



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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February 29, 2012

Midweek 1

Sermon Text: [Matthew 26:20-25](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

Sacred Head, Now Wounded: The Wound of Betrayal

The Bernard of Clairvaux's hymn that we just sang a few verses of paints some interesting pictures of Jesus. In the second verse, it talks about sore abuse and scorn paled our Lord's head with anguish and about how crowns were his only thorn, and gory. When is the last time you sang the word *gory*? He uses all these different pictures that paint the picture of Jesus' physical suffering. Yet the anguish, the abuse, the scorn that paled his head with anguish began long before the physical abuse did.

This evening we begin to see him suffer some of that as one of his very own, one of those closest to him, one who broke the bread with him and had this intimate connection with him, wounds him by betraying him. I think there are a number of things as we consider this wound of betrayal that you and I can learn. Hopefully we'll learn something about ourselves, and then we'll learn something about how Jesus reacted when he was betrayed and maybe how we can react when we are also betrayed.

You probably know the story pretty well of how Judas was led astray from believing Jesus was his Savior to focusing on something else and went to the leaders and agreed to sell him for the price of a slave. Thirty pieces of silver is what the mosaic law put as the price of a slave. Then he told them he'd look for an opportune time, and that opportune time came on the evening they celebrated the Passover.

You have to wonder what he was thinking through the whole meal because the Passover meal was really full of ritual. As they celebrated in Jesus' day, it was full of questions that you would ask every year and answers that would be given, psalms that would be sung. It was all focusing on how God delivered his people in his mercy from the bondage of slavery and how he took the blood of a lamb that was put on the doorpost and then the angel of death passed over their homes and the firstborn were spared. It's this whole focus on God's great love and God's great mercy. You have to kind of wonder as they were asking these questions and giving these answers and singing these psalms if Judas had second thoughts. You have to kind of wonder if there was a struggle going on inside of him.

Then you might think, Boy, it would be nice to have an isolated camera on him while they were eating, reclining around the table there, when Jesus all of a sudden, out of the blue, says, "I tell you the truth." Which means "Everyone listen to this. This is important." "I tell you the truth. One of you is going to betray me." Do you think his

spine straightened? Do you think beads of sweat came on his forehead? Does he know? How does he know? What is going to happen next?

Have you ever just stopped and thought about why Jesus said that in the middle of the meal? Why not just say "Hey! You see that guy third from the left down there...Judas? He is going to betray me later." Why say "one of you"? It's kind of an interesting thought, isn't it? I wonder if he brings up the topic and doesn't identify him but leaves it open so that they all do exactly what they did. "Is it me, Lord? Could I do it? Is it within me to turn on you sometime? How could that be?"

I suppose he doesn't point him out so they don't all go tackle him or something like that, I don't know, but if he didn't want them to do that, he could have just not brought the subject up. By bringing it up, you have to think he is trying to teach them something. Also, he's trying to teach us something. I think the lesson that you and I need to learn is hopefully what they learned, although maybe not all that quickly. The lesson is that there isn't a sin that any one of us is incapable of committing.

During this season of Lent, we are encouraged to spend some time taking a look at our own hearts and seeing it for the evilness that it is, the evilness that exists within our sinful nature. When you and I start seeing news reports of someone shooting this or burning that down or doing something else that we think is just horrific and we say to ourselves, "I could never do that," you are kidding yourself. The depravity of all of us is capable of any sin. I wonder if that isn't exactly what Jesus was trying to teach them and trying to teach us. Just one last time to kind of show "You guys so desperately need a Savior because every one of you is capable of this."

That's what Lent is all about. It's all about you and I looking and seeing the sin of our own hearts. It seems like we are pretty good during the rest of the year at pointing out the sin of someone else's heart. Maybe it's really good for us to slow down and look at ourselves and see how we betray our Savior. He tells us do this and we do that. He says be quiet about this and we talk about it. He says don't set your heart on this and that's where our heart goes. We betray him time and time again. We're no different than Judas, but doesn't Satan help us, give us a lift by helping us up on our high horse so we think we could never do that? That's what Satan is good at. When we start thinking we are better than each other, then we don't act in love toward one another. We don't love each other the way God has called us to love because we think we are better than others. There is a little pharisee in all of us.

The other thing I think our Lord was doing when he said "one of you is going to betray me" is that he is reaching out to Judas in love to lead Judas to turn away from his sin. He reaches out to him in love by a very stern preaching of the Law, doesn't he? "The one that dips the bread in the bowl, one of you that is sitting right here that is eating with me and saying you're my friend and we have this connection," that's what eating together in that culture meant, "one of you that says you're so close to me is going to betray me." Yes, that is what all the prophets had written. That's the plan from before time began, but don't think that just because that's God's plan that it doesn't mean that

you aren't sinning. He says, "Woe to the man who betrays me. It would be better for him if he had never been born." If you are Judas sitting there and you hear that and that doesn't dissuade you, your heart has been hardened, right? You've separated yourself from God.

Look at Jesus reach out to him even to the end. Isn't that what we see in our Savior? Isn't that what we see in Jesus as we look at him during Lent, as we listen to the story of his suffering and death as we read through it this year from Mark? As we consider it, we see the depth of his love for us, what he was willing to do for us who have betrayed him. One who was close to him betrayed him. He tells us we are his own child. He made us his children through baptism. We received his body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins and we still turn away from him and betray him. Yet God still loves us just as he loved Judas.

He lived perfectly. He went to the cross. He paid for Judas' sin. He paid for your sin. He paid for my sin. He paid for the sin of everyone in the world. That's the depth of his love. He loves those who he knows will betray him. He loves without expectation of return. He loves by putting others' interests ahead of his own. He doesn't say "I'm holy and perfect. You guys should have been holy and perfect. To hell with all of you!" He gets off the high horse. He comes down as one of us. And he loves us to the point of death. Even death on a cross.

That's love. I know it's not fun to look at the evilness of our own hearts during Lent. I know it's not an enjoyable thing, but it's necessary. Then we just have to sit back in awe, in slack-jawed awe at how much our God loves us. We need that, because just like Jesus was betrayed and he continued to love, that's what he has called you and me to do.

This happened on Maundy Thursday. It's called Maundy Thursday because he gave them the new command, the new mandate. He said "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." ([John 13:34-35](#).) He loved us by loving and dying for even those who would betray him.

As we go through life, we are going to feel that sting of betrayal at times, aren't we? There are people that we love dearly who have done something to hurt us or they turned their back on us and have caused us great pain and anguish. And we have betrayed others. But when someone has betrayed us and caused us that kind of agony, that kind of heartache, that kind of pain and anguish and suffering and scorn and abuse, our sinful nature wants to get even. Our sinful nature wants to pay back hurt for hurt. Then again we are led into sin.

That's why we see Jesus, when he was betrayed, loving and then he urges us to love. The only way you and I can do that, the only way you and I can do that is by being close to our Savior, close to his Word, close to him in the Sacraments, not straying when our sinful nature wants to drag us down the wrong path. And when we do stray,

not to make excuses and not acting better than thou when someone else strays. Instead, loving one another and leading one another back to the cross. And when we have sinned, dragging ourselves back to the cross and seeing the depth of our Savior's love.

Then our faces that at times maybe become paled, not maybe with anguish but with guilt, will have the color returned to them when we see just how much our Savior loves us.