

Betrayal and Reconciliation

(John 18:1-19)

Betrayal is one of the most difficult emotions to experience. Betrayal comes in many forms, some of which come from those closest to us. Betrayal is hard to overcome. It takes time, prayer, and patience to forgive those who betray us. Often the closer we are to a person who has betrayed us, the more difficult the recovery.

Reading of Judas' betrayal of Jesus has always been a challenge for me. What catches my attention is that Jesus knew it was coming. He had already called it. It is part of a necessary plan, as Jesus knows his fate is the Cross.

However, Judas' betrayal isn't the only one Jesus faces. Peter denies knowing Jesus, a betrayal in itself. Peter was one of the most faithful disciples; many believe he was Jesus' favorite. Yet after Jesus is taken away, Peter denies knowing Jesus not just once, but three times. By this time, Peter has chosen violence in

Betrayal and Reconciliation

page 2 of 8

attempting to prevent Jesus' arrest by cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant, and, as we saw yesterday, Peter didn't want Jesus to wash his feet. Throughout the last days of Jesus' earthly life, Peter fails him in so many ways.

Peter and Judas both regret their betrayal of Jesus. But Peter goes on to continue as a faithful follower, introducing Christ to many throughout his life. His words of love and service to Christ continue to this day. The role of Peter shows us that the love of Christ overcomes any of our faults and failures. At times we get it right, and at other times we fail. In every moment, we rely on the grace of God.

In Matthew 27:1-26, Matthew has presented us with two men who betrayed Jesus: Judas, who handed Jesus over; and Peter, who denied him. Both are deeply sorrowful. One commits suicide, while the other is restored. What is the difference? Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 7:10, "**Godly sorrow** brings repentance

Betrayal and Reconciliation

page 3 of 8

that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but **worldly sorrow** brings death. **Godly sorrow** does not drive you to the hangman's noose but to the Savior and the Cross, the place of repentance and forgiveness.

Paul continues in 2 Corinthians 5:16-21, "From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view." In contrast to the way human merit is typically measured, Paul invites the church to consider a deeper criterion, namely, the orientation of one's heart to God.

We might explore this contrast by making connections with contemporary culture. Consider the ways that the world of advertising and marketing defines success and beauty. Or the preferential treatment our culture offers the powerful at the expense of the poor, outcast, and marginalized. Or our intrinsic infatuation with celebrities.

Betrayal and Reconciliation

page 4 of 8

Paul says that from now on, our focus should be on the transformation that is possible through the work of Jesus Christ. “Everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” What might life be like for us to shift away from the more superficial standards of merit, and toward a celebration of resurrection in those who have discovered new life, hope, and possibility? Might the former addict celebrating 25 years of sobriety be celebrated more than the actor making 25 million dollars per film? Might the former hedge-fund manager who walked away from a seven-figure salary to take the helm of a nonprofit be as praised as the reality television star? Might the teacher who works overtime to tutor at-risk youth be as notable as the Washington, DC, power broker?

For Paul, this is what transformation from “old” to “new” looks like: a radical alteration of priorities and

perspectives to be more in line with the way and will of

Betrayal and Reconciliation

page 5 of 8

God—a **reconciliation** of our hearts and minds with the heart and mind of God.

All of this is possible because of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. God no longer counts our trespasses against us and now entrusts us with the task of calling others to **reconciliation** with God.

We are in Paul's terminology, "ambassadors for Christ," who bear witness to the redemptive, transformative possibilities in others by sharing what God has done and is doing in ourselves.

What might it mean to be this kind of ambassador? Let us consider what modern-day ambassadors do, even in the context of the modern political world. An ambassador is different from the national leader who governs the country, but is entrusted with the full authority to speak and act on its behalf. An ambassador for Jesus, then, is not to be equated

with God, but does have the capability to represent God's heart and embody God's love before others.

An

Betrayal and Reconciliation
6 of 8

page

ambassador chooses to live in a foreign country, just as Christians are called to live as “aliens and strangers” in a world that feels the opposite of the message of Jesus. And an ambassador builds relationships with foreign leaders and citizens, all for forging new understandings and pathways to peace. As ambassadors, we are called to be in relationship with others, so that the love of God might be fully revealed in us, shared with others, and set the foundation for peace. We are **reconciled** to God, and are called to **reconcile** others to God in Christ. That is the ministry of **reconciliation**.

So, what are the lessons we can learn from these two Scripture readings from John and 2 Corinthians?

From John we learned about Jesus' arrest, Peter's actions, and the initial trial, emphasizing Jesus' divine control over his passion, the necessity of sacrificial

Betrayal and Reconciliation

page 7 of 8

love, and the facility of human courage. The key lessons include trusting in God's sovereign plan even during crises, and the importance on divine strength rather than human, worldly power. In summary, this Scripture from John challenges believers to trust in God's sovereign control over seemingly chaotic situations and to follow Jesus' example of humble obedience rather than reacting with fear and violence.

The Scripture from 2 Corinthians teaches that being "in Christ" makes believers new creations with a transformed perspective, no longer viewing people worldly. It highlights God's **reconciliation** of the world, making believers ambassadors who share this message, while emphasizing the great

exchange where Jesus took on sin to grant us righteousness.

Please bow your heads as I pray.

Betrayal and Reconciliation

page 8 of 8

Heavenly Father, we want to learn the spiritual lessons that you would teach us and to live in willing obedience and utter dependence upon you. May we never fear the cup of difficult circumstances in our lives, but live as you intended, learning obedience by the things that we may suffer so that in all things, we may say: “Thy will, not mine, be done.”

Thank you for the ministry of **reconciliation** and for not counting my trespasses against us. As we walk as ambassadors for your kingdom, we ask for the strength and wisdom to share your message of peace in a broken world.