

## **“Betrayal by a Kiss” (Matthew 26:47–56)(4.2.2021 – Good Friday)**

Matthew 26:47–56 (NIV84)

<sup>47</sup> While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. <sup>48</sup> Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.” <sup>49</sup> Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him.

<sup>50</sup> Jesus replied, “Friend, do what you came for.”

Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. <sup>51</sup> With that, one of Jesus’ companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

<sup>52</sup> “Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.

<sup>53</sup> Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? <sup>54</sup> But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?”

<sup>55</sup> At that time Jesus said to the crowd, “Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. <sup>56</sup> But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

### **The word of God for the people of God.**

Title: **“Betrayal by a Kiss”**

LET US PRAY.

INTRODUCTION:

Calling the remembrance of Jesus’ crucifixion Good Friday has, for a long time, given me pause. It kind of reminds me of the homemade cough medicine my parents gave me as a child. In some families, it is called “witches brew.” It did not taste good at all, and it didn’t feel good going down; but, it was good for the purpose for which it was given.

We are tempted to downplay the Cross of Christ because He is God; because He voluntarily laid down His life; and, because He received a reward for His sacrifice. The author of Hebrews 12:2 (NIV84) tells us, “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Our tendency is to gloss over “endured the cross, scorning its shame.” We forget the Garden of Gethsemane and Jesus’ sweat and blood soaked prayer to the Father: Mark 14:34–36 (NIV84) <sup>34</sup> “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” he said to [His disciples]. “Stay here and keep watch.”

<sup>35</sup> Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. <sup>36</sup> “Abba, Father,” he said, “everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

Maybe one of our difficulties is that the depth of the spiritual pain that Jesus suffered is not scripturally explained. How could the indescribable penalty of God’s wrath for the totality of human depravity be expressed? It is simply summed up in the cry of Jesus, no longer calling His Father, “Father:” “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

So, what makes Good Friday “good” for us, is that Jesus paid the penalty for our sin. But there is another reason we can call it Good Friday. We need to take the medicine of self-examination. We need to look at and take ownership of our part in nailing Jesus to that Cross. The medicine may be tough to swallow, but it will make us well so we can fully appreciate the resurrection to come.

BODY:

Each of us has betrayed Jesus. On that Good Friday, there was three hours of darkness. Let us look within us at those dark places we try to hide from ourselves and the world. The ground shook and graves were opened. What thoughts, motivations, and behaviors must be shaken out of our lives? What dead things must be made alive again?

Are you familiar with the saying, “the kiss of death”? When I looked it up online, I was surprised that many resources say that this saying comes from when Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss. The name of Judas has become synonymous with traitor. For Americans, the only other name that comes close is Benedict Arnold and he would be a distant second place among traitors’ names.

Of course, in human thinking, as there are different levels of sin there are different levels of treachery. I don’t think the Lord Jesus thinks the same way. Jesus was betrayed in many ways by many different people. And sadly, we continue to betray Jesus still today. We betray the person of Jesus. We betray the Lordship of Jesus. We betray the teachings of Jesus. We betray the commission of Jesus. We betray the love of Jesus.

Well, we can make a rational argument that Judas’ betrayal was especially heinous. To start with, his was duplicitous, going behind people’s backs and conspiring with Jesus’ sworn enemies. Then he took money for his treachery.

Additionally, there is the issue of the kiss as a signal. He uses the endearing term of Rabbi, teacher, and then kisses Jesus. A kiss is a sign of tenderness. A kiss is a sign of love. And a kiss is a sign of submission and respect to a king or a high priest. In some cultures a kiss is a simple greeting instead of shaking hands. Of course, shaking hands demonstrates that you are not carrying a weapon; it is a sign of peace. Also, a kiss is a sign of commitment. Think of a marriage ceremony – the officiant announces to the groom, “Now, you may kiss the bride.”

Well, we have made a very strong case against Judas. It seems the idea of the kiss of death has been substantiated. But Jesus knew all of this and more. Jesus knew Judas’ heart, his motivations, and his intentions. And yet, Jesus calls him friend in response to the kiss of death. Obviously, this betrayal was a domino that led to Jesus’ crucifixion and death.

There were other betrayals, those close to Jesus, failing Him. To betray: to lead astray; to fail or desert especially in time of need; to reveal unintentionally; to disclose a confidence; and to prove false. Have you already gotten ahead of me? Yes, having a full definition makes it easier to see how others betrayed Jesus.

Can you hear the cock crowing three times? Yes, the Lord Jesus heard Peter boasting about his willingness to die for his Master, and then warns Peter: This night you will deny me three times. Not once, not twice, but three times in the same night.

Denying your relationship with Jesus is betrayal. Are you truly a follower of Christ? If you were accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you? The last part of our church mission statement is to model a life-giving gospel. There is an expression, “they wear their heart on their sleeve.” It refers to a person that does not hide their emotions. We should wear our faith on our sleeves. Christians in the early Church were called people of The Way. Their lives, their walk, was different than those around them. It showed. There was no denying it.

What about the rest of the disciples? “Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.” Certainly you can see this desertion as betrayal. They acted cowardly. They ran and hid. Desert – to leave in the lurch; to abandon; to quit one’s post, allegiance, or service without justification; to abandon military duty without leave and without intent to return. In the military, desertion in the face of the enemy is punishable by death.

Well, that can’t apply to us, you might be thinking. The most obvious example would be failing to gather together to worship God. Every Christian has been given at least one spiritual gift. This gift or gifts are to be used to bless others in the service of the kingdom of God. One of my general orders that I memorized in Coast Guard boot camp was to stand my post until properly relieved. Are you using your gifts to serve the kingdom or have you deserted your responsibility?

Jesus’ last words before taking His heavenly seat beside God the Father were The Great Commission. Matthew 28:18–20 (NIV84)

<sup>18</sup> Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

So, your Lord and Savior’s last earthly action was to give His followers a command. Make disciples. We are to share our faith with others. Then we are to walk beside them, teaching, mentoring, encouraging, and exhorting them. Disciples make disciples. In the United States, only 7% of Christians share the good news of Jesus with other people. That means that 93% of professing Christians have deserted their post in the face of the Enemy. Betrayal indeed.

All four of the Gospel accounts address the fact that one of Jesus’ followers draws a sword and cuts off the ear of the high priest’s servant. Only the Gospel of John names the servant, Malchus, and the sword bearer, Peter. Two very significant things are revealed by Jesus’ response. Jesus heals Malchus. Jesus says, “If you live by the sword, you will die by the sword.” “This is not the Father’s plan.” There were always 10s of thousands of angels at God’s disposal to do His will.

The way of violence, is not the way for Jesus followers. I confess that often I wish that Jesus and His angels would come immediately. But, it is the desire of the Father’s heart that none should perish but that all would come to repentance and be saved. Jesus is a healer. Why was the injury cutting off the high priest’s servant’s ear and Jesus’ immediate healing of that ear? We are not told why, but I wonder if it has something to do with faith coming through hearing the word of God.

The contrast is clear. Jesus has an awesome power, a force that could and will conquer. There are many that try to make Jesus out to be a revolutionary; but here, he clearly declares that he is not leading a rebellion. Jesus says, He is a teacher. Jesus is saying He is the one the prophets wrote about. Jesus is the one who will fulfill the scriptures.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus says, “Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?” This is the cup of wrath for the sin of the whole world for all of history. This cup, is the Calvary Cross and the atonement for sin. So, the mission of God will not be accomplished by violence and rebellion. The mission of God will be accomplished through sacrificial love and healing.

2 Corinthians 10:3–4 (NIV84)

<sup>3</sup> For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup> The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. Anytime a Christian seeks a solution that leads to or involves violence, Jesus says, “Sheath your sword.” We are to be a people of peace and ambassadors of reconciliation. Anger, malice, and divisiveness are a betrayal of the Lord Jesus.

CONCLUSION:

As we reflect on Good Friday, let us remember there were three crosses, three crucifixions. In the center was our Savior. On one side of Jesus there was a criminal that was unrepentant. On the other side of Jesus,

Luke 23:40–43 (NIV84)

<sup>40</sup> ...the other criminal rebuked [the criminal who mocked Jesus]. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? <sup>41</sup> We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

<sup>42</sup> Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

<sup>43</sup> Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”

That is the heart of God for every repentant debtor. Jesus restored Peter. Jesus restored the other disciples. When Jesus called Judas friend after the betraying kiss, I believe he was letting Judas know that there was a way back, even for him. I base my argument on the fact that on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane, the Gospel of John records Jesus calling the disciples with Him, friends.

So, let us take these next two days and empty ourselves of everything unworthy of our Savior. Let us be the people we are called to be. Let us commit to be faithful in our walk with Jesus. Let us dedicate ourselves to making new disciples of Jesus. Let us stand our post and never desert it. Let us truly be ministers of reconciliation.

Jesus has shown us The Way.

Jesus will bring us to Resurrection Day, Easter.

Amen and amen. Let us pray.