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Luke 22:47-48: “God’s Question:

Would You Betray the Son of Man with a Kiss?”

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While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss (Luke 22:47-48)?"

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is hard to think that Judas, one of the twelve apostles, despite all that he heard and saw, would betray Jesus and hand him over to his enemies. As a result, many have tried to somehow get into the mind of Judas in order to understand his thinking and motives. I remember watching Franco Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth* where Judas was portrayed as being politically motivated - a Zealot who had good intentions and only wanted to force Jesus' hand to take steps to overthrow the Roman empire and establish a kingdom on earth. In the movie, the observer was manipulated to almost feel a certain sympathy for Judas as if he was just trying to help the Lord, albeit in ignorance.

The New Testament Scripture actually gives us the reason. Judas was a thief. Six days before the Passover Jesus comes to Bethany, and Mary takes some expensive ointment and anoints the feet of Jesus and wipes his feet with her hair. John says that Judas Iscariot, "who was about to betray him," was not too happy about this and questions why she didn't sell it and give the money to the poor. John then adds by the Holy Spirit, "He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it (John 12:4-6)."

It is no wonder then that Judas would have betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Perhaps Judas did not expect Jesus to allow his enemies to take him into their custody. This would make sense because Judas and the other disciples could not bring themselves to believe that something bad would really happen to Jesus in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Judas betrays the Lord. And, when he realizes the magnitude of what he has done, he becomes full of worldly sorrow, takes the money back to the religious leaders, and says: "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said to him, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, Judas departed, and went and hanged himself.

Now, before Judas gets to this point, Jesus says to him in the garden: "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" In our society, men do not greet one another with a kiss on the cheek. We are much more accustomed to a handshake and, at most, a quick half-hug. If Judas were living in our society, he might have said, "Seize the one with whom I shake hands and give a quick half-hug." The bottom line was that Judas was covering his duplicity. Can you imagine someone shaking your hand and knifing you in the back at the same time? But, Jesus is able to see through it all, and he asks Judas a question that is designed to lead him from death to life!

By asking the question, Jesus was reaching out to Judas and was forcing him to come to an understanding of the seriousness of what he was doing. He was applying law to Judas in order to bring him to senses. Even at that dramatic and decisive moment, Jesus was reaching out to his disciple with a heartfelt call to repentance and faithfulness. In fact, this was the second time that Jesus does this. You will recall that at the Passover meal, he clearly tells Judas that he is the one who is about to betray the Son of

Man. Still, Judas embraces Satan and is along for the ride. And, in typical fashion, when Satan is done with him, he does what he does best. Satan's accusations of sin are overwhelming and Judas is crushed. Jesus says, "the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born (Matthew 26:24)."

I find it really sobering that while Judas's betrayal of Jesus sets the events in motion that lead to his crucifixion, it was God's saving plan that would be ultimately carried out. I find it stunning that Jesus would go to the cross and even suffer for all the sins of Judas, as well as for those who had crucified him. The truth is that all of our sins put him there. We put him on the cross. And he dies there for us. There is forgiveness to be received, but Judas would have none of it. He was so engrossed in his sinful desires, so curved in on himself, completely overwhelmed with the accusations of Satan, that he did not believe that there was forgiveness for him. But Isaiah writes of the Savior, "the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all (Is. 53:6)."

Again, Jesus asked Judas: "Would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" It was a question designed to lead Judas from death to life. It continues to be a question that is even asked of us in order that we may search our hearts. You might remember that at the beginning of the sermon I stated that "it is hard to think that Judas, one of the twelve apostles, despite all that he heard and saw, would betray Jesus and hand him over to his enemies. As a result, many have tried to somehow get into the mind of Judas in order to understand his thinking and motives." Now I ask you, is it really that hard to understand when you take the question that Jesus asked Judas and turn it on yourself? So, would you? **Would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?**

I would suggest to you that it is quite possible that we have been more like Judas than we would ever care to admit. Think of it for a moment. When we realize that Judas did what he did because he loved money, how often do we let our sinful desires get in the way of our relationship with Christ? How many times have we been so curved in toward ourselves that we have decided to do evil instead of good because we are burning for what we wanted instead of what God wants? And, how many times have we knowingly pursued our sinful desires to the point that after getting what we wanted we have to hear the accusations of Satan? How many times have we felt our sins to such an extent that we really wonder if God can forgive us and ease our guilty consciences? Are there not those times when our sins lead us to such a despair that we just want to hide and never be seen again? Let's ask the question another time: **Would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?**

Indeed! We can pretend to be pious Christians by kissing Jesus on the cheek while in the next moment we are doing whatever we want and throwing him off to the side. It really doesn't matter if it's thirty pieces of silver or something else, it is all a betrayal of Jesus and all that he gives. Therefore, when Jesus asks us the same question that he asked Judas, he is asking the question not to destroy us, but to bring us from death to life. He is asking the question that we might repent of our sins and be faithful to him. In all of our moments where we think that we might have betrayed Jesus, we have got to remember that he went to the cross to suffer and die for all sins in order that we might be forgiven. And, there is forgiveness there for each of us to receive - if only, we receive it in Godly sorrow looking only to Christ.

In the case of Peter, who denied Jesus three times, it wasn't about thirty pieces of silver. Rather, it was about saving his own skin when he was confronted with being a Galilean and a disciple of Jesus Christ. After he saw Jesus and the rooster crowed, after the accusations hit and his conscience pronounced the verdict of "guilty!" we are told that Peter wept bitterly. It was a rough time for him.

The difference between the sorrow of Peter versus Judas was that Peter's sorrow was godly and he was looking to the Lord for forgiveness. It got him through some rough days. And, lest we forget, there is the moment where Jesus restores Peter after his resurrection from the dead. In the same way, despite the many betrayals that we might be able to list this morning in our own lives, let us come to the Savior who died for our sins. Let us remember the words of Peter that he spoke to those who killed the author of life. He said, "Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago (Acts 3:19-21)."

Would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss? Jesus' question searches our hearts and lives this morning, and we all know that there have been times that we have given the kiss and stabbed him in the back. But, the question is to invite us to repentance and renewed faithfulness. Paul writes, "He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised (2 Cor. 5:15)." He invites us and empowers us to give him the kiss of faith and discipleship, the kiss of commitment to confess him as Savior and Lord, the kiss of struggling with sin and overcoming in his grace, the happy kiss of walking with him forever! May he grant us strength to never betray him again! And if we do, may he bring us to Godly sorrow and the one who speaks in our defense - Jesus Christ, the righteous one.

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott