

Betrayal

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[0 : 00] Thanks so much, Alistair. My name's Archie. I'm the pastor in training here. And it's my job this morning to open God's word for us and to let him speak. And before we do that together, why don't I pray just to prepare our hearts to hear from him.

Heavenly Father, as we hear from you in your word this morning, as we look to your son, I pray that by your Holy Spirit, the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts would be acceptable to you this morning.

Amen. I want to begin this morning with a story. And this story is a completely made up story, but hopefully it gets us feeling some of the weight of this passage.

It's a story about Ahmed. Ahmed grew up in inner city Birmingham. He was a happy kid, happy at school. He had lots of friends. But when he was six years old, his best friend, Jonathan, was moving away.

He was moving to Carlisle. Ahmed and Jonathan stayed in touch. Their parents got on quite well. They even went on holiday together over the next couple of years, that kind of thing.

[1 : 16] But school definitely wasn't as good now for Ahmed now that Jonathan had left. They were still best friends, but life was just that little bit sadder.

A couple of years later, and the good news, one day Ahmed got home from school. His parents sat him down. His mum had got a new job. It wasn't far from Carlisle, and they were going to be moving.

And so at the end of the summer, they were going to be moving up there. Ahmed was going to get to go to school with his best friend, Jonathan, again. They were on holiday together that summer, just a couple of weeks before the move.

And the boys were so excited. You can imagine them planning their first day back at school together again. And then the day came. Ahmed arrived at this new school in Carlisle, and it was strange.

See, his school in Birmingham was just really multicultural. Lots of kids that looked like him, who had families like his. But here, it was just so obvious, as soon as he arrived in the playground, all of the other kids at this school were white.

[2 : 22] And when he got to registration, he realized that he wasn't going to be in Jonathan's class. And everyone there was looking at him and whispering, some of them openly pointing and laughing.

No one said hello. No one welcomed him. No one sat next to him. He could not wait for the first break time to get out into the playground to find Jonathan.

The bell goes. It's break time straight out into the playground. And there's Jonathan. He's with a group of friends. And Ahmed notices that some of them in this circle were those in his class.

Some were even those who had been pointing and laughing at him. So he nervously approaches his best friend. And Jonathan just totally ignores him.

The other kids ask if Jonathan knows this new kid. He says he's never seen him before. And he turns his back. It's a horrible betrayal, that, isn't it?

[3 : 26] I wonder if you've ever been betrayed. Maybe betrayed like that. Just think for a moment how that feels. Betrayal is horrible, isn't it?

Very often when we're teaching children the gospel, we use this sort of metaphor, that Jesus wants to be your friend. You've done things that would upset him, but he's willing to forgive you.

He wants to be your friend. And that can be quite helpful, I think. But if I can put it like this. If you are a Christian here this morning, and Jesus is your friend, well, have you ever been a Jonathan-like friend?

I know I have. Privately, Jesus and I are best friends. But when it comes down to it, faced with temptation, in my weakness, even the merest temptation, so often I can pretend it was as though I never knew him.

This passage that we're in today, we're told that both Judas and Peter are going to betray Jesus in their way. Judas is going to hand Jesus over to the authorities.

[4 : 45] Peter is going to deny that he ever knew him. And if you're at all familiar with that story, it's very easy to sort of take the emotion out of it, but it's horrible. This is a brutal story.

And my prayer for us this morning is that we would feel that. And that we would respond rightly to it. Key question for us then is this.

What might it mean to betray or deny Jesus today? And when we do, what next? Maybe you've explicitly done that.

A co-worker or a friend at uni or at school is asked, are you a Christian? And your response, what, me? A Christian? Maybe it's more subtle than that.

Well, yeah, I am a Christian, but I'm not one of those Christians. We might not have done it with our words like that, but there are ways. I think there are lots of ways for me that we betray Jesus, that we deny that we belong to him, that we do that in the way that we live.

[5 : 50] Right? If we're honest, Judas, in this passage, his betrayal is going to send Jesus to the cross. But my sin, it hammers in the nails. To betray Jesus, it means that you've chosen to follow him, that you are a Christian, and yet you continue to deny it in what you say and in what you do.

But the message here this morning is not, and so take a good look at yourself. Clean up your act. Commit a bit more earnestly, and don't you dare deny or betray again.

That is not the message here at all. Instead, as we answer this question, when we betray or deny Jesus, when you experience the crushing weight of guilt, where do you go with it?

Where are you going to run? That's what we're going to do this morning. That's where we're heading. But where have we been in this series in John's Gospel?

We've returned, I guess, almost every week to chapter 20 near the end of the book. John gives us his purpose. He says this, Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.

[7 : 12] But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing, you may have life in his name. In other words, John wants his readers to see all the incredible stuff that Jesus did, and to understand that all of it was supposed to point to something much bigger.

And so when John records Jesus turning water into wine, when Jesus heals the lame and drives out a demon, when he feeds a crowd of people, when he walks on water, it's all supposed to point to something about who Jesus is, and the big thing that he came to do.

And throughout this book, as if to make that really clear, John repeats this phrase, his hour had not yet come. Nine times that phrase is repeated through the book, his hour has not yet come, until at last, in John chapter 12, verse 23, we saw this a few weeks ago, the hour has come.

For the Son of Man, that is just a title for Jesus, for the Son of Man to be glorified. The hour has come. It's just around the corner. And we saw last week with JT, as chapter 13 starts back in verse 1, Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father.

So you see, we're in this new section in John's Gospel. You might even divide John's Gospel into two halves, chapter 12, verse 23, kind of from the hour has not yet come to where we are now.

[8 : 50] The hour has come. And we're in this room in the passage that Alistair has read for us. We're in this room that we first saw that last week with JT.

It's the same room in verse 2. Jesus and the 12, they're enjoying the evening meal together and it's Passover. JT helped us see last week how the foot-washing episode in the first half of the chapter is both a wonderful example of loving service and also a symbol of the cleansing for sin that will be available at the cross.

That Jesus wants his disciples, that he wants those who follow him to likewise serve one another and to point one another to his work on the cross. That's where we've been so far.

And here's where we're going this morning. That passage that Alistair has just read for us. I think it's got quite a clear structure. Verses 18 to 30, Judas is going to betray Jesus.

Verses 31 to 35, Jesus is going to the cross. And verses 36 to 38, Peter is going to deny Jesus. So first, Judas is going to betray Jesus.

[10:06] See in verse 18, Jesus has just been explaining the foot-washing thing. And he says in verse 18, he says, this isn't all of you. I know those I have chosen, but this is to fulfill the passage of scripture.

He who shared my bread has turned against me. And if you're not in the Pew Bible, you might have something like he lifted his heel against me. And that's just kind of a cultural way of saying he stuck the middle finger up at me.

He betrayed me. And Jesus is quoting from Psalm 41, where King David's own son betrays him. In other words, and we'll talk about this a bit more in a second, it's a family betrayal.

One who sat at the table with me, shared food with me, he will be the one to betray me. And notice in verse 21 that that troubles Jesus.

He knows it's coming. Of course he does. He's the sovereign God of the universe. But he has taken on human flesh and he knows what it is to feel the pain of that betrayal.

[11:12] Just as you and I might feel it. Just as you can imagine Ahmed in that story would have felt it. But the disciples don't know who he's talking about.

I see in verse 22, they stared at each other. You can picture it wide-eyed, looking around. Which one of us is it going to be? And then in verse 23, have a look at verse 23.

One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved was reclining next to him. Simon Peter in verse 24 tells this disciple to ask Jesus who it is.

And then verse 25, that's exactly what he does. Just a brief aside here. The disciple whom Jesus loved is John, the author of this gospel. He's referring to himself.

It might not be obvious here, but we get it explicitly right at the end of the book in chapter 21, verses 22 to 24. If you want to do that, check that out in your own time. But it is a very strange way for someone to refer to themselves, isn't it?

[12:12] What is John getting at? Is he somehow especially loved by Jesus? Jesus? I think that's how I had always read this. Almost like a kind of humble brag from John.

You think you're loved? Check me out. But I don't think that's what it is at all. Instead, what I think he is actually saying is this. This is the most important thing about me.

It might be true of you as well, but I am loved by Jesus. That's who I am. It's why I'm writing. It's my motivation. It's my identity.

In fact, it's all you need to know about me. Jesus loves me. And so knowing that Jesus loves him, verse 25, he asks, Lord, who is it?

Who is it that will betray you? And Jesus responds, verse 26, it is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.

[13:09] Apparently, that was a sort of sign of honoring someone, a bit like we might raise a toast to someone at a dinner today. And Jesus, still in verse 26, he dips the bread, he gives it to Judas.

It's a special kind of honoring. Yes, he's saying, you will betray me, but he honors him as he does that. And remember I said that Judas' betrayal was a family betrayal and the Passover feast that they're sharing together, that was a family meal.

And here, Jesus is sharing it with his closest followers as if to say, this is my family. And Judas is included in that. Jesus washes Judas' feet earlier in this chapter.

And Jesus, as he quotes from Psalm 41, he says, just like David, in fact, in fulfillment of David, I'm going to be betrayed by my own family. And more than that, as he hands him the bread, as he honors him in that way, he says, Judas, you are part of my beloved family.

He extends grace and honor and the offer of life to him, even in that final moment. And it is final for immediately, verse 27, as Judas takes the bread, he decides finally to betray Jesus and Satan entered into him.

[14:28] I don't think that's to say that he's now possessed by Satan or something like that and no longer responsible for his actions. It's not as though Judas was innocent up until this point.

In chapter 12, John tells us that Judas used to help himself to the money and the money bag. And in verse 2 of our chapter, we saw that the devil was already at work on Judas to betray Jesus.

But this is a final rejection, a rejection of Jesus's offer of love. It sort of seals the deal, signs the fated betrayal as Judas finally allows evil and darkness to overcome him.

In other words, I think this is the point of no return. His heart is now so hard that there is no going back. The disciples, as is typical of them in John's gospel, continue to fail to understand.

See in verse 29, they think Jesus is sending Judas out for supplies or maybe to give to the poor. He was the money bag guy after all. But Judas, he takes the bread and he heads out into the night.

[15:35] As Satan enters Judas, so Judas enters into the darkness. Earlier in the week, Cater told me about this painting that's on the screen. It's an amazing painting.

It's currently hanging in the National Gallery down there on Princes Street. You can go and check it out. It's by a French artist, Poussin. And just see the way that he uses light to tell the story, just like John does in his gospel.

That's Judas there on the left as you look at it. He's in the dark. His back is turned to Jesus and the disciples and he's heading out into the night. Judas is going to betray Jesus.

Next, Jesus is going to the cross. And we'll see here that the cross is glorious, that the cross is necessary and that the cross is love.

Have a look at verse 31. When he was gone. In other words, now that Judas has left the room, Jesus can really get going on his teaching and prayer that will come in the following chapters.

[16:37] And Jesus says, now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself and will glorify him at once.

Now, those verses are obviously quite difficult to understand and see the logic of, especially I think because on the Pew Bibles they're over the page from one another, aren't they? So it's hard to follow. But let's just try and see the logic of this.

First, the Son of Man is glorified. That is Jesus the man, the human, shown to be glorious. And then God is glorified in him. That I think is the divine nature of Jesus.

God the Son will be glorified in Jesus the human. It's true in that direction. The second half of the verse just says this is true in the other direction too. That is to say, Jesus' humanity and his divinity will both be glorified and what is to come.

But what does it mean to be glorified? I think it might be helpful, first of all, to say that you and I cannot add to God's glory. Maybe you've heard that like a sports person after they've won a match or something might say, all glory to God.

[17:52] Or songs that we sing where we say we glorify his name. When we do that, it's vital for us to understand that we're not adding to God something that wasn't already there.

Instead, when we say that we glorify God, we're revealing or showing something that already is, showing God to be who he already is, who God really is.

In Isaiah chapter 6, Isaiah sees the Lord in his throne room and the seraphim calling to one another. And here's what they say, holy, holy, holy.

Three times they say, holy. That is who God is in himself. As he sits on his throne in his splendor and his majesty.

In other words, God's holiness is kind of like his infinite worth. God is holy. And the seraphim say, holy, holy, holy is the Lord almighty.

[18:52] The whole earth is full of his. And you'd expect them to say holiness, I guess, wouldn't you? And maybe that phrase is familiar to you and so you know that that's not what they say.

What they say is the whole earth is full of his glory. In other words, God's glory, for God to be glorified, it is for his holiness, his infinite worth, to be made public, to be visible in all the earth.

And so in Exodus chapter 33, where Moses asks God to show him his glory, he is asking God to make his holiness, to make that known.

And here is how God responds. I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence.

I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. What does God's glory look like as he reveals it to Moses?

[19:58] It is his goodness. It is the name, Lord Yahweh, the name that says, I am faithful to my promises. It is his mercy and it is his compassion.

And so here in our passage this morning, Jesus is saying that the glory of God will be seen in what he is about to do. For God to be glorified is for God to be seen for who he is.

And nowhere in all of scripture and nowhere in all of history is that more true than here. At the cross. Notice in verses 31 and 32 of our passage that this glorifying, it happens now at the start of the verse and it is at once at the end of the verse.

This is the hour at which he will be glorified. It's the cross. Nowhere does Jesus look more humiliated and defeated.

Nowhere does he look less like God himself. And yet nowhere is his glory more evident than this. [21 : 10] At his lowest point, he is raised up. At his most defeated, he is defeating death. On the cross as he dies, pouring out mercy and compassion and making a way for you and for me to know the Father.

When he looks most human, he is most gloriously God. Good and faithful to his promises and merciful and compassionate.

Do you see how glorious the cross is? And the cross is also necessary. See how tenderly Jesus speaks to his disciples in verse 33.

He says, my children or little children. And he tells them that he won't be with them for much longer and that they can't come with him. We saw back in chapter 8 of John's Gospel, Jesus, as John refers to here, said the same thing to the Jews, that they can't follow him where he's going.

Why does he say it? Well, in chapter 8, he says specifically it's because they will die in their sin. In other words, Jesus is going to be with the Father, eternal resurrection life and it is impossible to follow him there if you remain wrapped up in sin.

[22 : 30] That was true of the Jews. It's true of the disciples as he speaks to them here and it is true of us today. This is the great problem to which the cross is the answer.

Here's why the cross is necessary. We are human beings wrapped up in sin. We all are. It's the default position. And because of that, we cannot go where Jesus says that he is going.

We need the cross. It's necessary because notice down in verse 36, he says, you cannot follow now to Simon Peter. You cannot follow now, but you will follow later.

In other words, if you want to follow me, you need me to go first. You can't come to the Father and enjoy eternal resurrection life unless I first go to the cross and deal with your sin.

This is the gospel's answer to that great problem for the Jews, for Peter, for the disciples, for us. None of us can enter into eternal life. None of us can follow Jesus to the Father unless he has dealt with our sin on the cross, unless he has been shown to be glorious in that way as he takes all of our sin and our shame and our betrayal and denial of him and he bears the weight of the guilt of that on his shoulders.

[23 : 51] And unless we look to him in that moment, unless we recognize his glory and humble ourselves and trust him, only then will we follow him through death to resurrection glory.

The cross is glorious. The cross is necessary. And finally, the cross is love. See, Jesus gives them this command in verses 34 and 35.

A new command I give you, love one another as I have loved you. So you must love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.

This command isn't really new at all. Loving your neighbor was central to the Old Testament law. God had always commanded that they love one another. But of course, there is a sense in which it is new.

Jesus isn't lying. And as Jesus literally puts meat onto the bones of that command, he takes it and he lives it and he makes it flesh.

[24 : 55] It's a new command insofar as Jesus has given it a context as I have loved you. And that is ultimately expressed at the cross. The incredible, self-sacrificial, life-giving love.

As Jesus lays down his life in love to give life to those who follow him. The cross is love. And as he explains this, Jesus is really preparing his disciples for his departure.

He says, this is how you are to live, to echo the self-giving love of the cross amongst you. And this is how those in your community will know that you follow Jesus as you love one another like this.

And we talked about this a bit last week with JT. Maybe you talked about it in your growth groups this week too. We did. Because this remains true for us. As we love one another in various ways, so we point one another to the love of Jesus on the cross.

The glorious cross. The necessary cross. The cross where God's love is ultimately expressed for us. But Peter, he still can't get over what Jesus has said in verse 33.

[26 : 16] He can't get over the fact that Jesus is going to leave. And so this is where we move from Jesus is going to the cross to Peter is going to deny Jesus. This is our final point and it won't take very long, I promise.

See in verse 36 Peter's question. Where are you going? Where is Jesus going? Why can't we go with him? Again, Jesus' response. We've seen it already. You can't follow now but you will follow later.

Peter doesn't understand and he says in verse 37 I will follow you. I would even lay down my life for you. See how zealous and forthright Peter is but he's misunderstanding. He thinks Jesus is going on some earthly journey that might result in his death.

He doesn't realise that he needs Jesus to die for him and instead he wants to die for Jesus. Peter wants to do the saving and Jesus says verse 38 you can make all your promises now but you will deny me.

You will disown me three times before the rooster crows. Peter will deny Jesus as we read on over the next few weeks we'll see he does just that.

[27 : 28] I began this morning with that story of betrayal of Ahmed and Jonathan the betrayal and denial of a best friend. It's brutal and it's brutal here in John's Gospel too as we've seen the big movements of the plot in this passage as Judas is going to betray Jesus as Jesus will be glorified at the cross and as Peter will deny Jesus too.

Two of his closest friends it's brutal but as we put all of that together notice the importance for us this morning because it is also brutal when we betray and deny Jesus and in some ways we could describe all of our sin like this as we deny the one who created us and I think especially brutal if you're a Christian here this morning adopted sons and daughters of our creator in him followers of Jesus and yet there are ways aren't there that we continue to betray and deny him still and so what do we do?

We've reached the end of the story here the climax the last hour we have these two men Judas who followed Jesus but never trusted him who never confessed him as the son of God the Messiah the Christ who never repented we have Peter often misunderstanding always zealous always the activist he wants to lay down his life for Jesus and not have Jesus lay down his life for him but despite that Peter who trusted Jesus who confessed him to be the son of God the Christ the Messiah and who we'll see in a few weeks time does repent the question for us this morning then is not simply will I betray or deny Jesus the question is when I betray and deny Jesus will I be Judas or will I be Peter where will I run because if like Judas you continue out into the dark this is what happens as your heart becomes increasingly hard it will become easier and easier to continue in your sin you will continue to convince yourself that there's no harm done and it will be harder and harder to return to him and it's very easy for us to be like

Peter too to want to save ourselves when we betray or deny Jesus we want something to do don't we to a prayer to say or an action to perform something concrete to pin our renewed faith to and it's subtle but wrapped up in that instinct is that we want to earn our way back instead when we betray or deny Jesus would you remember what you have already received look at the glorious cross notice how this passage is structured with the betrayal and the denial either side but with the glory of the necessary and loving cross in the middle it's as if John is saying the answer to the betrayal the answer to the denial the answer to all of our sin it's here it's Jesus glorified on the cross shown to be the loving faithful merciful and compassionate

God that he is making a way for all of our sin to be forgiven and making a way for us to know him it is the centre of this little bit of John's gospel but it is the centre of history and it is the centre of your story if you're a Christian here this morning let me close with this this poem Glenn Scrivener wrote this poem I gave my life to Jesus it's brilliant it's well worth looking it up that's just the first verse but notice how it begins I gave my life to Jesus about a thousand times and he tells the story of how he committed his life to Jesus at a camp as a teenager and then he walked away and a few months later another camp another conversion and the cycle kind of repeats itself throughout the poem a cycle that ultimately was all about Glenn about Glenn's coming to Jesus about Glenn's sin about Glenn's prayer and Glenn's response until one day he started reading the

[32 : 03] Bible for himself and he saw there that he wasn't the centre of the story at all he'd always been taught that the important thing was his response about what he might do but as he read God's word he saw that the gospel wasn't about Glenn but about Jesus and this is how he finishes his poem as he says to those who taught him you say give your heart this says Christ is the donor you say yield your life this says he was always the owner you say get on fire he says this says you are the light you say keep running to God this says walk in Christ you say dare to be a missional intentional incarnational contextualized no compromise countercultural radical red letter fully devoted disciple this says follow you say get hungry for God this says take eat swallow you say press into

God this says you're hidden in Christ you say be a world changer this says live a quiet life you say surrender all this says you're not your own you say step up to the plate this says you're raised to a throne you say burn out this says shine you say you've got to work on your relationship with Jesus this says I am my beloved and he is mine let me pray heavenly father I pray that as we have opened your word to us this morning we might have seen the glory of your son there and I pray for each of us that you would help us to receive him with open hands that we might humbly accept what he has done for us and I pray that as we go from here your holy spirit would continue to work in our hearts revealing to us the ways in which we betray and deny your love for us and pointing us to what you have already won for us on the cross
Lord I pray that we would each of us know your new mercies to us day by day in Jesus name Amen
name In name In