

Mark 14:12-21

March 24, 2019

“I Tell You the Truth...

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

One of You Will Betray Me”

Rev. Brent Hartwig

3rd Sunday in Lent

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen! Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

[Introduction]

Which conversation would you rather have:

Telling someone that a family member had a baby,	Or telling someone that a family member passed away?
Telling someone they made the team,	or telling someone they're cut?
Telling someone they're approved for a loan,	or telling someone they've been denied?

Even though our tongues are quite quick to criticize,
would any of us here choose to be the bad news messenger?

No, but that doesn't mean tough conversations can or should be avoided.
You can't *not* tell someone his or her grandma died.
You can't *not* tell someone they weren't approved for their home loan.

Tough conversations need to occur, and they usually start out this way:
“Have a seat. We need to talk.”

Today, we see Jesus sitting or, technically, “reclining” at the Passover table,
and he's about to have one of the toughest conversations ever.

It goes like this: *“I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me—
one who is eating with me.”*

[Jesus is someone who is concerned]

Imagine starting *THAT* conversation.

What would you have said? How would you have acted?

If a friend betrays our confidence,
we maybe give them the silent treatment,
we avoid them,
we yell at them,
we get revenge on them...

But this “friend” wasn’t just going to betray Jesus’ confidence, he was going to betray his life. He was going to hand him over to death.

Just imagine walking into a gathering of friends and family,
and you knew one of them was going to hand you over to your killer.
What would you do at that party?

The way that Jesus handles himself,
the way that he handled Judas and the other disciples in that very situation,
is what makes this upper room conversation so amazing.

Through these words, “I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me,”
we see, first of all, **Jesus is someone who is concerned.**

He’s concerned for Judas. This is not the only time that Jesus sent out the warning to Judas. Comb through Jesus’ conversations and hear him caution, “*There are some of you who do not believe,*” or “*Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!*” (Jn 6:64,70).

Nor is this upper room warning going to be the last time Jesus reaches out to Judas.

To the bitter end, in the Garden of Gethsemane
when Judas leans in to kiss Jesus’ cheeks
that are stained with the blood-like sweat
that he poured out in anguishing prayer,
Jesus in love and concern still questions,
“*Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?*” (Lk 22:48).

Jesus didn’t see Judas simply as a pawn of Satan who wasn’t worth his time and effort. He saw Judas as a soul—a soul that he was willing to die for,
a soul that he was willing to call to repentance.

And marvel at the gentle way Jesus went about this. I think we often picture the bread-dipping scene in the upper room as a *dant-dant-dant-da* moment that breaks to commercial as soon as the betrayer is exposed.

But then why is it that half the disciples thought Judas left the room to go pay the Passover tab or give money to the poor?

Jesus was so concerned for Judas, so patient with him, that he got his point across without belittling or berating him.

But it wasn’t just Judas who Jesus was concerned about.

By generically saying,

“I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me,”

Jesus also shows his concern for the other disciples

and where their hearts were that night he dined with them.

This was his last chance to prep them before he went to the cross. He eagerly looked forward to this night and how he might have his last Bible class with them before he died.

This “I tell you the truth” statement wasn’t just for Judas’ ears, it was for all of their ears.

How do we know? Remember their response? Mark reports, *“They were saddened.”*

Not just saddened because Jesus was going to be betrayed.

Not just saddened because one of their colleagues was plotting this awful thing.

But saddened because they weren’t sure if he was talking about them or not.

Jesus’ question led the disciples to take their eyes off their meal for a second and search their own hearts and to think the unthinkable.

Jesus’ “I tell you the truth” statement led the disciples to reflect on their own sinfulness, which prompted them to ask one by one, *“Surely not I?”*

Three little words. But can anything pack a more powerful punch for us than the question, *“Surely not I,”* especially when you consider who asked the question?

These were people who had front-pew seats for Jesus’ sermons.

These were people who had witnessed his miracles.

These were people who had seen his glory shine.

Yet, Jesus’ words prompted them to ask, “Is it I?” and for one of them the answer was “Yes.”

Sure, from our cushy New Testament seat around that upper room table, we know it was Judas’ hand that dipped bread into the bowl,	but we also know it could have been ours.
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We know it was Judas who would have been better off if he had not been born.	But a reflection of our own sinful hearts knows Jesus would have every right to sound his caution to any one of us.
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[Jesus is someone who is in control]

But Jesus doesn't want that for us,
just like he didn't want that for the disciples,
just like he didn't want that for Judas.

Thank God, out of concern our Savior made the statement,
"I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me."

Thank God, our Savior is concerned about our sinfulness enough to have the tough conversation and not just let it slide.

But then also know this same truth statement doesn't just show Jesus as someone who is concerned, it also shows: **Jesus is someone who is in control.**

That became crystal clear even before the first piece of bread was broken that night.
The Bible says he sent a few disciples to make preparations
and they *"found things just as Jesus had told them."*

Not "similar to," not "about," not "close enough," but "just as."

On a night that, to the outsider, looks like one that spiraled out of control for Jesus, how important it is to be reminded from the onset that he was in complete control.

From the preparations to the arrest to the kangaroo court,
Jesus was always in control.

And he was in control when it came to his betrayer. Here is where these words, "I tell you the truth," really hit home.

This wasn't a game of *Clue* in which Jesus was trying to guess how he would die or who would hand him over.

Jesus wasn't trying to interrogate any one of his disciples into a confession so he knew whom to avoid.

He knew. He testified.

He had firsthand knowledge that Judas was going to hand him over
to the enemy that very night.

He knew what the truth was and yet he did it.

You've heard the saying, "A friend is someone who knows everything about you and still likes you."

A Savior, our Savior, is someone who knew everything that he would have to do and he still did it.

He did it in order to fulfill Scripture, in order to fulfill God's salvation plan,
"The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him."

For a thousand years, the scrolls of Scripture had made this part of God's plan public knowledge, *"Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me"* (Ps 41:9).

There was no other way. Jesus had to be betrayed. And so he was.

The fact that he did everything according to God's plan shows that Jesus was in complete control.

[Conclusion]

Take note,

it was "one of the Twelve" who betrayed the Son of Man, not twelve of twelve.

All would desert him.

All were capable of betraying him.

But not all received woe. And neither will you.

The plan worked.

The Lord who is so concerned about you that he called you to repentance—
his plan worked.

The Lord who controls all things, including his own betrayal,
so that he could win a place in heaven for you—his plan worked.

And that's not a tough conversation to have with you.

You didn't have to sit down to hear that news. You can stand. You can stand and sing, "Chief of sinners though I be, Jesus shed his blood for me". Amen.

"Now may the God of peace... equip you with everything good that you may do his will, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." (Heb 13:20-21)
