

Betrayal and the Passover

Matthew 26:14-25

It is interesting to note how these two polar opposite events are so immediately and directly connected in the gospel narrative—the event of the most evil, wicked and heinous betrayal of any man at any time in history, and then also the most faithful demonstration of submission and obedience to God ever performed by any man at any time in history. In other words, Judas’ betrayal of Jesus and Jesus’ own commitment to fulfill the will of his father by offering his own human life once for all as the ultimate sacrifice to atone for the sins of God’s people. That sacrifice is so well represented by the celebration of the passover with his disciples. And it was at that very moment, at that very specific time of the passover, Thursday the day before Jesus’ crucifixion, when God, in his perfect plan with regard to all that comes to pass in human history, would reveal the wickedness of the one who would betray Jesus unto death, Judas Iscariot.

So these two contrasting events are presented to us together, essentially simultaneous. An evil betrayal and a faithful sacrifice. First,

I. AN EVIL BETRAYAL.

v.14-16

The other gospel accounts give us further insight, including a personal reference to Satan in,

John 13:2 “And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray Him.”

Likewise,

Luke 22:3 “Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve. 4 So he went his way and

conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them.”

Judas was, of course, one of the original twelve disciples whom Jesus called to himself during his earthly ministry. Everything about this betrayal is, therefore, evil. Beginning with the motive, the root of betrayal, which is shown to be nothing other than greed

A. The root of betrayal—greed.

Pure, simple, uncomplicated greed! Matthew tells us that Judas went to the chief priests himself, soliciting money!

v.15

That specific amount of money is identified in the OT as the appropriate restitution for damage caused by a wild ox.

Ex. 21:28 “If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, then the ox shall surely be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be acquitted. 29 But if the ox tended to thrust with its horn in times past, and it has been made known to his owner, and he has not kept it confined, so that it has killed a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death. 30 If there is imposed on him a sum of money, then he shall pay to redeem his life, whatever is imposed on him. 31 Whether it has gored a son or gored a daughter, according to this judgment it shall be done to him. 32 If the ox gores a male or female servant, he shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.”

So something along the lines of blood money. That’s what Judas has done...he has put a monetary value upon the life of Jesus himself. Because of his greed! And remember what we learned about Judas when he complained about the anointing of Jesus with the costly flask of spikenard.

John 12:4 “But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, who would betray Him, said, 5 “Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” 6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.”

Judas was nothing but a thief, pretending to care for the poor, pretending to be loyal to Jesus in keeping the money box. But he was nothing but a thief, given to the sin of greed.

Greed is such a prevalent sin, even among God’s people. And such a dangerous one, a sin of the heart. Consider Jesus’ own warning...

Luke 11:39 “Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. 40 Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also?”

Writing to Timothy, Paul warns of this danger of greed, defining it by identifying those,

1 Tim. 6:6 “...who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.”

Paul continues,

1 Tim. 6:6 “Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

There greed is defined as the love of money, and a root of all kinds of evil. Writing to the Colossians, Paul defines greed as idolatry, with the English translation of covetousness. Some versions simply translate it greed.

Col. 3:5 “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.”

Greed is idolatry. It is the worship of another god, a false god. And to circle back to our text in Matthew 26, this greed is the root of betrayal. Greed, covetousness, with regard to the things of this world is, ultimately, rebellion against God himself in the form of a betrayal. And a betrayal of the worst order. Consider, therefore,

B. The heinous nature of betrayal.

Now, all betrayal is sinful. Nothing about it is good, or even less bad. But sometimes we might be able to identify some acts of betrayal as more heinous. More offensive. More dishonoring to God himself. And this is such a case because of the close relationship which Judas had with Jesus. Jesus had chosen him to be his disciple. And there was, therefore, a closeness of work and ministry on a very personal level. Judas was even what we could call the treasurer of the group. In that way, he had responsibility, even beyond the others. What we read in our text is this,

v.20-23

Again, this was no ordinary meal. This was the passover meal, and even before Jesus transformed that Old Testament rite into the New Testament sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, this was the most important of the Old Testament feasts. This was a special day of great religious and spiritual significance. And there

was Judas, eating the passover with Jesus. And Jesus' words are unquestionably sad and grievous, lamenting this evil and deeply personal betrayal.

v.21

The significance of those words, the grief embodied in those words, was immediate obvious to the other disciples, who, themselves, were stricken with the grief of the possibility of their own potential to betray Jesus.

v.22

Jesus then identifies Judas himself, noting the closeness of their relationship even by reference to Judas proximity to Jesus in the passover meal.

v.23

Note, then, something very important. This betrayal was evil. Heinous. I have used those words freely this afternoon. But notice something else, namely,

C. The predestination of betrayal.

In other words, Judas acted with evil desire and intent. His actions were evil in every sense of the word. And yet, as well, this evil act was ordained by God, pre-ordained. Predestined. It came about according to God's own plan and purpose. And those two things are not contradictory. Judas acted freely, according to the sinfulness of his own heart. He sinned, and was held responsible for it. And yet, even that sin, came about according to the good counsel of God's eternal purpose. Thus we read,

v.24 "The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him..."

God wrote it ahead of time, that Jesus would be betrayed.

God wrote it ahead of time, that Jesus would suffer and die. That was his eternal purpose, decreed and determined from before the foundation of the world! For example,

Ps. 22:12 "Many bulls have surrounded Me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me. 13 They gape at Me with their mouths, Like a raging and roaring lion. 14 I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me. 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. 16 For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; 17 I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. 18 They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots."

Also the prophecy of Daniel, perhaps difficult to interpret in all its details, but still a clear prophecy of Jesus the Messiah.

Dan. 9:26 "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined. 27 Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering."

He brought an end to the sacrifice and offering of the Old Testament by offering his own body once and for all! Just as it was written! Just as God had determined. We get that same emphasis of the evil actions and intentions of men with respect to the predetermined purpose of God when Peter speaks about the sin and guilt of the Jews with respect to Jesus' death,

Act 2:22 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also

know— 23 Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; 24 whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. 25 For David says concerning Him: I foresaw the LORD always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. 26 Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. 27 For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.”

So it was God’s purpose for Jesus to die, to be betrayed unto death. It was God’s predetermined purpose from all eternity. And the human acts which brought about that death were sinful, including, most especially, Judas. And so we see,

D. The guilt of betrayal.

Judas can’t hide it, he is afflicted with guilt immediately as Jesus condemns him accordingly.

v.24-25

I suspect you know how Judas managed that guilt, what it did to his soul.

Mat. 27:3 “Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4 saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” And they said, “What is that to us? You see to it!” 5 Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. 6 But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, “It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood.” 7 And they consulted together and bought with them the potter’s field, to bury strangers in. 8 Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. 9 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by

Jeremiah the prophet, saying, “And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, 10 and gave them for the potter’s field, as the LORD directed me.”

Likewise,

Acts 1:15 “And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, 16 “Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; 17 for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry.” 18 (Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. 19 And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.) 20 “For it is written in the Book of Psalms: Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it’; and, Let another take his office.”

Again, those twin points are both evident and connected. Scripture had to be fulfilled. What God prophesied would happen, and Judas would betray Jesus. And he would bear the guilt of his own sin unto death and eternal condemnation.

And that is the context for the great act of devotion and service which Jesus offered to his father in heaven, the greatest act of devotion and obedience very performed by a man. And it would be...

II. A FAITHFUL SACRIFICE.

That’s what the passover was all about, the covenant sacrifice. The sacrifice of blood, the blood of the covenant, shed

for the forgiveness of sins. That blood in the Old Covenant was but a sign and symbol. The blood of the passover lamb was but a sign and symbol, and, thus it had to be repeated every year. And so we see that sacrifice in our text this afternoon.

v.17-19

We will more fully at the institution of the Lord's supper next week, but for today, in the context of the old testament symbol of the passover, note these two things with regard to the faithful sacrifice which Jesus would offer. First, as I hinted earlier about the predestination of all these events, note the reference to,

A. The appointed time.

v.18

My time is at hand! Such a meaningful expression. And a repeated one, repeated for emphasis.

John 17:1 "Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, 2 as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him."

John 13:1 "Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end."

John 12:23 "But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. 24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."

This is such a powerful expression in Scripture—the appointed

time. The time of God's appointment. The time of God's purpose and the time for his counsel to be fulfilled. Jesus' faithful sacrifice of his own human life fully demonstrates the sanctity of the appointed time in the plan and purpose of God for the salvation of his people in all ages. And so we read,

Gal. 4:4 "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."

And in that appointed time, what is abundantly obvious is that this sacrifice, this passover sacrifice, is,

B. The appointed sacrifice.

So it's not just the timing of the sacrifice, but its purpose.

v.18-19

"I will keep the passover." That's Jesus. That's God's plan. That's redemption, or salvation. The blood of the sacrifice would become Jesus' own blood. The shedding of blood would become a reference to Jesus' blood, without which there is no forgiveness of sins!

So God appointed this Old Testament festival of passover to be the appointed demonstration and representation of what Jesus himself would do, in his own body. So Jesus would take that passover sacrifice,

v.26 "...And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." 27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

That is the promise of the gospel, the sacrifice by which we who believe in Jesus might have and enjoy the forgiveness of our sins. And that sacrifice of Jesus is the means by which God the father will satisfy the demands of his own justice as he gives to his true people the blessed hope of everlasting life.

And that is what you proclaim, that is what you profess, when you take the elements that set before us this afternoon. You proclaim the Lord's death for the forgiveness of your sins. So come, eat and drink, the body and the blood of Jesus, who offered up his own life as the appointed sacrifice at the appointed time.