

John 18:1-27**"Betrayal"**

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INTRODUCTION

Recap.

Remember that John has told us that **"the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot ... to betray" Jesus (John 13:2)**. But now that betrayal comes into fruition.

At no point, though, does John want us to imagine that God's plan to save sinners through his Son has is threatened. Instead, he shows us that even at great personal cost, Jesus stayed the course.

Main Idea: Jesus faithfully followed God's saving plan (a) despite unfaithfulness all around him and (b) in order to save unfaithful people.

Betrayal in 3 acts...

1) BETRAYAL IN THE GARDEN**(18:1-11)**

So Jesus and his disciples go to a garden on the side of the Mount of Olives outside of Jerusalem.

As we look at this scene, it's helpful to remember that this is not the first time the Lord has been betrayed in a Garden. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, chose to

believe the lie that God is not for us, but against us. So in an effort of self-protection they sought to make themselves equal with God and effectively neutralize his influence over their lives.

It was this act of rebellion and betrayal that led to humanity’s need for forgiveness *by God* and reconciliation *to God*.

Thankfully, God did not utterly cut humanity off—as would have been his right—but put in place a plan to save a rebellious and unfaithful race. It is THAT PLAN that comes to fruition on this night in the Garden.

It was a common place for them to gather, so Judas knows where to go.

Verse 3 — he had “procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons.”

under the cover of night = they knew what they were doing was out of bounds, but their hands were tied...

[quickly!] ... b/c Jesus had entered into the city and been received as a hero *by the masses*. But *by the religious leaders* he was seen as a threat and possibly a heretic.

He was proclaiming the kingdom of God in a way that didn’t depend on their legalistic rules and strict religiosity.

The masses did not understand him, but they loved him. But the religious leaders had been seeking a way to trap and arrest him ever since he walked into town for the Passover celebration.

At one point they sent their best lawyers to trap him, but they could not. So they needed an inside man—and Judas was there, ready and waiting. His own sinful, selfish ambition had squeezed out his ability to see Jesus for who he was—just as Adam and Eve’s vision of God’s goodness and truth was clouded.

So in the garden that night, they came for Jesus. This was **their great offensive**. It was **their attack move**. They had **laid a trap** and Jesus had walked into it unsuspectingly.

Or that’s what they thought.

It’s interesting, isn’t it, that John goes out of his way in verse 4 to tell us that [4] “Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward...”

He wants us to be very clear that Jesus is NOT caught off guard. He is NOT taken by surprise. He is NOT having to adjust his plan.

THIS. IS. THE. PLAN.

I think this explains so much about vv. 4-9. They thought they had the upper hand to take him down, but Jesus’

own plan was higher and more glorious than their short-sighted and evil scheme.

His was a path of obedience to God the Father—walking faithfully in God’s plan to save unfaithful people by being betrayed by them. So when unfaithful people showed up in that garden with betrayal in their hearts, he was not the one caught off guard—they were.

He steps forward and asks, “Whom do you seek?” [4]. And they say “Jesus of Nazareth” and they want him to cower in fear. But he doesn’t. Instead, he identifies himself with such boldness that they are literally “taken aback”—“[6] When Jesus said to them, ‘I am he,’ they drew back and fell to the ground.”

Not only does he own up to it, but he does using the same phrase he’s used so many times in John’s Gospel—“I AM.” It was bold and vaguely blasphemous.

But he *had* to own up to it. That’s the overwhelming sense you get from Jesus in this passage. Absolute control. Absolute determination to fulfill God’s plan even if it costs him his very life.

We get a glimpse of it in vv.8-9. After he AGAIN identifies himself — “So, if you seek me, let these men go.’ [9] This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: ‘Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one.’”

Even IN THE MIDST OF HIS BETRAYAL his primary concern is faithfulness to the Father that leads to the salvation of his people.

Well, **Peter doesn't get it**. Unlike Jesus, he IS caught off guard, and seeing their tight spot he decides to match force with force. He cuts off this poor guy's ear ... but only to be rebuked by Jesus.

But notice that Jesus' rebuke is **fundamentally theological, not strategic**. He's not saying, 'We're outnumbered.' He's saying, 'This isn't the plan!'

And notice **the source of the plan**—the Father. The cup is a common biblical reference to the wrath of God against sin, and Jesus is telling us that the Father has given that cup to the Son to drink. [\[gospel application\]](#)

The betrayal begins in the garden, but it continues to the religious court.

2) BETRAYAL IN THE RELIGIOUS COURT (18:12-14, 19-24)

As we get into the meat of this next scene, it's helpful to just know a little bit of background.

In vv.12-14 they take him to **Annas**, a former High Priest in the ruling religious body (called the **Sanhedrin**). Annas is also the father-in-law of the current high priest (**Caiaphas** – who had prophesied about this whole thing).

But if we pick up in verse 19 John calls Annas “the high priest.” We know this is still Annas because look at verse 24:

[24] Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

After Annas finishes questioning Jesus, he sends him along the Caiaphas—the high priest. What’s going on here.

Well it’s quite simple, really. The Jews saw the role of High Priest as a lifetime appointment—*kinda like our Supreme Court Justices*. But because the Jews were under Roman rule at the time, the Romans regularly appointed and removed the official High Priest. So Annas wasn’t technically the high priest, but he still held the title among the Jews and still had the influence.

In addition, he was the father or father-in-law of about 5 other high priests during this era. So he had a lot of clout. He may not have been *the* High Priest, but he was certainly *a* high priest.

And he questions Jesus about 2 things [19]: “about his disciples and his teaching.”

Jesus mostly addresses his teaching.

[20] Jesus answered him, “**I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret.** [21] Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said.”

On the first pass it may seem like Jesus is being dodgy here, but he’s not. He’s actually **calling out the hypocrisy around him.**

See, if Annas and the crowd that surrounded him were **violating several Jewish and Roman laws.** They weren’t even really supposed to be having this trial at night, unless there were exceptional circumstances—and Jesus’ case would hardly have made the cut. In addition, those accusing Jesus should not have been able to question him directly. They were supposed to establish the charges against a person by talking to witnesses.

So Jesus responds to the questioning not by indulging their betrayal but by calling them on it!
‘There are all kinds of witnesses! Ask them to establish your charges!’

[22] When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, “Is that how you answer the high priest?” [23] Jesus answered him, “If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?”

Again, Jesus is pointing to their procedure: If he was offensive, there was a way to handle it—file a complaint. File a statement. Testify. But instead they mock and abuse. They deceive and they hide. And the contrast with Jesus could not be clearer.

It’s striking, isn’t it, that John 17 is often referred to as the **“High Priestly Prayer.”** It’s not in the text of Scripture, but it’s unmistakable that Jesus is in that prayer stepping into the role of the high priest, **mediating between God and his people and pleading with God on behalf of his people—that he might lose none of them, and that he might accomplish in them and through them all that the Father has planned.**

And yet here in John 18, the official high priesthood makes a mockery of the office and a mockery of the role. **Jesus is presented to us as God’s true and faithful high priest, committed to the utmost to God’s saving plan. Yet those who bear the title betray both their calling and their Lord** in how they treat Christ.

(APP) There are, of course, several points of application here. The most obvious, simple, and yet profound is this: **betrayal, disappointment, and failure are possible even among religious people and religious leaders.** Even in the church, your leaders will disappoint you. WE will disappoint you. We want to love and serve faithfully, but we will fall short. But Jesus never falls short. He never fails. He is always faithful.

Some of you have been hurt by those in leadership, even in the church. Please know that those hurts can be very real and Jesus still be true. He still loves you.

In this text, he never loses sight of his purpose to live and die for the sins of the world. He will not lose sight of you.

Well, the betrayal begins in the garden, it extends to the religious court, but it doesn't stay "out there." It creeps into Jesus' closest relationships.

3) BETRAYAL IN THE INNER CIRCLE (18:15-18, 25-27)

[15] Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, [16] but Peter stood outside at the door. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door, and brought Peter in.

When Jesus was transported from the Garden to Annas' house, many fell away, but not Peter and this other guy. We are invited to admire them, on some level, for their loyalty, but it won't remain long.

The other disciple (John?), has an "in" with some of the powers that be, so he can get them access.

And as they enter Peter finds himself faced with a shockingly similar situation to Jesus only a few moments earlier.

[17] The servant girl at the door said to Peter, "You also are not one of this man's disciples, are you?"

Except where Jesus was able to step forward with authority and confidence in the good plan of God, Peter shrinks back.— **"I am not."**

It's striking, isn't? The language he uses. Jesus: "I am he." Peter: "I am not." TWO TIMES! Look also at v.25:

[25] Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You also are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not."

And then a third time.

[26] One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" [27] Peter again denied it, and at once a rooster crowed.

There's a lot more we could deal with here, and we'll revisit some of Peter's journey in a few weeks when the Lord graciously restores Peter.

But the point I want to make right now is this: **even the betrayal in Jesus' inner circle is not able to derail the saving love and plan of God that is ACCOMPLISHED BY THAT BETRAYAL.**

And, what's more, his is going to die for those who betrayed him.

It's easy for us to look at Peter and think, "What a dufus!" But, friend, there is good news for you and for me in Peter's failure. Because Jesus died for those who betrayed him. That was Peter. But it is also you and me.

WE are those who have turned our back on a good and loving God in our sin, and HE is the one who made a way by sending a faithful servant, Jesus Christ, to die for our betrayal so we could be brought back to our God.

CONCLUSION

I want to close with 4 simple applications:

- 1) Behold
- 2) Do not be ashamed

Association is a big deal in this text. John goes out of his way TWICE to show us who is associating with whom, and who is not.

[5] ... Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.

[18] Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.

- 3) Be thankful
- 4) Worship