

Reeks: *Keeping Love...*

Titel: *...Trust and Betrayal*

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Good morning, friends, it's good to be with you again. You've got a bulletin, and inside that bulletin there is a leaflet, and on that leaflet there is, I think, one of the most moving stories in the New Testament. It takes place just after Jesus is raised from the dead, and I want to read this story to you. It's a little bit long, but I'd like to read it. I'd like you to follow with me. If you've got a pen or a pencil in your hand I'd like you to underline some of the sentences as we just go through it, so let's go through it together.

Afterwards Jesus appeared again to his disciples by the Sea of Galilee. It happened in this way: Simon Peter, Thomas, also known as Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. I'm going out to fish, Simon Peter told them, and they said we'll go with you, so they went out and they got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Now, here's a very beautiful sentence. It you've got a pen, underline it. Early in the morning Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, friends, have you any fish? No, they answered. He said throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some, and when they did they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish, then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, it is the Lord.

As soon as Simon Peter heard him say it is the Lord he wrapped his outer garment around him, for he had taken it off, and he jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, lowing [sic] the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore; about a hundred yards. When they landed they saw... and you may want to underline this... they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

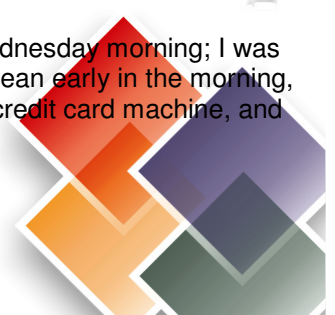
Jesus said bring some of the fish you have just caught, and so Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153. Fishermen always know how many fish they've caught, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them come here and have breakfast. You may want to underline that. None of the disciples dared to ask Him who are You. They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread, it's like a communion moment, Jesus took the bread and He gave it to them, and He did the same with the fish.

We turn over. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples after He was raised from the dead. When they had finished eating, this is a very important conversation; Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do You love Me more than these? Yes, Lord, he said, You know that I love You. Jesus said feed My lambs. Again Jesus said, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? He answered yes, Lord; You know that I love You. Jesus said take care of My sheep. The third time... you can underline the third time. The third time He said to him, Simon, son of John, do you love Me?

Peter was hurt because Jesus had asked him the third time, do you love Me? He said, Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you. Jesus said feed My sheep. Very truly, Jesus said, when you were younger you dressed yourself and you went where you wanted, but when you are old you will stretch out your hands and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go, and Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God, then He said to him follow Me.

Friends, I wonder if you would agree with me if I were to say to you today that we live in a day and age when we really struggle to trust people, whether it be in the public sphere of life, the political, the business, the commercial, the professional, whether it be in the personal dimension of life; marriage, friendships, colleagueship, we seem to be living in a crisis of trust, a crisis of trust, and I have little doubt... I have little doubt that you know what I'm speaking about.

The other day, about two, three weeks ago I came across to the West Rand early one Wednesday morning; I was going to spend the day here, and a West Rander took me out for breakfast at Mugg and Bean early in the morning, we had some coffee, in Clearwater, and when the waitress came across she brought the credit card machine, and



then she turned away so my friend could, you know, put his PIN in, I made sure that a West Rander paid for an East Rander for breakfast, and so she turned away, and he said to her, tell me, what's it like not to be trusted by your customers?

She looked at him as if he was from another planet, and then he said to her, here's my credit card. I'd like you to put in my PIN number, and she looked at him, like, with open eyes, not too sure, was this a joke, was she on Candid Camera, so she put in his PIN number and then she said to him, you know, this is the first time ever as a waitress I've ever been trusted with someone's PIN number, and I know that some of you are thinking, jjs, he was crazy. Well, I just want to say he comes from the West Rand.

We live in a day and age where people don't trust each other, and I have a hunch that underneath this struggle to trust is the experience that we all know of, I think, of betrayal, huh, of betrayal. On the one hand there are many people in this auditorium today, maybe all of us, who know what it means what it is to be betrayed, to be betrayed.

Maybe we were betrayed by the company we worked for, maybe we were betrayed by someone who was handling our finances. Maybe we were betrayed by someone in the professional world that we would have trusted without blinking an eye 20, 30 years ago. Maybe, most devastatingly of all, we have been betrayed by someone who said they loved us, maybe a father who abused us, a loved one who was unfaithful, a child who took money from us, maybe to support a drug habit, huh, and because we have been betrayed we struggle to trust, huh.

On the other hand, maybe some of us struggle to trust, let's be honest, because we know that we are not trustworthy. Maybe we have betrayed others and we know that if we look into the mirror. Maybe we have overpromised and under-delivered. Maybe we have made promises that we have not kept, said something that we would do that we haven't done, made a promise to love forever, and we haven't. Maybe there is a betrayer in each one of us. Who here hasn't ever broken, huh, their word, a promise? I think all of us have at some stage or another, so we can't throw stones at each other, huh.

Now, it's against this background of trust, the struggle to trust, and of betrayal that I want us to go into one of the most moving stories in the whole of the Bible. It's when Jesus comes to Peter, and perhaps besides Judas who betrayed Jesus, maybe Peter is the one who betrays Jesus the most, and in this story, and it's a moving story, and that's why I took time to read the whole story to you, we watch Jesus coming to someone who has betrayed Him deeply and we watch Jesus making possible for Peter, the betrayer, a new beginning, a new start, a new day, and just for a few moments, not for long today, I want us to step into the story.

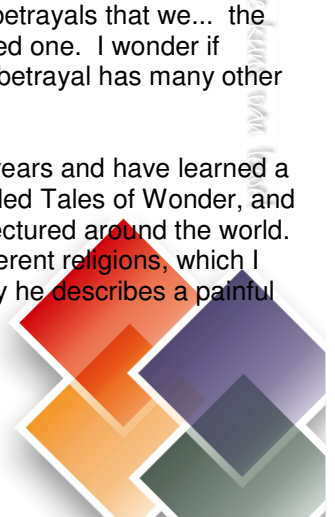
I want us to live in the story, see what's going on, and then I pray that, just as we do this, that the spirit of Jesus Christ will come to us today and maybe bring to us today a new day, a new day. Will you notice, friends, that when this story begins, Peter, as we meet Peter in this story he represents the betrayer in every one of our own lives. There's a Peter in every one of us, huh. If you want to understand the story you have to understand two other stories that took place a little bit earlier in the gospels, and I'm not going to go through them too long.

In John 13, if you're taking notes make a note of that, in John 13 Peter says to Jesus, Jesus, I will follow You wherever You will go, wherever You will go. Even if You go to death I will follow You. Peter just promises himself to Jesus, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, Jesus, I'm Yours. John 18, Peter, the same Peter who has made that promise denies Jesus three times, three times. Next to a charcoal fire he says to a young servant woman, he says to her about Jesus, I don't know this man, I don't know this man, I don't know this man.

Peter represents the betrayer in each one of us, huh, and what I want to suggest this morning, friends, is that betrayal has many faces. Betrayal has many faces. It takes many shapes and forms in our lives. If we were to think only of marriage today sometimes we only think of betrayal in terms of sexual unfaithfulness. That's usually the only grid we have to understand betrayal, and it is... it is perhaps one of the deepest betrayals that we... the deepest betrayals that we can... that we can share in, both as betrayer and as the betrayed one. I wonder if there's anything more devastating in a marriage to get through. I wonder sometimes, but betrayal has many other shapes, it has many other forms.

I love reading autobiographies, and especially, you know, people that I followed over the years and have learned a lot from, and there's a bit... there's an autobiography that I've just finished reading, it's called Tales of Wonder, and it's written by a 91 year old guy called Huston Smith. He's well known in the USA. He's lectured around the world. He's a... he's been a student of different religions, and he helps people to understand different religions, which I think is a great thing. He himself is someone who follows Christ, and in this autobiography he describes a painful moment in his own marriage.

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He's been married for over 60 years, and I listen to people who have been married for over 60 years. He writes these words. He says there's only one time that I have been both scared and afraid. It was the night Kendra, that's the woman he's married to, said you know, I'm thinking of leaving you. I sobbed myself to sleep that night. It is painful even now; he's 91 years old when he writes this, to admit that Kendra had good reasons for leaving me. I'm a workaholic.

There are perhaps worse forms infidelity than the sexual. Here I was living with one of the most interesting women in the world and my attention always was somewhere else. Fortunately she did not leave me. I attempted to make amends and I began the most difficult challenge of all challenges; I began to change, an honest admission of a man who betrayed the one in his life through over-commitment to work. It's a betrayal, huh.

I was sitting with a woman; she must be in her early 30s, ten days ago in Benoni. We were sitting together in my office and she said to me, and I could just hear the anguish, and I'm going to quote her almost verbatim. She's speaking to me, she said, you know, Trevor, when I go to bed at night I lie in my bed alone. My husband is in another room at the computer. I know what's going on, and it's one of the most painful things to realise, that he prefers what's on the computer to me. Can you hear the anguish? Can you feel the betrayal?

Sometimes we do it with our sport, don't we? We say, ag you know, she's a golfing widow. Johan is not here so I'll talk about cycling widows this morning, huh, but betrayal takes many shapes and many forms. In our friendships I betray you when I speak behind your back. I betray you. When I damage your reputation in someone else I betray you. I betray a colleague when I speak badly about them when that person is not in my presence.

I think of the betrayal that happens within the Christian church when Christians talk badly about each other instead of to each other. Sometimes I just want to say to my brothers and sisters let's just talk rather than talk about, huh. Can I ask you this morning, and this is a difficult question and it requires a lot of courage, what form does betrayal take in your life? What form does betrayal take in your life?

Now, go back to the story. Peter has betrayed Jesus. Jesus has died. Can you imagine the remorse that Peter was living with, the guilt, the shame when Jesus was killed, and then Jesus is resurrected and one of the first things Jesus does after his resurrection, what does he do? He comes looking for Peter. He comes looking for the man who has betrayed him almost the most, and John described the moment beautifully.

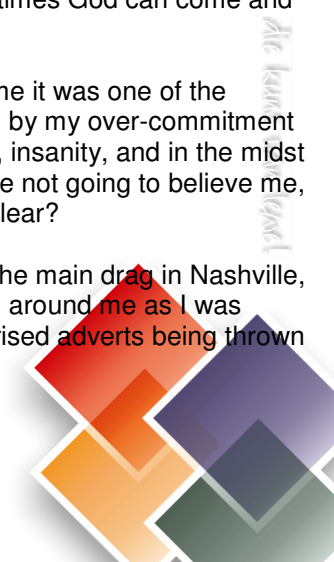
In his gospel he says early in the morning Jesus stood at the shore. Early in the morning as the sun was rising bringing colour again to the sky and to the sea Jesus comes for Peter. Isn't that a beautiful picture, Jesus bringing a new day, Jesus bringing a new beginning, Jesus bringing new creation with Him to Peter? It's a beautiful... and that's what the gospel is about.

The gospel is about a God who loves us so much that He comes to us in Jesus Christ and looks for us in our betrayals, and even though we've messed up, even though we've broken our promises, even though we have not done what we've said, even though we've broken God's heart as well as the hearts of people around about us, God does not give up on us, and some of us need to say that to ourselves deeply this morning; God does not give up on me. He comes looking for us in Jesus Christ.

Even though we have been faithless He still has faith in us, and maybe even as I'm speaking this morning, even maybe through my words, Christ Himself may be coming to you, just knocking on your door and saying come on, let Me in, let Me find you, let's make a new beginning, let Me bring a new day, and sometimes God can come and find us in a most unusual way, huh, have you noticed that?

May was a very difficult month for me. Debbie, she's the woman I'm married to, said to me it was one of the darkest moments of our marriage for her. That was very hard to hear, and it was caused by my over-commitment to work, taking on stuff all over the place. It was insane, absolutely... it was like insanity, insanity, and in the midst of this pain I had to go overseas, and I had a strange experience one Friday night. You're not going to believe me, and I need to say, before I even tell you the story, I was stone cold sober, okay. Is that clear?

I just had had a pizza and I was walking back to my room, this was a Friday night along the main drag in Nashville, the Vanderbilt University on my left hand side, the Medical School, and I was just looking around me as I was walking, and there was... I'm sure you know what I mean, there was like these computerised adverts being thrown



up on the wall of the Vanderbilt Medical School, so there was just pictures changing all the time, so I was watching these pictures.

So there's a picture of Martin Luther King and then there came a picture of, you know, the facilities of the university, and then there was a picture of a graduation ceremony, and suddenly I saw these words: Mr Hudson, you are tough on your wife. Huh? I was riveted. Now, I don't know if there's a person that every... in America that everyone knows, there's also a TV celebrity, I didn't know what was going on.

So I got hold of my Blackberry, and some of you are thinking I was on some other kind of berry, but I got hold of my Blackberry just to get a photograph of this, just a photograph, so I waited there for the... for it to come around again, the advert, it must have been an advert, but it didn't come around and I got a bit embarrassed standing there with my Blackberry while people were passing me on either side, but it was a moment of... and to this day I don't know what that is, but it was like God speaking to me, God coming to look for me, God saying to me, Trevor, come on, let me find you now, huh. Will you let Christ find you, even now?

But there's a third movement in this story, and it's a very important movement. Do you notice Jesus comes to Peter, and then what does Jesus do so that Peter can start again? He takes Peter on a long walk, on a long walk. Did you notice that? It's a long walk into truth, into truth, and there are three little bits and pieces there that we need to hold on. Did you notice how Jesus does this? He starts a charcoal fire.

Can you imagine what that does for Peter? What is Jesus doing? He is getting Peter to face his past. Peter, you denied me at a charcoal fire. Let's face facts, let's not push it under the carpet, and then Jesus asks him three times, do you love Me? Why three times? Why? Because Peter denied Him three times and He's helping Peter here to go on a journey, to face things, to face the denials, no excuses, and then Jesus does something very beautiful. He says to Peter I want you to feed my sheep. I've got a job of work for you to do. Even though you let me down I'm still going to trust you. I'm still going to put my faith in you, huh. I think that's how a new day comes to us, friends, it's when we let Jesus... it's when we let Jesus take us on a long journey into truth, into truth, huh.

One of my favourite lines from the Psalms, Psalm 51, God, You desire truth in the most inward part. You desire truth... You desire truth, and I want to suggest, friends, this morning, that if we've betrayed someone, and I think we all have one way or another, the way we enter a new day is when we allow Christ to take us into truth, the truth of our lives, the truth of what we've done, the truth of our betrayals, the truth of our deceit, the truth of our darkness, the truth of our lies, no excuses, no rationalisations, and sometimes it's helpful do to that with another human being, and if there's one thing that helps a person to trust me again when I've betrayed them is when they can see me on that journey into truth, and I'm hoping there will be a day when Debbie will say, you know, Trevor, when you talk about your work I'm going to trust you again. I'm hoping that she will see in me a journey into truth in my own life. Can I invite you to come with me on that journey into truth, into truth, the truth of our betrayals? Then the new day comes. Then the new day comes.

Let me end. If you were to come to Benoni, and you must come visit me sometime, if you were to come to Benoni for a communion service, we're going to have communion now, in the Methodist Church we do it in a bit of a different way. I start every communion service with one of the most haunting sentences I say on a Sunday, and I want to say that sentence now. It's a haunting sentence. It's a beautiful sentence. I say these words: in the night, in the night, in the night in which Jesus was betrayed He took bread and He broke it. In the night that He was betrayed He took wine and He poured it. In the night that we betray God by betraying others Christ takes the bread and breaks it and says I give Myself to you in mercy and forgiveness, let Me find you.

In the night when we are betrayed and our lives are devastated Christ says I know what it's like to be betrayed. I have been betrayed and I want to walk with you through this betrayal, deeply and closely and intimately and personally. In the night in which Jesus was betrayed, in the night He took bread and He broke it and He said this is My body, broken for you. We're going to take communion, and I pray that as we take communion we'll open our hearts and lives in a new way to Christ, who comes to us today. Amen.

For a few moments, just a few moments, maybe you want to just allow the gospel that Stef has drawn, the look of Christ into your life, the look of deep love, mercy, forgiveness, challenge, and just for a few moments you may want Christ to look at you and you may want to inwardly make your own response to Him today.

God, we thank You for the gospel. We thank You for the new day that can dawn in our life with Christ and for the way that He brings colour back into our drab lives. Come to us today. Come to us, Lord, in the pain of our



betrayals, those that have been done to us and those that we have done to others. Help us, Christ, to go with You on that deep journey into that truth which sets us free to live anew. Come, Lord Jesus, come. This is our prayer. We offer it to you with all the love and the longing of our hearts. We say together as God's people, Amen, amen.

Well, friends, I hope that it's going to be a good day for you. May the joy... May the joy of the risen Christ be with you. God bless you, friends, take care.



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die kuns van taal

