

“Betrayed!”

Liturgical Date: Proper 10 C

Primary Text: Psalm 41 (references events of 2 Samuel 13-18)

Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. The primary text for today’s sermon is the Psalm appointed for today, Psalm 41 and the historical chain of the events this Psalm references can be found in 2 Samuel Chapters 13-18. The title of the Sermon is “Betrayed!” All of the readings for today speak of loving our neighbor and caring for those in need. The first verse of the Psalm 41 says, *“Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the Lord delivers him”*. David, as the king of Israel, has a duty to look after the people of his kingdom, but the very existence of that kingdom is being threatened by a rebellion led by those who had betrayed him. **DAVID IS BETRAYED BY THOSE CLOSEST TO HIM, BUT GOD DELIVERS HIM FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN.**

Psalm 41 is written by David in a time of great trouble for him. The continuation of his rule, and even his very life, are in grave danger. He is going through a time of great calamity. He had fallen into sin with Bathsheba. He had repented after being confronted by Nathan, but there were grave consequences for his sin of adultery and sending the husband of his mistress to death in battle. His family was disarray. The child of his adulterous affair would die. One of his other sons, Amnon, would rape David’s daughter Tamar, his very own sister. Another of his sons, Absalom, would murder Amnon in vengeance. After a period of time, David would

offer forgiveness to Absalom, but this did not solve the rift between father and son.

In Psalm 41, David is physically ill. Perhaps weakened by all of these stressful events, his health was failing. Verses 3-8 speak of this. Verse 3 speaks of “his sickbed” or as the KJV paints a vivid picture by saying a “bed of languishing”. Verse 8 states, “A deadly thing is poured out on him” which could be literally translated “is welded to him” implying a deep despair and illness that cannot be shaken. Through all of this, David does not cry out “Why is this happening to me!” He knows full and well that he deserves the troubles that have befallen him as he calls out to God in verse 4, *“O Lord, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you.”* Through all of this, David knows that God can deliver and restore him.

As with most political rulers, David had rivals and enemies that would have liked him cast out of his position of authority. The weakness brought on by his illness gives them a chance to strike. In verse 6 he is visited by someone who offers false sympathies, and then goes and broadcasts the weakened state of the king to others. The time is right for David’s enemies to make their move.

And where does this rebellion come from? Not outside forces, but those close to him. A rebellion led by those within the royal family and court. History is replete with great damage done by the betrayal of a close, trusted one. From Brutus’ plot against Julius Caesar to the treason of one of the American Revolution’s greatest generals-Benedict Arnold-betrayal can come from where you least expect it. In fact, mafia families and gangs have been brought down by someone on the inside, who despite vows of loyalty at the threat of death, have flipped sides and worked to bring down the

organization. Law enforcement knows the value of someone on the inside who is undercover or an informant.

David's rule would be challenged by his own flesh and blood, Absalom who led the rebellion against his father. David's third son had a winning personality, remarkable good looks, and the organizational ability to rally those opposed to his father. In addition, there was a traitor in the midst that had access to David and his plans before he was exposed. In verse 9, David laments, *"Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me."* This turncoat advisor was Ahithophel. He likely was the one who reported the poor condition of David's health in verse 6. Ahithophel assisted Absalom and the rebellion. He is sometimes called the "Old Testament Judas" and the similarities are striking. Like Judas, he was a close associate. Like Judas he ate at the table appearing as a friend. In fact, this verse is prophetic as Jesus spoke it at the Last Supper, *"I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen, But the Scripture will be fulfilled, He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me"* (John 13:18). But David was a great king and highly skilled military leader. He is eventually able to undermine Ahithophel with his own spy inside the rebellion, Hushai, and when Ahithophel realizes that his usefulness is coming to end and David's forces may prevail he, like Judas, committed suicide by hanging himself.

David and his allies are able to turn back the rebellion. God had not abandoned David as he says in verse 11, *"my enemy will not triumph over me"* and in verse 12 he knows that God has, *"set me in your presence forever."* DAVID IS BETRAYED BY THOSE CLOSEST TO HIM, BUT GOD DELIVERS HIM FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN. The rebellion is crushed and most importantly, the line of Jesus Christ is

preserved. Absalom meets his doom when as he was fleeing his long locks got caught in a tree, and he was killed by David's military commander, Joab. Despite Absalom's rebellion, David wept over the death of his son and cried out in 2 Samuel 18:35, "*O my son, Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I have died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!*"

Betrayal can hurt. It can cut deeply. It can sting and take a long time to heal. Perhaps you have been, or felt, betrayed at times in your life. We may get angry when betrayed by someone, but it is especially painful when it is someone that we trusted. A friend at work is secretly conspiring to get a promotion ahead of you. A family member insults you behind your back. A child, whom you cared for and raised, rebels and brings shame. At these times it is important to go to the Lord in prayer for strength and comfort. We should not blame God. Betrayal is one of the many sins that are a result of living in a fallen world. Our sins may not be as dramatic as David's, but we do sin. There is forgiveness that follows repentance, but the consequences of our sin still affect us on this earth. Like David in Psalm 41 we need to recognize the effects of sin and call out to God to strengthen us and delivers us in times of trial, even betrayal.

Does God know something about betrayal? Can he relate to our times of betrayal? Certainly. God's created beings have rebelled against him as well. Lucifer was one of the most beautiful angels in heaven. But he led a rebellion in an attempt to seize power in the heavens. He was defeated by the all-powerful God, as St. Michael led the angel armies against the rebellious demons. Our Lord created the world and all that is in it. On the sixth day, He created man, a creation in His own image and blessed mankind with a perfect Garden to live in and enjoy direct fellowship with Him. There was only one rule: don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

But alas, Adam and Eve could not resist the temptation of Satan and rebelled against their Father-God who had given them life and every blessing. This is the ultimate betrayal in history, one which brought sin and death into the perfect world that God had created. God rescued the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. Their response was complaining and disobedience. God time and time again protected the people of Israel from their enemies, but the people still disobeyed God's Law and followed after false gods. God sent His Son into the world, but he was rejected by many and betrayed by one of His disciples. God has given His Church great freedom and favor in our country, but many churches move away from the teachings of the Bible and compromise with the prevailing winds of the times. Yes, God knows about betrayal from those He loves and has given so much to.

But what is God's response? How did He ultimately reconcile His rebellious children to Him? God delivers us from the consequences of sin, by coming to us. There was a penalty to be paid for the rebellion of sin. A penalty too high for anyone to pay but God Himself. Jesus came as God in the flesh to reconcile the betrayers. David had to lose a son, Absalom, in the rebellion. But the Son that God sent was not a rebel, but a reconciler. A sacrifice that would die for the sins of His people and rise again in victory.

The story is told of an African tribe where a rebellion took place against the chief. The chief decreed that whoever started the rebellion would be bound to a tree and receive 100 lashes, likely resulting in their death. It was discovered that the chief's son was the mastermind of the rebellion. His people wondered what would happen. If the chief backed down from his threat he would be a liar and justice would not be served. But his own son, could he go through with it? To the shock of the people, the chief ordered himself tied to the tree and he received the lashes in his son's place. The

innocent in place of the guilty out of love for his rebellious child. You see this illustrates what God has done for us. God is the chief. We are the rebellious child who betrayed the trust of our heavenly Father. But instead of the punishment falling on us, He took the lashes for us. Because He had too? No, out of His divine Fatherly love for His creation.

Betrayal is painful. But there is deliverance. DAVID IS BETRAYED BY THOSE CLOSEST TO HIM, BUT GOD DELIVERS HIM FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN. And so God delivers us. The book of Psalms was originally sub-divided into 5 books. Psalm 41 closes the first book. At the end of each book, there is a benediction of hope and praise. All praise for our salvation from sin, including the sin of betrayal, goes completely to God. As Psalm 41:13 concludes, so do we conclude the word for today, *“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen.”*