



CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: The Book of Mark

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Overcoming Betrayal

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Awesome worship of an awesome God today. As we continue to trust God with our giving, I'm going to ask you to get your Bibles in your hands. Let's get them open to the gospel of Mark, chapter 14. While you're doing that, I want you to think about something for me. It's probably not something you would naturally want to focus your attention on, but it's something I think will help us move into this message.

When you think of the whole vastness of human history as we know it, what would you say is humanity's most horrific sin? When you think about all of human history, what comes to mind when you think of man's worst sin? Now, don't say that out loud, necessarily, but I'm wondering if maybe the Holocaust came to mind, or some other form of war crimes by evil dictators upon human life.

Maybe you immediately thought of acts of terrorism, school shootings, or other social ills. Maybe something like sex trafficking, abortion, or things like that came to mind. The list could be so long that I'm not even sure we can compose a list like that, because ultimately, all sin is grievous.

After giving it some thought this week, I believe history's most spectacular sin ever committed is the brutal murder of Jesus Christ, the all-powerful, perfectly loving, perfectly holy, infinitely worthy Son of God. In the midst of that murder, we see probably the most deplorable act in the process of the murder, which was the betrayal of Jesus by a close personal friend.

That's where we come today in the gospel of Mark as we're working our way through it verse by verse. We come to that story of Judas. I'm going to let that be the introduction. Let's stand for the reading of God's Word. We'll pick it up in Mark, chapter 14, verse 10.

"Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him." Now, I want you to scoot down to verse 17.

"And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, 'Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.' They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, 'Is it I?' He said to them, 'It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.'"

Now, scoot all the way down to verse 43. We find Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane.

"And immediately, while [Jesus] was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard.' And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, 'Rabbi!' And he kissed him. And they laid hands on him and seized him."

Father in heaven, I pray that you would ready our hearts right now to talk about and understand the brutality of betrayal. God, help us to see how horrific it is that your very Son was betrayed by a kiss. God, I pray, in this room, for those of us who know betrayal all too well, that today would be a day of understanding, comfort, and victory in it.

God, may you give us great hope as we look ahead of betrayal. God, I pray for those who have not yet experienced it, that these words would be embedded in hearts, that someday they might be able to go through betrayal with a sense of hope that you can turn it into something beautiful. We pray this in Christ's name, amen.

Probably, already, for some of you, there's someone in your life you've already thought of, someone whom you thought you knew, only to find out that that person wasn't really who you thought they were. It's possible that that close friend or loved one had intentionally caused you deep pain and sorrow in your life.

For 2,000 years, his name has been synonymous with betrayal. The irony is that Judas comes from the Hebrew name *Judah*, which means God is praised. Don't you think his dear parents had high hopes for their son when they named him that, *God is praised*? It only reminds us, once again, that we can do everything we can to lead our children to know God and love God and yet ultimately, they must make their own choices, right?

Before we talk about overcoming betrayal... I am going to talk about the brutality of it, but I feel like I need to put it in context. The intent of this message is not to dredge up past pain and hurt. The truth is, some of you in this room have been through betrayal and being betrayed. By God's grace, it is in your past and you have been able to move forward. With God's strength, you are. This is not meant to bring back all of that stuff in the past and plop it down in your lap today, by no means.

The context of this is mainly for those who might be very close to this experience of being betrayed in either the recent past, right now in current real time, or perhaps some of us who still have never been betrayed may indeed experience it sometime down the road. What we learn from this passage about Judas, I believe, can give us some real hope and strength. So, that's the context of this, and I pray that's what God will accomplish.

Betrayal is brutal for a lot of obvious reasons. I want to talk about those first, and then we'll talk about overcoming it.

1. *Betrayal is horrific because it often comes from those closest to us.* Judas was in the circle. In verse 10, it says he was one of the Twelve. In verses 17 and 20, we see that he's reclining with Jesus at the table. Some believe Judas is sitting right next to Jesus in that Last Supper scene, so as to not give off any suspicion. For three and a half years, Judas has full access to the Son of God. He walked with him, he talked with him, and he lived with Jesus, sharing everything from meals to miracles. Judas had an open door to the open heart of the Savior of the world.

Spiritually speaking, isn't it sad that sometimes those who betray Jesus are shockingly the ones who look all-in to the rest of us? They're the ones who we couldn't imagine. That professed Christian or follower of Jesus who walks away from Jesus and joins a cult or a false religion... That pastor who declares out of nowhere that Jesus isn't the only way anymore and that the Bible isn't really relevant for our lives anymore...

It's that choir member, Sunday school teacher, Life Group leader, parent, spouse, or college-age kid who tramples the blood of Jesus to pursue an unrepentant, unholy life without God. To most of us, they were the ones who looked all-in. First John, chapter 2, describes it this way. It says, "They were among us, but they weren't of us."

Relationally speaking, this is why betrayal hurts so much. Typically, we didn't see it coming. The shock and surprise can actually be as devastating as the sadness of it. The betrayed person typically trusts the betrayer with a vulnerable and honest trust and love, and the betrayer tends to take full advantage of that. See, betrayal takes your love and your trust and intentionally stomps on it with a wounding force from someone close to you. That's part of the reason why it's so brutal to go through.

2. *Betrayal is conceived in extreme selfishness.* The backdrop to all of this that we just read is that Judas wanted his Messiah, Jesus, to overthrow Rome and to restore Israel's independence. That's what he wanted the Messiah to do, but all he's hearing from Jesus at the time is all of this crucifixion and death talk, and Jesus was acting less like the leader of a rebellion and more like a defeated pacifist.

So, Judas is thinking in his own mind, "This isn't what I signed up for. Jesus, you're not who I want you to be." When his selfish expectations didn't come true, he turns on Jesus. Don't we see that today? Don't we see people coming to Jesus with a Judas-like spirit still?

It's that person who wants a Jesus who will love and accept them but won't judge them. They want a Jesus who will get them to heaven but doesn't put any limitations or expectations on the way they live here on this earth. They want a Jesus who will protect them from all sadness, pain, uncertainty, and even tragedy, but they don't want a Jesus who demands their love and devotion above all else. Their Jesus is nothing more than a personal servant. As soon as Jesus doesn't deliver, their selfish hearts are exposed and they turn from Jesus. We see that, sadly, still today.

Relationally, the person who betrays you has basically said, "You're not what I was expecting. I wanted you to be something else. You're in the way now and you're keeping me from getting what I really want. The reason it hurts so much is because betrayal objectifies you and it makes you feel like you were never more than that person's personal servant, to be used for their selfish desires. Betrayal is brutal because it's conceived in extreme selfishness.

3. *Betrayal is masked in deception and dishonesty.* Outwardly, for three years, Judas had the face of a saint, but inwardly, he had the heart of a deceiver. In verse 10, it says he **"...went to the chief priests in order to betray him..."** This was no accident. This wasn't some spontaneous slip-up. This wasn't an elaborate entrapment by the priests. It was premeditated by Judas.

In verse 19, we read that the disciples were sorrowful when Jesus said, "One of you is going to betray me." They were saddened and they said, "Jesus, is it me? Is it me?" We can assume that Judas chimed right in with them, all the while knowing it was him. "Jesus, is it me?" He had already put the plot and plan into motion. It was already going.

In verses 43-46, we read this horrible scene where Judas betrays the Son of God with a kiss. Listen, church. Betrayal is perverse in that way, isn't it? That's not what a kiss is for. Judas used phony affection to pull off his plan. The Bible says a lot about these types of deceivers and betrayers in James, chapter 1, verse 26. It says they have no filter on their tongue. In Titus 1, verse 10, we're told that they're empty talkers. Nothing they say is trustworthy.

Relationally, what makes betrayal so brutal is that everything leading up to it appears to have been a big lie. In a perverted way, the betrayer preys on trust and affection. They lie to you and often they lie about you. It's brutal in every regard.

4. *Betrayal is often motivated by greed.* Now, it's not the only motivation, but it's a big one. We see right here and from the other gospels that Judas oversaw the money for Jesus and the disciples as they traveled and ministered from city to city, and the other gospel writers tell us Judas was stealing from the money. They reveal that later in their gospel writing.

In verse 11, it says, **"And when they heard [that Judas wanted to betray Jesus], they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him."** The other gospel writers give us the detail that it was 30 pieces of silver. The terrible part about the 30 pieces of silver detail is that even in that day that wasn't worth all that much.

In fact, they calculate that in today's currency, those exact silver pieces they were talking about in the Gospels are worth about \$200-\$600, depending on the value of silver at the moment. In

Judas' day, that would have been worth anywhere from one day's wages to five days' at the most. Wouldn't it be sad to know how many people spit on the cross of Jesus Christ and are in hell because the pursuit of money was more important to them than their own souls?

That fits perfectly with what Jesus says in Matthew, chapter 6, doesn't it? Jesus says, "**No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.**" Relationally, being betrayed is horrific enough, but when the betrayer does everything they can to benefit financially from it, it makes what you thought was a trusted and priceless relationship into something as cheap as money. No wonder it is so gruesome to our emotions.

5. *Betrayal will have serious consequences for the betrayer.* I've lived long enough now where I've seen that the natural law of returns on betraying people seems to eventually bring more harm on the betrayer than they ever thought imaginable. If you look at verse 21, Jesus says, "**For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.**" You get the sense that Judas committed the most despicable sin, and he would be accountable for it.

Of course, we know that not too long after this, Judas commits suicide. I'm not saying every betrayer will always experience personal disaster in their lives, but disaster is certain. In the book of Isaiah, God speaks through the prophet Isaiah in chapter 29, and here's what he says to the prophet.

"Destruction is certain for those who try to hide their plans from the Lord, who try to keep him in the dark concerning what they do. 'The Lord didn't see us,' you say to yourselves. 'He doesn't know what is going on.' How stupid can you be? For the ruthless will come to nothing, and those who tell lies to tear down the innocent will be no more and shall be cut off."

Here's what we know. Jesus gets it. He gets the hurt and pain of it. No one in the universe knows betrayal like Jesus. He's able to sympathize with us like no one else in the world, and so we can bring that hurt and pain to Jesus every single day if necessary, because he never runs out of compassion for the betrayed.

How do we overcome it? What are some practical handles we can grab hold of? Again, there's no way I can counsel every betrayal circumstance and situation from this pulpit. There are just way too many different kinds and things that happen, but I think what I'm about to share with you can absolutely continue healing, if you're on that path, or begin healing, if you're not yet.

1. *You'll need to name it.* James MacDonald reminds us that more than once in Scripture, God gave new names to people when important things happened in their lives. He renamed them so they'd see themselves the way God sees them. Do you remember Abram? God named him Abraham. Do you remember Jacob? God renamed him Israel. Remember Saul? God renamed him Paul. Very important events in their lives took place, and God, from that moment on, wanted them to see themselves the way he sees them, not the way they or the world sees them.

MacDonald suggests, for instance, that maybe you could do the same in your own life. Instead of calling it my bankruptcy, maybe you name it my new value system. Instead of calling it, "my cancer," maybe you call it, "my every day counts now." Instead of, "my betrayal," think of it as, "when my eyes were opened." He says it so brilliantly that I could not improve on it and, therefore, give him full credit. He said, "Don't call it what the sin did; call it what the grace did." Overcoming betrayal, I think, includes that important step of naming it.

2. *You'll also need to grieve it.* Christian faith doesn't require you to minimize what you've lost or how long it went on. Possibly, you did your best. Possibly, you tried your hardest. You gave your most and it still didn't turn out the way you had hoped. Grieving and tears are God's gifts that lessen and help heal the pain. Grieving serves us well unless we grieve like those with no hope, unless we let grieving rule over us indefinitely. When that happens, unending grief has a sneaky way of turning into things like despair, bitterness, or self-pity.

Psychiatrists have tried to turn grief into a science. We've all heard about the stages of grief. I would just say to you, don't worry about the stages of grief. Don't worry about the order of them. Don't even try to figure out, necessarily, where you are in that scientific approach to grieving. Just grieve.

Scripture says there is a time to weep and a time to laugh. There's a time to mourn and a time to dance. Does anybody remember where that is in the Bible? What book? Ecclesiastes, correct. My personal favorite in that list Solomon is making as he says there is "**...a time to kill, and a time to heal...**" I think there's a good relationship there. I'm probably not biblically interpreting that correctly in my own head, but I'm glad it's there, just in case. Amen? That's from the New Jersey International Version of the Bible, right there. I have it on my shelf. You can borrow it.

I think part of what Solomon is saying is that grieving has an expiration date to it. There comes a time when we allow ourselves to put grief in the rear-view mirror, where it's not present-tense any more. I'm not saying you just wake up one day, snap your fingers, and say, "Okay. I'm not going to grieve anymore." I'm not talking about that, but it may be that for some of you right now, it may be time to take off your grieving shoes and maybe just start looking for your dancing shoes once again, metaphorically speaking.

The truth is if you don't grieve it, you won't leave it. Trust me. If you don't want it crouching at your door anymore, you're going to need to leave it. I'm not talking about some artificial form of self-hypnosis. I'm not talking about pretending it didn't happen or that it doesn't hurt. I'm not saying any of that. Ultimately, what I believe God wants us to learn or remember today is that there is a way to leaving it with Jesus, the one who truly understands.

Romans, chapter 12, is probably the greatest place in Scripture that warns us not to be overcome by evil and fall into the traps of vengeance and bitterness. The Bible knows our natural inclination. It gives us the recipe that guarantees that we won't let our betrayal overcome us and make us so vengeful and bitter that we can't get out of it.

So, I want us to look at it for ourselves, if you'll turn to Romans 12. Let me warn you. If you are in the midst of betrayal at some place along the path, what we're about to read does not and will not seem intuitive. In fact, I will say to you that you will not like what we're about to read. The section starts out in Romans 12, verse 9.

"Let love be genuine. Abhor [hate] what is evil; hold fast to what is good." There is a calling on our lives to love the genuine and to hate the disingenuous, the deceitful, and the evil. Then, you go down to verse 14, and it says, **"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them."** Don't curse. Don't engage in horrific cursing with your enemy, with those who hurt you.

Then, verse 17: **"Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'"** There is the key, leaving the vengeance and the repayment with God.

"To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.'" We don't have time to unpack that nuance right here. **"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."** There is the recipe.

Don't be overcome by it. The way we don't become overcome by it is by overcoming it with good. Anyone who says Christianity is a wimpy religion is woefully ignorant. Here's the game-changer. Every day, begin the journey of praying for the person who hurt you. Choose to forgive and ask God to change them and, if necessary, bring them to Christ.

When you do this, watch as God begins to melt the hardness and grief in your heart. He will do a deep work so that at some point, your pain and your resentment will be replaced by the peace of the Holy Spirit. How in God's name do we do that in human strength? It's impossible. Nothing, humanly speaking, makes that possible. It's a supernatural promise of God to leave it with him, the God you know loves you.

It may be overused, but this morning as I was going over these notes, I just visualized writing down the pain, the hurt, and just the ways the betrayal has just broken your heart and life. I'm not suggesting it starts here, but when you get to that place when you can just acknowledge it, write it down and just roll it up, tie a string around it, attach it to a big balloon full of helium, and let it go. As it floats up, visually, in my mind, to God, where you cannot get it back...

I think that's part of what Romans 12 is allowing us to do here. Let it go to God. Let him take it. It may be that we have to buy a lot of balloons, but that is the hope we have of overcoming it. Watch God begin to make all things new inside you. You see, what God did was take Judas' betrayal and use it to accomplish his plan. Judas helped send Jesus to the cross, yes, but on the cross, sin and death were defeated. Now, God's provision of salvation is freely available to all who will receive Jesus by faith.

Here's the truth. God may choose never to restore what the betrayal took or broke. God may never bring back that which the betrayal destroyed. He may not bring back that business, that dream, that relationship, that specific career path, or whatever it is that the betrayal took, but...

Listen to me now. Betrayal holds no power over God's love and purpose for our lives going forward. The only thing that holds power over God's love and purpose for our lives going forward is to bury ourselves in vengeance, bitterness, anger, and extended-forever grief that never moves and looks up with hope.

I feel the responsibility to say a word to the betrayer, because we're all sinners in here, saved by grace, for the most part. Not all of us, but most of us in here. Many of us have been on the betraying end of this discussion. I would say to you, if you haven't genuinely and biblically, first of all, *repent of it*. Acknowledge the ungodliness and destruction of your betrayal and ask for forgiveness. Acknowledge every ounce of it. Repent of it. Don't just admit it but repent of it and ask for forgiveness.

Secondly, *resolve it*. If you're on the betrayer end, fix, restore, and replace what you have broken. Take all of the time and expense necessary to fix the reputation, finances, or whatever you destroyed with your betrayal to the best of your opportunity and ability to do so. Fix it and restore it as well as all the people affected by your betrayal.

Thirdly, once you have done that sincerely and with every ounce of effort you have, *release it*. Trust in the forgiveness and grace of God. Now, we don't have the right to release it until we have repented of it and attempted to resolve it, but once we have, God is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from our unrighteousness.

Now, I want to take all of that that we just talked about and set it right here for a second. Just put it right here. Don't forget that every person who rejects Jesus Christ is the ultimate Judas. Every time a person hears the gospel and the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and they reject it, mock it, or ignore it, in that very moment, they are betraying Jesus.

They are saying everything else in the world is more valuable to them than Christ's shed blood. They are saying they are not worthy of God's grace in the forgiveness of their sins through their repentance and faith in God. In a way, our world has a lot more in common with Judas than we might think. So we cling to Christ. We proclaim him and share him with everyone who will listen, and we pray that those will see that his death on the cross is the ultimate evidence of God's unbelievable love for their own soul.

I would say to you, if you have continued to keep Jesus at arm's length you have not truly repented, turned from your sinful ways, and given your devotion to him and you have not been baptized, potentially, in his name, declaring publicly who it is that you worship and trust, and I would pray that today would be that day for you. Why don't we bow our heads together?

God in heaven, I pray in the name of Jesus and in the presence of your Holy Spirit, for those in this room who have been through betrayal and it is in their rear-view mirror. I pray that today,

God, they would rejoice as they have seen and continue to see your plan and your purpose for their lives going forward.

I pray, God, for those who are in the midst of it right now, that in a miraculous, supernatural, powerful way, you would grab hold of them with your comfort and give them courage to grieve and to leave it. I pray, God, that you would give them a fresh new view of your purpose for their lives going forward that may fill them with unexpected hope and joy, even now.

God, for any who have yet to experience betrayal, if in your sovereignty you should so allow them to walk down that road, may today bring them hope that they will be able to grieve with hope in the midst of betrayal. Lord, we love you and we look forward that one day we'll live with you forever where there will be no more tears. Until then, God, we cling to you with all our might. In Christ's name, amen.

The people standing up here would love to talk to any of you who want to take that next step of genuine faith in Christ. If you have never repented of your sin and asked Jesus to be your Savior and Lord and follow him, they would love to help you take that step. They are also here to pray with you. If there's anything going on in your life right now that they can pray with you about, that would be their honor. Please allow them to do that. I'm looking forward to next Sunday. We'll see you then. God bless you.