

Follow Me: The Betrayal
“Have you made mistakes too?”

Mark 14:43-50

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A couple years ago, Jeff and I took a long weekend trip out to New England so Jeff could run races in a couple states. We flew into Boston arriving about 9 at night. After we picked up the rental car, I plugged the address for the hotel into our GPS and off we went.

We traveled about 20 minutes when the GPS announced “You have arrived at your destination.” However, there was no hotel to be found – instead we were stopped in the middle of a bridge with a park on one side of the street and some condominiums on the other.

Jeff drove around for a few minutes before asking me “are you sure you entered the correct address?” I was sure I had entered the right address and I showed him the printout of the confirmation for the hotel and what I had put into the GPS. Then he suggested maybe I should enter both lines of the address into the GPS to see what happens.

Turns out that even though the second line didn’t really look like an address, it was an important detail to finding our hotel.

Have you ever been confident that you knew exactly what you were doing and it was the right thing? Only to find out later that you were wrong. Completely wrong. And then you felt bad, even guilty for your behavior? That happened to me that day. I think it happens to all of us and we don’t like it. It even happened to people in our bible.

[10:00 Let’s read MARK 14: 43 – 50.]

The chief priests and other Jewish officials had been waiting for a long time to come up with a plan to get rid of Jesus. They didn't like Jesus. He was disruptive. He hung out with the "outsiders", the people who lived on the edge, he spent time with the Jewish people who broke the religious laws. And, Jesus himself broke the Jewish law more than once. The leaders were tired of Jesus. The sooner they got rid of him the better.

They didn't want to go after Jesus during the daylight or during any festival. They knew Jesus had devoted followers and they didn't want any trouble. They wanted to quietly get rid of him.

Judas had decided he would help them in their task. The chief priests were thrilled, an insider, one of Jesus' own disciples is the perfect person for the job. Judas gave them the perfect opportunity. They were going to seize him at night, take Jesus away quietly and in darkness to do away with him quickly.

The Jewish leaders believed they were doing the right thing. They were getting rid of a trouble maker in their religion. In Judas's eyes he was doing the right thing. But then, after it was done, Judas realized he had made a mistake. A very big mistake.

Judas is known for his mistake. Often when people hear the name Judas, they immediately think the one who handed Jesus over to the Jewish leaders to be crucified. They remember him by what he did on that night Jesus shared the last supper with his disciples. He sat there with Jesus and the rest of the disciples, participating in the last supper, knowing all along what he was about to do.

Today his name still carries with it a lot of negativity. Think about it, how many of you know a person named Judas? (Not many.....) But I bet you probably do know someone named Peter, Matthew, Mark or John. I find it interesting that the name Judas actually means "Praised one" since his actions seem to do the opposite.

You might wonder, how did Jesus view Judas? How did Jesus live with him for those years of ministry, how does Jesus respond to Judas during that last supper?

From the beginning of his ministry Judas was treated with the same love and forgiveness as the rest of the disciples. Jesus loved him. The night of the last supper, when Jesus shared the bread and the wine he gave it to all of them for the forgiveness of sin and new life. All of them, *including Judas*.

Judas had made a very big mistake and Jesus knew it. But Jesus never excluded him, he never cast him off for what he had done or what he was about to do.

In fact, when Jesus says “one of you will betray me,” (v.18) he doesn’t identify him by name. Is it for Judas’ safety? Is it to keep them from fighting? Or is it possible, that Jesus doesn’t name him because leaving the statement open ended includes all of us?

Because that same night, all of the other disciples at the table deserted Jesus. Each one of those disciples made very painful mistakes, they all denied Jesus. Each one of them left Jesus, not one of them reached out their lord. They watched him being taken away and then they walked away.

And you and I make mistakes too. We have all walked away from our relationship with Jesus. We deny him every time we fail to recognize him. He is constantly with us, and as human beings we can forget about him during our days. We put our trust and our hope in other things - things other than Jesus. We trust in our bank accounts, the economy, our ability to live on our own, without even thinking of Jesus. How does Jesus respond to us when we ignore him, when we act as if he isn’t with us?

The same way he responded to his disciples. His love is unconditional, his forgiveness of sins is for all of us. He doesn’t keep track of our wrongs. He loves us, forgives us and walks with us as his forgiven children. We start new each day.

Mary and Eric had dated for 3 years and were married for 2 when Eric finally got his dream car. It was a beauty. He had saved and saved for this car since he was 16 years old. When he drove it home from the dealer it was like living the dream. The car was

perfect, it drove beautifully, it was easy to handle and nice on the eyes. Eric had spent the week before he brought the car home cleaning the garage and preparing a new home for his purchase. The first few days when he woke up in the morning he would go out into the garage and just look at it and smile.

Mary wasn't much of a car person, but was thrilled to see Eric so happy. Eric wanted to share his joy with his wife so when she needed to go to the store to get a few things, he suggested she should drive the new car.

Mary didn't really want to drive the new car, what if she got it dirty? Or what if something worse happened to it? Eric assured her she was only going to the store and the car would be fine.

Mary took off. When she got to the store she parked at the far end of the parking lot, away from all the other cars. She came back with a few groceries, put them in the trunk and headed home. While she was driving home the car in front of her stopped suddenly so it wouldn't hit a squirrel running across the road. Mary slammed on her breaks, but hit the car in front of her hard. Just as she did that the car behind her smashed into her. She was less than one mile from her home.

By time the police came she was hysterical. The officer thought that she had been injured. She told the officer she wasn't hurt but she was in so much trouble, her husband was going to be so mad, she made a huge mistake, she didn't even want to go home.

The officer asked her for her insurance card. When she opened the glove box there was an envelope. On the envelope it said, "open in case of an accident." Mary's hands were shaking, this was it, she was in real trouble. She opened the note inside the envelope and read it.

"Mary, if you are reading this you have been in an accident. I hope and pray that you have not been hurt. That you are okay. As for the car, it is only a car, it can be fixed and repaired. You on the other

hand are so precious to me and I look forward to holding you in my arms when you come home. Love, Eric

Jesus says the same thing to you and to me. You are precious to me, I hold you in my arms, I am always here for you. I don't keep track of your mistakes, the wrongs you have done. I chose love. I chose forgiveness. You are mine.

That is the most incredible good news for you, for me, for all people. Maybe the next time we hear about Judas, instead of focusing on his mistake, his betrayal – let's think about the amazing love of Jesus. The Love that willingly laid down his life for you and me so that our mistakes, our wrongs – big or small – can all be forgiven. May that love change us – change the way we see our own mistakes and the wrongs others have done to us. And let's love others the way we've been loved. Amen