

4 March 2009  
Lent 1 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

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“The Wound of Betrayal”

Text: Matthew 26:20-25; 2 Samuel 15:1-12

**“One of you will betray me,”** Jesus said as He reclined at the table with His disciples. What makes that statement even more remarkable is that it was spoken at not just any table, and not just at the Passover table, but at the Table which was about to be the Table of our Lord’s Supper. Jesus was about to give them His body and blood, and one of them was going to give Him over to death.

**“One of your will betray me,”** Jesus said to *His friends*. The twelve who were like His family. Who were the closest to Him. Whom He had hand-picked to be His disciples. One of *them* would turn on Him. No crown of thorns, no whip, no mocking, would hurt as deeply as that. Most of you know that. For most of you have felt the wound of betrayal - when your trust is thrust aside, and you are hurt by one close to you . . . a family member or a close friend. It is a wound not quick to heal.

**“One of you will betray me.”** And when they heard those words, the disciples began to be sorrowful, and each asked: **“Is it I, Lord?”** They would, of course, all betray Him. Not as Judas would, but each in their own way. *As do we*. Lent is a time to consider that, to examine ourselves, to ask the hard questions. Do I betray His name given to me in Baptism by how I live? Do I betray Him by presuming on His forgiveness and regarding it lightly? Do I take my Lord’s love and return it not?

**“One of you will betray me.”** As Absalom turned on his father David, so do sons of God turn on their Heavenly Father. But King David gives us a picture of the heart of God in that he will not return betrayal for betrayal, or wound for wound - his love for his son Absalom continues. He will endure the hurt and will not hurt in return.

And so it is with Jesus. When He speaks, His words are not filled with anger or judgment or condemnation, but filled with love. **“One of you will betray me”** and **“woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed”** is not thundered like at Sinai, but spoken in compassion from the heart, to bring the terrors of conscience that lead to repentance and confession. That there might not be woe, but forgiveness. Yet Jesus knew, as was His way, that it would not be so. That when Judas came to know his sin, he would think it too grievous to be forgiven; greater than God’s mercy in Christ. And that made the sorrow even greater, and broke our Lord’s heart even more than the betrayal itself.

For it was for that sin that Jesus would now go **“as it is written of Him.”** It was for the sin of Judas, and the sins of all of us Judases, that the Son of Man stretched His hands on the wood of the cross and let them pound the nails. It was for the sin of Judas, and the sins of all of us Judases, that the Son of Man pleaded *“Father, forgive!”* It was for the sin of Judas, and the sins of all of us Judases, that the Lord of life let *“grim death, with cruel rigor”* (LSB #450 v.2) rob Him of His life, so that sin and death would lose their claim on us forever.

The wound of betrayal, perhaps we could say, *hurt like hell!* But in Jesus' heart lives a love too great, too strong, too mighty to be conquered. And so there is no sin too great, too strong, too mighty to be forgiven. Jesus took all the sin of Judas, and all the sins of all of us Judases, that we might be forgiven. That we might turn to Him in faith. That we turn and live.

And live we do! Now, with the same love with which we have been loved. A love that will not return hurt for hurt, betrayal for betrayal, wound for wound - but which *forgives the trespasses of those who sin against us.* That is not easy; impossible, in fact, for our fallen human nature! But in communion with Christ, it is possible. That when we are crushed, when we are reduced to tears, when we are sold out, when we feel like rising up in anger and indignation and getting even *with those who sin against us . . .* instead, **we take up our cross and follow Him.** We nail that old Adam in us to the cross, and forgive. And love. To do so will feel like torture and death - like a cross! - to the old Adam. But to the new man in you, the resurrected man, created by God in Baptism, it will be joy and life. It will be the glory of Christ and His love living in you.

And so in the wounds of Christ, we find healing for our wounds of betrayal. In the wounds of Christ, we discover a love that sets us free from the need for revenge. In the wounds of Christ, we find the strength of compassion, and the joy of forgiveness. From the wounds of Christ come the gifts of our Lord, who comes to us betrayers, us sinners, now at *this* Table, this altar, with His body and blood, *given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.* And we say, at this table: **“It is I, Lord.”** And He says: *Take eat; take drink.* For you I am wounded. For you I am crucified. For you I am risen. For you I live. Go in My peace, My strength, My love.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.