

Good evening!

I'm Pastor Doug Browne. Thank you for joining me this evening.

May the peace of the Lord be with you.

(pause to let folks say "and also with you.")

Remember, "In life and in death we belong to God."

We trust in God, and God is worthy of our trust. Even now.

During this time when we're not meeting in person, I've been posting videos here, praying with you and walking through the Bible stories in the Gospel of Mark, continuing from where we left off when we were together in one room. Our Sunday morning services are on Zoom. We will post a portion of the video from that here, too, but there's more information on both the Church

website and the Church Facebook page. If you can't find this information, please contact me.

If you've missed any of the videos, the easiest way to find them is that they're all linked from the sermons page on the church website.

I won't be posting mid-week videos on Facebook next week, but we will have our Maundy Thursday service at 7:30 on Zoom, and, of course, Easter Sunday at 10:30 am.

I hope to pick the midweek services back up after Easter Sunday, with the Book of Acts, the story of the church before it owned buildings, when all the people were in houses.

My hope is that doing these videos will help us remember that we are God's people, no matter what's happening around us, and that God loves us.

Today, let's pick up in Mark chapter 14, verses 3 through 9, if you'd like to read along at home.

"It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; for they said, 'Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people.'

"Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him."

This is the Word of God, for the People of God.

Thanks Be to God.

This is just a few verses, but it's a required part of the story. The high priests are looking for a way to get rid of Jesus, but they're afraid to do it during the Passover Festival, when Jerusalem is full of extra people. They're afraid that arresting Jesus will cause a riot, and that the Romans will then feel like they have to put this riot down by force. This would mean lots of people getting killed.

Judas Iscariot goes to the high priests and offers to betray Jesus. They offer him money, and he starts looking for an opportunity.

Jesus is no fool. He knows what's going on. He doesn't kick Judas out. He doesn't tell the others to shun the traitor. Jesus knows what he is going to do,

and Jesus loves him anyway. Jesus sits down and eats the Passover meal with his disciples, including Judas. He loves them all, and he eats this meal with them, because he loves them.

Do you have someone in your life whom you think of as a betrayer, even a Judas?

Is it someone of differing political views, who is more difficult to deal with in these polarized times?

Is it a former friend, or a former spouse, who broke a vital promise?

Is it a sibling with whom you don't speak?

Is it a parent, who did not give you what you needed as a child?

Is it a child, who moved away when you needed them most?

Scripture tells how Jesus dealt with his Judas. Jesus stayed who he was, and he kept working to follow the path that God had put him on. He refused to change that in order to give Judas whatever it was that Judas wanted. He continued to do the will of God, but, at the same time, He reached out and fed Judas from His Table.

Jesus taught us to love our neighbors, and our enemies. Jesus did it.

So, even as we deal with difficult people and difficult situations, remember to love all our neighbors, and that'll include our enemies, too.

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And now, people of God, remember, we are still God's people. We are still called to love our neighbors and our enemies. Which is convenient, considering how often those are the same person.

Trust in God and wash your hands.

And may the grace of God the Father, the love of Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit rest upon you and rest in you, now and forever. Amen.