

MATTHEW 26 : 46***“RISE, LET US BE GOING. SEE, MY BETRAYER IS AT HAND.”***

It would not be very enjoyable to get slapped in the face or stabbed in the back—either physically or figuratively. It would be even less enjoyable to go forward knowing that it's going happen.

Jesus knew. There in the Garden of Gethsemane, He had prayed while the disciples fell asleep, “My Father, if it is possible take this cup from Me, yet not as I will, but as You will.” Then the Father sent angels to minister to Him. Jesus knew. Earlier that very evening at the Passover meal He had pointed out Judas as the betrayer. He knew.

The events that would happen that Thursday night and then Friday would not happen because Jesus got backed into a corner and couldn't get out. He had already told His disciples earlier, “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be completed. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and suffer and spit upon. They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day, He will rise again.” Jesus knew what would happen. Jesus knew why this would happen. “I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” He had come to be punished for the world's sins. He had come to be punished for you—for me. It's as if you are cowering in a corner, waiting to get the punishment you have coming. Then Jesus enters and, knowing full well what it meant for Him, willingly goes to the one with the rod or whip or noose, I'll take it all for him, for her. He knows and He knew. And He went forward in the Garden to meet it! He loves and rescues you—who are nothing and in big trouble. Such a Savior! During Lent think how He says *Rise, let us be going*. He knew.

Notice the word “*us*.” The disciples were to go along—at least for a while. They would not suffer what He suffered. They would not help pay for the sins of the world. Even “saints” in heaven are not co-Saviors with Jesus. Their abundance of “good” could not even help themselves, to say nothing of helping you, as if certificates in their name were sitting in a box for you to use to get forgiveness. The disciples went along, not to help, but to be identified with Jesus. They would suffer the public stigma of being His students and followers. Even three days later—Easter Sunday—they were still hiding behind locked doors for fear of the Jewish leaders. Later Paul spoke of the sufferings endured by all who preach Christ, and really all who bear His name—tribulation, distress, dishonor, sorrow, suffering, considered as poor and having nothing yet making many rich and possessing all things!” (2 Corinthians 6:1-10). Forget about any reproach you may suffer. In Him you have everything.

Jesus said, *Arise, let us be going. My betrayer is at hand*. “It's time.” The time for His deep suffering and degradation to redeem, to pay the ransom for sinners, was about to begin. This time itself was no accident. All was set by the Father's will for His death, as well as it had been for His birth. Do you remember a verse we hear at Christmas? “When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:4-5). When the time was just right God sent His Son, and when the time was just right His Son was sacrificed for our sins. Jesus spoke similar words to His mother Mary at the wedding at Cana. She was urging Him to step forward and do something about the lack of wine. He answered, “My time is not yet come.” He would act, but when the time was just right. The same is true for you. When the time was just right, God brought you to birth through your parents, brought you to faith through His Word, lifts you up out of every difficulty in this life, and will take you from life through death to His side—when the time is just right. He steers all things for the good of His children. He knows the time that is just right for your eternal salvation.

This was the time for Jesus to take the punishment for us. He would go forward to meet His betrayer. What is a betrayer? A traitor. It is one who has been loyal, has been a friend and supporter, or at least has given that appearance, but then turns against you to your harm and to his glory. Cain betrayed Abel his brother. When they were out in the field together, Cain rose up and killed Abel. Jacob betrayed his brother Esau and also his father Jacob. He pretended to be Esau and got the blessing that Jacob and Esau both intended to go to Esau. Absalom betrayed his father King David. He won people away from David to his side, deposed his father, and sought to kill him. It all came from Satan. It was Satan who had betrayed Eve. He pretended to be Eve's friend (and Adam's), sold her (them) on the idea of eating the forbidden fruit. He deceived then, and then received them into the dungeon of separation from God. Traitor.

Being a traitor against that which is good is sad. Satan makes being a traitor look so good and so desirable! Think of Judas his false glory! Judas got money! Also, perhaps Judas thought this was an opportunity to force Jesus to step out and establish His kingdom against the forces opposing him—the he was doing Jesus a favor! Likewise Judas was given power!—a few moments of glory! Imagine Judas that night—IN CHARGE!—leading the enemies who were eagerly following, leading a “great armed multitude,” as Matthew says. “This way boys!” Judas did not understand that the will of God in establishing His Kingdom in men’s hearts is not accomplished by force, or power, or cunning, or cleverness.

Judas even arranged a “secret” sign with the enemies. Judas, with the adrenaline pumping I’m sure,, stepped forward to give Jesus a kiss, “Greetings Rabbi.” Likely you are familiar with the adrenaline rush of being about to do something wrong—especially the first time? Judas had his moment of glory. The glow soon faded and by the next morning it filled his heart with regret. Unwilling to seek the Father’s forgiveness, Judas hanged himself.

This was sad for Jesus too. In the Garden Jesus said, “Friend, why have you come?” Jesus was still calling him “Friend,” still reaching out to his wayward heart. Have you understand the sadness of being betrayed? Someone you thought was your friend, ridiculed you in front of others, or did you dirt in some dealings. It’s sad. To suffer an offense is bad enough, but when it was/is from your friend, your neighbor, your family member! Psalm 41:9 written by King David speaks of Jesus, oppressed by His enemies and even a close friend! “Even My own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate My bread, has lifted up his heel against Me” (Psalm 41:9). Judas was someone close to Jesus, who turned against Jesus. All to Judas’ own great harm. There was/is sadness in Jesus’ heart for every rejector, for “[The Lord] is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Do you betray Jesus? Not like Judas, I’m sure. But when you think about it, haven’t you at times betrayed Jesus? You have spent many years with Jesus. You are today at St. Luke’s Evangelical Lutheran Church. Let’s take that apart. **A.** “St, Luke’s ” It’s Luke who wrote the Gospel of Luke with its memorable verses: “Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11). “The tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other” (Luke 18:13-14). “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). “[The repentant thief on the cross] said to Jesus, Lord remember me when you come into Your Kingdom. And Jesus said to him, Assuredly I say to you, Today you shall be with Me in paradise!” (Luke 23:42-43). You have been associated with this great message from the Gospel of Luke, yet have you considered it “light stuff?” Fluff? “Take it or leave it?” **B.** “Evangelical”” Evangelical means “preaching the Gospel—which is, the “Good News” of salvation in Christ. “I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ” (Romans 1:16). Yet how quickly the Gospel is drowned out at Christmas time, Easter time, and everywhere in between. **C.** “Lutheran” Martin Luther of the 1500’s (not Martin Luther King of the 1900’s!) knew from the Bible and adamantly taught that forgiveness and heaven are ours only by God’s gift—His grace—through His Son. “A man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28). Sin cannot be gotten rid of by by hiding it, by working around it so as to take it out of the main focus, by denying it, by attempting to make amends for it. Faith in Christ is the only way to deal with sin’s punishment. Forgiveness in Jesus! Do not betray Him and His gift, to make yourself popular and acceptable to others. Example: Leading or allowing them to think, as long as they “believe in God”—whatever or whoever that might be—they will be OK. Any Christ-less god is not God! Maybe such a scene it brings a moment of glory, or acceptance, or prominence to you--play down Jesus and just say “Believe in God,”—but to what end? “Greetings Master” and betray Him?

Now what? Jesus has never, and will never, betray you. Go to Him for forgiveness. Go back to Him 1000 times over. Does that sound like a lot? That’s only three years if we are talking once a day. Go back to Him 10,000 times—a 100,000 times—and seek His pardon. Through the the Father’s love and the Son’s blood, you go home justified and pardoned! “He who comes to me, I will in no wise cast out!”(John 6:37), Jesus said. Jesus is not a Betrayer! He will not betray you. You are secure in His hands! “Thank you, Lord, for taking it all, for me.”

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach--