

Logan Reynolds
First Belton
February 9, 2025

Series: Power of Moments

Title: What Is at Stake?

Text: John 13:21; John 13:31-36; John 7:34; Ephesians 2:1; Romans 5:8,10

Betrayal. That is an interesting word, isn't it? According to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, betrayal is the act of betraying someone by violating someone's trust and confidence. The interesting part is that for someone to be betrayed, they had to be in relationship with the one who betrayed them. I did a little research this week and concluded that the hardest thing to overcome is betrayal of trust in relationships. I bet I could take a poll this morning, and we could all point to a moment in time when we were betrayed. It is almost like you can still feel the air being sucked out of your lungs. I bet we can also remember that moment when we were the one who betrayed someone else's trust, too. See, whether we are the betrayed or the betrayer, it all leaves a lasting impact on us. We sit in this room this morning carrying wounds of betrayal.

As Jesus finished washing the disciples' feet, He sat down with His disciples and continued to teach them. Suddenly, out of His mouth came words that the disciples never thought they would hear. With remorse in His eyes and sadness in His heart, Jesus said in v. 21, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me."*

After shock and a brief dialogue, Jesus excuses Judas from the table, and he runs into the night to betray Jesus. Knowing all of this, v. 21 says He was *"troubled in his spirit."* Just like any one of us who have been betrayed, Jesus was brokenhearted. Nevertheless, Jesus doesn't sit in the sadness but presses on, which brings us to v. 31.

"When he [Judas] had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify in himself, and glorify him at once. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.'"

You may not realize it quite yet, but this is a powerful moment. In fact, many argue that when Judas left the room, it started the clock that unfolded all the events that led to Jesus' death. Prior to all these things happening, Jesus was reassuring the disciples that what is about to happen is about God and His glory. As the clock begins to click away, Jesus is about to return to His place of glory, and in doing so, God will be glorified as He glorifies the Son.

So, He says to them, *"little children,"* which may seem derogatory to us, but to them in their Jewish culture, it was a sign of deep care and gentleness as a good father would write to his

children. He tells them, in the next few days, *"You are going to seek me, but you will not be able to find me for where I am going you cannot come."*

Confused by all of this, the disciples would soon learn that something bigger is happening around them. God had sent Jesus to the earth to surrender His life even unto death. This was a mission that only the Son of God could shoulder.

He tells them in v. 36, *"Where I am going you cannot follow me **now**, but you will afterward."*

So, Jesus says, "While I am gone, here is what I leave for you." In other words, "Here are my last wishes," so to speak. V. 34, *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

I can't imagine the weight in the room. Jesus is leaving – after three years – and here is our last assignment. Love one another.

I am sure we could all make a list of things we would have expected Jesus to give the disciples as His last wish and their final assignment. We might think: "Go and tell everyone you know about me!" "Memorize everything that I have taught you." "Heal the blind, sick, and lame!" "Serve the poor." "Attend church every week and don't miss Bible study." "Pray daily." "Fast often." We could go on and on.

But notice, Jesus doesn't give us a list of things to do, He gives us one word: love. He tells us to love one another. That is His final command. Jesus knows the disciples pretty well by now and anticipates their questions before they could ask; He tells us how they are to love one another. *Just as He had loved them.*

Just like we could all point to a moment in time when someone betrayed us, I imagine, hearing these words, each one of the disciples could think back to the moment they first experienced Jesus' love. I think about that group, none of them of noble birth nor were they teachers of the law, yet Jesus saw them for who they were and chose them to be His followers. Peter, Andrew, James, and John - fisherman, yet Jesus loved them and chose them. Nathaniel and Thomas - full of doubt, yet Jesus saw past their doubts and chose them. Matthew - a tax collector; speaking of betrayal, he had betrayed the Jewish people, yet the Jewish Messiah loved him and called him to follow Him.

I imagine that the disciples were having flashbacks of the last three years when Jesus met with Mary, a woman possessed by demons, and He healed her and gave her a new identity. I bet they thought of the moment when, against all Jewish customs, Jesus went out of His way

to meet with the Samaritan woman at the well, who was all alone due to her lifestyle. He saw her not for who she was but for who she was becoming. I bet they thought of the moment when Jesus healed the Roman official's son. He healed the son of one who was considered an enemy of His people. Or the several times that Jesus healed the lepers, the deaf, blind, and lame, whom everyone else had given up on. Or the time when Jesus stuck up for the woman caught in adultery and how He spoke to her and loved her. Or how Jesus interacted with kids in town – His playful spirit and the way He talked with them. How about the way Jesus cared for Zacchaeus, a person who robbed people, yet Jesus shared a meal with him. And then, of course, I would imagine all those memories brought them to the moment when Jesus stooped down to wash their feet. In each case, Jesus showed up, He served, and He sacrificed, even if it meant He would get nothing in return or be betrayed.

This morning, maybe you, too, are having flashbacks of when you first experienced the love of Jesus. Some in this room were at the end of the rope - depressed, bitter, angry. Some of you were at the bottom of the barrel with nowhere to go - lonely, afraid, abandoned, hopeless. Some of you were met in your pride and self-righteousness, and Jesus broke through. Some of you were stuck in a whirlwind of doubt, trying to put together all the pieces of life. Some of you were drowning in shame, wondering if there was a way out, if anyone would love you if they found out. Some of you were met in your betrayal. Others of you were met as you betrayed.

Some of you met the love of Jesus through your parents as they sat with you on your bed each night, demonstrating His love as they explained the love of Christ for you.

Nevertheless, in each and every case, just like the disciples, Jesus showed up for us; He served us, and He sacrificed for us even if it meant He would get nothing in return and even if we would betray Him. Whether we have experienced the love of Jesus or not, the one thing that we all have in common is that no matter where we have been and no matter where we are right now, no one has ever loved us like Jesus.

The disciples didn't realize it at the time, but the next day, Jesus would surrender His life and die. Perplexed by it all, it wasn't until He arose from the grave and met with them that they realized all that had to happen - that Jesus' death was for them; it was for their sin.

Whether we realize it or not either, God created us to live in a perfect relationship with Him as our King. But, like Adam and Eve, instead of being content with that, we want more. That "wanting more," the desire to be like God, to rule over our lives, is what led to disobedience and ultimate separation from Him. Knowing that justice requires a wrong to be made right, God sent Jesus to the earth to die. By His death, Jesus satisfies the righteous requirement of the law and of sin, so that all who place their faith in Jesus as their substitute on the cross would be forgiven of their sin and made right with God. After His death, Jesus arose from the

grave as a sign of God's approval of the sacrifice and promise that, as Jesus arose from the grave conquering sin, so, too, will all those who have placed their faith and trust in Him.

No one has, nor will they ever, love you like Jesus.

And here we sit two thousand years later, knowing what the disciples didn't at the time as Jesus leaves us with this command: love one another as I have loved you even unto death.

Show up, serve, sacrifice your life for one another, even if that means that you get nothing in return. Even if it means betrayal. Love one another.

Hear me: we stop loving one another when we forget how we have been loved. We lose patience with each other when we forget how patient Jesus has been with us. We say unkind things to one another when we forget how kind Jesus has been to us. We leave each other out when we forget that Jesus invited us to the table. We abandon and betray one another when we forget that Jesus never betrayed us or abandoned us. We stop loving one another when we start thinking we deserve His love and forget that Ephesians 2:1 says that He found us when we were dead in our trespasses and sins. Romans 5:8 says that when we were still sinners, He died for us. Romans 5:10 says that while we were His enemies, God gave us His son. No one has ever loved us like Jesus.

This morning, if you want to love like Jesus, you must never get over how Jesus has loved you.

[video or song]

Let's talk briefly about what is at stake here. Jesus says in v. 35, *"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

This morning, what lies before us is this challenge – that when we love one another as Jesus has loved us, the world will know we are His. Our love for one another brings to life the love of Jesus for the world to see. But the opposite is also true – when we fail to love one another as Jesus has loved us, the world will question whether we are His, and the light of His love on earth will dim.

When we forget how Jesus has loved us, we fail to love one another, and when we fail to love one another, the world will miss the love of Jesus altogether.

Let's not ever get over the love of Jesus. While our testimony to the world may not be perfect, at the end of the day we showed up, we served, and we sacrificed for one another even if it meant we gained nothing in return or we were betrayed.