already messed up twice in putting down insurrections. One was with Jews - he slaughtered a bunch that he didn't have to. Another time he also waffled. It was 3 strikes and you're out and so by the time Jesus is standing before Pilate and the Jewish leaders are in a frenzy wanting him killed, Pilate really can't mess up again.

Rome would likely remove him from his post and that almost always meant exile or death. That's the attitude of Rome in general toward insurrectionist. So when Jesus says "Have you come out against me as a robber" that's not the issue. He's saying "Have you come out against me like I'm leading an insurrection?" That would be the only reason to lead a cohort of 600 men to get Jesus.

Jesus's enemies almost always blow things out of proportion. They hate Jesus and they want to stop him any way they know how. The irony, of course, is that even with a cohort Jesus is in absolute control.

And like Jesus people will often betray us in ways that are disproportionate to the crime they claim we've committed.

Early Christians were burned at the stake because they were accused of being cannibals: because they ate the bread and wine at the Supper - the body and blood of Jesus.

They were crucified like Jesus because they refused to call Caesar Lord, and uphold his divinity. No one cared if he really was a god or not. Unless you were actually around Caesar, no one really cared. But proclaiming his lordship before the local magistrate became a test of loyalty and if you didn't simply say the words "Caesar is lord" you were killed. Crazy.

Betrayal is petty, it's disproportionate.

3) It's also often hidden until the very end. Read 44-45

I think this is probably the most disgusting part of the whole situation. Jesus knows exactly what is about to happen. And Judas knows that Jesus knows all things.

And so Jesus has watched this cohort of men come down from Jerusalem, into the valley and straight to the Garden where he is.

And all the way up until the deception is done Judas is putting on a show that he loves Jesus.

He does two things. First he kisses Jesus. In ancient times kissing your close friends on the cheek was a normal greeting. It was a sign of affection and brotherly love was common. It's still common in some countries around the world.

I know you guys get nervous when I bring this up, but Paul and Peter command the church 5 different times to greet one another with a holy kiss. This isn't a sexual thing, it's a kiss like you'd give your dad or mom or sister on the cheek. I actually think it's good thing because it conveys more than the type of camaraderie with have with unbelievers. Usually missionaries from Europe give kisses on the cheek. And I'll be honest, while it's weird at first, I think it conveys a familial affection.

But here, Judas uses it for treachery.

Prov. 27:6: Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

Judas's kisses are profuse - they are many. It's a show. Solomon long ago knew that betrayal is often hidden. And it's often hidden by acts of kindness and love heaped up to hide the hidden reality.

Your true friends are the ones who are going to say the hard things to you. They are the ones that are going to wound you. They'll tell you the hard things in life, they'll be honest when you need to hear it, they'll call you out when you're out of line. The reason they do that is because they are truly your friends.

Side: If your friends have never smacked you upside the head with the wounds of tough love, you might not have any friends. And if you've never wounded your friends with some hard truths you might not be a friend. Those wounds are faithful wounds because we need to hear some tough love from time to time.

Your enemies are the ones who will pat your backside gently all the way to destruction. They'll kiss you just like Judas kissed Jesus. Judas is the preeminent fulfillment of this proverb.

The second thing he does is call Jesus "Rabbi." Teacher or master. This was a common title for religious leaders in Jesus's day and the disciples referred to Jesus as rabbi regularly.

Peter calls Jesus Rabbi in **Mark 9:5, 11:21**

A blind man calls Jesus rabbi in **Mark 10:51**

Andrew and Nathaniel both refer to him as rabbi in **John 1**

And of course Nicodemus - the religious leader - calls Jesus rabbi in **John 3**

This is a title of deference and respect and authority. And Judas uses it as a charade. As though he still views Jesus as an authority in his life, one who would have great respect and esteem.

Why's he doing this? Well, remember, what time of day is it right now? It's in the middle of the night. It's dark and they're under the cover of trees and there are people everywhere around the Kidron Valley. It's packed.

And Judas has one job which is to make 100% sure that the soldiers get the right guy. He can't mess that up. So this whole thing is a charade so that he can get close to Jesus to point the soldiers to arrest him. And if the kiss isn't enough, he also calls him rabbi. He's the leader. He's the one want!

So he puts on the show until the very end.

Don't expect any different.

4) Expect your friends will let you down.

Even those who haven't betrayed you outright, will often let you down. We see this in 3 situations here.

Peter thinks he's gotta save Jesus. **Read 47**

"Stand back, God! I'll save you!" And he swings for the head of Malchus, the high priest's servant. And he misses. Well, he gets the ear. And actually in the other gospels we find out that Jesus actually heals the ear.

But Peter has no idea what is happening. He's again boasting in his own strength, rather than in what Jesus is trying to accomplish.

By the way: there's some people who use this passage to say we should never defend ourselves or that Christians shouldn't serve in the military or protect their families deform danger. That couldn't be further from the truth. But here, as Jesus is being led away, Peter misses what this whole situation is about.

It's not about Peter saving Jesus's life. It's about Jesus saving his soul.

All the others flee. **Read 50**

Jesus secures their release and they're gone. Remember what they all said just a couple hours earlier? **Read 26-31**

They all pledged allegiance to death. Now they're gone.

And even those who were on the fringe, not the inner circle, leave. **Read 51-52**

Who's this? There's a lot of suggestions, but the best arguments seem to be that it's John Mark. The author of the gospel. This is an odd addition in the book. One that would be appropriate for someone who was right there.

We also know from Acts 12:12 that Mark's mom had a rather large house in Jerusalem - large enough for the church to gather in. It may have even been the location for the Last Supper.

That's all conjecture we don't know. But what we do know is that even the Jesus followers who were watching from afar abandoned Jesus.

This is Jesus, betrayed and all alone. Betrayed and all alone and still determined to head to the cross. Still determined to accomplish what the Father has set out for him to do: reconcile sinners to himself.

Do we go through betrayal? Of course. We often walk the same road as our Lord. But Jesus goes through betrayal for us. He has determined to suffer and die and rise and reign for us.

Hallelujah. What a Savior.

Pray