

## Et Tu?

A sermon based on Matthew 26:20-25

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Did you see the sermon theme for today? Don't worry; Pastor hasn't gone mad! It's not gibberish. Does anyone know what this is? *It's a Latin phrase. Do you know what it means? Here's your hint: we're coming up on it, March 15<sup>th</sup>, or, the Ides of March.*

On that day, so many years ago, Julius Caesar cried out, "Et tu, Brute?" It means, "And you, too, Brutus?" There, now you know as much Latin as Pastor (just kidding!).

But do you know why he cried out those words? It was in the midst of one act of betrayal which brought an end to one of the greatest reigns/cruellest dictatorships (depends on how you look at it) in our entire history. As Caesar was being stabbed by a large number of assassins, he recognized one as his good friend, Marcus Brutus, one who had been a close confidant, one whose presence and counsel he had enjoyed, one who had supped with him many times. "Et tu, Brute" expressed Caesar's surprise and dismay at the treachery of a supposed friend.

Throughout our Sundays in Lent, we're going to examine the many wounds Jesus suffered in his Passion, his walk to the cross. But they aren't the physical wounds Jesus bore, but rather, we'll look at his emotional blows and see how, at the very least, they were on par with the physical beating and suffering he endured...for you!

Today, it's the wound of betrayal, and you can probably guess who that's referring to. But the question is: "Et tu?" Is it you, too?

It must have been the last thing any one of them would have expected to hear. Jesus was with his disciples. It was a great evening...a great meal. Just Jesus and the disciples, his friends, celebrating one of the greatest meals in the Jewish religion, the Passover.

And then, the mood-killing comment, **"One of you will betray me."** One of you will deceive me...one of you will let me down in the worst way imaginable."

That must have hit them like a ton of bricks. You can imagine the scene. Maybe one of them spitting their food or drink out in complete and utter shock. The mass pandemonium that may have ensued as each looked accusingly across the table, trying to catch a look of surprise or guilt in their counterpart. Maybe a somber mood as many of them looked inward and wondered, "Surely I'm not capable of something that terrible and heinous, am I?" Or, "Would I ever really do that to my friend and mentor?"

And then, one after another, **"Surely not I, Lord?"** And then it was Judas, the real traitor, unbeknownst to rest of the Twelve, asking the same question, feigning his innocence. And Jesus, whether he spoke out loud or merely whispered in Judas' ear, he knew and told him, **"Yes, it is you."**

And even though the disciples didn't truly understand what was happening (John's gospel says many thought Judas left abruptly to take care of some financial matter), we know. It was him. Judas was the one who betray Jesus, handing him over to be tried and killed for 30 pieces of silver.

But do you think Jesus could have said that to any of the disciples sitting there? "It's you"? Because it wasn't just the kiss on the face where Jesus was dealt the wound of betrayal, was it? Can you think of other occurrences?

What about the unified **"Even if [we] have to die for you, [we] will never disown you,"** promise the disciples made to Jesus a short time later...until there were weapons involved and they were heavily outnumbered. Then they ran, scared for their lives, leaving Jesus to be arrested. Or Peter's **"Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will"** guarantee...until he was in the temple courtyard, with three separate opportunities to stand up for Jesus, at the very least acknowledge him, and three times, "I don't know the man!" It's the **"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God...our Master, our Teacher"** confession made a few weeks earlier, but now, as you're hanging there on the cross, we couldn't be bothered (or we were too scared) to be there to support you in your final hours.

Wasn't that betrayal? How much did that hurt? For Jesus, to know all of them, in one way or another, would betray him?

**"I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me."** Et tu? It's you, too, isn't it?

I want you to take a couple seconds right now to dig through your memory bank and think about a time you were betrayed. It could be as simple as when you told your friend you were really into this girl, and then he asked her to dance. Or, you told your best friend something that "I've never told anyone else," and pretty soon the entire school knew your secret because she let it slip out. Or, maybe it's something on a larger scale, like a joint venture, where your partner dropped out at the last moment, with you taking the huge financial hit.

Anyways, do you have it? Who betrayed you? I'll be willing to be it was someone close to you...a friend, family member, a co-worker who you were close with.

Jesus makes it clear here: the wound of betrayal would not be inflicted on Him by those who are distant from Him, from those who were not His companions, His friends, His close ones. No. This was a pain from those whom He held in special love. **"The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me."**

You know, that might not mean all that much to us today; we're comfortable with eating out at restaurants, sometimes even being seated at a table with complete strangers. But in Jesus' day, in his culture, there were no restaurants. This table fellowship would take place in the home, in an intimate setting. An invitation to share a meal was no casual thing. Even in the Arab culture today, as it was then, to eat with a person was tantamount to saying, "I am your friend. I will never hurt you." Jesus' betrayer, not someone distant and unknown, but someone near, dear, loved.

That someone is you, too, isn't it? What Jesus later said to his disciples, he says to you and me as well, **"I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."**

Friends, what do our betrayals of Jesus look like? Instead of "Surely not I, Lord?" maybe we should be asking, "Have I sold you out, Lord? For a few extra hours of sleep on a Sunday morning or whatever excuses I can come up with instead of worshipping you? For some overtime at work instead of helping out with a church project?" "Lord, have I lived for this world and its pleasures and bought into them,

rather than wanting you, spending time with you, hearing your words of life? Have I lived as if I mattered most and you mattered not at all? Is it I, Lord?

Does he even need to answer that question for you, or do you already know what he would say? Et tu...it is you.

When you were betrayed (and I think we've all been in that position, at one time or another), how did it feel? A phrase I commonly hear is "stabbed in the back." There's a reason why we can say these emotional wounds were just as damaging to Jesus as the physical beatings and torture he endured. And compound that with who you are...your relationship with Jesus...how he's made you his own child, given you faith in him, so now he calls you not even friend, but brother or sister...how he's given you every good thing you have in life, and this is what we've done. We are Judas.

And you see what Jesus said to him? ***"Woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."*** Now, Jesus did not say these words out of hatred, anger, or any such thing. He spoke to Judas from the depth of His sorrowful compassion. He saw, as is His way, where Judas would end his life, that in the end Judas would despair of the mercy of God and go to his grave (killing himself) believing that his sin was stronger than God's mercy in Christ. And it broke our Lord's heart even more than the betrayal itself.

Is that how your betrayal makes you feel? The guilt...the shame...the misery...that you could and would ever drop to the level of the man who handed Jesus over to his death, and for what? Momentary pleasure and gain? For our betrayal (and yes, we're all guilty), we deserve hell. And for that eternal destination, it would be better had we not been born.

But...but note the love of the Lord! Do not think for one second the Lord's love for Judas, His betrayer, was altered by his betrayal. In our Savior the psalmist's words rang true: ***"The Lord is good to all, he has compassion on all he has made"*** (Psalm 145:9). He loved this man who would go his senseless way. Jesus loved this man who would first despise and turn from His love, and then despair of what he thought he had lost forever. For Judas, the betrayal was so big a sin that he was convinced he would never find forgiveness. And you might feel that way, too! But, Jesus loves you too!

In the end, how little Judas understood the Son of Man whom he betrayed! For it was also for the sin of Judas, and the sin of all us Judases, that the Son of Man stretched His hands on the wood and let them pound in the nails. It was for the sin of Judas, and of all us Judases, that the Son of Man pleaded, ***"Father, forgive!"*** It was for the sin of Judas, and of all us Judases, that the Lord of life let ***"grim death, with cruel rigor"*** (CW 105, v.3) rob Him of His life so that sin and death would lose their claim over us forever. It was for the sin of Judas, and of all us Judases, that our Friend and our Brother underwent an even greater betrayal, as God his Father, the same who had promised, ***"Do this (as in obey all the 10 Commandments and all of God's laws perfectly), and you will live (and have eternal life)"***...as God his Father betrayed him, handing Jesus' perfect life and his innocent blood over to death for us, abandoning Jesus to the full extent of his wrath and hell's punishment in our place. "Et tu, Father?" Jesus could have cried as he hung and died on the cross.

But there was no blame. The pain of betrayal is great, and it wounded our Lord's tender heart. But it could never turn that heart to bitterness. In that heart lives a love too great, too strong, too mighty for

bitterness and hatred to ever conquer it. Although betrayal hurt, and hurt like hell itself, Jesus went on loving—Judas, you, even me.

We only need to go a few verses past our sermon text today to see that love, the same love we'll see and experience in the Lord's Supper today...as Jesus took bread, then took the cup and gave it to them...the same bread and cup he gives us, saying, ***"This is my body...this is my blood, FOR YOU for the forgiveness of sins."***

Et tu? We might be Judas, but we have a Savior. We celebrate the love in our Savior, which is stronger than all our betrayals—a love he gives us freely in the body and blood that won forgiveness for Judas, for you, and for all. It's our experience of such love that frees and strengthens us to bear the wounds of betrayal ourselves, following our Lord with joy, forgiving those who hurt us. But even more importantly, his love frees us and moves us to love and serve him...no more betrayals. And when he returns, you'll be glad you were born because with joy he will say to those who are his, "Come, enjoy the kingdom prepared for you." Et tu? Yes, for you, too! Amen.