

The Battle Belongs to the Lord

A Battle of Betrayal

Pastor Matthew Ude

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Matthew 26:21-24 ²¹ Now as they were eating, He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me." ²² And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?" ²³ He answered and said, "He who dipped *his* hand with Me in the dish will betray Me." ²⁴ "The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

Betrayal - it makes for a great movie. There is nothing more suspenseful than a good betrayal. Whenever you hear "this show/movie has it all," it almost always includes the word betrayal.

In real life betrayal destroys relationships and is a seed for serious sins in the lives of both the betrayed and the betrayer. Jesus says of the one who would betray him "**It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.**"

Yet despite its devastating effects on our lives and the lives of our loved ones we still do it.

When was the last time you betrayed someone?

In case you need help remembering we can go through some examples. You might be a betrayer if . . .

. . . You've ever messed up and blamed someone else. You feel guilty about something, so you point the finger at someone else. It's not really my fault, they made me do it. You throw your spouse under the bus.

. . . You've ever criticized, gossiped, or talked about someone behind their back. We tend to think this is ok because they aren't around to hear what we say.

. . . You've ever plotted to get your way. Instead of talking things through honestly and openly we sometimes plot to make sure we get our way.

These are all examples of ways that we have betrayed one another. This is our sinful nature and the devil at work in our lives. These betrayals create serious problems in our lives. So, the question is how can we win this battle? How can we clean up the effects of betrayal in our lives? How can we resist the temptation as well as forgive those who have so betrayed us. This brings us to our theme for this year's lent services.

The Battle is not yours but the Lord's.
Tonight, a Battle of Betrayal.

This theme comes from one of the most loved of all bible stories, David and Goliath.

What gave David the courage to stand against a giant ten feet tall, when all the greatest warriors were cowering like little babies in their tents? It was because he knew that the fight was not between him and Goliath but between Goliath and God. He knew the promises of God and the power of God and did not hesitate to trust those promises and that power.

As David stood and faced Goliath with nothing but a stone, he said to Goliath:

1 Samuel 17:47 "the battle is the LORD'S, and He will give you into our hands."

THE BATTLE BELONGS TO THE LORD

This Sunday we are going to hear about Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. When we think of battles we think of mighty men in armor, with swords, and great horses. But Jesus was a fighting a battle there in that wilderness. He was fighting a battle that we should have been fighting but which we would lose. He was fighting a battle against our greatest enemy. He was fighting a battle and won. And because he won the battle is over, our battle is over.

The Battle belongs to the Lord.

When we like David remember this simple truth, we can easily win every battle. When we forget it, we will most certainly lose. I can't fight a ten-foot-tall giant, and I can't win against Satan on my own. But the battle doesn't belong to me, it belongs to the Lord. Like David we can stand fast and confident that we will win when we put our trust in Jesus and remember that the battle belongs to him.

This brings us back to the specific battle for tonight, betrayal. Why do we do it? If we love our family, friends and neighbors why do we still betray them? That is a question that many spouses have asked each other. If you love me, why did you do this? It is a question we may have asked ourselves many times.

Sometimes, maybe even often, it is because we convince ourselves that we have a very good reason for what we are doing. We have two examples of betrayal this evening, Absalom and Judas. Both thought they had excellent reasons for betrayal.

Let's start with Judas.

We don't know for sure what was going through Judas head, but the Gospel of Matthew tells us:

Matthew 27:3 Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

That certainly sounds like Judas was not expecting Jesus to be condemned.

It is easy to imagine Judas thinking, "Jesus hasn't done anything wrong. They can't accuse him of anything. I'll get thirty pieces of silver. He'll be let go. No one will get hurt. I'll be rich. No harm no foul."

It's not hard to imagine Judas thinking like this because we often think along similar lines. "What they don't know can't hurt them." "No one needs to know." "No one will get hurt."

Jesus did get hurt, but more importantly Judas hurt himself. We may think that no one will get hurt but often they do. Even if they don't, we have hurt ourselves through our sin.

Absalom also, at least in his mind, had a very good reason for betraying his father. That, however, is a story which doesn't usually make it into our Sunday school books. It is one which would be hard to explain fully with children present. It is one of those stories that "has everything," and would make a good tv drama. I would encourage you to read it yourself in 2 Samuel 13 and 14. For now let's just say Absalom was angry. He was angry at his brother Amnon for what he did. He was angry at his father David for letting it happen and not properly dealing with it.

Absalom's attitude was that they betrayed me surely, I have the right to betray them.

Absalom and Judas both thought they had a good reason to do what they did. We often also have a good reason. "No one will get hurt. No one will know. They betrayed me first. They deserve it . . ."

How do we win the battle against these tempting thoughts? We can win only when we remember that the battle belongs to the Lord.

Jesus went into the wilderness and resisted every temptation. Jesus died on the cross to forgive our sins. The strength to resist temptation comes from Jesus and the strength to forgive comes from Jesus.

When Judas betrayed Jesus, Jesus offered him forgiveness.
When Peter betrayed Jesus, Jesus gave him forgiveness.

When King Saul betrayed David and sought his life by faith David did not seek to get him back but trusting in the Lord, he forgave him. When his son Absalom betrayed him, David commanded that Absalom was not to be killed. When he was killed David wept for him.

When facing Goliath David confessed "The battle belongs to the Lord." This was a truth he carried with him in every aspect of his life. He was not only able to defeat Goliath, but he was able to do something far harder, learn to forgive and love those who had betrayed him. He accomplished this by faith that the battle belongs to the Lord.

We cannot do this on our own any more than we could win a physical altercation with Goliath, but Jesus has already won the battle. We win when we remember the Battle belongs to the Lord. Amen