

# “Easter’s Message on Overcoming Betrayal”

LaPorte New Church Swedenborgian  
Easter Sunday Morning Sermon  
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April 17, 2022

## Scriptures

Psalm 55:12-14, 16-17, 20-22  
Luke 24:1-12

## Hymns/Songs

“Jesus Christ is Risen Today”  
“Let Us Break Bread Together” 265  
“The Resurrection Song” 132 (vs. 1,2,4)

## Children’s Message: “The Lesson of the Easter Lily”

### **Psalm 55:12-14, 16-17, 20-22**

#### ***Cast Your Burden on the Lord***

<sup>12</sup> For it is not an enemy who taunts me—  
then I could bear it;  
it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me—  
then I could hide from him.

<sup>13</sup> But it is you, a man, my equal,  
my companion, my familiar friend.

<sup>14</sup> We used to take sweet counsel together;  
within God's house we walked in the throng.

<sup>16</sup> But I call to God,  
and the LORD will save me.

<sup>17</sup> Evening and morning and at noon  
I utter my complaint and moan,  
and he hears my voice.

<sup>20</sup> My companion stretched out his hand against his friends;  
he violated his covenant.

<sup>21</sup> His speech was smooth as butter,  
yet war was in his heart;  
his words were softer than oil,  
yet they were drawn swords.

<sup>22</sup> Cast your burden on the LORD,  
and he will sustain you;  
he will never permit  
the righteous to be moved.

**Luke 24:1-12*****The Resurrection***

**24** But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. <sup>2</sup> And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <sup>3</sup> but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. <sup>4</sup> While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. <sup>5</sup> And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? <sup>6</sup> He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, <sup>7</sup> that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." <sup>8</sup> And they remembered his words, <sup>9</sup> and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. <sup>10</sup> Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, <sup>11</sup> but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. <sup>12</sup> But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

**Insight for Worship**

*Secrets of Heaven n. 1735* by Emanuel Swedenborg

"There is no adequate way to describe God except in terms of pure love and so in terms of pure mercy toward the whole human race. That mercy is His desire to save everyone, to make everyone happy forever, and to give us everything He has. Anyone who is willing to follow is someone He wishes to draw toward heaven, or in other words, toward Himself, out of pure mercy, by the powerful force of love."

**SERMON:** "Easter's Message on Overcoming Betrayal"

Today is Easter Sunday, a time of greatest joy when we celebrate our Lord's final and greatest victory over evil and sin—when God's Divine Love and Truth won, when it had appeared that on Good Friday all was lost. What does Easter and the Lord's resurrection mean for you, for your life? Is it perhaps a powerful confirmation that our own physical death is really the beginning of our highest form of life in God's Kingdom? Is it a reminder to never count the Lord "out!" because when things are at their worst, God and Heaven are at their best. Or, is Easter our reminder that out of many forms of

dying or death come a long array of mysterious blessings of new life—symbolized by the rebirth of Springtime out of the long apparent deadness of Winter?

Easter Sunday is a time when families get together and favorite foods get passed around the dinner table. Therefore, I am aware that the length of my sermon determines how soon it will be until you get to eat your Easter ham, those scrumptious Deviled Eggs or your favorite Quiche Lorraine if that is your thing!

I've heard it said that perhaps the biggest barrier many people have toward making significant progress in their life, is our tendency to live in the past. And in my experience, I can easily say that one of the more common hurdles many people struggle with is...**betrayal**. William Blake once wrote, "It is easier to forgive an enemy than to forgive a friend." And Shannon Alder wrote, "If you spend your time hoping someone will suffer the consequences for what they did to your heart, then you're allowing them to hurt you a second time in your mind."

This morning I'd like to talk with you about Easter's message on overcoming the trauma of betrayal in life. I believe that there is no greater insult to a friendship than betrayal. Betrayal can rob us of a sense of security in life, because someone close to us has proven themselves to be untrustworthy.

Ever since I was a teenager it became clear to me that the theme of betrayal was at the heart of why our Lord Jesus Christ was handed over into the hands of evil men who convinced Pontius Pilot to crucify Jesus on Good Friday. As we know, it was one of Christ's inner circle, one of the twelve disciples named Judas Iscariot, who decided to sell his Master's life into the hands of the Sanhedrin for 30 pieces of silver. Judas had been one of Christ's trusted disciples, but when Judas made his decision to allow the Pharisees' guards to find and arrest the Lord, he added insult to injury by identifying Jesus who had been praying in Gethsemane by greeting the Lord with a kiss. In *Luke 22:48* we read: "...[then] Jesus said to him, '**Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?**'" And so began the horrible events that ended in the Lord's death upon a cross.

Some years ago, I began to realize that the theme of betrayal looms much greater than just with Judas' actions on the Thursday night after the Lord instituted His Holy Supper. Among the many powerful messages God has for us on Easter Sunday, one of them is the overarching theme of how we can move in the direction of healing after someone has betrayed us, or after we have betrayed someone else. Most of us have

felt the sting of betrayal, and it is likely that most of us have even inflicted betrayal on someone we love. From experience I know how hard and painful betrayal is for our hearts, and I hope that what I'm about to share with you will be a source of healing goodness in your growth in God's Love.

This morning I will deal with these three aspects of what I believe is Easter's message on overcoming betrayal:

- 1) By recognizing the backdrop of betrayal within the incredible drama of Holy Week, which leads us into Easter Sunday.**
- 2) By looking briefly at King David's *Psalms 55*, which unveils deep insights about how we can move further into healing and growth after betrayal happens to us.**
- 3) By looking briefly at how God-in-Christ chose mercy and forgiveness rather than getting stuck in bitterness.**

There really is a much larger backdrop of betrayal that Jesus dealt with, in addition to what Judas had done by handing Him over to the Sanhedrin. You may recall that on that fateful night when Christ was arrested, at the end of the Holy Supper the Lord helped His disciples to understand that all of them would betray Him. We read in *Matthew 26:31-32*, "Then Jesus said to them, 'This very night you will all fall away on account of Me. For it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.'"

Also, Jesus of course was a Jewish man, which means He was a part of the Israelite nation, and in their beliefs all Jews are brothers and sisters under God. Thus, in that sense, all of those who plotted against Him and then handed Him over to Pontius Pilot betrayed the Lord. Now, of course, there is a difference between premeditated betrayal versus accidental betrayal, such as what Peter did when he denied knowing Christ three times before the rooster crowed in the morning. In *Psalms 55* we find another example of betrayal, which also appears to have been done intentionally, but in that instance it was perpetrated upon King David, who himself was guilty of betraying and really murdering a friend of his in order to cozy up with that man's wife, Bathsheba.

In this psalm it is clear that one of David's close friends had hurt him by means of betrayal. David refers to his friend as his "equal," a companion and even a familiar

friend. David recalls that he often would walk to worship with this heartbreaker friend where they sought spiritual counsel together—they “walked in the throng” of those going in together for worship each week. So, what wisdom does David give us out of his tragic experience?

First we see that as modern psychology would say, David knew he needed to express and name his pain. David was no stranger to the torment of enemies, but even that seemed less painful than betrayal from a friend. We can do as David did, perhaps first by journaling our experience of betrayal, or by seeking out a trusted friend who will listen. Or, we can have time with our own pastor, priest or rabbi...or, perhaps with a therapist we trust. But then David’s wisdom goes even deeper, by telling us that what helped and healed him most of all was casting his burden upon the Lord, because he knew that ultimately God will save him. He wrote that “Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and [the Lord] hears my voice.” David recalls personal details, saying that his once trusted friend used to stretch out his hand in friendship, but he now had violated their covenant, while his friend’s voice was “as smooth as butter, yet war was in his heart.” And David encourages us as well to ***cast our burdens upon the Lord also***, because the Lord sustains and cares for us.

I appreciate also that David **learned from his experience** of betrayal. He learned that his once good friend actually had untrustworthy elements in his heart, which means that David would need to approach friendship with deeper perceptiveness and learn how to draw better boundaries around who he let into his closest circle of friends. The reality is that a severe betrayal by a close friend or family member cuts us to the quick, wounding us very, very deeply. Betrayal is very hard. There’s something powerful about being betrayed by those we have trusted deeply, which makes it harder to forgive and harder to move on. Perhaps your experience of betrayal happened by a lifelong friend, your spouse, a parent or a trusted coworker. Betrayals like this tend to sink down into our bones—they haunt us and refuse to let go.

Why does such betrayal stick with us? Because it wounds us so deeply. But, even our hardest and most painful experiences in life are not outside of the infinite, Divine power that God is. This for me is the most meaningful gift from the Lord’s resurrection on that morning when He rose again into His fullest Divine-Human form. Jesus had been betrayed by His closest friends, but even that was no match for the Divine Love and Wisdom of God, who was Christ’s soul. If we will give God the power to heal us, to raise us upward into Heaven’s Light as if we were on the eagle’s wings, then

we will discover our wounds shall be healed and we will be set free, able to forgive and move on, even if the betrayer shows no remorse, no contrition, and gives no apology.

How you ask? Through the power of the Lord's glorification and resurrection. Resurrection isn't just about life after death. It's about bringing new life into the dark parts of the human experience, the places where we feel dead. It's about resurrecting us from despair to hope, from conflict to peace, from dismay to joy, and from hatred into love. [God's power of resurrection brings us back to life in this life as well as the next](#), and when we open ourselves deeply to this Divine power from the Lord, then we get empowered to overcome all of our barriers and roadblocks—just as the disciples did. If you recall, they went from feeling forlorn, overwhelmed and ridden with guilt, to becoming the great forerunners of Christianity itself! Through the power of the Lord's resurrection, they were no longer afraid of what Rome would do to them if they continued Christ's mission, and from their seeds of loving faith here we are today as learners and growers of love and peace in God.

And in God's Spirit we become the comforter to others who are hurting. The Apostle Paul learned this gift, in that God is ["the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. <sup>5</sup> For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ."](#) (2 Cor. 1:3-5)

In conclusion, may we all become heirs of the Lord's abundant goodness and peace, instead of getting trapped in bitterness, anger and vengeance, instead of hoping and waiting for our betrayer to apologize. For we were born to be radically loving and forgiving as Jesus was and is. Remember, as our theology informs us:

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"There is no adequate way to describe God except in terms of pure love and so in terms of pure mercy toward the whole human race. That mercy is His desire to save everyone, to make everyone happy forever, and to give us everything He has. Anyone who is willing to follow is someone He wishes to draw toward heaven, or in other words, toward Himself, out of pure mercy, by the powerful force of love."

So, rise again and rise above that which holds you back from your angelic potential, and be the Light of love for others whom God brings your way.

Amen.