

The Twelve: Judas Iscariot, Part 2

Luke 6:16

I want you to notice in Luke Chapter 6, verse 12: "In these days, Jesus went up to the mountain to pray. All night he continued in prayer to God. When day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: Peter and Andrew, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas the son of James, and," he chose "Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor."

Today, we're gonna look at a wholly negative example: Judas Iscariot. It's interesting that, apart from a few hints at Judas' betrayal during Jesus' ministry, what we know about Judas comes from the end of his life. Judas makes a decision to betray Jesus, and it's comes late in Jesus' ministry. He colludes and collaborates with the chief priests; he makes the agreement with them. Then he proceeds with the betrayal of Jesus, leading to the arrest and crucifixion of our Lord. The Bible records even

Judas' remorse, his suicide, but no heart of repentance, no repentance leading to salvation.

So what's in the heart of Judas Iscariot? What's driving him? What led Judas to betray the Son of Man? What's always gonna be the worst possible act of treachery in the history of the human race; what, what, what caused this to happen? I'm reminded, when I think of Judas, of the Apostle Paul, who was always careful to distinguish his ministry from the interests and motivations of all the false teachers and the peddlers around him. First Thessalonians 2:5, he wrote, "We never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed— God is witness." Philippians 1:17, you may remember, he refers to some who preach the Gospel, but their hearts weren't right. They "proclaim Christ," he says, but, "not sincerely," but out of a heart that's dominated by selfish ambition.

It's sadly and tragically apparent that Judas was never set free from his bondage to covetousness, to greed, selfish ambition. He brought that kind of a heart with him to the ministry of John the Baptist, where, like all the other apostles, he professed repentance in the waters of John's

baptism verbally. He spoke those words. When Jesus came, Judas was also listening to what John was teaching about Je Jesus, and like the other disciples, he too, he left John's ministry to start following Jesus. And then Jesus came down from that mountain, Luke 6:13. He called all those disciples to himself, and then he appointed Judas to be one of his twelve. But Judas' heart was never with him. It was never with the rest of the disciples.

Turn in your Bibles to a familiar story, Mark Chapter 14. Mark 14. We're gonna start here by, in looking at Judas, by looking at a really beautiful, beautiful story familiar to you. What we're about to read is a beautiful act of worship and devotion. It's recorded, as we find out in this story, it's recorded for all posterity to reflect upon. Look at verse 3, Mark 14 verse 3, "While he" (while Jesus) "was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at the table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. There were some who said to themselves indignantly, 'Why was the ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have

been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.' And they scolded her."

Stop there for a second. Three hundred denarii, that's the equivalent of a, a year's wages for a common laborer. That's a lot of money that this woman (her name is Mary, by the way, she's the sister of Lazarus), but it's a lot of money that she had saved up to spend on this ointment. The men here are accusing Mary, and they're rebuking her for squandering such a large sum of money just to pour it all on Jesus. Take a look how Jesus responded. Verse 6, "Jesus said, 'Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly, I say to you, wherever the Gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.'"

Guess what? That was just fulfilled right now, again. As important as it is to show concern for the poor, there is something greater, isn't there? There's a greater principle here

in showing honor for Jesus Christ. And that's a principle that we will recognize illustrated in this beautiful act of devotion from this grateful, worshiping woman. You know what else is gonna be remembered wherever the Gospel is proclaimed in the whole world? Well, because of what the Apostle John wrote in his gospel, his parallel narrative where he also recounts this story, we're also gonna remember the man who instigated the rebuke of this woman, stirred up the disciples' indignation. John tells us in John 12:4-6 that it was Judas who led the protest. "Judas Iscariot," it says there, "one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him) said, 'Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?' He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the money bag he used to help himself to what was put into it."

Look, John, John who wrote this, he recognized Judas' deviousness in retrospect, but not at the moment. (He realized greed is what characterized Judas, as a thief, all along the way.) In fact, the verbs in John 12:6, they're in the imperfect tense, continuous action, past time. It was his usual habit, Judas' usual habit to dip into the till, to lift coins out of

the money bag, the purse, all along. That means Judas is in bondage to his covetousness. He'd been driven by selfish desire all along. His association with Jesus had very little (absolutely nothing, really), to do with love for God and love for righteousness. It had everything, instead, to do with what he could gain for himself. Clearly, Judas believed at some level, along with the other disciples, that Jesus is the Christ. And he had ample opportunity all along the way to depart, to walk away. We just read that from John 6. Jesus gave him and the other apostles an opportunity to leave. None of them joined the other so-called disciples, the, the fair-weather disciples. They didn't depart from Jesus. They all remained with Jesus, including Judas. What made Judas stay? If he had no love and affection that drew him, and, magnetically to Jesus to worship him, what made him stay?

Look, Judas is here exposed. He's an insider. But he's exposed to Jesus' teaching. He's exposed to Jesus' miracles. Judas saw Jesus' character; he saw it up close. He saw Jesus' character when the pressure was on. He heard him in those intimate conversations in those inner rooms. He heard him in the

crowds and away from the crowds. He saw him at all times. So Judas is exposed. He's an insider.

Judas knew Jesus is the Messiah, at least on an intellectual level. Even called him, "Rabbi." What remained unchanged and unmoved in Judas were his affections. He had no heart for Christ. Apart from spiritual regeneration, knowing Jesus' true identity did not move Judas to worship him. His fallen nature and his unbridled avarice used that intellectual knowledge not for worship but for selfish gain. For Judas, Jesus as Messiah, he saw dollar signs (or denarii signs). Jesus as Messiah simply became an opportunity for him. Jesus as Messiah meant a means to his own self-centered ends. Judas saw Jesus as an avenue to self-advancement, to self-satisfaction. Lot of that going on today, isn't there?

Judas, he had gained the trust of the other apostles as well, so much so that they felt confident in putting the money bag in his care. And that made Judas the apostolic treasurer. So in Judas' mind, if everything continued according to the Messianic plan that he had mapped out, he'd soon be promoted, and he'd take the title, "Kingdom Treasurer." So far, Judas held

the right of precedent over the other apostles, managing the money. He'd been able to gain and maintain their trust so far. But by taking advantage of their trust, or through their trust, he'd been able to embezzle funds, taking advantage of their trust. He embezzled without anybody's notice. Clever, very clever. So surely, in his mind, this could only get better for him, if he just could carry on and hang on a little bit longer. If he kept playing his cards right, Judas would have control of the finances, not just for this little band of apostles, but for the entire millennial kingdom. Pretty lucrative.

Certainly at the very foundational level, Judas had not examined his heart. He had never considered the evil of his motives; much less did he repent of any of his sin. He remained trapped in bondage to his greed. And folks, Judas provides a warning to all of us to guard our own hearts, to examine ourselves regularly, often. There may be some who, like Judas, are false professors and false disciples. May God grant mercy on you, give you grace by his Holy Spirit. May he send the Spirit to convict you of sin and righteousness and judgment. May he regenerate you, grant you the gift of saving faith, that you can repent of your sin, put your faith in Jesus Christ, escape the



bondage of sin and death because of the perfect atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross. There is still time, while you have breath, for Jesus to set you free. Judas Iscariot, then, is a warning to examine our own hearts first; to discern our thoughts, our motives, the nature of our ambitions.

There's a second lesson, though, here, of warning from the fact that Judas Iscariot's numbered among the twelve. Be discerning, not just about your own heart, but be discerning about people who come to church. Be discerning about people who come to church. Look, we need to grow in discernment to realize, to recognize that false professors may very well attach themselves, for a time, to the church. Why would they do that? Because you all are such friendly, wonderful people. They want to be around you. You know what else they think? You're gracious people. You understand sin, you're gracious with them. They want to take advantage of that. Remember, none of the Gospel writers called Judas "the betrayer," "the traitor." They refer to him as the "one who betrayed him" (that's a focus on the act); the one who became a traitor, a focus on the process. So that provides an additional call to discernment for us, because we need to recognize, none of the apostles saw this coming. We need to

understand that not everyone who professes to be with us is truly of us. There are some very clever false believers out there; some very practiced, intelligent pretenders.

Turn over in your Bibles to John 13, John 13:21. I realize that we are skipping around just a little bit in the story. We're just trying to draw out some of these important, vital lessons for practical life, exercising discernment in the church. By this time, though, in John 13, Jesus has washed all the disciples' feet, including Judas' feet, by the way. It's an incredible act of love, isn't it? And then Jesus sat down at the table again, sat down to teach them the meaning of what he has just done for them. In John 13:13-15 he says, "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you're right, for so I am. If I then, your teacher, (or, your Lord and Teacher), have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you."

But then it says, look down in verse 21, John 13:21, "After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit and testified, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.'" Side comment, footnote here: Jesus is troubled. He's not

indifferent or cold to Judas at all. He loved Judas. He loved his betrayer, and he's troubled by this defection. It hurts. Isn't that interesting? Just keep that in mind all the way through this.

"The disciples looked at one another," verse 22, "uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved," that's John, "he's reclining at the table close to Jesus, and so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. And so that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, 'Lord, who is it?' Jesus answered, 'It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.' So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. And then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, 'What you're gonna do, do quickly.' Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the money bag, Jesus was telling him, 'Buy what we need for the feast,' or that he should give something to the poor. So after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night."

Again, until that moment, no one suspected Judas Iscariot. John learned the fact from Jesus. He's, it's at Peter's behest, he learned the identity of the one who betray, who would betray Jesus. But everyone at the table that night thought nothing of Judas' departure. All of them assumed good motives, good intentions; at the very least, a harmless, innocuous purpose. Think about that, too. This is Jesus and his twelve apostles. Satan's there, right? If Satan is there among them, and he enters among one of them and causes him to depart, do we think of ourselves as any better? I like to say this sometimes, You know what, Satan goes to church. Everybody saw Judas, assuming the best. He had the money bag and they thought, Well, hin, Jesus' just telling him to go and get something for the feast, or that sh, he should give something to the poor. Why? Because Judas is all about the poor. Hey Judas, I thought we had a little bit more money in this money bag. Oh, it's because I've been giving to the poor. Wow, what a holy guy that is. He's so concerned for the poor. He's got such a big heart, so tender and compassionate for the poor." None of them saw it coming.

Significant to note that once Judas departed, look there at John 13:31, it tells us, "When he had gone out, Jesus said,"

what? “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” Only Jesus knew and fully understood what Judas is about to do. Even though John and Peter had discovered the identity of the betrayer, it has to be very hard for them at this point to accept. Judas? Okay, maybe Simon the Zealot or one of those other guys that I don’t even know their names, but Judas? No way!

You’re in John 13. Turn over just a page or two to John 15. John 15:1-6. This is such a precious illustration for us as believers, right? Jesus says, “I am the true vine, my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away. Every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, so that it may bear more fruit.” I don’t know about you, but I think pruning hurts a bit. Hurts to be cut. But he just wants us to bear more fruit. Verse 3, “Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch

and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.”

Know who that’s describing? Judas Iscariot. You know the connection? Back there in verse 3, “Already you’re clean because of the word I have spoken to you.” Do you know what he said earlier in John 13? “Already you are clean, but not all of you.” Now he makes no qualification. There’s no exception. “You’re already clean,” all of you, “because of the word I have spoken to you.” Now that the betrayer has gone out of your midst, the unclean one is gone. Why? He’s been cut from the vine. He was superficially attached to Christ, but like an unproductive branch, Judas is cut off, he quickly withered, he’s thrown into the fire. The disciples didn’t fully understand this at this moment, but they did later on, which is why John includes this in the Upper Room discourse. But at the moment, in the presence of Jesus Christ, the idea that Judas could be anything but what he seemed to be, this is something that had to be utterly impossible to their minds. Even when he was completely unmasked in the, the garden of Gethsemane, he comes at the head of the arresting party, and I believe they couldn’t believe their eyes. The shock of his hateful betrayal just intensified their dismay.

In fact, turn if you're, if you will, over to Luke 22. Luke 22 and verse 47. Let's look at that scene, just quickly, take a look at this, what's really, comes across as cold, cold hatred; calculating hypocrisy involved in Judas' treachery here. Judas' betrayal of Jesus is followed by a cascading set of injustices. We all know the story about the arrest, the speedy trial, really a kangaroo court. Already knew the verdict before they even started the trial. Then a hasty crucifixion. The disciples are completely disoriented as their entire world unraveled in a single night. In their minds, what started it all? What was the catalyst? He had a human face. It's the face of a familiar friend. This is someone with whom they'd broken bread for three years. He's someone they trusted, and he turned on them wholesale. His hatred, Judas' hatred is apparent in the hypocritically spiteful sign of his betrayal. Look at verse 47, Luke 22, "While Jesus was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him. Jesus said to him, 'Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?'"

The rest of the apostles are thinking, are, "Is this some kind of mistake? Surely Judas was captured first, and he's being forced at sword-point to lead the soldiers to us. What is going on?" It's bewildering to the disciples, but Jesus knows exactly what's happening. We read in Matthew 26:48, "Now the betrayer had given the chief priest a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; seize him.'" Judas could have chosen any sign, any signal. He chose a kiss. He's calculating here in his expression of hatred, feigning friendship so he can come close and insert the knife. The next verse pictures him doing just that. Look at verse 49. "He came up to Jesus at once and said, 'Greetings, Rabbi!' 'Greetings, Rabbi.' And he kissed him. And Jesus said to him, 'Friend,'" even calling him friend at that moment, "'Friend, do what you came to do.'" At that moment, Jesus unmasked his betrayer. And now the other apostles knew, too, that one so close, one so intimate, though he's among them, he was never of them.