

My Dad died when I was 31. I had seen him twice since I was 11 and my parents got divorced. He was 56 and lived in Invercargill. I was the Baptist Minister in Ashburton. Janet and I and the kids packed up and went to Glengarry to be with him and his second ex-wife, while he lay waiting for cancer to claim his life.

It was a good couple of weeks for me. Perhaps not so for my Dad. I got to sit with him as he lay dying. It was quiet and peaceful and it felt like a good thing to do. I met one of my half brothers for the first time. My Aunty and Grandfather also came to stay. I hadn't seen them in a long time either. My brother Lindsay was also there.

In the midst of all of the grief, for him dying, for his leaving, for his never being in touch, for not knowing him ... there was some healing, and that was good.

When he died, I took the funeral and spoke of what I remembered. They were the thoughts and memories of an 11-year-old boy.

My dad never amounted to much; a man full of dreams and not a lot of sensible action. When he died, he didn't have anything to leave other than a small insurance policy. We were all called together for the reading of the will, such as it was.

Even in 1991 \$9000 wasn't a lot. Lindsay and I got left \$500 each, and my half-brother the balance.

In spite of the fact that I hadn't seen him in over 20 years, and hadn't heard from him in 5, I was utterly floored. I had no idea that there would be anything other than a fair sharing of the little he had had.

I felt sick. Almost unclean, right under my skin. I kept thinking that I needed to scrap this dirt from off of my soul, shake myself free somehow. It took me a nano second to decide that giving my share of the money to my brother Lindsay was the right thing to do. I didn't want it.

I felt betrayed.

The Apostle Peter knows a little bit about betrayal too. Judas had been one of them. With them from the very beginning; eating, drinking and sleeping with them. Laughing and arguing and working with them. Watching, following Jesus all over Galilee. Listening to him speak and seeing all that he did. Learning to love and respect this man who seemed to promise such a lot.

And then he led those who would crucify him. He betrayed him and them all. Possibly the greatest betrayal in human history.

I wonder how sick Peter felt.

Peter knows a little about betrayal.

But Peter also knows a little about betrayal too, because if Judas's betrayal of Jesus is the most infamous in human history, Peter's denial of Jesus in the High priest's courtyard, is probably the second. "I don't know him" he said. "I don't know him." I don't know him," for the third time, as he was questioned.

Peter knows a little about betrayal.

Perhaps this is why Peter's account of his brother Judas is not overly harsh, "he was one of us", he says, and seems to give Judas an out, by qualifying his action, as does The gospel of John, "as the scriptures said he must".

Nothing about hatred, or horror or evil, the things that would come later as the early church shaped the response to the one who came in the dark of the night. Perhaps Peter understood better than most, that betrayal can come for us all.

Betrayed and betrayer.

Most of us understand being betrayed. It happens, it's never nice, it's always ugly. It hurts. Sometimes it's even evil. But being betrayers is much more difficult for us to see. This is a reality that we find harder to accept.

It goes against all of our conceptions of ourselves, that we are basically good people, we wouldn't hurt anyone, we would never do anyone any harm. We are not like that. How could we deny Jesus or those that we love?

I'm sure this made Peter feel sick too.

Next week is Pentecost when we celebrate the coming of the Spirit, the power of the church. I wonder if today's attention on betrayal is a reminder to all of us that in spite of the glories to come next week, like Peter and Judas we all face battles with ourselves, with betrayal, with hardness of heart, with forgiveness, with loving those we don't like. With not being the people we had hoped we would be.

I felt betrayed by my Dad, he was "he was one of us," and that was hard. It made me feel sick. But coming to the realisation that I was a betrayer as well ... that was much harder.

But thanks be to God, as certainly Peter, and I hope Judas found, this is no barrier to the sending of the Holy Spirit, and being embraced in the love of God.

Amen.