



April 23, 2007

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THE STAND
BETRAYAL

One of you will betray me.

So said Jesus of Nazareth to His 12 disciples, His brothers as He called them, as they openly fellowshiped at the Last Supper.

So, like all humans, they were shocked at the accusation. Each said “not me, no way”. You are my Lord, my friend, my teacher and my leader. I would die before I would betray you, so they all said.

Then came Judas. He said to the Christ:

IS IT I?

And Jesus said:

IT IS YOU. YOU ARE THE MAN!

Judas in fact intended to betray his Master. He had willful intention to do so. That intention was malicious, like the kind of malice many of our criminals have today. He maliciously intended to betray the Christ.

Like Judas, we get angry. We intend to get even so often. So much of our lives are spent eye for an eye, vengeful, like Judas. How convenient it is to forget that vengeance is mine sayeth the Lord. I will repay. So many times we think our vengeance is better than His.

Judas was jealous, greedy and self serving. It was all about him. He cared little or nothing about the Christ. Jealousy motivated Judas to betray Jesus. Jealousy motivates us to betray many we love. When we become jealous, we are intent, often maliciously so, on getting even. Jealousy is a cardinal sin, and Judas was possessed with that evil to the core of his soul. We do some of the worst things we can when we are jealous. Like Judas.

And Judas was greedy and self-serving. It is much easier to betray when everything is all about you. He knew he could do away with Jesus, His ministry, mission and person, and all of that for the grand sum of 30 pieces of silver. He sold the Christ for money. He sold his soul for silver. How many times have we sold out for money, compromised values and ideals for the almighty dollar. Judas did it without compunction.

Judas was guileful, sneakily. He was subtle and sardonic. I can imagine the gall as he looked into the eyes of Jesus and dared to say is it I. Can you just imagine the look, the eye contact between these two at that time. That had to be one of the most dynamic encounters in all history. The betrayer and the

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betrayed. Eye to eye, face to face with all of history at stake. Judas must have really felt that he might be more clever than the Christ, that Jesus was not really able to see the betrayal coming, or know it was Judas. I can only wonder how Judas felt when Jesus said:

YOU ARE THE MAN. YOU ARE THE BETRAYER.!

So often in our lives we deceive and betray. We do that by not telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. We avoid, deflect, and present subtle meanings to our dialogue and conversation. We create false impressions through others and about ourselves. We think we get away with it but what goes around comes around. If you don't tell the whole truth to someone, someone else will lie to you. Like the laws of nature, what goes around comes around.

Notice how straight Jesus was. He said:

YOU ARE THE MAN!

Nothing soft, gentle or avoiding. Straight on. Think how often we compound the existing problem or create new ones when we are not straight. We bring dishonor to ourselves and we mislead others. If we do not tell another exactly how we think, we can not expect that other to understand our thoughts and feelings and react accordingly. What we often regard as their fault is more often than not ours. It just takes too much courage to be totally straight. Jesus was perfectly straight to Judas, as he was with everyone. What a difference it would make in marriages if husbands and wives were totally straight with each other. What a difference it would make in parenting if father and mother were totally, caringly straight with son and daughter. It just doesn't happen today in this politically correct society of ours.

There was Judas in the inner circle, Judas the traitor. Judas hugged Jesus, kissed Him on the cheek. He shared the cup with his Lord, they drank together, they broke bread together, they talked and conversed intimately and philosophically. They worked and acted together, they ministered together. They undoubtedly laughed and cried together. They were open with each other, loving, caring and giving. INTIMATE. And with all of that, Judas sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Small wonder he went thereafter and hanged himself. I only hoped he asked forgiveness for his betrayal. The first thing we should do when we betray is ask forgiveness.

Then there was Peter, a second one. A second brother of the Christ betrayed Him. This Peter, whom Jesus loved, and declared him to be the rock upon which the church would be built, was no more than quicksand at crunch time. Like Judas, Peter betrayed Jesus. He denied Him three times and was reminded by the Rooster. Three times Peter denied his Master and Lord. He said:

I DON'T KNOW HIM.

No one was more intimate with Jesus Christ than Peter. But when his time had come, Peter was the first and the quickest to deny Him. He was afraid, caught up in history's greatest drama, uncertain and insecure, and sold out his Lord, not for 30 pieces of silver, but to protect himself from harm. The disciple who stood shoulder to shoulder with Jesus time and again, blessed by His teaching, participating in His miracles, denied Him, BETRAYED HIM!

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How often in life do we deny our Lord? So often in little ways. We fail to defend Him when His name is taken in vain. We fail to communicate the love and gratitude we feel knowing Him and sharing so fully and freely in His love. By word or deed, we can betray Him everyday. We can do so by acts of omission or commission. Sometimes simply being silent can betray. We need, as He instructed, to confess Him before men. We need that men should see our good works and consequently glorify Him and our Father which is in Heaven. Sometimes, to do or not do is to betray. He told us He would be our agent before the Father if we confessed Him, but if we deny Him, He will also deny us. Betrayal has some wicked consequences, does it not?

Then there were the other ten. The shepherd was stricken and they scattered. They, the ones at the last supper who said we will never leave or forsake you, we will never betray you, or deny you, they hit the road, they scattered as quickly as possible when the crisis struck the Master. Mere men they were, fallible, afraid, uncertain, not really knowing what to do when their leader went down. They were sheep without a shepherd. They were undoubtedly overwhelmed, uncertain, and sorely afraid. They really did not know what to do but none of them, not one stood up, stayed with Him, or suffered with Him. NOT ONE. When it was all said and done I hope each one of them, like Peter, went out and wept bitterly. The remorse, the feeling which must have existed as a result of the betrayal must have been overwhelming. I wonder how the human Jesus felt. He knew it would happen, we were told, but it must have been unbelievably hurtful nonetheless. For us, there really is nothing more hurtful than an outright betrayal by the one you love most. The feeling can fester inside for days and weeks. Even when there is forgiveness, it is so difficult to forget, forget betrayal. One can forgive infidelity in marriage, but how can one forget. One can forgive the lie or delinquent behavior of a child, but how can a parent forget. Conversely, a child can forgive the lie of a parent, but how can a child ever forget that lie! Betrayal is a daily thing, more often little than large. The betraying, malicious molehills becomes mountains. The possibility of betrayal lives within us, in our thoughts, is evident in our actions, and always present in our communication, our gossip, our judgmental criticisms. We by nature are ready to betray. Just like every one of those 12 disciples in his own way betrayed the Son of God, the Son of Man, their Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

No matter, He forgave them. Only He could say your sins are remembered no more. When He rose again, He was anxious to see those who betrayed them. Go and tell, He said to the Marys, my brothers, my disciples and Peter, that awful betrayer Peter, that I am coming to see them. I want to see them. I want to fellowship with them even as before. What a joy it must have been for them, the betrayers, to know that the BETRAYED still loved them. Is there anything more wonderful for us, betrayers two thousand years later to know that we are forgiven. Any betrayal, any at all, is forgotten. And that we are loved, no matter what, by Him. Forgiving, forgetting and loving, makes us understand the betrayal so clearly, and provides the courage, the will, to never do it again. Greater love has no man than this, than that man lay down his life for his friend, for you and me. Human as we are, let us nonetheless do everything possible to never, ever betray anyone we love, anyone at all, and especially:

THE LORD WE LOVE!

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