

“One of You Will Betray Me”

John 13:18-30

I had a good conversation this week with a friend I have for almost 20 years. When I met him, he was coming to be presbytery as a young seminary student seeking to be licensed. And I took part in that examination. We had a number of conversations over the next several years, and he was eventually ordained. He just celebrated his 15th anniversary at the church he pastors, which actually makes me feel a little bit old. But he always appreciated me, he always respected me, and I have appreciated his willingness to express that to me.

So when he asked to have lunch with me this week at General Assembly, I looked forward to it. He knew I had gone through a hard time, and he wanted to hear about it, not so that he could satisfy his curiosity or have fodder for gossip, but because he was a friend who cared. And after telling him a good bit of what I've been through, much to his horror, he gently asked me if I could identify something that I had learned through it all. After a moment's thought, I answered, "Friendship is more important than doctrine."

That's not an answer I would have given several years ago, and I didn't mean that in an absolute way. Because what you believe ultimately determines your eternal destiny. But in the nitty, gritty affairs of life, I meant what I said. Friendship is absolutely vital, in a real sense, in terms of Christian fellowship and genuine brotherhood, it has become more important even than doctrine.

In that context, this was a good week for me at General Assembly, and I was very glad to engage personally with many friends. I was glad to work together with many friends, even giving advice and counsel that was sought after and appreciated.

All of that was especially encouraging to me in the context of many of the things that have happened to me in recent years at the hands of others who have claimed to be my friend. The pain of the betrayal of friendship has been an especially deep and hard trial to endure, and the priority and value of friendship is something I have come to cherish. Friends matter. And I am particularly thankful for those I can rightly call friend.

Betrayal is a deep, deep wound. Yet, as much as I know what that wound is, our text this morning describes how Jesus had to endure that very wound himself, far deeper and far more severe than anything I will ever know. And we see the effect of that betrayal upon Jesus. We're told very simply in verse 21, "He was troubled in spirit." And we are told why. "Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me."

There is,

I. THE PAIN OF BETRAYAL.

And I want to start there this morning, with an emphasis upon Jesus' humanity. He was fully man, his human nature was real. It is who he was. And so his realization that one of his twelve, one of the men with whom he had been with for three years, would betray him, it hurt. "He was troubled in spirit."

To give you a sense of how painful that was, let me remind you of the other time that expression is used to describe Jesus. It was the description of his grief at the home of Mary and Martha, after his friend Lazarus had died.

John 11:33 "Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled... 38 Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it."

Jesus was grieved, a grief expressed by the groaning. The

idea is a troubled soul. It is to be shaken and afflicted with intense struggles. That is what is going on here in chapter 13. I want you to recognize the intensity of this pain, which is hard to define with mere words. Jesus was “troubled in spirit.”

Now, in this context of his betrayal by Judas, let me remind you of the greatest pain of betrayal that Jesus would later experience.

Is. 53:3 “He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. 8 He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken. 9 And they made His grave with the wicked-- But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth. 10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief.”

And yet Jesus endured that grief, he endured that betrayal, and we're told in,

Heb. 12:2 “...for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Then we are encouraged with these words,

Heb. 12:3 “For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.”

Despite the pain of betrayal that you might experience as well. Second thought, second point this morning. We see that Judas' betrayal was not a surprise. It was decreed, which is to say, it was part of God's own eternal will and purpose, whereby he foreordains whatsoever comes to pass.

v.18

Jesus contrasts those whom he has chosen, or elected, with those whom he has not chosen. The betrayer is one who is not clean, according to the verses we studied last week. Do you remember when Peter didn't want Jesus to wash his feet, but when Jesus insisted then Peter wanted Jesus to wash his whole body?

v.10 “He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.”

Jesus knew all about Judas, for it was all part of God's own eternal decree. God raised up Judas for that very purpose, just as he raised up Pharaoh, that his own purpose in election might stand. So Judas Iscariot represents,

II. BETRAYAL DECREED.

Again, the idea is that this was not a surprise. This was not unknown. Nor does it contradict the full scope of the sovereignty of God. There is one among the disciples whom God has not chosen. And there is a prophetic identification of him as well. And prophecy goes along with the idea of God's decrees. God is able to prophecy the future because he has already decreed all things. The Bible calls that “the counsel of his will.” And so we read,

Eph. 1:11 “In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.”

He works ALL THINGS according to the counsel of His will. Including Jesus’ betrayal. And since he also provides a prophetic announcement of it, Judas himself acts in such a way as to fulfill God’s eternal decree. Or, in the words of verse 18, “that the Scripture may be fulfilled.” That comes to us as,

III. A PROPHETIC WARNING.

It comes from a specific prophecy.

v.18 “...that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.’”

And what Scripture is that?

Ps. 41:7 “All who hate me whisper together against me; Against me they devise my hurt. 8 “An evil disease,” they say, “clings to him. And now that he lies down, he will rise up no more.” 9 Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me.”

David, there is speaking of himself. And the commentators generally believe that the occasion was the experience of Absalom’s rebellion, when David was betrayed by his own son. Turn with me to,

2 Sam. 15:1 “After this it happened that Absalom provided himself with chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. 2 Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate. So it was, whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the king for a decision, that Absalom would call to him and say, “What city are you from?” And he would say, “Your servant is from such and such a tribe of Israel.” 3 Then Absalom would say to him, “Look, your case is good and right; but there is no deputy of the

king to hear you.” 4 Moreover Absalom would say, “Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice.” 5 And so it was, whenever anyone came near to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him. 6 In this manner Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel...12 Then Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David’s counselor, from his city--from Giloh--while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy grew strong, for the people with Absalom continually increased in number. 13 Now a messenger came to David, saying, “The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom.” 14 So David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, “Arise, and let us flee; or we shall not escape from Absalom. Make haste to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly and bring disaster upon us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword.”

Even David’s trusted advisor Ahithophel would join the conspiracy and betray David. Thus David would say in Psalm 41, “Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me.”

But there is a prophetic meaning to that verse. David, in his own life experiences, was a type of Jesus Christ. And Ahithophel’s treachery would foreshadow the ultimate betrayer, Judas Iscariot.

And note how this is given to the disciples as a warning, an edifying warning, one designed to protect them from being presumptuous or overly self-confident. The purpose is to stimulate humility.

IV. BETRAYAL AND HUMILITY.

Look at,

v.25-26

There is a display of humility among the disciples, an appropriate self-awareness that allows them to receive this warning well. When Jesus told them in verse 21 that one of them would betray him, we see that humility expressed.

v.22-24

Warnings are helpful, aren't they? Even a warning against betrayal. Warnings against self-reliance. Surely that is helpful for all of us, lest we gain too much self-confidence and become careless. Indeed, when there are occasions where we know of men who have fallen away, or even fallen into grievous sin, we ought to be warned by their example. There is a great warning to any who would presume upon God's favor, thinking that they might have the freedom to continue on in their sin that grace might increase.

Heb. 6:4 "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. 7 For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; 8 but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned."

That warning is so severe, that the writer of Hebrews tempers it with the next verse,

Heb. 6:9 "But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner."

So that's all part of this betrayal, it's all part of the eternal decree of God. But notice who the author of this betrayal is. God has decreed this betrayal by Judas. He has prophesied it with specific detail. But still, the author of betrayal is Satan.

V. THE AUTHOR OF BETRAYAL.

v.27

Now, surely, Satan had already prompted Judas. Satan had already entered Judas even in conceiving of this sin. But now Satan takes full control. Now the deed is done, and Satan has full and entire possession of Judas' heart. Up to this time he was in it, but now he possessed it.

J. C. Ryle writes these very appropriate words: "Let us note the reality, personality, and awful power of our great spiritual enemy the devil. There are degrees in his power and dominion over us. If his first temptations are not resisted, he may in the end gain full and entire possession of every part of our soul, and lead us captive to be his slaves. This seems the history of Judas. There are gradual steps in every apostasy."

To use the words Paul would later write to the church at Rome, it was at this point that "God gave him up", "God gave him over" to his sin. Judas is now fully hardened in his sin, and he would not repent. Thus Jesus tells him, in reproach and condemnation, "what you do, do quickly." There is no command from Jesus there, a command to sin. Rather, contempt for the man given over to the fullness of his sin.

Satan's role is prominent, for he is the author of sin. He is the great tempter, who presents sin to us packaged in a way that he says makes it look good.

As he said to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden,

Gen. 3:4 “You will not surely die. 5 “For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Don't ever let Satan get away with that lie, showing you something wicked and saying, “It is good...”

Sin is wicked, from its first conception in the mind to the temptation of desires to the actual acts that come forth. Sin is wicked and it leads to death, and Satan is the author of death!

Therefore the consistent and urgent exhortation for Christians is simple,

James 4:7 “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”

Resist the devil from the first impulses, the first inclination to sin. And read about Judas with sober humility. There but for the grace of God, is every one of us!

Satan is the author of sin, but don't ever let that be an excuse. “The devil made me do it.” Don't ever try to escape the consequences of your sin by blaming someone else. Adam, of course, blamed Eve. He even blamed God for giving him the woman. Eve blamed the serpent, but no excuses hold any water before God the judge.

Satan may well be the author of sin, but still we see,

VI. THE JUST CONSEQUENCES OF BETRAYAL.

In other words, Judas was responsible for his actions. And he suffered the consequences. Justly.

Judas wasn't a helpless victim of Satan's treachery. He was a guilty participant, whose actions are calculated and pre-meditated. Judas had respect among the disciples. He kept the money. They didn't suspect him in the least, so great was his hypocrisy. But the deal had already been made. And rather than humble himself at Jesus' rebuke, he went forward in his sin just as he determined beforehand.

And Jesus forced him to identify himself in his wickedness.
v.27

What Judas had committed himself to do, he did. Of his own free will. Even after Jesus identified him. He, certainly, understood exactly what Jesus meant, even if the other disciples didn't, and with a conscience that condemned him, he hardened his heart and rushed headlong into that most grievous rebellion and betrayal. Calvin comments that “his heart ought to have been softened by Christ's great kindness, but it was harder than iron.”

Judas alone bore that responsibility, and we read that all of this was unknown to the rest of the disciples.

v.28-30

There is, of course, a great warning for us in all of this. Beware the attractive appearances of sin. Beware of the seducing appeals of Satan. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Unlike Judas, who paid the just consequences for his sinful rebellion and betrayal.

One more thing to tie all of this together. Let's end with a focus on God's purpose.

VII. BETRAYAL AND GOD'S PURPOSE.

God does allow us to recognize and understand his purpose for all of this, namely for the full and complete revelation of Jesus. As an encouragement to the faithful disciples. And to us! So that those who seek to be faithful to Jesus can identify danger when it arises.

We are given this example of betrayal as an encouragement to us, the encouragement of a warning to beware our great enemy, and to recognize him is absolute distinction from Jesus.

Beloved, betrayal is from the devil, and when you see Satan at work in Judas, the encouragement is to look to Jesus as you resist the devil. And in looking to Jesus you can remain faithful to God. That's God's purpose.

v.19-20

Surely there is wickedness in this world, and there are wicked people. There are people willing and wishing to do you harm. Some who might betray you, perhaps even from among your closest of friends and family. Be assured, however, that nothing new or strange is happening to you. Nothing that didn't already happen to Jesus himself.

I'll with a brief but very personal reminder to look "unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."

Heb. 12:3 "For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls."