

“Come, and Embrace Jesus!”
Sermon, Maundy Thursday, 2018

The Betrayer

Let me ask you, what do we usually call Judas, and why? ...

Often, we have the bad tendency to say horrible things about Judas. Often, we refer to him as a betrayer.

Did you consider yourself to be a betrayer of Christ?

That could happen to us before we even realize it.

I know that it could be hard for some of you to consider this, but I am confident that we all were born with this weakness. No matter how careful we are, because of sin, we all make mistakes. In visible or invisible ways, we often betray our Lord Jesus Christ with words and actions. Betrayal is causing divisions and chaos.

Only the Holy Spirit can reveal who we really are behind the scenes. We have to re-think our words and actions seriously. Tonight is the time to recognize our weakness, to repent and to make changes in order to be faithful disciples, doing things for the glory of God.

As long as we deny that we can betray Jesus, we continue to protect ourselves and our personalities, and we delay being the disciples we should be.

If we are listening to the Holy Spirit, He can convince us that a betrayer is already in us.

Probably, some people are having bad thoughts now about this sermon, thinking that the minister is too negative again. Probably you are fighting with this message, saying: How do I dare to say that we, good Christians, can be betrayers of Christ since we all LOVE CHRIST and each other?

The reality is that we all show our true colors when we are in temptation. We are not planning to be a betrayer, but we become it in an uncontrolled moment. We may not believe that we are capable of such things and, as we look around, we would not think of those around us as being capable of harming Jesus.

Let me go a step further. Jesus Christ said that the church is His body. If we hurt this congregation, if we say bad things about our fellow Christians, if we cause any disruption, we betray the body of Christ. In every congregation, the devil is working very actively to create betrayers of the church who offend the gospel and cause great division and trouble.

Please do not think now specifically of anybody else, but think about yourself, your mentality, your intentions and your feelings, and ask the Lord Jesus Christ to draw you closer to Him.

Reading in the Gospel of Mark, chapter 14, let's see again what was happening at the Last Supper, on the evening of Passover, when Jesus sat down, with his disciples, for the last time, before going to the cross.

“They prepared the Passover meal. When it was evening, he came with the twelve. And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, ‘Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.’ They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, ‘Surely, not I?’” (Mark 14:16b-19)

Dear beloved, no matter how hard we try to hide things from each other, the fact is that Jesus knows our hearts. He knows you and me. He knows that we all have our own personal weaknesses.

Please don't say that you wouldn't be capable of betrayal. Look at Peter, in Mark 14:29-31: **“Peter said to him, ‘Even though all become deserters, I will not.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Truly I tell you, this day, this very night before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.’ But he said vehemently, ‘Even though I must die with you; I will not deny you.’ And all of them said the same.”**

After Jesus was arrested, all the disciples betrayed Jesus by running away, saving their own lives. There was only one who “loved Jesus”. The Bible says this only about John, that he loved Jesus. All the other disciples were around for their own reasons. But, on that night, even John left the Lord.

Jesus loved them all equally. Each one was a unique individual, and Jesus loved them equally, including Judas.

May our Lord Jesus Christ reveal to us now what really is in our hearts. May the Holy Spirit reveal in us tonight what is in our hearts, so that we could bring those things to the cross tonight, to repent them, and to receive forgiveness. I believe that Holy Spirit is moving in each of our hearts right now, doing the same thing. He is revealing to us things in our hearts that we need to put on the cross in repentance.

Maybe He is revealing just how close, or how far away we are from the very heart of Jesus.

Remember, at one point Jesus said to Judas: Judas, you already made a plan in your heart, and you already made arrangements to betray me. The very sad part is that, even at that moment, Judas did not understand the seriousness of his sin. He did not realize how far his sin would take him in actions. He did not even try to stop it. When he realized what he did, it was too late. The deed was done. The outcome was set. There was no turning back.

Judas' other mistake was that, after he realized what he did, he avoided meeting Jesus in person, to talk to Him and to ask for forgiveness. He was such a strong man who could not cry because of what he did. There are such people who would rather break than to bow their heads or to humble themselves. He never considered that he could seek forgiveness. He could not forgive himself, neither could he ever face the other disciples, or Jesus again. This is why he lost his eternal soul.

A few things what we have to learn from Judas's story:

- We should not play with sin in our own lives.
- We should not come up with reasons to justify doing what we know is wrong.
- We should not come up with excuses to make up why we continue doing wrong.

Our sin cannot enter Heaven's gates. It must be dealt with now, at the Lord's Table.

Please remember the saying: “Sin will take you farther and deeper than you ever thought it would, and it will condemn you longer than you could ever dream.”

May none of us become the betrayer of Christ and of our church. Please come close to God's heart as you can get.

We are all Christians here. We are all Disciples of Christ. Our prayer today should be: Lord, help me to never be a betrayer, or to bring offense to the gospel and to the name of Jesus. Jesus is here to help you and me. Let's call upon His name. Amen.