

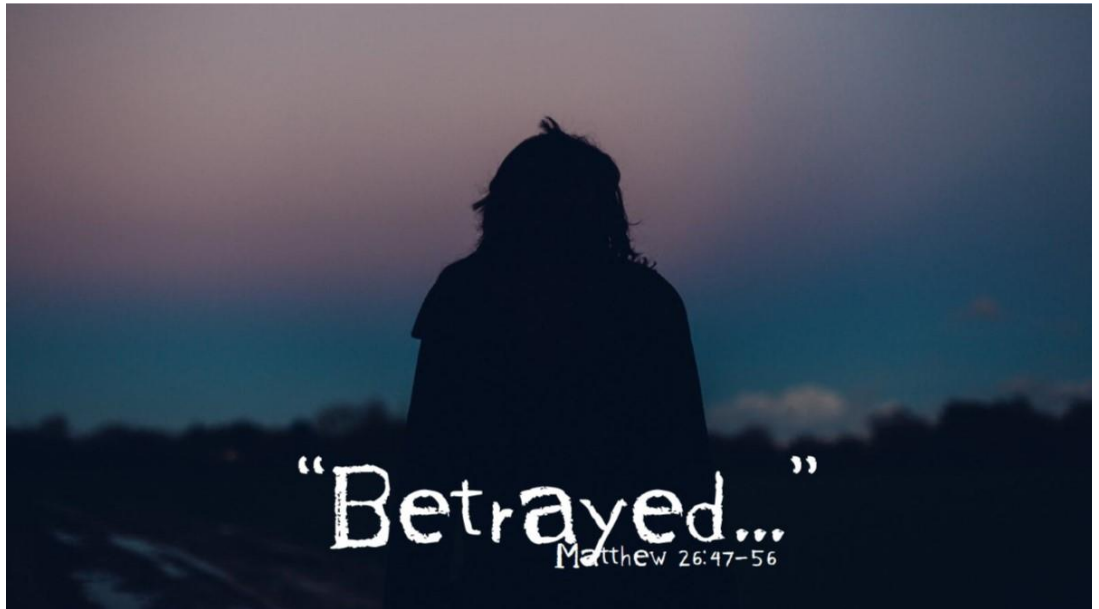
“Betrayed...”

Matthew 26:47-56

by **Pastor Tim Dodson**
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Matthew 26:47 - 56 *And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief*

priests and elders of the people. 48 Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him." 49 Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. 50 But Jesus said to him, "Friend, why have you come?" Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him. 51 And suddenly, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. 52 But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. 53 "Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? 54 "How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?" 55 In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me. 56 "But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.



The grand and historical moment had passed. The opportunity to wait and pray with the Son of God had been squandered away on weakness of the flesh: ***Jesus prayed while the apostles slept.***

One would have to believe that Jesus saw the mob approaching. For there is always a full moon on Passover, and they would of course be carrying many torches to light their way. He knew what they wanted. He knew what they were there for, and yet He did not run. It is interesting that the gospel of John tells us that the group of men that came to get Jesus was a mob of approximately 600 men. I find that astonishing! *600 men* to arrest this one meek and mild Messiah and teacher? Really? Men will deny His deity and reject His claims of sovereignty, yet they are quick to express fear when having to confront Him directly. We practice similar behavior now except we vent on social media while also attempting at all cost to avoid face-to-face confrontations with those we criticize!

What would occur next would be an action... *an event*, that would become infamous. What Judas would now do would be remembered throughout time, and become synonymous with betrayal, treason, false love, weakness and greed. Judas would give Jesus up for arrest and death, and he would do so literally “with a kiss.” A sign of friendship, loyalty, and trust now coldly turned into a calculated, hollow, and hypocritical act of treason.

Jesus would now be betrayed, arrested, and deserted, all within a matter of a few minutes. That’s the thing about such life events. Sometime it all just happens so very fast that there is simple no time to back-peddle, no chance to catch your balance. He would be sold-out by one of His own apostles, falsely arrested by a mob determined to kill Him, and deserted by all His closest friends. Jesus stood alone.

It would be easy thing to stand slack-jawed at this string of failures, denials, and the cold and blatant duplicity of Judas. Yet to be surprised by this would only reveal our lack of understanding of the heart of mankind. Scripture tells us clearly of such in **Ps 14:3**, and **Isa 53:6**. The reality is that we live even today in a time when many of us would and *will* as quickly and easily deny Him and His church despite having "walked" with Him and His brethren, tasted of the heavenly gift, shared in His miraculous, and known the power of the resurrected life.

In proximity, Judas was just a step away from Jesus, yet in truth he couldn't have been further away. He had spent years with Jesus, up close and personal. Close enough to see the miraculous, close enough to know His power and reality. And yet He was still so very far away. I can't help but wonder how many of us are today living in that same position.

Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss. Again, like so many of us, our loyalty is on our lips and on our lips only. Our love is espoused verbally, but our *actions* betray Him! We know from scripture that later there would be remorse on the part of Judas. But this would be one of those things that could not be undone.

The word "kiss" is the Greek word "*kataphileo*" which means "to kiss repeatedly." Perhaps even at this point Judas was feeling regret, yet caught up in something he felt he could not control. Betrayal is a strange thing. It's like a wave which we feel we cannot get off and so we ride it to its climax. It's always something we swore we would never do, but yet we can so easily find ourselves in that place. Though it can happen quickly once we arrive at its door, we do not *get there quickly*, but rather as a slow and steady slide over time. And what was finished with our hands, feet and lips, began in our hearts and minds. The cancer of pride eventually consumed Judas as surely as it will for many of us.

Sadly, the Judas's of our day rarely go out and hang themselves as this Judas did. No, they tend to just go on down the road to another church that doesn't care about their history and doesn't ask questions. On to a place where one can ease their conscience in the holy huddle of another unwitting group of church-goers, who out of some strange and misdirected manifest of religious tolerance will support a Judas in their midst for the sake of having another warm body in their pews.

Jesus was not hiding that evening. He *had* been and *was still* living, ministering, and sharing His life in public. To do so, as it is for me as a pastor and for you who count yourselves a disciple, is often a risky proposition. For to operate openly and publically provides the opportunity for the enemies of the kingdom to lie, slander, and attack.

This they have done to Jesus, and perhaps to a lot of us also. And sadly, such is often meted out by those *we* once counted friends, as in the case of Judas with Christ. In this, we share in an odd way in the life and ministry of Christ. In John 15:20 Jesus warns us "*Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you...*" Surely we may never know what was in the heart and mind of Judas that night. But we are safe in assuming that such an action could only come through great pride, self-righteousness, and ultimately *evil*. For it is these things that lead us all to sin's door.

Let us be fully aware of the gravity of the actions of Judas. This betrayal would be legendary in its occurrence, and would be epic in its penalty. It is bad enough to sin in such a way as to bring harm upon oneself. But when our sin's spill over to the innocents around us, there is indeed "hell to pay." Jesus once told His apostles in Luke 17:1-2, "*It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea...*"

It is notable that both the chief priests and the Pharisees were together that night. Such a union, such a brotherhood, would be strange indeed considering that these men generally couldn't stand each other! They had nothing in common and were constantly at odds. But that evening they proved the old adage, "*the enemy of my enemy is my friend.*" It would seem almost unthinkable if I hadn't witnessed and even been the "receiver" of such bitter dis-unity myself. Folks who ironically gather now on facebook like buddies when for years they so disliked each other we as a church had at times had to keep them apart and intervene in their childish tantrums.

Reiterating the fact that Jesus was fully aware of what was happening to Him, and what **would** happen to Him, the scriptures record that He "*knew all things.*" He didn't run, and He didn't hide. No, His time had come and He went forward into the mob and addressed them. Let us not just breeze by this fact. *Jesus knew what was coming, and yet He continued on down His path.*

In another gospel account Jesus asked the mob "*Whom do you seek?*" As is often the case with each of us, Jesus always knows the answer to the questions He asks us. He asks to see if *we* know, and further if we are willing to verbalize it. Just as in the garden when God asks, "*Adam, where are you?*"

Judas was the official rep from the religious powers of his day. Those who should have been His greatest allies turned out to be not only His greatest persecutors, but ultimately His *executioners*. There is no reason to believe it would be any different if the whole scene were played out today instead of 2000 years ago.

Generally Jesus *was not*, and *is not* the Messiah that people want. He doesn't fit the profile of the Savior and Lord that most people are looking for. We want a "designer Jesus" that is created in *our* personal image with our personal tastes, desires, needs, and personality in mind. We want a Jesus that fits into *our* lives instead of the other way around. We want a *Savior*...albeit on our terms, but we're not much into the idea of a *Lord* over our lives.

In verse 50 Jesus asks the question of Judas... "*Friend, why have you come?*" Did Jesus not know the answer? Did He not grasp the magnitude of what was happening? Oh, He knew... the question was presented for the sake of Judas' understanding of himself, not for any clarity or benefit for Jesus. You see, a man *can* and *will* do a lot without ever really stopping and seeking an understanding as to *why*. The question that is being proposed to Judas is not only why he is doing what he is doing, but further, *why he ever came to Jesus in the first place three years prior!*

Why have you come to Jesus? What are you looking for? What are you hoping to find? And what happens when the Lord fails to deliver as you expect; or *as you demand?* Will you also do the unthinkable and reject Him also? It's interesting and actually crucial to our understanding of this event that Judas used the term "master" or "Rabbi" which means *teacher*. Perhaps because that's all he ever saw Jesus as. He wasn't turning on His *Lord*, only on His *teacher*.

From other gospels, we know that the one who lost the ear was a man named Malchus; and the individual with the sword was none other than Peter. No doubt he thought He was coming to the Lord's rescue. But Jesus didn't need any rescuing. He knew exactly what He was doing, and He was exactly where He was meant to be. He had everything under control.

Our "I-won't-deny-you" Peter, had so much more to learn concerning his own heart, as well as what it meant to war in the flesh. Peter acted to back up his claim to be willing to *die* for Jesus without wholly understanding what it meant to actually *live* for Him! How many of us are bold enough to declare our willingness to go and serve in some grand capacity, but we are unable to commit daily to what He is asking us to do on a faithful consistent basis here and now? We don't serve, we aren't a real and active part of a body of Christ...we can't even get to church with any regularity, but we claim we are ready to take hold of the sword and fight the glorious fight! We ignore what Jesus taught concerning "*being faithful in the little things...*" (Luke 16:10)

No doubt still understanding that Jesus was going to set up an *earthly* kingdom, Peter reacted in an *earthly* way. Though with good intentions, he acted *in the flesh* instead of *in the Spirit!* Even with good intentions, when we act in the flesh we are always doomed to failure. Peter attempted to take matters into his own hands, under his own strength. He didn't wait for instructions from his master, he instead acted out of impulse and moved unilaterally. Like us, Peter had to learn what it meant to actually live by faith!

The battle that Jesus was fighting, was not to be won by force. Not by any extra-spiritual method; *not with a sword, politics, or human effort.* Jesus was moving *physically*, but in answer to the *spiritual.* He was moving according to the Father's will, plan, and timing and was acting to further a government that dwelt within His followers. Jesus knew that ultimately His plan and will could never be forced with a law or even a sword.

Luke tells us that Jesus healed the ear of Malchus and then turned to remind Peter, with a statement that should echo down through the years even unto the hearts of modern man, that such methods are not His way. Perhaps we would do well to remember that when we tend to get fired up in the political religious right. He reminds us that, if force was the answer, He could call twelve legions of angels. Strong's Concordance tells us that such a number could measure up to 82,000 angels. And let us remember that one angel in the Old Testament, in one night, killed 185,000 soldiers!

Jesus pointed out the foolishness, even the ludicrous actions that were now being brought against Him. *"Swords? Clubs? What's the deal? What am I? A thief? Wasn't I right there out in the open every day? Yet you have waited until the cloak of darkness and the hype of a mob to come and take me?"*

Jesus tells us once again that things are going to play out just as prophesied in Scripture. No sword or tank, no king or president will change that plan. Many will be unwilling to accept this absolute and will move in the flesh to see their own will executed. In their failure, the apostles ran away as many do today. Despite whether Peter, or any man since, truly understood or agreed with His actions and methods, Jesus *had a plan*, just as surely as He does today. It's not as if this plan was a secret! Scripture did *and does* detail this great plan if we are willing to read and accept it! His plan doesn't involve a democratic vote.

For Judas, after three years, the mask is off, the 'jig is up' as they say. In time it always happens. We eventually manifest who we really are. It may take weeks, months, or years, but it always comes sooner or later. We certainly have witnessed this truth here in this fellowship many times.

Even in His apparent moment of crisis, Jesus is only concerned about His apostles. Again, He isn't coy or elusive, just matter-of-fact. John records what was essentially *"Yup, I'm the guy you're looking for. Let these guys take off and let's get going."* It is again an incredible thing to witness! One "man" telling 600 soldiers that they will be needing to let His boys go their way. *That's brassy.*

Now let us examine the scene before us. Here "on stage" stands two of Jesus' followers, Peter and Judas, both of whom would fail Him. Both of whom denied Jesus and His sovereignty. But the difference is that before the night was over, one would be weeping in repentance, the other would be out committing suicide. We all will eventually, *at one time or another*, find ourselves in such a situation, that is not in question. It all comes down to what we do next. We can repent in sorrow, or we can die in our pride. **It's our choice to make.**