



THE ROAD TO CALVARY



WEEK THREE: IT WAS A BETRAYAL

Betrayal is an ugly word and there are repercussions. What does betrayal do to a person?

One explanation says: *“The effects may include shock, loss and grief, morbid pre-occupation, damaged self-esteem, self-doubting, anger.”* Jesus was betrayed. You might say that because he was the Son of God, it would not affect him in the same way. However, we must remember that Jesus was human as well as divine.

Hebrews 4:15 says: *“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.”* Jesus, therefore, would no doubt have felt shock and grief even though he knew that Judas would betray him (*John 18:3-4*). It is one thing to *know* something, and another to *experience* it. Can you think of any example of that?

“The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.” John 13:2.

So how did it come to this? Judas had been one of the chosen twelve, the one who looked after the money. He had spent the time of Jesus’s ministry with him, listened to his teaching, seen the miracles he performed, and yet he took that terrible decision.

The downward path starts at the high place: ***read Luke 19:28-40***

It was only a week prior to his betrayal that Jesus rode into Jerusalem to the shouts of *“Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”* All seems well and once again, he was fulfilling the scripture: see in Zechariah 9:9 *“Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey— riding on a donkey’s colt.”*

Read Luke 22:7-13

Now, it is the Last Supper when Jesus broke the bread and blessed the wine, saying those immortal words: *“This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”* And also: *“This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for you.”* The NLT

describes what happened next: Jesus going on to say *“But here at this table, sitting among us as a friend, is the man who will betray me. For I, the Son of Man, must die since it is part of God’s plan. But how terrible it will be for my betrayer!”* (Luke 22: 21-22).

Read Luke 22:31-62

It was not only Judas who betrayed Jesus, but all of the disciples ‘forsook’ him on that fateful night. Before they went out to the Mount of Olives, Jesus told Simon Peter that he had prayed that his strength would not fail, so that when he had repented and turned to Jesus again, he was to strengthen and building up his brothers. Peter replied in typical fashion: *“Lord, I am ready to go to prison with you, and even to die with you.”* But Jesus said, *“Peter, let me tell you something. The rooster will not crow tomorrow morning until you have denied three times that you even know me.”*

We read how they went to the Mount of Olives, but Jesus moved a little further away, telling the disciples to *“Pray that you may not enter into temptation.”* These verses tell us that Jesus was in agony as he prayed, so much so that his sweat was like great drops of blood falling to the ground. He asked his father, if possible, to take this cup from him. **“NEVERTHELESS, NOT MY WILL, BUT YOURS BE DONE.”**

You will recall that Judas Iscariot, had done a deal with the high priest to identify Jesus, which he did with a kiss, for the price of 30 pieces of silver (probably somewhere around £450 in modern times).

- Can you imagine how Peter must have felt at what Jesus had to say to him?
- Have we made promises to God only to fail miserably?
- Do you think that Peter took in the part about strengthening and building up his brothers?
- Most of us have felt guilt in not doing what we promised, but it is important that we hand over our failures to Jesus and allow him to bring healing and strength to us.
- Who would have thought that a few weeks later, this same Peter, would be instrumental in bringing 3,000 souls to the Lord in one day?
- I don’t think any of us have grasped the true extent of the mercy and grace of God. Soon after his resurrection, Jesus was telling Peter to *“feed my sheep.”*

The words of the last verse of that lovely old hymn *Jesus lover of my soul* say:

Plenteous grace with Thee is found, Grace to cover all my sin;
Let the healing streams abound; Make and keep me pure within.
Thou of life the fountain art, Freely let me take of Thee;
Spring Thou up within my heart,
Rise to all eternity.

In verses 54-62 we read of Peter's denial of Jesus, not once but three times. The rooster crowed, and that last verse tears at your heart: *"So Peter remembered and went out and wept bitterly."*

I think it would be fair to say that the Jewish religious leaders also betrayed Jesus. They twisted his words on many occasions. When they finally got Jesus to admit that he was the Son of God, they asked what further evidence was required, as it was against Jewish law to claim this.

They must have felt so pleased with themselves as they headed the multitude over to Pontius Pilate. Still, they couldn't resist lying about his words saying that he had told people not to pay taxes to Caesar because he himself was a king. Not yet finished, they persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas, a convicted trouble causer, and probably a murderer, to be released. It was the custom to ask for the release of one prisoner at the time of the Passover. However, the priests stirred up the crowd to such an extent that they refused to ask for that to be Jesus.

Jesus was betrayed and there were consequences.

- Let us watch and pray this week, that we say nothing of which to be ashamed.
- Pray that we do not fall into the trap of blaming others when it is we who have spoken in ways that are not uplifting to ourselves or God.

A depiction of Peter betraying Jesus



"The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times."

Luke 22:61 NIV

Prayer: Father, help us not to waver in following you.