

Luke 22:47-53  
Jesus: The Man for All People  
*Betrayal*  
Rev. Jonathan Cornell  
3-9-14

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This week, we begin a new series of sermons I've entitled, *Jesus: The Man for All People*. During the next five weeks of this season of Lent, we'll be following the account of Jesus' final hours leading up to the crucifixion through the Gospel of Luke. Each week, we will walk alongside Jesus in the excruciating and all too relatable experiences and emotions he endured in the final hours leading up to Calvary.

One of the things that make Jesus such a profound and personal Savior is that Jesus never experiences life as detached and non-feeling. Greek stoics and philosophers and eastern religions down play experience and emotion as the consequence of living physical lives, and that the true search is for life that transcends emotion and gets to the place of pure experience, sort of unfeeling and transcendent. Jesus, on the other hand, is intimately involved in the very height and depth of human emotion and the experience of being a person. We believe Jesus is fully human. That means he lives fully as a human, and thus is able to relate to us in every way, even in the feeling of being hurt and betrayed by a friend.

I invite you to reach for your Bible, either the red one we've made available for you in the pew racks, or the one you brought with you and turn with me to Luke chapter 22 beginning at verse 47. And as you are able, I invite you to stand in honor and reverence for God's word, and listen to the reading of God's Holy Word.

**While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him; but Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray the Son of man with a kiss?" And when those who were about him saw what would follow, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" And one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."**

Well, as my college baseball coach used to say, nothing good ever happens after midnight. In fact, it's at night when some of the worst things in life seem to happen. In the absence of the daylight, it seems that we are more prone to allow anxiety, fear, uncertainty, loneliness overwhelm us. Even when crises happen in the middle of the day, they always seem to be remembered as shrouded by darkness.

We meet Jesus this morning in Act One of the final drama. For the last chapter and a half, Jesus cautioned his disciples that it was about to begin. The Last Supper, it seems, was the calm before the storm. And the match that set the fuse was an act of treason.

Throughout history, we have always reserved our greatest judgment for those who commit some act of betrayal. Betrayal is a sin against trust. It shatters loyalty and faith, and it breaks apart the unity Jesus prays for us to know. Somebody we trusted, who got close enough to kiss us, has turned against us.

In his biography, *Washington: A Life*, Ron Chernow tells the story of one of Washington's most trusted and revered battlefield commanders. Fearless in battle, his wartime exploits made him legendary, including one victory over the Brits at Saratoga where he was shot in the leg and refused amputation, opting instead to limp around with a musket ball in his leg for the rest of his life.

This general grew up the son of a poor alcoholic father, always fighting to keep his place at the table. So he never forgot the crushing slight in 1777 when Congress passed him over in naming five new major generals, all inferior to him in rank. Even though Washington loved this pugnacious commander and made him commandant of Philadelphia, he never felt like he had Washington's full support. And his bitterness turned to malice when, in 1780 he was appointed to defend the fort at West Point, and a letter that was sent by Washington informing him that he was coming to inspect the fort found its way into the hands of British Officers. When Washington arrived just outside the fort for breakfast with the commander and his beautiful wife, he found only the wife present. Moments later, Alexander Hamilton showed up with evidence that the commander had given confidential material about West Point and Washington's travel plans to the enemy. Washington was thunderstruck. "Benedict Arnold has betrayed us!" he exclaimed. "Whom can we trust now?"

To this very day, the name Benedict Arnold is synonymous with treachery and betrayal. Not unlike Benedict Arnold, the name Judas conjures similar feelings of betrayal and deception.

Judas, one of Jesus' cabinet members, his secretary of finance, ironically sold Jesus out for a bag of 30 silver pieces (roughly amounting to \$20,000). Maybe it was because he was not offered the inner circle status that was given to James and John and Peter, maybe it was because Jesus didn't look like the powerful triumphant Messiah Judas was waiting for. Whatever the reason, Judas has become a name, like Benedict Arnold, that is synonymous with deception.

Not surprisingly, when the statistics are released each year with the most popular baby names, Judas is never on the list. Which is ironic, because it's actually a beautiful name. Judas in Hebrew means "praise to Yahweh." And there were other Judases who did great things for God. Judas Maccabeas was a man who, in 164 BC, led a revolt against the Romans, recapturing the temple and cleansing it of all the pagan rituals. To this day, Jews

celebrate Judas Maccabeus' memory through the festival of Hanukah. And of the original 12 disciples, two were named Judas.

Of all the sins that a person commits, nothing embitters others towards them more than betrayal.

We've all been burned at one point or another. And a person like Judas can go from hero to zero in a heartbeat. But why do we despise Judas so much? After all, as it says in earlier in Luke 22, Satan actually enters Judas. Was it even Judas' fault? Did he have control over himself? Perhaps the reason why we feel so strongly about Judas is that we're afraid that there's a little Judas chromosome in each of us. After all, if it can happen to one of Jesus' closest friends, maybe it can happen to us, too. How or why it happened to Judas we don't know, and therein lies the worry: can any one of us truly know if and when that little pocket of sin tucked neatly in the recesses of our hearts will take over?

As Jesus sat with his disciples at the Last Supper, he said to them, "One of you will betray me." And they each responded, "Surely not I Lord," or "Lord, I have that impulse in my life under control, I would never do such a thing." Maybe we get uncomfortable around Judas because the sin we find hardest to forgive is the one we struggle with on our own.

Historically, no one eats their wounded with more satisfaction than Christians. We can come down like a ton of bricks on the people who commit public and off-putting sins. Maybe we do it because we want to make sure others don't see our weakness in the same area. Whether it's a person who is unfaithful in their marriage, or someone who burns with envy over the success or admiration of another, someone who deals untruthfully in their business. We see Wall Street insiders, political and corporate opportunists and athletic field cheaters as utterly repugnant, but maybe the reason why we treat them so harshly is that inside us, we see ourselves as not all that far off. The Judas chromosome is scarier to us than the cross. The cross at least is noble and self-sacrificing; Judas is just the sad state capable by the human heart.

In my first call in Southern Illinois, I had a guy ask if he could come and see me that day. I could sense a profound urgency in his voice, like, "What I've got to say must be heard now." He was a young successful husband and father. He had a beautiful family and everything going for him. But when he arrived, I could already tell that this was a broken man. He came in and said, "There's no mincing words, I've really messed things up and I don't know if there is any way to put them back together." He went on to tell me that for the last 6 months, he had been having an affair with a coworker, worse yet, it was someone in the church. He confessed it to his wife, who understandably was devastated by the betrayal.

His family and his in-laws were shocked and angered by his confession, and if I'm being honest, as his pastor, I was confused and disappointed. But the man who sat before me in a crumpled heap on the floor, was a broken person, who knew he put his family and

future in jeopardy in a series of very bad decisions. He betrayed his family, compromised their trust, and understood that by his own merit he deserved to be cast out. But was he just like any of us who, as Isaiah 64 says, come to Jesus with deeds that are nothing more than filthy rags.

There's a Peanuts Cartoon where Lucy says to Charlie Brown, "Charlie Brown, you are the world's worst failure. In fact, you have failure written all over your face; it's there; I can see it—it's failure, written all over your face." Charlie Brown found his dog Snoopy, and said, "Just look at my face; don't write on it."

In a profound little book, called *Jesus and Judas*, Ray Anderson writes: "We have no cause to write on the face of Judas. We have no right to disqualify him ahead of time simply because we know his destiny here on earth." What do we see written on the face of others? Anger, apathy, bitterness, unfaithfulness, hatred, loneliness. These are all the masks we put on others to deny them the grace of God. They are also the mask we put on ourselves to deny ourselves the forgiveness Jesus comes to offer. If Judas is capable to succumbing to betrayal, maybe I am, too. Maybe you are, too. Do any of us want that to be the last word about our lives?

But God, in putting us on this earth, in our ancestors Adam and Eve, and giving them freedom to be and exist in the garden, God intrinsically risked betrayal. God risks failure in each of us. And it's into the very middle of our deepest failure and sin that Jesus steps in and says "no more." In Luke's account, it says that one of them stepped in with a sword to defend the righteousness of Jesus, cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant. But then as the bloodbath was about to begin, Jesus simply says, "No more of this." No more of this, no more of this. Can you hear him in your embittered and violent moments, where you've been scorned or cheated, or slandered and you're bent on revenge, Jesus says, "No more of this." No more eating our wounded, no more ignoring the poor in our midst, no more putting someone else's misery on display to make us feel justified in our self-righteousness. No more of this.

There are times in life when we will need to pick up a sword to defend ourselves, but we do not have to defend Jesus in this way because the very people who go after him are the one's he came to save.

Jesus came to save:

Judas – Peter

Democrats – Republicans

Hetero – Homo

Fox News Watchers – MSNBC watchers

For ex-spouses and for that boss who downsized someone you love to increase his own stock value .01%

For the Judas in the person sitting next to you, in front of you, behind you, the one standing in the pulpit, and the one within your very own heart.

Jesus is beginning the hour where darkness reigns. And John's gospel describes the same event by saying that Jesus would drink the cup of Judgment the father had given to him.

This is reference to the metaphor about judgment used by the Hebrew prophets Jeremiah, Obadiah, Habbakuk, and Zachariah. God was utterly disgusted with our treatment of others and ourselves, and the best way the prophets had to explain it was that we would have to be drunk to treat one another so poorly. And so the only way out of it was to let us get to the bottom of our misery.

When Jesus says that he will drink from the Father's Cup, what he is saying is that he is going to take the judgment, the accusation, the betrayal of all of us upon himself. And this means that you no longer have to atone for your sins, or try and make them right AND you no longer have to stand in the judgment seat of anyone else.

This is why Jesus begins his journey to the cross, to beckon us out of the shadows and down from our ivory towers, all we who have sin written all over our faces. Jesus doesn't abandon us, he doesn't condemn us, he doesn't add to the written words against us. He takes it, he shoulders our burdens, puts on our masks and our guilt and our shame, and walks them deliberately to the cross, and there, once and for all, puts an end to them. We are not abandoned, we are not cast out, we are not forgotten; we are forgiven and found.

Do you see? It doesn't matter how dark the night, or how violent the world becomes, what others do to you, or even what your own Judas chromosome does to you. If you believe God is not against you, and if you believe the Lord is with you, then you have every reason to lift up your heart. As John promised in the opening lines of his gospel, "the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it."