

Dr. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Matthew 26:17-25 | Betrayal at Passover
Sunday March 1, 2026

WELCOME:

- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.
- My sermon notes are in the foyer—please take them home with you.

REVIEW:

Last Sunday, we learned about the poster boy of betrayal.

When you look up the word “betrayal” in a dictionary, you’ll see a picture of Judas Iscariot. *—not physically but metaphorically*

Even the world knows this. How many tv shows/movies have you watched and heard people referring to others as a “Judas?”

Judas Iscariot’s name goes down in infamy as a betrayer and a coward.

The reason for that is the dichotomy between his words and deeds.

Nobody likes a religious hypocrite.

Being a religious hypocrite is the worst kind of hypocrite because they are invoking God’s holy name for their own benefit.

Last Week KEYPOINT 1:

Our actions prove, validate, and verify our theology.

What we do and how we act—especially in the midst of a crisis—reveals what we truly believe about God.

Judas’ actions revealed the state of his heart.

Judas didn't love Jesus—Judas used Jesus.

When Judas realized that his plan of manipulation wasn't working and that Jesus wasn't budging—Judas turned traitor.

Last Week KEYPOINT 2:

People betray others when they are needed the most.

When Jesus needed the Twelve the most—they all abandoned Him.

When Paul needed Demas—Demas bolts.

You have your own story...because we've all been betrayed at some level.

We also talked about how betrayal has a price.

Last Week KEYPOINT 3:

We all have a price to sell out and betray our loved ones—and it's lower than we think.

For Judas, it was 30 pieces of silver—the price of a dead slave.

That's a very important lesson for us to consider.

We are to be very careful and come to terms with our own weaknesses, temptations, and ambitions.

All it takes is the right storm of circumstances for us to regret doing or saying things that will change the course of our lives forever.

There are things we can't unsee. There are things that we can't unhear.

There are things that we can not undo.

Yes, God can and will redeem those things, but that's why God has given us His Son, Spirit, and His Word—so we don't have to go down the road of hard knocks.

Lastly, we closed with some suggestions on how to manage your own emotions and the hurt you feel toward those who have betrayed you.

Remembering that we are to work through those relationships in forgiveness, reconciliation, and, if possible, restitution. Why?

Because the Lord Jesus first forgave us.

Let us not forget that we ourselves have gone astray like sheep.

Let us not become so focused on what's been done to us that we forget what we've done to our Lord—for we have all turned our backs on God and gone our own way (Isa. 53:6).

INTRODUCTION:

Today, our theme of betrayal continues.

The Disciples are busy preparing for the Last Passover meal.

It's during this meal that Jesus tells the Twelve that not only will He be betrayed, but that it will be an inside job.

Jesus tells them directly that the betrayer is one of them.

- How do they respond to such shocking news?
- How does Judas respond?
- How are we to respond and apply this to our own lives?

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 26:17— On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?”

Matthew 26:18—“Go into the city to a certain man,” he said, “and tell him, ‘The Teacher says: My time is near; I am celebrating the Passover at your place with my disciples.’ ”

Matthew 26:19—So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.

Matthew 26:20—When evening came, he was reclining at the table with the Twelve.

Matthew 26:21—While they were eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.”

Matthew 26:22—Deeply distressed, each one began to say to him, “Surely not I, Lord?”

Matthew 26:23—He replied, “The one who dipped his hand with me in the bowl—he will betray me.

Matthew 26:24—The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for him if he had not been born.”

Matthew 26:25—Judas, his betrayer, replied, “Surely not I, Rabbi?”
“You have said it,” he told him.

PRAY:

Now it is not an enemy who insults me—otherwise I could bear it; it is not a foe who rises up against me—otherwise I could hide from him. But it is you, a man who is my peer, my companion and good friend! We used to have close fellowship; we walked with the crowd into the house of God. (Psalm 55:12-14)

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 26:17— On the first day of Unleavened Bread...

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was a week-long celebration associated with Passover.

Passover was the chief celebration of Israel's faith.

As Easter is the crescendo for Christians because Christ rose on the third day, so Passover was the primary celebration for the Jews because God freed them Egyptian slavery.

When the Jews left Egypt, they left in a hurry.

The name of the feast—"Unleavened Bread" refers to the speed at which the Jews escaped.

The bread itself had no yeast— so it didn't have time to rise— (Ex 13:7–8; Dt 16:3–4).

So the *Feast of Unleavened Bread* and the *Passover* are annual reminders of God's grace, mercy, and provision.

We all need reminders. Why? Otherwise, we'll forget.

Many of us wear rings or necklaces that have a cross.

Many of us have crosses hanging on the walls of our homes.

Why? They are reminders of what God has done for us.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Passover were reminders to the Jews of what God had done for them.

Matthew 26:17— On the first day of Unleavened Bread...

To give us an idea of the timeline here—this is Thursday.

We are in the last 48 hours of Jesus' life.

Jesus and the Disciples will eat the final Passover meal after sundown on Thursday evening.

This is where Jesus also institutes the Lord's Supper.

By this time, Judas Iscariot had left the Supper to betray Jesus.

After Supper, Jesus takes the remaining Disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray.

This prayer time goes past midnight and continues until early Friday morning.

Jesus will be arrested and condemned hours later and crucified on Friday morning as the Passover celebrations begin.

Passover celebrates God's deliverance of the Jews from Egyptian slavery.

That term "Passover" specifically refers to the night when God killed every firstborn son in Egypt, but passed over the homes of Israel marked with lamb's blood.

Passover is a celebration for Israel but a judgment upon Egypt.

Passover is interesting because the Jews celebrate it twice.

They would first celebrate it with their friends and family, and secondly, they would celebrate it corporately with the Nation.

In a similiar way, many of us do the same thing with Christmas.

We choose Christmas Eve to celebrate corporately with our church family by attending the worship service| and then have Christmas Day to celebrate with our friends and immediate family—or vice versa.

At this moment, the Disciples know they need to celebrate the Passover with Jesus, and they are simply asking for practical instructions.

Matthew 26:17— *On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?”*

Matthew 26:18—*“Go into the city to a certain man,” he said, “and tell him, ‘The Teacher says: My time is near; I am celebrating the Passover at your place with my disciples.’ ”*

First things first—notice that Jesus has a plan.

God always has a plan, which comes in two overarching parts.

God has a secret plan/will— where we are to worship rather than question.

We are to live by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7)

God also has a *revealed* plan and will be found in Scripture.

His revealed plan is exactly that—it’s revealed when we read, examine, and investigate God’s Word|through God’s Spirit|among God’s people.

In today's passage, we're seeing God's revealed plan.

Either Jesus had made prior arrangements with this man, or this encounter is a miraculous work of God.

Matthew 26:18—“Go into the city to a certain man,” he said, “and tell him, ‘The Teacher says:

It's funny that the Greek term for “certain man” is *deina*, which basically means “so and so.”

If that sounds secretive, it is. (“So and So” and “the Teacher.”)

Keep in mind that the Jewish leaders are trying to kill Jesus.

And if they find out where Jesus is, they'll crash the Passover meal and ruin the institution of the Lord's Supper.

It's amazing how we see the sovereignty of God at work among all the oppositions of the flesh, the world, and the devil.

So Jesus is telling the Disciples to be discreet.

Mark's Gospel fills in a few details...

Mark 14:12—On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrifice the Passover lamb, his disciples asked him, “Where do you want us to go and prepare the Passover so that you may eat it?”

Mark 14:13—So he sent two of his disciples and told them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him.

What's secretive about a man carrying a water jar?

Why is that little detail in verse 13?

Let's immerse ourselves in Jewish tradition.

Jewish men didn't carry water jars—they carried water skins.

A man carrying a water jar in the first century is like seeing a man carrying a bright red purse at the shopping mall.

He's going to stick out!

† **Mark 14:14**—Wherever he enters, tell the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"'

† **Mark 14:15**—He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make the preparations for us there."

Every detail care about

Some people make a case that this is John Mark's home, but Scripture doesn't say for certain.

John Mark is the one who traveled with Paul and the other Disciples in the book of Acts.

He is also the one who penned the Gospel of Mark through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Back to Matthew

† **Matthew 26:18**—My time is near;

During the last 48 hours of Jesus life, we'll witness the sovereign plan of Almighty God to save the elect.

Let's talk about Sovereignty

† **KEYPOINT 1:**

You'll notice that the word **sovereign** has "reign" in it.

That's a great way to remember what it means.

God rules and reigns as a monarch.

That's why Scripture calls Jesus the King of kings.

Formal Definition

KEYPOINT 2:

God's sovereignty refers to His absolute and unrivaled rule over all His creatures and their circumstances.

Scripture tells us that:

- God's knowledge is unlimited and unending.
- God has complete knowledge of all future events, including human choices.
- God not only knows, but ordains all things to pass.

We must confess that God's sovereignty is a mystery.

God intends it to be a mystery.

God being master over everyone and everything should bring us so much comfort!

That no matter where you are or what you're going through, God is not only in control of the situation, but has ordained it to come about in your life to test your faith.

We are to wrestle well with the Doctrine of Sovereignty.

In our passage today, we see that everything is running on God's divine timeframe.

Jesus is Lord and master of history—His history and ours.

The Lord accomplishes His purposes, whether we can see them or not—or whether we believe them or not.

By saying, “My time is near,” Jesus emphasizes that all these terrible events that will soon take place are not only under God’s control but have been ordained to happen before He created the cosmos in Genesis 1:1.

of Redemption
God’s plan is triune and includes each member of the Trinity.

- God the Father has decreed the plan.
- God the Son is the one who carries out the plan by fulfilling the requirements.
- God, the Holy Spirit, finishes the plan by working through the Church in both sanctification and evangelism.

† Matthew 26:18—“I am celebrating the Passover at your place with my disciples.”

Notice how this is a statement—it’s not a question.

Jesus is not asking for permission—He owns everyone and everything (Psalm 2).

Jesus has a plan to redeem the elect, and the plan is now being carried out through people.

† Matthew 26:19—“So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.”

The goal for the Disciples was to arrange a safe place for them to celebrate the Passover meal without tipping off the Jewish authorities.

† Matthew 26:20—“When evening came, (Jesus) was reclining at the table with the Twelve.”

In OT, people sat down for their meals (e.g., Judg. 19:6), but by the first century, they had adopted the Greco-Roman habit of reclining while dining.

They placed pillows around the table, leaned on their left arm, and ate with their right hand.

During dinner, Jesus drops this bomb.

† **Matthew 26:21**—While they were eating, (Jesus) said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.”

Betrayal is broken trust.

Being betrayed is first trusting someone—becoming vulnerable with someone—and then that person using or abusing that vulnerability for their own benefit.

The Greek verb for betray is *Paradidōmi* (para-dee-doe-me)—it paints the picture of delivering a prisoner into prison.

And we’ll see that definition plays out as we read on.

How do the Disciples respond to such an accusation of betrayal?

† **Matthew 26:22**—Deeply distressed,

Your translation may say, “Very sad” or “deeply grieved.”

To betray a friend in Scripture is considered a great act of evil.

† **Psalm 41:9 NLT**—Even my best friend, the one I trusted completely, the one who shared my food, has turned against me.

Psalm 55 expresses heartache and heartbreak.

† **Psalm 55:20 NLT**—As for my companion, he betrayed his friends; he broke his promises.

† **Psalm 55:21 NLT**—His words are as smooth as butter, but in his heart is war. His words are as soothing as lotion, but underneath are daggers!

If we fast-forward to our culture today, betrayal is a way of life.

- Men betray their wives for someone younger.
- Women betray their husbands with someone richer.
- People betray their employers for more opportunities.
- Pastors betray their congregations for larger congregations.
- Congregations betray their churches for a variety of reasons that aren't Biblical.

Betrayal in our world is so commonplace—but instead of selling someone out for 30 pieces of silver, people get book deals and make millions.

They become famous—at someone else's expense.

Matthew 26:22—*Deeply distressed, each one began to say to him, "Surely not I, Lord?"*

Notice what didn't happen.

1. Peter didn't stand up and point his finger at Judas.
2. Jesus didn't call Judas out in front of everyone!

Remarkably, Judas continues to stay for the Passover meal!

But what's Judas feeling/doing?

It seems that each Disciple, one by one—probably with great fear, trembling, and hesitation—began to ask Jesus, "Lord, is it me?"

They're all asking themselves, "Do I have the capacity to do this?"

KEYPOINT 3:

The Disciples looked at themselves rather than blaming others.

The Disciples knew that Jesus had a ton of enemies, so they weren't really surprised when Jesus said He would be betrayed.

But they had no idea that the betrayal would be an inside job.

Since Judas was the treasurer, he was among the most trusted and least suspected.

Matthew 26:23—*He replied, "The one who dipped his hand with me in the bowl—he will betray me."*

Jesus' statement is a bit odd and cryptic.

In first-century Jewish culture, the custom for dinner was family-style—to place a large dish of food within reach of everyone.

They didn't generally use individual plates as we do.

Same thing for the appetizers.

So Jesus is referring to taking a piece of bread and dipping it into a common bowl of sauce on the table.

Jesus first gives the Disciples a hint—"It is one of you."

This was hardly reassuring to the Disciples.

John's Gospel provides more details...

John 13:21—*When Jesus had said this, he was troubled in his spirit and testified, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me."*

John 13:22—*The disciples started looking at one another—uncertain which one he was speaking about.*

John 13:23—One of his disciples, the one Jesus loved, was reclining close beside Jesus.

John 13:24—Simon Peter motioned to him to find out who it was he was talking about.

John 13:25—So ~~he~~ ^{John} leaned back against Jesus and asked him, “Lord, who is it?”

John 13:26—Jesus replied, “He’s the one I give the piece of bread to after I have dipped it.” When he had dipped the bread, he gave it to Judas, Simon Iscariot’s son.

So Matthew’s Gospel reveals that the betrayer is one of the 12 Disciples, while John’s Gospel reveals which Disciple it is.

Back to Matthew’s Gospel.

Matthew 26:24—The Son of Man...

The Lord Jesus Christ has over 150 titles in Scripture.

However, *the Son of Man* is His favorite.

It refers to both his deity as God and His humanness as man.

The Son of Man combines both human attributes and divine authority.

The Son of Man is the only one who could be the sacrificial Lamb of God because it is a man who sinned, so a man must pay the sacrifice.

But it can’t be any man—it must be a perfect man/sinless man.

Matthew 26:24—...will go just as it is written about him,

Jesus is fulfilling prophecy.

The OT prophets did not merely predict the suffering, death, and resurrection of their Messiah—they declared in advance that it must happen according to God's plan of redemption.

Verse 24 is a reference to the suffering He will endure in Isaiah 53.

The book of Isaiah was written 700 years before Jesus was born.

† **Isaiah 53:3 NLT**—*He (Jesus) was despised and rejected—
a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.
We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised,
and we did not care.*

† **Isaiah 53:4 NLT**—*Yet it was our weaknesses he carried;
it was our sorrows that weighed him down.
And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God,
a punishment for his own sins!*

† **Isaiah 53:5 NLT**—*But he was pierced for our rebellion,
crushed for our sins.
He was beaten so we could be whole.
He was whipped so we could be healed.*

† **Isaiah 53:6 NLT**—*All of us, like sheep, have strayed away.
We have left God's paths to follow our own.
Yet the Lord laid on him
the sins of us all.*

† **Isaiah 53:7 NLT**—*He was oppressed and treated harshly,
yet he never said a word.*

He was led like a lamb to the slaughter.
And as a sheep is silent before the shearers,
he did not open his mouth.

† **Isaiah 53:8 NLT**—Unjustly condemned, he was led away.
No one cared that he died without descendants,
that his life was cut short in midstream.
But he was struck down
for the rebellion of my people.

† **Isaiah 53:9 NLT**—He had done no wrong
and had never deceived anyone.
But he was buried like a criminal;
he was put in a rich man's grave.

† **Isaiah 53:10 NLT**—But it was the Lord's good plan to crush him
and cause him grief.

Once again, those words were written by Isaiah 700 years before Jesus was born.
And speaking of God's good plan, in the NT...

† **Acts 2:23**—Though (Jesus) was delivered up according to God's
determined plan and foreknowledge, you (Jews) used lawless people
(Romans) to nail him to a cross and kill him.

God's ways and plans are indeed mysterious.

For us as sinful human beings to ^{fully} understand the sovereignty of God is like trying to
explain calculus to your cat!

However, we can trust in God's sovereignty because God is always good.

Romans 8:28—We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

This passage doesn't say that all things are good—it says all things work together for good.

In other words, all things are for God's glory and our ultimate good.

Everything ultimately serves God's glory | while simultaneously working toward our good.

Matthew 26:24— *but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for him if he had not been born.*"

A woe is a prophetic curse.

Jesus is stating that divine judgment is upon Judas Iscariot.

God has his purposes, but he works without violating human freedom or responsibility.

Divine sovereignty and human responsibility are both involved in Judas's betrayal.

We call this the *Doctrine of Concurrence*.

The Doctrine of Concurrence is the theological tension of God | using people to accomplish His plans.

We not only see this tension in Judas' betrayal | and Jesus' crucifixion, | but in the life of Joseph in Genesis.

Genesis 50:20 ESV—As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good,

Joe says to his brothers who first wanted to kill him, but sold him into slavery instead.

Speaking of evil, back to Judas...

Matthew 26:25—*Judas, his betrayer, replied, “Surely not I, Rabbi?”*

Talk about lying through your teeth!

What was Judas thinking as he spoke those words to the Son of God?

Is this man’s conscience so seared that he has no moral compass at all?

Probably not. Judas still has a conscience because he can’t handle the guilt after Jesus is arrested.

Regardless...

Matthew 26:25—*“Surely not I, Rabbi?”*

We mentioned how important titles are in Scripture, and Judas deliberately uses the title, *Rabbi* or *Teacher*.

Jesus has over 150 titles, and here’s one of them.

Back in verse 22, Matthew records how the other Disciples called Jesus, “Lord.”

Matthew 26:22—*Deeply distressed, each one began to say to him, “Surely not I, Lord?”*

“Rabbi” is way different than *Lord—Lord*, meaning “Master.”

The other eleven Disciples are all on the same team.

However, Judas calls Jesus “Rabbi/Teacher.”

The difference is eternally significant.

“Teacher” is a term of respect, while “Master” refers to ownership.

In other words, Judas hasn't submitted to the Lordship of Jesus.

It's very interesting that throughout the Gospels, Judas never calls Jesus “Lord.”

His language consistently maintains this distance.

In other words, Judas is not saved? Doesn't believe Jesus: The Gospel.

Judas' own language condemns him. How does Jesus respond?

X **Matthew 26:25**—“You have said it,” he told him.

This is a fairly cryptic answer from Jesus—what's it mean?

This was a Greek expression called a “qualified affirmation.”

Jesus puts responsibility back onto Judas.

We do the same thing today:

- You already know the answer to that.
- What's stopping you?

The “you” in Greek is emphatic—meaning “Yes, you said it yourself” or “You have said it, not I”;

So, Jesus essentially identified Judas as His betrayer and placed responsibility on Judas without a direct confrontation.

It's Jesus' indirect way of letting Judas know that He knows—without letting the rest of the Disciples know!

Jesus couldn't let the Disciples know, because Judas still had a job to do.

APPLICATION:

Consider meditating on Matthew 26:1-25 and answering one question each day this week during your devotional time with the Lord.

1. *How would you define God's sovereignty in your own words?*
2. *How has betrayal shaped your understanding of forgiveness?*
3. *What lessons can be learned from the disciples' reaction to Jesus' revelation of betrayal?*
4. *How quickly are you to ask for forgiveness when realizing that you've been hypocritical?*
5. *How can understanding the story of Judas help us in our own relationships with friends and family?*
6. *Have you placed proactive measures in your life to guard yourself and your family from doing things and saying things that you'll instantly regret?*
7. *How can understanding the pain of betrayal help you be more compassionate towards others?*

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