

## SERMON THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2020

Maundy Thursday **The Battle Is Personal** Text: Luke 22:47,48

**While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus asked him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”**

Our text is a tragic case of one of the 12 men who'd walked beside Jesus on all those dusty paths in Israel, had heard his sermons, had watched all those miracles, had prayed with him, and had even done some mission work for him.

But this man became the betrayer. The enemy Satan had gained control of his heart and mind, turning him against Jesus.

As we examine this case, it becomes very clear how important it is that Jesus is our warrior who fought for us and, to this very day, helps us in our own battles with the devil, who wants to use our own sinful flesh against Jesus and kill our faith in Jesus. In doing so, we realize that **This Battle Is Personal**

We can lock our doors to keep out thieves and robbers. We can carry mace when we jog in order to ward off attackers. But more often than not, we find that our worst war is almost always inside of us, like Judas' was.

It was right after Jesus and the disciples had their last meal together. They had gone out to the Garden of Gethsemane at the foot of the Mount of Olives. There, Jesus prayed. When he finished, he returned to his disciples, who had fallen asleep.

Jesus woke them, and **“while he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus asked him, ‘Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?’”**

Perhaps to some, it looked as if Judas was greeting his great friend Jesus. But the soldiers, Judas, and Jesus all knew what it really meant: He was using the display of close friendship to betray and hand over our Savior to his enemies.

As they say, only a friend can betray a friend. Even so, Jesus gives him two more chances, calling him by name just as he had done perhaps hundreds of times before: “Judas.”

Matthew mentions that Jesus finally said, **“Do what you came for, friend.”** What had turned Judas from a friend into someone who could betray Jesus? What evil had entered his heart to make him a traitor within the ranks of the 12 men closest to Jesus for the past three years?

Most of you know:

- Judas had been the treasurer for the disciples and had been helping himself to some of that money. (John 12:6).

- Satan had entered into Judas and prodded him to go to the chief priests to get paid for betraying Jesus—30 silver coins.
- Just a few hours earlier, Jesus had mentioned that one of the disciples would betray him and had said it was a fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy in Psalm 41:9. Judas was not touched by the warning.
- During the Last Supper, we learn these terrible words yet again: **“As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. So, Jesus told him, ‘What you are about to do, do quickly.’”**

What a sad life. Judas experienced a huge struggle inside him, especially at the end. Satan had gained control of the sinful nature within Judas and driven him to commit the worst sin ever. Can you think of a sadder legacy than that of Judas?

When Jesus told the disciples at the Last Supper that one of them was going to betray him, they didn’t know who would do it. But what did they do? **“His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant.”**

They suspected one another because they knew their own weakness. Each had a sinful flesh that Satan could attack and use to drive them away from Jesus. Which of them could possibly do this?

The battle against Satan was and is a personal one for Judas and for us too. We know, **the struggle within us.**

Jesus had warned them all that they would desert him. He had given a special warning to Peter, who had strongly denied it. Sure enough, that very night, after the disciples received the Lord’s Supper from our Savior, they all deserted him in the Garden of Gethsemane. Peter swung his sword, but then he also fled.

Yet Peter followed the soldiers into the courtyard of the high priest. There he kept denying he was a disciple of Jesus, even to the point of swearing it. He too was a betrayer. The fear in his heart was Satan’s way to turn even Peter against Jesus.

I think about this when I look at my life. You too? I ask myself, “What kind of evil; will Satan use in *this* heart?”

I’m just like you, just like Peter, just like St. Paul, who said, **“In my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”**

Did you catch his reference to the spiritual war going on inside us? I so want to trust Jesus with all my heart, but my faith is under attack. My sinful flesh is weak. As Jesus told his disciples, **“The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”**

And so is yours. Sometimes there is guilt from the past. You feel unworthy of Jesus. Are you living right now in disappointment? Perhaps depressing thoughts have been working against your faith. Are you losing your cheerful spirit in serving and giving?

Does it bother you that your personal Bible study has been slipping? And your prayer life? Do you see the Trojan horse of evil within? Sad indeed. But here's the good news: **Our hero loves us every day of our lives!**

We have a warrior who can help us fight these battles and sneak attacks! We agree with St. Paul: **"Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!"**

Jesus is the defense against our sinful flesh and Satan's battle for our hearts. Our betrayed Jesus never betrayed us! He went through all that physical abuse alone.

And then, also alone, went before God's judgment bar, piled high with our sins, to experience the full misery of hell in our place, with the prize in his sight of earning full forgiveness for every sin we've ever committed.

When Jesus voluntarily gave up his life on the cross, God cleared sinners of every charge against you, me, and the world.

When God looks at us, though, all he sees in us is the holy, perfect life of Jesus! And all that freely available to all who turn to him in faith.

Jesus has given us some wonderful war weapons to help us grow stronger in faith, to become more like him, to brighten our vision of our final home in heaven, to enlarge the daily joy we already have in him!

Here are some of those weapons we have for our personal struggle against Satan and the sin within:

The first is his powerful Word with all those promises. That Word is a two-edged sword as it exposes all the stuff we try to keep hidden and, at the same time, it cuts away all the guilt as it brings Jesus into sharp focus! God's Word strengthens our faith. It's both our armor and offensive weapon (Ephesians 6).

Second, is the Lord's Supper. Our warrior shares Himself with us in the most intimate possible way: Providing each of us personally his true body and blood. It's as close as we can possibly get to him this side of heaven.

It's as if we were in that upper room when Jesus looked at each of the disciples as he passed around the bread and the wine, assuring them in that Last Supper that he was actually touching them with his real presence.

Do you see yourself there—at the end of the table? Whenever I feel like I'm slipping in my struggle with the devil, this meal points me back to Jesus.

In my internal war, He gives me the forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation that he has battled to win for me. My battle against Satan is personal, but so is this Supper: my warrior's flesh and blood with the bread and wine to strengthen me.

Third, right here, right now, the Holy Spirit is working within you with the gospel to strengthen you in your battle with Satan and sin. Together with the believers around you, we one another.

We encourage one another to stay close to Jesus and his Word so that our faith might grow and get stronger, nourished by the rich grace of God through Word and sacrament.

Here, in non-Pandemic times, we greet one another in Christ, show our concern and care for one another in conversation, and pray for one another's needs as we express our Christ-centered love in real words and real actions.

So, fellow fully loved and fully equipped soldiers of Christ our Savior and hero, **“Put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. AMEN**