

February 17, 2008 – Second Sunday of Lent
“Jesus: In Every Way Like Us”
Part 3: “Ever Been Betrayed By Friends?”

Luke 22:46-62 NLT

"Why are you sleeping?" he asked. "Get up and pray. Otherwise temptation will overpower you."

But even as he said this, a mob approached, led by Judas, one of his twelve disciples. Judas walked over to Jesus and greeted him with a kiss. 48 But Jesus said, "Judas, how can you betray me, the Son of Man, with a kiss?"

49 When the other disciples saw what was about to happen, they exclaimed, "Lord, should we fight? We brought the swords!" 50 And one of them slashed at the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear.

51 But Jesus said, "Don't resist anymore." And he touched the place where the man's ear had been and healed him. 52 Then Jesus spoke to the leading priests and captains of the Temple guard and the other leaders who headed the mob. "Am I some dangerous criminal," he asked, "that you have come armed with swords and clubs to arrest me? 53 Why didn't you arrest me in the Temple? I was there every day. But this is your moment, the time when the power of darkness reigns."

54 So they arrested him and led him to the high priest's residence, and Peter was following far behind. 55 The guards lit a fire in the courtyard and sat around it, and Peter joined them there. 56 A servant girl noticed him in the firelight and began staring at him. Finally she said, "This man was one of Jesus' followers!"

57 Peter denied it. "Woman," he said, "I don't even know the man!"

58 After a while someone else looked at him and said, "You must be one of them!"

"No, man, I'm not!" Peter replied.

59 About an hour later someone else insisted, "This must be one of Jesus' disciples because he is a Galilean, too."

60 But Peter said, "Man, I don't know what you are talking about." And as soon as he said these words, the rooster crowed. 61 At that moment the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered that the Lord had said, "Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny me three times." 62 And Peter left the courtyard, crying bitterly.

The premise of our Lenten Series this year is to let you know that Jesus has suffered like you do and worse. Therefore, He not only can sympathize with you, but He comes to your aid to help, by way of the Holy Spirit. Last week Pastor Nick asked the question,

“Ever been tempted?” Jesus was too, and more severely than you ever will. For there was much at stake if Satan could get Jesus to fall into temptation. Today we ask, “Ever Been Betrayed By Friends?” Jesus was too! He was betrayed by not just Judas and Peter, but all of the apostles abandoned Jesus when He was arrested.

While Jesus was praying in a garden at the Mount of Olives He asked His apostles to stay awake and pray also, but they didn't. Then He asked them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray. Otherwise temptation will overpower you." Jesus is warning them to pray because they will soon face the temptation to run away or deny even knowing Jesus.

“The word ‘temptation’ can mean testing or trial. Jesus wanted His disciples to pray for strength to go through the coming ordeal. The disciples were about to see Jesus die. Would they still think he was the Messiah? The disciples would soon face confusion, fear, loneliness, guilt, and the temptation to conclude that they had been deceived.” (from The Life Application Commentary Series copyright (C) 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000 by the Livingstone Corporation. Produced with permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved.)

So, Jesus tells them to pray so that temptation would not overpower them. Jesus no sooner gives that warning when a mob approached, led by Judas, one of his twelve disciples. In other words Jesus was betrayed by one of His closest followers. Ever been betrayed by a close friend. That hurts. And how does Judas betray Him? with a kiss. Judas was at the Last Supper with Jesus and the other apostles. He left early, perhaps so he could tell the religious leaders where to find Jesus. (Matt 26:48-49 NLT) Judas had given them a prearranged signal: "You will know which one to arrest when I go over and give Him the kiss of greeting."

Judas walked over to Jesus and greeted him with a kiss. Jesus said, "Judas, how can you betray me, the Son of Man, with a kiss?" "Is this how you will do it, Judas, with a kiss? Is this going to be your signal? Have I mistreated you, have I been a hard Master, do I deserve this from you? Will you betray Me with a kiss, a sign of friendship? Now a sign of friendship has become as sign of deceit!"

A kiss is still a traditional greeting among men in many cultures. Not so much in the United States. When I was a pastor in Valley Stream, I was at a wedding. I was standing outside the church next to a big, rough man who was with the Nassau County Police Department, and attended the Valley Steam church. My brother-in-law, an Italian from Brooklyn, was invited to this wedding, and when he saw me he hugged me and gave me a kiss on the cheek, before entering the church. The police officer said, "that man just kissed you!" I said, "yeah, who was that? No, I said, I'm just kidding, that was my brother-in-law he greets me like that all the time." The police officer just looked at me and rolled his eyes. A kiss was and is a sign of friendship and affection. Isn't it ironic, then, that Judas would use this gesture as a means of betrayal? The ultimate deceit. It was a hollow gesture from Judas, a hypocritical, and insincere gesture. With that kiss Judas showed himself as the ultimate traitor. Just hours before he had eaten with Jesus. This was the height of disloyalty, hypocrisy, and deceitfulness.

Have you ever been treated that way by a supposed friend? Jesus understands how you feel. He experienced that same pain. But, let me ask you another question; How are you like Judas? Have you ever betrayed Christ?

In a sense, people can still betray Christ when their acts of service or giving (like Judas) are insincere or carried out merely for show. We still betray Christ with a kiss, when we profess to know Him, yet do not do His will, or do not seek to live a holy and godly life. We still betray Him when we do not love His people. (1 John 4:20-21 NLT) "If someone says, 'I love God,' but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we have not seen? And God himself has commanded that we must love not only him but our Christian brothers and sisters, too." We betray Christ when we show disregard for the poor, the outcast, the ones being treated unjustly. (Matt 25:44-45 NIV) "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

Or even when we hate our enemy. (Matt 5:44-45 NLT) "But I say, love your enemies ! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and on the unjust, too."

Let me move on to Peter. When Jesus was arrested Peter followed, but at a safe distance, and three times denied knowing Jesus, denied being one of His followers. Several hours before Peter courageously committed to follow Jesus to prison or even to death. In the garden it was Peter who drew his sword to defend Jesus. It was Peter who slashed at the high priest's servant cutting off his right ear. Now, he repeatedly denies any association with Jesus. Peter denied ever being with Jesus, he denied being a follower (disciple) of Jesus, and denied even knowing Jesus at all.

The guards lit a fire in the courtyard and sat around it, for warmth from the evening chill, and Peter joined them there. A servant girl noticed him in the firelight and began staring at him. Finally she said, "This man was one of Jesus' followers!" Later someone else said the same thing. Perhaps they thought they had seen him with Jesus. An hour after that someone else insisted he must be one of Jesus' disciples because he is a Galilean, too. Because Peter was from Galilee he had a strong accent, his accent gave him away. But all three times Peter denied knowing Jesus. Standing among the soldiers right there in enemy territory, Peter did not necessarily want to be identified with the man on trial for his life. So Peter made a natural and impulsive response - he lied.

When the rooster crowed Jesus looked at Peter either from a window or as He passed him in the court yard. Then Peter remembered Jesus said before the rooster crows you will disown me three times. The look was more than Peter could bear, and he wept bitterly as he left the courtyard.

The good news is that unlike Judas, who did not return to the group, wallowed in self pity and guilt and hung himself, Peter returned and was reinstated by Jesus. Another lesson for us; from Peter, to ask forgiveness and not run off like Judas. That so often happens we are hurt by someone or we hurt someone else and we leave the church rather than deal with the problem. The lesson we learn from Jesus; forgive those who betray us and reinstate or reconcile the friendship.

Ever been let down by a friend? Ever disown a friend? Jesus understands how that feels. Have you ever let Jesus down? Ever deny knowing Him? How are you like Peter? Remember how I said Peter committed himself to die with Jesus? And Peter came to Christ's defense in the garden. Peter was bold in the garden then can't handle a question from a servant girl. Temptation can come at any time and temptation and compromise can be most powerful against us when it comes at less obvious times. Also, Peter was bold when he was with Jesus, but on his own he wasn't. This is a good lesson for us to stay close to Jesus. Stay in prayer, Bible Study, Church fellowship. Anyone is capable of denying the Lord and selling Him out when he or she stands alone.

This experience transformed Peter's life. He would change from an impulsive follower to a repentant and wiser disciple, and finally to the kind of person Christ could use to build his church.

How are we like Judas and Peter?