

The Betrayed King

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[0:00] The Darkest Hour. It is a biographical war movie about Winston Churchill's early days as the Prime Minister of the UK.!

As Nazi Germany's military forces sweep across Western Europe and trap hundreds of thousands of Allied troops at Dunkirk. And Churchill faces immense political pressure.

And it's coming from his own party. And it's also coming from former Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and Viscount Halifax. And they would like Churchill to sign this peace treaty.

And so they actively betray Churchill and they plot against him. And even King George VI is initially skeptical of Churchill's leadership.

But Churchill, as you know, resists the compromise and he gains the backing of the common people. And he manages to get the king to come on side. And he decides to fight on.

[1:20] He decides that he will not go for this peace treaty even though his own people are against him. And then he delivers that iconic, we shall fight them on the beaches speech.

Which, of course, changes the course of history. Now, our Bible reading this afternoon records conversations that lead to events that have changed our world forever.

Because this is the night before the death of Jesus Christ. When Jesus will approach his darkest hour on the cross the next day.

But it's not just the darkest hour for Jesus. It is also the darkest hour for Judas. Who will betray Jesus. And so as we listen into these conversations between Jesus and his disciples in this upper room in Jerusalem.

Before Jesus dies. We get what is called the farewell discourse in John's Gospel. Because Jesus is having a discourse. He's having a time with his disciples just before his death.

[2:26] And this afternoon we're focusing on Jesus' betrayal to death at the hands of Judas. And this, of course, is all part of Jesus' destiny.

He came into this world in order to die. And yet though Jesus knew he would die. We see from this passage that Jesus is distressed. Because it's one of his own disciples who betrays him.

And so there is a darkness to this betrayal. But while we see how Judas' sin is a betrayal of Jesus. We also see how in Jesus' dealings with Judas.

How Jesus responds to people who are against him. People like you and me. So three things this afternoon we're going to look at as we focus on this passage.

First, the destiny of betrayal. Verse 18 to 20. Second, the distress of betrayal. Verse 21 to 26. And then thirdly, the darkness of betrayal.

[3:27] Verse 27 to 30. So first of all, the destiny of betrayal. Jesus is moving towards his death. It's his destiny as part of God's salvation plan for this world.

And the betrayal of Jesus by Judas is part of this plan. And so there's no surprises for Jesus here in this whole passage.

In fact, his betrayal was foretold in the Scriptures. We see that in verse 18. Where Jesus says, I am not referring to all of you. I know those I have chosen.

But this is to fulfill this passage of Scripture. He who shared my bread has turned against me. Jesus is quoting a text from Psalm 41.

Which is a psalm of David. And in the psalm, David is suffering. Because his enemies are against him. But what is worse for David is that it's one of his close friends who is against him.

[4:29] Somebody he trusts. Somebody he eats with has turned against him. And so just as David is betrayed by someone close to him, so here Jesus quotes this passage.

Because he is going to be betrayed by Judas, one of his disciples. And so they're eating this last supper together. Jesus quotes these words.

Because he who shared my bread has turned against me. So Jesus was expecting to be betrayed by a close friend.

He knew exactly what was happening. And he was in complete control of the situation. And so Jesus reveals this to his disciples as if to steady them for what was about to happen.

Because they'll come to discover that Jesus' death was no tragic accident. And when they realize that his betrayal was by one of their own and see that this was the fulfillment of the scriptures, then they'll be helped.

[5:30] So verse 19, Jesus says, I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen, you will believe that I am who I am.

Very truly, I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me, and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me. He's telling them about his betrayal because when it happens, Jesus says, you will believe that I am who I am.

Because obviously for these disciples who trusted Jesus and he was their master and they were his followers, the betrayal and the arrest and the trial and the crucifixion would all be difficult for the disciples to cope with.

And so Jesus is preparing them by assuring them that all of this will help them to know and believe that, what does he say? That I am.

By literally saying, I am, Jesus is taking here the Old Testament name of God, the name that Moses, the name that God gave to Moses in Exodus chapter 3.

[6:42] And so everything that happened here to Jesus would help his disciples believe his true identity as God, as God the Son, that he really is the Messiah, he really is the Son of God that they must believe in and hold on to.

Because a lot would happen in a few hours that they wouldn't fully understand at the time. Even the work of the devil through Judas has a part in God's purposes in moving Jesus towards his death on the cross.

And so for the disciples, understanding this in time would not only help the disciples know who Jesus is, but it would make sure that they weren't caught out by these events.

And so it would enable them as his people to spread the message about Jesus to the world after his death and his resurrection. They would spread the good news that the Father had planned that the Son would come into the world to suffer and die and rise again in order to draw people to himself.

And so God's sovereign plan was in no way being disrupted by Judas and behind him, Satan, the devil.

[8:02] In fact, they were unknowingly giving it traction and pushing this plan towards the death of Jesus. For even this evil was being used in God's good purposes.

It is as the German reformer Martin Luther once said, the devil is God's devil. And here he is, he is actually doing God's bidding. Jesus is in full control of his life, but also his death as these events unfold and as his identity is revealed.

So can you see how every single thing that happens ultimately serves the plan and the purpose of God?

And Jesus is teaching this to stabilize his disciples for everything that would happen. And so what should we take from this?

Well, if we're curious about Christianity, then we should be in no doubt that Jesus came to die. His death was no accident.

[9:09] Everything comes together like the pieces of a jigsaw to make it happen. And if we're a committed Christian, then we should be in no doubt that God is sovereign.

Because the better we grasp this, the steadier we ought to be in our faith. And so let the destiny of Jesus, including his betrayal, not only warm your heart because of his love for you, because he went to the cross in order to save you, but let it strengthen your faith in him.

But also in how God chooses to work out his purposes. Here, God chooses the death of his son to complete his salvation plan.

And so it should remind us that nothing is ever out of God's control. There's never a time in your life or my life or in the lives of those that we love that God doesn't know what he is doing.

And so we can trust him. But in case this seems cold and hard and unfeeling, that God is sovereign and he knows what he's doing, well, we need to move on and see Jesus' personal reaction to what is going on here.

[10:32] So first of all, there's the destiny of betrayal. But secondly, there is the distress of betrayal. Look at verse 21. After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, Very truly, I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.

We're told here about the emotional anguish of Jesus. And the word that John uses means to be agitated or disturbed or shaken.

In fact, it's a word that John used earlier. Remember when Jesus healed the man at the pool and there was this belief that when the water at the pool was stirred up, if you were first in, then you could be healed.

Well, it's that same word of stirring up at the pool that's used here of the inside emotion of Jesus, that he's being stirred up on the inside as he stares his death and the betrayal of his closest friend, Judas, bear down heavily upon him.

And so he's agitated by what's happening. His inner emotion is so strong that John picks up on this outward effect that it has on him, that John's aware Jesus is troubled in spirit.

[11:54] And as we've seen before in John's gospel, Jesus' distress tells us something significant and important about him, saying to us that, well, yes, he is fully God, God the Son, but he is also fully man.

He is a human being. And so while he knows he is going to die, that's why he came, he's not stoic, he's not somehow disengaged from the suffering and death that's coming his way, he's troubled. That's his real experience. And it's an experience that we've all had, although to a lesser extent, isn't it? Like when we make that shocking discovery or when we hear some tragic news and we're shaken to the core, when we're stirred inside, while we're agitated, we're disturbed, we're full of anxiety.

And that's the language that John uses to express the emotional life of our Lord Jesus Christ. But Jesus' betrayal was somewhat lost on his disciples.

Verse 22 tells us, disciples stared at one another at a loss to know which of them he meant. And so while John has dropped a number of clues about Judas to the reader of his gospel, us, the disciples are still puzzled.

[13:26] They don't understand who Jesus is talking about here or how one of them could betray him. It wasn't like Judas walked about with a t-shirt that said the word betrayer on the front or on the back.

Judas was a disciple. Judas was an apostle. He'd been close to Jesus throughout this three-year ministry. Judas had heard what Jesus had taught.

Judas had seen all the amazing things that Jesus had done. Judas had even been entrusted with the money. He was the treasurer. So nobody here was pointing the finger at Judas.

And of course, for us, Judas has gone down in history as a traitor. He is the ultimate celebrity traitor. Richard E. Grant doesn't get a look in. And we know Judas describes somebody who is a traitor. A couple of years ago, I was at the Glasgow Warriors stadium down in Scottsdale, and it was a Glasgow-Edinburgh rugby match.

[14:36] And one of the players who used to play for Glasgow had switched, and he'd moved and gone through to Edinburgh. And for the whole game, everybody in Glasgow, the Glasgow section, shouted at him and called him Judas.

Judas. Judas. It was funny if it weren't so sad that he was being reminded again and again that he was a traitor moving from Glasgow to Edinburgh.

And so although we associate Judas, the name Judas, the word Judas, with betrayal, that wasn't in the minds of the disciples right here at this time.

Just look, verse 23. One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. Simon, that's John, Simon Peter, motioned to this disciple and said, ask him which one he means.

Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, Lord, who is it? So that disciple whom Jesus loved, we know to be John, the author of this gospel.

[15:41] And he is right next to Jesus at the table. And I'm sure we've all seen Leonardo da Vinci's painting of The Last Supper. And da Vinci was a genius.

And his painting of The Last Supper, it's a masterpiece. It's meant to capture this very moment when Jesus had just declared that one of them would betray him.

And so they're all there in shock, looking around at one another, wondering who it could be. Now, I am no art critic, as you would know, but da Vinci has got it wrong.

His painting is incorrect. Because in his painting, Jesus and his disciples are all sitting upright at a table, like we would sit at a table today.

But back then, that's not how they shared a meal together. They weren't sitting around a table. We're told that they were reclining. So probably lying with their cushion, with a cushion under their elbow, with their head, where the food was at the table, and their feet away from it.

[16:47] So they've been really close together. And that's why Simon Peter can whisper to John. And you can just imagine him elbowing John in the ribs and saying, ask him who it is.

John, you're close. Ask him. And so John does. And Jesus responds by saying, in verse 26, it is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.

Then dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. So John is watching Jesus hand the piece of bread to Judas, identifying Judas as the betrayer.

And so Jesus here, deeply troubled in this upper room. But I suspect that Jesus wasn't simply deeply troubled for himself.

Given the amount of focus there is on Judas, Jesus is surely troubled for Judas too. And of course we know that Judas' betrayal didn't take Jesus by surprise.

[17:57] But that doesn't mean that Jesus wasn't emotionally impacted by it. Clearly, he was. Jesus knew that Judas would betray him.

He knew his destiny. He was going to the cross to die. But he also knew the destiny of Judas. And so the inner distress that Jesus experienced is over his own impending death.

But it's also for his beloved disciples. That's why he's investing all of this time, the night before he dies, teaching them. And then later, praying for them.

But perhaps Jesus is especially troubled for Judas, who is about to reach a point of no return.

Which takes us to our third and final point.

So first, the destiny of betrayal. Second, the distress of betrayal. And then third, the darkness of betrayal. Let's read those closing verses of our passage, 27 to 30.

[19:02] As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. So Jesus told him, what you are about to do, do quickly. But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him.

Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival or to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out and it was night.

So Judas, possessed by Satan, takes the bread and he immediately goes out into the dark night. Why does John say, and it was night?

Well, as we've been reading through the Gospel of John, we've seen this big theme of light and of darkness and night. So at the beginning in the prologue, John told us that Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness.

Jesus himself said in John chapter 8, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

[20:14] And so while Jesus is the true light, darkness and night symbolize in John's Gospel a world that is in rebellion against God.

And so surely here, John wants us to pick up this double meaning when he says, and it was night. Of course it was night outside the upper room, but it was also night on the inside, on the inside of the heart of Judas Iscariot.

Because you see, Judas was in spiritual darkness because he had turned away from Jesus who is the light. And so he went out into the darkness of night to betray Jesus.

It was the point of no return for Judas. He had crossed the Rubicon. Satan had taken possession of him. But think about this.

It wasn't as if a switch had been flicked and Judas was in darkness all of a sudden. Like the lights went off and that was it. Judas' betrayal of Jesus was the climax of a pattern in Judas' life where we can trace the progression of his sin through all of his bad life choices.

[21:41] So early on, the gospel writer John calls Judas out as the betrayer. John chapter 6, verse 71. And he points out in his gospel the darkness that's inside Judas' heart and in his life.

So remember, as treasurer, Judas had been stealing the money. And so in chapter 12, when Mary pours this really expensive perfume on Jesus' feet as an act of devotion, what does Judas do?

Well, he objects and says the perfume could have been sold and the money given to the poor. But John tells us Judas wasn't actually concerned about the poor at all.

He was a thief and so he wanted the money for himself. And so what was happening in the upper room didn't start in the upper room.

It started long before. Judas was on a slippery slope. And it's clear that Judas didn't want to deal with his sin.

[22:49] Sin that wasn't even visible to others who were close to him. So much so that when Jesus said, what you're about to do, do quickly, what were the disciples thinking?

Oh, that's it. That's a moment of betrayal right there. No, they were thinking, perhaps he's going out to buy something for the festival. Or maybe Judas is going out to give some money to the poor. So Judas somehow had managed to carry on his sinful lifestyle and deceive all of those people who were closest to him. And so rather than seek forgiveness from Jesus for his greed, what does Judas do?

Well, he's ready to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver to basically feed that greed. and so he's an easy target for the devil because it might have seemed like Judas, the disciple, was following Jesus and yet in reality he was far from Jesus and in the end he turned away from Jesus completely. And yet what I find so interesting is that Jesus doesn't seem to turn away from Judas even though Judas is the betrayer.

[24:08] Notice how Jesus relates to Judas here. Jesus shows nothing but love and grace to Judas right up to the end. Jesus knew Judas would betray him and yet what does he do?

He washes Judas' feet along with the rest of the disciples. He sits Judas around the table with him to share in his last supper. And when John asks Lord who is it?

Verse 25 Jesus doesn't name and shame Judas in front of everybody else. He doesn't say boys it's him. Judas is the betrayer and points his finger.

He is the dirty thieving scumbag who is about to get me killed. Right there. Him. Judas. you. Does Jesus do that? No.

There's none of that. And even when Jesus says to Judas what you are about to do, do quickly, he still doesn't call him out as the betrayer. So does Jesus' love for Judas mean that his grace still extends to Judas?

[25:22] Because it doesn't seem like Jesus rejects Judas before the devil takes possession. It's more like Jesus tries to reach Judas. Tim Keller in a sermon on this text describes it like playing chess with a child.

You know when you do that the child is about to make a bad move in the chess game and you say, do you really want to make that move? See what will happen if you move that piece there?

Making that move will not be a good move for you. Don't make that move. If you make that move then you'll lose the game. Is that what Jesus is doing here with Judas?

He's gently and yet lovingly telling them if he makes this move it will be a disaster for him. Judas must have known that Jesus was on to him.

And so Judas is confronted with a choice. He can press on with his wicked plot or he can admit his sin and beg forgiveness from his loving saviour.

[26:31] But instead of responding to Jesus' love for him, Judas hardens his heart against him. Until eventually it reaches this point of no return. And Jesus simply sends him out to get on with it.

Jesus sent Judas on his way so that even his sin is somehow caught up in God's greater purposes of salvation. I wonder if you're like me you've wondered why is Judas such a main character?

He doesn't have main character energy like other characters in the gospel but he is given so much attention for the one who is the betrayer of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And surely it's because Judas is meant to be a stark warning for all of us because he's showing us just how possible it is for somebody to reach a point of no return.

Judas is saying to us that you can have all the privileges and all the blessings of being near Jesus and yet you can live a life that eventually turns you away from Jesus.

[27:51] So you can be born into a Christian family. You can be at church every Sunday. You can know your Bible and you can say your prayers. You can talk a good game when it comes to Christianity.

You can go to Christian camps and be involved in Christian activities. You can even fool all the people around you who are the closest to you into thinking that you're a Christian.

You can do all this and yet there can be a darkness in your heart where you resist the lordship of Jesus Christ because you want to rule your own life and do everything your way.

Fact is, Judas was on the road to hell and he resisted every loving appeal of Jesus. He hardened his heart against Jesus until he was finally overtaken by darkness.

darkness. And this surely alerts us to the reality that there will be people who will not be saved by Jesus because resisting Jesus to the end means we will be cut off from God forever.

[29:04] And that surely is the tragic message of this passage. But this sobering episode here also reminds us that there is still hope.

Yes, there will come a time when it is too late. But for you and for me, that time is not yet. And perhaps you need to hear this today because you feel you have gone too far and so there is no forgiveness forgiveness for you.

Perhaps you feel that you are on this really slippery slope and it just keeps going down, but you don't need to keep going further down.

Perhaps you have messed up big time. You think there cannot possibly be any more mess in your life or in your heart. start. But you can have a fresh start with Jesus.

You don't need to continue in your sin as if that's the only option for you. Instead, you need to know the truth of this passage that Jesus loves you to the end.

[30:24] Remember chapter 13 verse 1, he loved them to the end, including Judas. Because Jesus is Savior.

Jesus is Lord. So Jesus knows everything that you have ever done. And he hasn't given up on you. His grace reaches out to draw you in, to forgive your sin, and to change your heart.

There is no hope if you continue to go your own way till the end. That's why you must admit your helplessness and cry out to Jesus.

You don't need to live with the guilt and the shame of your past. So do not resist the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Either by thinking, it just can't reach you. or by taking offense and continuing in hard-heartedness thinking, I'll sort myself out.

[31:37] What does Jesus want to do? He wants to shine his light into our dark hearts and to give us a new purpose and to give us hope. He wants to give us the Holy Spirit's power to enable us to live a new life with him.

God's change is possible. Sadly for Judas, he reached a point of no return. The good news for all of us is that we're not there yet.

And Jesus offers us his grace because he loves us. Let's pray. may may may!