

The Twelve: Judas Iscariot, Part 3

Luke 6:16

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 into 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." You know when 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.

And again, folks, it's hard to fault the disciples for failing to discern Judas Iscariot's heart or intentions. Would you have? Would I have? It's only God who know, knows the hearts of men, truly. Not only that, the appearance of Messiah, the inauguration of the Messianic Age, that's something that's totally unprecedented. I mean, when else could they have seen something like this before, right? This is new. And besides that, didn't Jesus himself choose Judas? How could they see this coming?

But for us, for you and I, having read about Judas Iscariot as one of the twelve; listen, beloved, we have no excuse for being naïve. In fact, we're not allowed to put our heads in the sand, refuse to exercise discernment about people who come into the church. For the sake of the health and the purity of Christ's body, for the sake of the true glory of Christ, and for the good of Christ's beloved sheep, we have to be wary of hypocrites and liars. Hypocrites: skilled, studied, well-practiced hypocrites, they will draw near to the church. They'll feign loyalty, they'll flatter you with fine-sounding words, they'll butter people up with gifts, pleasantries, handshakes, smiles, pats on the back, but their hearts? Their hearts are

roaming in very dark places. We won't always be able to detect their true nature until after they've done their damage and departed from us.

But we can't be foolish and undiscerning. We cannot sympathize with this modern spirit of tolerance, which is tolerant of every form of doctrinal error and wicked behavior, but utterly intolerant of those who are committed to truth and holiness. We can't be like that, because this isn't about us. It's about Christ. It's about his beloved sheep. Jesus said, Mark 14:21, "The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." We might extend the same warning to hypocrites in our midst because, not only do they deceive themselves, continuing to suffer in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, but they also cause others of Jesus' sheep to stumble. And we should remember what Jesus said to those who cause his little ones to stumble: something about millstone necklaces, right? Being thrown into the depths of the sea for a deep, deep, deep dive. It's scary.

I realize that's some difficult and perhaps, for some, some very unpleasant teaching but listen, it's so necessary. In hard teaching like this, it's so important for us to see the grace of God, because a discerning church, Ephesians 4:14, is a healthy church. It's a thriving church. It's a mature church. And we have to be ever vigilant, don't we? Starting with ourselves. As Paul told young Timothy, 1 Timothy 4:16, "Keep a close watch on yourself and on your teaching." We have to watch our hearts diligently, self-examine regularly so that we're wary of ourselves, that we're clear before the Lord, clear with others; but then we need to be wary of false professors and hypocrites in our own midst.

I just want you to know we're gonna look at some more positive, encouraging words for the church, as well. I want you to understand, that there's some very good things to see here about Jesus' love and Jesus' assurance. We need to hear those things. Reasons for worship. We're gonna see the most foundational purpose of all, which is our redemption. But even today as we draw our study to a close, we want to ask a, a question. What happened to Judas? I mean, what? He became the betrayer. Became: there's a process there. What caused him to do



that? Not, and not just to walk away, many walked away, but to react with such antipathy and, and spite; to react to Jesus with such venomous hostility.

Be discerning not just about your heart, not just about people who come into our church, but be discerning about the cause of apostasy. Be discerning about the cause of apostasy. Let me state this point very simply, very plainly. The reason people apostatize and walk away is because they do not love the Lord Jesus Christ. They don't love Christ. So listen, if you find your own love for Christ waning, growing cold, watch out. "Remember from where you have fallen." Ephesian church, right? Revelation Chapter 2. "Remember from where you have fallen." Repent and do the first work, and remember your first love, Jesus Christ. Return to him in prayer, cry out for his restoration, because those who fan into flame their love for Christ, they remain.

Obviously, Judas' heart wasn't right from the very beginning. He was a man enslaved to greed; he was a man driven by selfish ambition. He saw Jesus as a means to his own ends. Every opportunity that he received from Jesus, every intimate

exposure that he was priv, privileged to enjoy, every honor that was bestowed upon him, none of it engendered humility or gratitude. None of it caused affection for Christ. All of it simply cemented him in his pride and his high self-evaluation. He was wise in his own eyes. And that's why I believe it was the simple but effusive and generous, remarkable act of love and devotion of Mary anointing Jesus; Jesus' commendation of that act; that's what pushed Judas Iscariot over the edge. He couldn't stand that.

Turn to John 12, and let's take a, just a closer look at that scene. I want you to see something here, in discerning the heart of Judas and what caused him to walk away. Some commentators, they believe that Judas bestr, betrayed Jesus because of his own disappointed political ambitions. That is, when he, when he saw Jesus is heading for the cross and not for immediate glory, he jumped ship, decided to take a little cash on the way out. Other people, they say it had to do with Judas' insatiable desire for money. So when he realized the apostolic purse was about to run dry, become pretty light pretty soon, he decided to profit from Jesus just one more time. And I don't

doubt that some of that thinking informed Judas' blackened heart.

I actually think that God, in his wisdom, he painted a contrast in John chapter 12 between the ugly heart of Judas and the beautiful, forgiven heart of a forgiven woman named Mary. Take a look at John chapter 12, "Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at the table. Mary, therefore, took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume."

Again, same Mary who sat at Jesus' feet in Luke 10:39. Mary's heart, it's filled with, with love and devotion, filled with humility and gratitude. She'd been saving up all this money, a whole year's wages for a common laborer. She saved up this money to purchase this expensive ointment, and she wants to offer the greatest gift she could think to offer. It's interesting; she, she suspected that he would eventually be

captured and killed. If you look back to John 11:55-57, you can see that the word was out about Jesus. There's an all-points bulletin put out about him in verse 57, that "If anyone knew where he was, he should let them all know, so they might arrest him." Bethany is close to Jerusalem, and Mary knows that she doesn't have much time or opportunity. She doesn't like the idea of anointing a dead body; she wants to honor wa him while he's still living. Can you blame her?

So Mary performs this simple but beautiful act of love and devotion; anointing the feet of Jesus, wiping his feet with her long hair. That was more meaningful than even she knew. Provided more symbology than she knew. And, by the way, more useful than she knew, because that simple act is what the Lord used to expose the heart of the hypocrite, Judas Iscariot, and push him to his inevitable end. Look at verse 4. "Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, he who was about to betray him, said, 'Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii, 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 moneybag, he used to help himself to what was put in it. Jesus said, 'Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. For

the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.' ”

Again, there's Judas Iscariot, his own heart filled with greed, caring nothing at all for the plight of the poor. He acts like he cares; he pretends to be concerned about altruistic, higher principles. He speaks words of compassion and mercy, but in fact he's just a hypocrite who's filled with greed, and the greed left no room in his heart for loving Christ. John doesn't know the connection, but in, or duh, doesn't show the connection, I should say; but in Matthew and Mark, you know what happens immediately after this scene? Right after Mary anoints Jesus for burial, Matthew 26:14, “Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, he went to the chief priests and said, ‘What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?’ They paid him thirty pieces of silver. From that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.” Interesting that that pushed him over the edge, isn't it? Disappointed political ambitions? Maybe. Probably. He didn't see his role as milli, millennial treasurer coming to fruition. But is this just an opportunity to make money? No, not likely. Thirty pieces of silver? It's a pittance. Exodus 21:32, tells us it's the price of a slave.

Judas probably could have run away with the moneybag and had more money than that.

No, thirty pieces of silver indicates that Judas Iscariot despises Jesus. His pride's offended. His heart is burning with anger at being exposed by the simple devotion and love of Mary. He's filled with bitterness, I believe, because his true feelings for Jesus are exposed in the sight of everybody. Unlike Mary, unlike the other disciples, Judas doesn't love Jesus at all. In truth, he hates him. Makes him angry that Jesus showed him up in front of this simple girl, Mary, and all the others. Jesus' words, here, of correction; they're all the more stinging because they're directed at him. Matthew and Mark, they record that all the disciples were expressing indignation over Mary's apparent waste of money. They're all indignant, but it's because they didn't understand. They had misinterpreted Mary's love. They misunderstood the higher principle that she's rightly operating by. But we learn from John that it was Judas who led them into their indignation. And so Jesus' rebuke, it's ultimately, fundamentally aimed at Judas; exposed his lack of love for Christ.

What's amazing about that is that, after making the deal with the chief priests, Judas returned to the twelve to have dinner. Evidently, he felt his cover hadn't been fully blown. He's confident that he can keep the ruse going. High estimation of himself, isn't it? So he returned to the apostles, joined them in the upper room. Look again at John 13 verse 2. It says, "During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that he Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God, was going back to God, rose from supper, laid aside his outer garments; taking a towel, he tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin, began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

There's Judas. He lets Jesus wash his dirty feet. He even hears Peter's protests over at his side. He keeps his own mouth shut. The devil had filled Judas' heart with hatred, brought him to the point of no return, and Judas returns here to play the hypocrite. But Jesus knew his, he had his number, didn't he? John 13:10, Jesus said to Peter, "'You are clean, but not every one of you,' for he knew who was to betray him." Later on, as

they're eating, Jes, Judas received from Jesus' hand the morsel dipped in the sop: an offering of friendship, a token of honor, one last overture of mercy and love. And before Judas could break down in agony of his conscience that had to be burning within him, John 13:27 says that, "After he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him." No way Satan wanted his plan to unravel. He was holding on to this one. And then Jesus said to him, "What you are gonna do, do quickly." Interesting, isn't it? Jesus is there, still in charge. He's commanding Judas Iscariot, and the devil inside of him, to do what the Father had ordained from the foundation of the world.

Judas is the catalyst for all that unfolds with the arrest, the, the trial, the sentencing, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, all for our redemption, beloved. Judas is there. Two purposes of Christ Jesus in choosing, choosing Judas Iscariot, I mentioned: one ecclesiological, one redemptive. Because he fulfilled, in all of this, an apostolic service that no one but Judas could fulfill, the loveless Apostle is about to become the catalyst God's gonna use to accomplish the redemption of all those who do truly love Jesus Christ. Let's close for prayer.



Heavenly Father, we thank you, just awestruck about the wonder of our own redemption. We thank you that we are not like Judas, with a heart that's cold toward you. We thank you that you have put within us a believing heart, a love for Jesus Christ. What could we do but say, Thank you, to see the horrific end that we could have come to apart from your saving, sovereign grace? We thank you, Father. We commit ourselves to you once again; fully, completely, wholly. We want to love Jesus Christ and honor him with our lives.