

Judas Betrays Jesus

John 13:18-30

Warm-up Question: What's the best story you have ever read? It could also be a film that you watched.

Whatever the story, chances are that in your book or film there is always a villain of the story. He or she is known as the antagonist. This is the person that everyone loves to hate, someone that, when he or she makes an appearance, everyone likes to boo and hiss. In our study today we will look at Judas, who makes an appearance as the villain in the pages of New Testament history, the one who was the traitor and betrayer of Jesus.

¹⁸“I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill this passage of Scripture: ‘He who shared my bread has turned against me.’¹⁹I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am. ²⁰Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me.” ²¹After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.” ²²His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. ²³One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. ²⁴Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, “Ask him which one he means.” ²⁵Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?” ²⁶Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. So Jesus told him, “What you are about to do, do quickly.” ²⁸But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. ²⁹Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor. ³⁰As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night (John 13:18-30).

God's Story or "His-story"

Every good story starts with an author and an idea. If it is a truly great story, then it starts out with a great author having a great idea, which will be brought to life. The author will take great care to unfold the story so that it speaks accurately; portraying what is in the author's heart and mind. Do you think it is any different with God and His story? After all, it has been called the "Greatest Story Ever Told," and He is the original author. Imagine, the Creator taking time to unfold the story of His redemptive love. There was a time in eternity past when God thought of how He would create a race of human beings and how He would demonstrate His nature to and through them. At some point He planned how He would create His Bride, His Church; a people that He would call close to Himself. The kind of love that God wanted to create in their hearts was more than an acquiescing compliant kind of love, but a love that was thankful, appreciative, self-sacrificial and ready to give of oneself. Those whose hearts were so in touch with His heart would be the ones who would be the modelers, leaders and examples to the rest.

The story He created began with Himself. He wanted to win the hearts of His people in such a way that forever they would serve Him because they wanted to love Him in the same way He loved them. There is a great mystery in this as well, for the story is interactive. It also bends and winds as it unfolds in response to the free will actions of these created beings. Each of them had to have the power of choice; they had to be able to have the freedom of will to say yes or no. He had to show them how much He loved them by giving them an example of the kind of love that is of the highest origin in the universe, that of self-sacrificing love. But how would He do it? He would allow an enemy into this world that would appeal to their will to walk in the ways of darkness rather than His way, the way of light. He also had to send His Son, Jesus to the world. This God man, the Lord Jesus, had to be one of them in such a way that He would experience all that this race of beings would experience so that none could ever say to Him, “you don’t know what it is like to go through what I am experiencing.”

¹⁴Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—¹⁵and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. ¹⁶For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. ¹⁷For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted (Hebrews 2:14-18).

How does Jesus’ suffering help us when we are tested, tempted or in pain?

Why Would God Allow His Son to be Betrayed?

Have you ever wondered why God allowed into His story a traitor such as Judas? If you have been hurt, Christ had to be hurt more. Have you suffered pain? He wanted to suffer pain so that He could feel what you feel and to be able to come alongside you in your pain. Have you been betrayed by someone you loved? Ah, now we are getting to our passage today—yes, He too had to experience what it was like to be betrayed by someone close to Him—someone He loved. Those of you who have gone through being betrayed by someone you thought loved you, and instead of love they put a knife in your back, He had to go through it too, so that you could never say, “you don’t know what I am going through.” Yes, He does know what you are going through. He deliberately planned before the beginning of time to allow someone close to Him, who, when the circumstance and reward was sufficient, would betray Him. Yes, Jesus chose Judas to be one of His disciples, but it was Judas who made the choice to betray his Lord.

Have you ever felt betrayed by someone? What was the hardest emotion you had to deal with in that situation?

The Character of Judas

Most of the disciples were from the area around the Sea of Galilee except for Judas. His surname, *Iscariot*, tells us the town that Judas came from; *ish* (“man”) of *Kerioth*, a small town in the south of Judea, the area around the capital city of Jerusalem. More refined Jewish people were from that area, so he was probably looked up to and respected highly by the other disciples. So highly, in fact, that he was given responsibility for the group of thirteen’s money bag, their finances. We don’t know how long it took, but over the three and a half years of ministry, Judas had started dipping his hand into the moneybag, helping himself to what was inside for his own personal need. He was clever enough to keep it hidden from the other disciples, but Christ knew. Six days previously, when Jesus was anointed with very expensive perfume by Mary, the sister of Lazarus, Judas had complained about how much money was wasted, saying, “**Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages**” (John 12:5). John the apostle, the writer who later understood what Judas was up to, records for our information, “**He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it** (John 12:5-6). How frustrating for Judas. He saw a year’s wages for one man flying from his grasp. Think of it, an average man’s wage in America today (2013) is somewhere around 48,000 dollars a year. Would it seem wasteful to pour 48,000 dollars worth of perfume on a person’s feet? It wouldn’t be if the person were the Son of God! Somehow Judas did not get that, or if he did, he chose to ignore whom Jesus was. Jesus said to Judas, “**Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of my burial. For the poor you have with you always, but me you do not have always**” (John 12:8). It is likely that he was deeply offended at this rebuke and loss of money. Matthew records that it was after this anointing that Judas went to the chief priests and asked,

“**What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you? So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over** (Matthew 26:15-16).

Do you think that Judas was born again of the Spirit but had lost his faith? How can a man live in close relationship to Jesus as Judas did, and still be a thief?

Judas had been with the disciples and had seen many mighty miracles. He had even been sent out to evangelize with the other eleven (Luke 8:1), but had never opened his heart and received the gift of God, new life in Christ. Jesus had reached out to Judas warning him with words such as, “**Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!**” (John 6:70). He didn’t warn Judas by saying that he was becoming a devil, but that his inner heart had never been changed, ***he was a devil***. He had never been delivered of his sins, and in fact, Satan was at work in him prompting him into greater depths of sin by using his unchecked deception of the disciples and robbing the moneybag for his own purposes. The Lord was never deceived, though, He knew what was going on. This is a big lesson to us. To whose voice do you respond to? Who will win the prompting of your inner man? The enemy will drop thoughts into your mind prompting you into greater sin in the hope that he can at some time have the door of your heart open so that he can use you as his vessel. We are told in scripture that Jesus knew early on just where Judas’ heart was:

⁶⁴Yet there are some of you *who do not believe.*" For Jesus had known from the beginning *which of them did not believe* and who would betray him (John 6:64).

Here we are told categorically that Judas did not believe, he had never placed his trust in Christ. We are talking here about a heart belief that brings about a change in one's life. Judas had a mental-assent to the person of Christ, but at the core level of his being he had never received grace and forgiveness for his sin, turning his life over to Christ in simple faith. What do we mean by mental-assent? When a person has a mental assent to a truth, they believe it with their head, that is, they agree with the truth, approve it and confirm that it is right, proper and godly, but the truth is not engaged with the person's will. They take no action with the truth that they have received. The truth can have a person's endorsement, but they don't realize that to believe a biblical truth, it must be more than a head knowledge—there has to be a heart knowledge where the person's will begins to action that truth and obey it.

³⁹You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰**yet you refuse to come to me to have life** (John 5:39-40).

A person can read the scriptures, acknowledge that the truth is therein written, and yet refuse to come to the Savior that the scriptures write about. Judas never took action with what he saw about the person of Jesus Christ, who He is and what He does. He was a classic hypocrite—an actor on the stage of life.

This is powerful deception at work. Our enemy, Satan, a very real spiritual being, is at work in the world to keep hearts and minds blinded to the truth concerning Christ. He seeks to influence every person to veil from them the light of Christ and keep them from acting upon the truth that the Holy Spirit would bring to their heart and mind. One can have an acceptance of the facts of the gospel, an understanding even of the great truths concerning Jesus Christ, but yet not receive the person of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 5:39-40). He alone can save each one of us from the penalty of our sinful lives. Our enemy loves to keep people in a mental assent to the person of Christ and His salvation, but only a genuine repentance, a turning over of our lives to the person of Christ, will ever bring us out of our spiritually dead condition (Ephesians 2:1).

If you have never given your life to Christ, allowing the Spirit to rule and reign over you, there is no better time to turn around (repent) than the moment you are in right now. Unfortunately, Judas never turned around.

The Scene of the Upper Room

In our last study in John (13:1-17), we talked about the fact that the disciples had gathered around the three-sided U-shaped table called the Triclinium. At the head of the table, the middle of the U shape, sat the host (Jesus), with the two most notable individuals to His right and His left. These were the seats of honor that the mother of James and John wanted for her two sons when the Kingdom of God should come

(Matthew 20:20-21). When invited to a formal meal like the one they were having, it was always the prerogative of the host to choose who should sit to the left and right of the host. These places were reserved for the guests of honor (Luke 14:10). It was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, also known as the Passover. The day in Israel begins with the night, so this was the day that Jesus would be crucified. This very night Jesus was to be betrayed and in the morning to be crucified. By this time during the Passover meal, there had already been a dispute that had arisen among them as to which of them was considered the greatest (Luke 22:24). Christ got up from the table and modeled servant leadership to them by going around the triclinium couches and graciously washing the feet of His disciples including the feet of Judas. The triclinium was three long tables put together that were eighteen inches or so off of the ground. Alongside the tables were couches where the disciples and Jesus reclined, leaning on their left elbow and leaving their right hand free to pick food off of the table.

The Conversation at the Table

Jesus had just finished telling the disciples that just as He, their Lord and Teacher had washed their feet they also should wash one another's feet (John 13:14). Again, Jesus warned Judas without looking at him, saying, to those listening:

18. "I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill this passage of Scripture: 'He who shared my bread has turned against me.'" (John 13:18)

When He had spoken about being their Lord and Teacher he was not referring to all of them. There was one among them, He revealed, that did not know Him as Lord. He was referring to Judas. He was telling them ahead of time so that when it happened; when Judas would appear in the Garden of Gethsemane with the temple soldiers, they would remember that He, The Christ, was still in control. This had always been a part of the plan of God- that Jesus would be betrayed.

Verse twenty-one tells us that He was *troubled* in spirit as he looked around the room saying, **"I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me."** This is the third time that scripture records that Jesus was 'troubled' in his spirit. The first was when He met Mary after the death of her brother, Lazarus (John 11:33), the Bible says that He was deeply moved in spirit and *troubled*. The second time was when He looked ahead at being separated from the Father as He was laden down with the sins of the world upon Him, He said, "Now, my heart is *troubled*" (John 12:27). John the apostle records now a third time He was troubled as He shared that He would be betrayed. He said that a prophetic scripture that was written long ago by King David was to be yet fulfilled by one that ate bread with Him. David wrote:

Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me (Psalm 41:9).

The disciples looked around the room at one another, having no idea who the guilty

one was that had planned to betray their Lord and Master. Don't you think that Judas should have repented at that statement? Jesus was reaching out to him still at this late hour, saying, in effect, you can still turn around from what you have planned to do. Although Jesus knew that this part of the plan would somehow be accomplished, Judas still had the freedom to choose whether or not he was to be the pawn used to perform this act of betrayal. Jesus' words must have convicted his heart, but he chose to harden his heart and carry on with his plan. Jesus reached out to him until the end when he chose his fate. And Jesus knew how this would play out.

This verse also gives us an intimate view of the humanity of Jesus, when we think about the phrase "troubled in spirit." If John, who was one of those disciples closest to Jesus, could see that Jesus was troubled, there must have been some outward signs of this. It is easy for us to forget that Jesus had to suffer like a man and we do not often picture Him like this.

Take a moment to think about the emotional pain that Jesus was going through at this time. What outward signs do you imagine John may have witnessed, indicating that Jesus was troubled in His spirit?

Let's consider now the seating arrangements at the table where they were reclining. When Jesus said to them that one would betray Him, Peter obviously was not in one of the honored places beside Him to Christ's left or right otherwise he would have asked Jesus who was the betrayer. Instead, we are told that Peter asked the disciple whom Jesus loved, who was leaning against Christ on His chest. Wouldn't you love to be close to the heart of Jesus? It is John the apostle that three times calls himself the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 13:23, 19:26, and 21:7). This is the greatest strength that a disciple of Christ has, to know that you are loved by Christ. When a man or woman has come to an intimate relationship of knowing that he is loved of Christ, he or she can endure and be all that he or she can be in God. Knowing the love of God in Christ comes from seeking Him out in His Word and spending time with Him in communion and prayer. John was to Jesus' right, and Peter was to the right of John. We have a good indication of who was to His left when Peter asked John, "Ask Him which one He means" (John 13:24).

²⁵Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" ²⁶Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him (John 13:25-27).

The scripture says that Satan entered Judas, so do you think that Judas was responsible for his sin of betrayal?

With Jesus reclining on His left elbow, the only one He could reach was the one to His left that was in the honored place alongside Him, Judas. Did Judas "pull a fast one" on the disciples and secure for himself the place of honor ahead of Peter? Or do you think that Jesus deliberately invited Judas close so that He could talk to him privately in the

hope that he could be turned from his path of treason? Jesus dipped his piece of bread into the charoset and passed it to Judas. The charoset is a sweet, dark colored paste made of fruit and nuts, which represents the mortar or mud that was used to make bricks in Egypt. The word "charoset" comes from the Hebrew word *cheres* — חרס — "clay." As soon as Judas received the bread and charoset from Jesus, Satan entered his life. Jesus said to him, "What you are about to do, do quickly" (John 13:27). At this word from Jesus, Judas got up from his reclining position and went out, without the others knowing where he was going. John records at the end of the passage, "And it was night" (Verse 30). The darkness closed in on Judas, and I am sure that he is still regretting his act, for he died in despair. Only two men are ever called the "son of perdition" in scripture, Judas (John 17:12) and the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

How Do I Get Beyond Being Betrayed?

Many believers that are wholehearted disciples of Christ have had to walk through the darkness of betrayal. This is often a test that God allows to bring fruitfulness to His people. The trusted counselor, Ahithophel, betrayed King David when he took the side of Absalom against David, counseling him to attack David while he was weak (2 Samuel 16:23, 17:1-2). Also there was Joseph, the son of Israel, who was betrayed by his eleven brothers and sold as a slave (Genesis 37:26-28). The price that the brothers received for selling Joseph was twenty pieces of silver. Some have compared Joseph's betrayal involving blood money to Jesus' betrayal, Joseph being a "type, or fore-shadowing" of Christ.

If you have ever said that you would like to be a fruitful bough on the Vine of Christ, then you will go through a time of pruning (John 15:1-8). The pain of betrayal digs down deep into the heart. Only the power of Christ and His forgiveness can set you free from a bitter root springing up within. If you have experienced this kind of betrayal, just know that being betrayed by someone close is one of the testing lessons of the man or woman of God. It is a very lonely experience and perhaps the most painful one emotionally. The pain of injustice and betrayal is something that Satan will use, if possible, to gain a foothold in your life. The response that the enemy seeks is for the injured person to retreat and nurse the hurt, causing bitterness. We need to take care that this bitter root does not take hold, germinate and grow. If it does, we are told that it will produce fruit of its kind:

¹⁵See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many (Hebrews 12:15).

It is interesting that bitterness will not only affect your own life but this verse explains that when it grows it will cause trouble by defiling many. By definition defilement means to stain, to soil, to sully or to contaminate. Bitterness can overflow and take root in others very easily when unchecked and released. This is why we must pay attention to the grace of God. If you have been hurt by betrayal, take it to the Lord and ask Him to remove the pain and bitterness from you. Spend time in prayer and express forgiveness from the heart to the one who has so hurt you. When others sin against us, it

can take a heavy toll on us emotionally. Many in the church have been shipwrecked by a wrong committed by someone else, only to conclude that they no longer want to be a part of the church. After all, who would want to willingly join themselves arm in arm with such a dysfunctional, broken band of people? The big problem with that way of thinking is that Jesus does not have a “plan B.” The church is His own, His Bride, and He has given His life for her. If we are ever tempted to think, “God, you just don’t know what it is like. It is like my heart has been ripped out.” He does know, because He has experienced human suffering in every way, even the betrayal of friends, of every friend, in His hour of greatest need. And more than we can possibly imagine, total rejection by God the Father as the wrath of God was poured upon His human form on the cross. This is a great mystery. We will never have to suffer to that extreme. We are required to forgive, however, any wrong that is committed against us. And even this is something that we do not have to do on our own. He offers us His strength, but we must submit our will to Him.

Remorse is not Repentance

Many have considered the sorrow of Judas and how he ended his life, and wondered if he had truly repented. It is my personal belief that he did not. I draw this conclusion for a couple of reasons. Judas had the opportunity before handing Jesus over, to repent and Jesus actually gave him an opportunity to do so. Although we are told that “Satan entered into him” before he performed his act of betrayal, his heart had been elsewhere all along. How else could he have lived with Christ and yet continue to willingly deceive the group, stealing from all of them? He also ended his life in despair, hanging himself. True repentance leads to life, not death. **“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death” (2 Corinthians 7:10).** We are also told that he did not truly believe (John 6:64). Judas was also referred to as the son of perdition (John 17:12). Judas’ story has a tragic end.

A Way of Escape

Perhaps some of you feel bound up by not being able to forgive someone. Do you know that God has provided an escape for you?

“...And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it (1 Corinthians 10:12).

The Father does not expect you to lean on your own strength, but offers you His strength at all times. If you do not feel able to forgive, submit your will to Him in prayer and ask for His strength. This does not mean that you condone the actions of the offending person. Indeed, there are times that may require you to distance and protect yourself from a harmful person. But you do not need to stay in bondage to a bitter root of not being able to forgive someone. If you need to, make the decision to forgive today and put your emotions into the hands of God. He will watch over His word to perform it, and provide for you a “way of escape.” Be thankful for His forgiveness and His everlasting

love towards you, and let the hurt melt. Sometimes this will take time, but He is faithful!
It begins with an act of your will.

Prayer: Father, forgive me for my sins, and help me to forgive others the way you have forgiven me. I ask you to help me release forgiveness to any and all who have hurt me. For every Judas in my life, I open my heart to bear them no ill will. Please work in their lives revealing your love and mercy to them too. Amen!

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