

# Betrayed, Abandoned and Denied

Mark 14:43-49; 66-72 preached March 15, 2009 by Dr. Dwight Kilbourne

Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. *Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard."* So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. Then they laid hands on him and arrested him. But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to them, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled." All of them deserted him and fled. (Mark 14:43-50)

While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, "You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth." But he denied it, saying, "I do not know or understand what you are talking about." And he went out into the forecourt. Then the cock crowed. And the servant-girl, on seeing him, began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." But again he denied it. Then after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean." But he began to curse, and he swore an oath, "I do not know this man you are talking about." At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, "Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept.

**Introduction.** Betrayed, abandoned and denied – these three words have the sound of hurt in them. If you have ever been a victim of one or all of them, you know something of the pain. Nearly all of us at some point in life know from experience the hurt that comes when we experience a measure of these. How

should we feel when these come? How should we react?

In the passion story of Jesus, we discover that he experienced all three of these in a matter of a few hours. He was betrayed, abandoned and denied by those who were among his friends and followers. Let's look at the story of what happened and discover what Jesus did.

**Betrayed.** One of the darkest characters of the passion story of Jesus is Judas. Think of this, "Do you know anyone whose parents named them 'Judas'?" Occasionally, there might be one who assumes a dark image such as "Judas Priest," a rock group out of the 1970's but it is extremely rare to find one carrying the name 'Judas.'

The disdain for Judas is seen vividly portrayed in Dante's, *The Divine Comedy*. In Hell, Judas is assigned his place among the traitors at the 9<sup>th</sup> and innermost location of solid ice because it is so far removed from God's love. There no one can move or speak. Judas is being chewed by Satan head first.

In the gospel story, Judas goes to the high priest with an offer. He seems to understand there is hostility from chief religious leaders toward Jesus. Judas offers to hand Jesus over to them at an appropriate time for a fee. They offer Judas 30 pieces of silver to deliver this deed.

Judas plotted a time when he would do the deed. During the week of Passover, Jesus and the disciples would go to an olive grove where they would camp for the evening. Away from the crowds, in a quiet and deserted place, Judas knew he could deliver. So during the Seder meal with Jesus and the disciples, Judas left a bit early. He went to the priests and led a squad of the temple police to Jesus. With a kiss, Judas identified Jesus and delivered him into their hands.

Many have speculated about why Judas did this. Was it greed? Was he angry with Jesus? Was it his divine appointment to fulfill scripture? Did he have a political motive? Was he

possessed by the Devil? While the scripture may hint at an answer, it does not tell us clearly. In a premeditated act of volition, he betrayed Jesus.

There are few acts that cause deeper pain than betrayal by one who is trusted. There have been a few of times in ministry when I have felt the pain of "betrayal." These came when a couple of people I considered friends and with whom I had worked in ministry in the church, turned against me and went on the offensive attacking me personally. The pain of those arrows sank deep within the soul.

In the present economic turmoil, there are many who have experienced what they considered to be betrayal. There have been good and faithful employees who have lost their jobs in the present crisis. Often those lay-off notices carry the feel and pain of betrayal. For an investment of hard work and faithfulness, a pink slip feels like "Judas' kiss."

This present economic turmoil has uncovered business ventures of traitors. The most notorious is Bernie Madoff, who through a ponzi scheme processed more than \$50 billion dollars, providing him with a lavish lifestyle. He promised great returns on Hedge fund investments, yet never invested any of the monies he received. Had it not been for a \$7 billion return on investment requests, he may not have been caught for some time. Many charities invested through his "company." Those who were a part of it, feel as though they have been betrayed.

How do we react when we feel betrayed?

**Abandoned.** The second scene of this narrative for Jesus was being abandoned by his friends and disciples. Following the Passover meal, Jesus and his disciples retreated to the olive grove. When Judas arrived and betrayed Jesus, it seems Jesus' followers were in panic. When Jesus was arrested, there was an initial struggle when Peter drew a sword and cut off a policeman's ear. That ended up being the measure of the resistance. After that, Mark tells us "they deserted him."

Unlike Judas, the others' act was not premeditated. They seemed to act impulsively. Perhaps they were fearful for their own well-being. Perhaps they could not comprehend what was happening to their teacher and hero. "How could he give in so easily?"

Two weeks ago, an incident touched many of our hearts when a month-old baby boy was found at a church in Marion County. This child had been abandoned. Few, if any of us could imagine doing such a thing to an innocent infant. Can you imagine what this child will feel when he is old enough to understand and to know he was abandoned?

A few here in our congregation know the enormous pain of being abandoned by a spouse or parent. Whether the deserter was motivated by selfishness, broke under stress or something else stimulated the flight, the pain of those abandoned is severe. It is difficult to imagine what emotions would be present in such a situation. Often those who lose a loved one to death, go through a time of feeling as those they have been abandoned when they are alone. I can hardly think of this without remembering Jesus' words on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

How are we to react when we feel as though we have been abandoned?

### **Denied.**

The third scene in this trilogy is Peter's denial. Peter was the out-front, outspoken leader of the pack. He seemed to exude confidence and courage. It turned out that he was somewhat more courageous than the other disciples. After the disciples had fled, Peter followed the arresting delegation to the high priest's home where Jesus was interrogated. Peter stood outside in the courtyard while Jesus was questioned.

According to the gospel stories, three persons suggested that Peter had been with Jesus and was a follower. Each gave the apostle an opportunity to stand and be a martyr. But with each question, Peter denied knowing and having any association with Jesus. Peter denied Jesus. Peter was strong to a point but acted impulsively when put under serious scrutiny.

Do you have someone who you believe you could count on if all others forsake you? Have you ever been denied by someone whom you had trusted?

In our present economic crisis, some have felt the pain and agony of being denied assistance. Stretched to the maximum, some have sought help from creditors but have not been given help. Businesses that have been consistent customers of lenders have been denied resources that could make or break a deal or the business. These actions can sink deep into the soul of even the most seasoned business person.

Betrayal, abandonment and denial are experiences we can have on a personal, familial and corporate level. Nearly always, these experiences cut deep into our hearts and soul. How are we to face these? Let's look at Jesus and what he did. I want to provide you with 4-P's you can remember.

**Prepare.** Jesus was prepared for these. In the gospels, we find a clear indication that Jesus expected them. During the supper, he told them that one of the disciples would betray him (Mark 14:18-21). After the supper, he warned them they would desert him (27). When Peter spoke boldly, Jesus informed him he would deny his master three times before the cock crowed twice (28-31).

How did Jesus know: Was it a divine revelation? Did he know based on his analysis of the disciples' character and events he believed was ahead? Did his reading of the scripture inform him what would take place? I do not know. I just know he was prepared.

In life, it is important to understand this simple fact: "Life is not fair." A few years ago, it was expressed in a way on stickers I cannot quote from a pulpit. It was two words with the second being "happens." I do not know that that is good theology but it conveys truth.

We must be tuned in to know that tough times do come. We are warned of this in scripture. If we are astute, we often can sense their coming. Think, how many of you are surprised by the recent recession? With the high level of people and business being leveraged, it seemed inevitable.

Awareness of the possibility and likelihood of these things, help us to make it through.

**Prayer.** Jesus most powerful resource in the midst of his crisis was prayer. In the Garden, Jesus spent a significant amount of time in prayer. Luke records that Jesus' intensity in prayer and the stress of the moment was so severe that his sweat was as drops of blood. That seems to indicate that some serious praying was going on.

The greatest resource God has given us is prayer. Prayer can aid us in dealing with our times of being betrayed, abandoned and denied. Sometimes, prayer gives us what seems to be our only avenue of sharing with another. In our prayers, we can be brutally honest with God and seek his care. (In a few weeks on Wednesday evening, I will be teaching a lesson on praying in this manner.) One of the things that strengthened this experience for Jesus was his routine practice of prayer. Often through these experiences, we do not feel like praying. But we must pray regardless.

**Purpose.** Through these experiences of betrayal, abandonment and being denied, Jesus remained focused on and determined to fulfill his purpose. As Jesus expressed in his encounter with Zacchaeus, he came to seek and to save the lost. Jesus understood that mission would involve suffering and death. Staying focused on his purpose enable Jesus to make it through these trying experiences.

In the garden while he prayed, we see a glimpse of Jesus as he struggled with that purpose. He prayed, "Father if it is possible, let this cup pass from me, yet not my will but your will be done." Like most human being, he was tempted to give up when the going was extreme but he drew on inner resources and resolved to do what God wanted him to do.

This "P" may be a problem for some because they do not understand their purpose. If you do not know your *raison d'être*, I would encourage you begin the journey of discovery. (If you are interesting in such a journey, let me know and I would be delighted to lead a class in discovery.)

**Pardon.** The final "P" is *pardon*. It becomes Jesus final reactive action following the denial, abandonment and betrayal. Jesus willingly forgives the offenders and acts to bring reconciliation. His desire to forgive them is evident even before they do their deeds. When Jesus warned them they would desert him, he went on to say that after he was raised, he would go before them to Galilee. These are words indicating a renewal of their relationship. It was an invitation to them.

Without a doubt the most powerful story of forgiveness and reconciliation occurred following the resurrection. Peter and a few of disciples went on a fishing excursion. Jesus met them on the shore. There he had this wonderful conversation with Peter asking him if he loved him. In that encounter, Peter was restored and given purpose and mission.

**Invitation.** Few things hurt more than being betrayed, abandoned and/or denied. It is like a hot iron penetrating into the deep recesses of our soul. Unfortunately, most of will encounter a measure of these in our lifetime. We need to lay hold of the 4 "P's" to help us through – preparation, prayer, purpose and pardon.

Perhaps today, you find yourself in a situation where you are suffering the pain of these. I encourage you to find a place of prayer. Perhaps this chancel is a place for you to come. Perhaps it is in a private place. Call out to God with your cares. Perhaps you need council – contact one of the pastors, a friend or counselor.