

Solving the Jesus Problem, Part 2

Luke 22:1-6

Turn to Luke 22 in your Bibles, let's read the opening 6 verses, this first narrative in chapter 22. "Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread which is called the Passover was drawing near. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might put him to death; for they were afraid of the people. And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, who belonged to the number of the Twelve. And he went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them. They were glad and agreed to give him money. And so he consented and began seeking a good opportunity to betray Him to them apart from the crowd."

So here's the second point in our outline number two: The betrayers' solution. In introducing Judas into the narrative in verse 3, Luke wants us to see, to know, to understand without any shadow of a doubt that Judas' solution did not originate with Judas. It says there, "Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, who belonged to the number of the Twelve and he went away and discussed," went away, that is to went away from the disciples, went away from Jesus. He went away from them and

then, "discussed with the chief priests and the officers how he might betray Him to them. And they were glad and agreed to give him money. And he consented, and he began seeking a good opportunity to betray Him to them apart from the crowd."

We can see here that every point of the leader's dilemma in verse 2, every single point is answered by Judas' solution. They're seeking how they might put Jesus to death, but away from the people. And here comes Judas offering that exact solution. How do I hand Jesus over to them? Verse 4, But to do so stealthily out of sight, verse 6, apart from the crowd, problem addressed, problem solved. He's a problem solver.

Several players we can see here, we've got Judas Iscariot, the chief priest, who we have seen, the scribes, we've also got these officers; this is the first time in Luke's Gospel, first mention of them. And so we want to identify who these officers are, what they did, they worked for the office of the high priest. They worked with the chief priest. The word is *strategos*, which refers to a military leader. And so if Rome deployed the a *strategos* to oversee, have some kind of a administrative authority, they would go oversee a Roman colony, maybe as a chief magistrate or some kind of high official.

You may remember in Acts 16 that Paul and Silas encountered these *strategoi*, the chief magistrates who falsely imprisoned them in Philippi. They had administrative oversight over the city. They wanted to send them out secretly, when they realized they were beating Roman citizens and they couldn't do that lawfully. And so Paul said, no, you come offer an apology, then we'll leave. Here, they're not Romans. This word used of those who were deployed in service of the temple, where no Gentile is allowed to enter, the *strategoi* here are Levites. The chief *strategos* is the captain of the temple police force. He's second in command of the chief priest, the high priest himself, and he enforces temple security.

So Luke wants us to see what it is that brought the solution of Judas into the home of Caiaphas to meet with the chief priests and the *strategoi*. These, these magistrates are temple police officers, temple guard. He wants us to see what it is *that* brought Judas into their company, because there was no natural way for Judas to mix with these religious leaders. He'd been travelling with Jesus and his disciples for three years. He'd been on the road. He'd been away. So without a natural way for Judas to mix, a supernatural connection had to be made. Enter Satan, an invisible spirit who's been hovering over the entire scene and all the way through ever since he encountered

Jesus in the wilderness and tried to tempt him and cause him to sin.

It says at the end of his temptations in Luke 4, Matthew 4 as well, it says that the devil left him for a more opportune time. He's back, here he comes entering into Judas Iscariot in order to make the necessary and supernatural connection. He just loves building bridges, this one. He loves making connections, loves bringing sinner to meet sinner, helping them achieve their goals, helping them reach their full potential.

Now we've encountered some demon possession in our study of Luke's Gospel, haven't we? Not a pretty picture. We got the demoniac in the Gerasenes inhabited by a legion of demons. We've got demons that cause mutinous, cause it to throw children into fire. I mean, we've got all kinds of problems caused by demonic possession, right? Notice here, when Satan enters into Judas, he doesn't become a raving lunatic, does he? Judas has his wits about him, he's of a sound mind, he's articulated in his speech. He comes with a good plan to them. He's able to reason with them. He's able to cut a deal to solve their dilemma with his help. This demonstrates his moral responsibility even though possessed by Satan himself.

So as Judas enters into the home of Caiaphas, knocks at the gate, they bring him through. And, we got Judas Iscariot, here, says he's one of the Twelve, says he wants to talk with you, cut a deal. We know exactly what these men are thinking, don't we? They're religious leaders, they're very familiar with their Bibles. You know they're going to be prone, aren't they, to spiritualize what's happening, aren't they? Here comes Judas, knocking on the door, wanting to meet with the high priest. He's called Iscariot, literally a man of Kerioth, Ish Kerioth; Iscariot.

John 6:71 says he's the son of Simon Iscariot. So he's really Judas, son of Simon. But so Iscariot is not a family name, it's a regional name. It's a name that identifies where his family is from, it's from Kerioth. According to Joshua 15:25, Kerioth is a town in Judah, Judah and it's located just 20 miles east of the Dead Sea. And so that makes Judas the only one of the Twelve who is not a Galilean.

A Judean disciple comes into the House of Caiaphas. Oh, that's not lost on the chief priests and the scribes. Ah, it just may sub, it may be that his interests align with ours. How convenient. They're feeling more comfortable with this guy by the minute. This Judas called Iscariot. Not only is he called

Iscariot, not only is he Judean, but he belongs to the number of the Twelve. This isn't some insignificant disciple. This isn't some fringe guy. He's a long-term disciple. He's a member of the Twelve. He's from the inner circle. He's an apostle. This is one of the guys that, that Jesus personally selected. What could be better?

What are these guys thinking? I'll tell you what they're thinking. They're, they're seeing this as God's favor on them. This is evidence of providence or in terms you may have heard before, maybe you've used this before, this is an open door. It's an open door. Look what God has done. Clearly this is God's will. After all, they've been praying about this. I hear that all the time. Oh, we've been praying about it. We got a peace about it. Really. So your prayer and your peace, trump's what's clearly not a good idea and not righteous. They've been praying about this. They've got a peace about it and their peace is growing by the moment.

Now that this Judas, a Judean from Kerioth has come, he's numbered among the Twelve, and he's finally come to his senses and he's going to tell his deconversion story. Can't wait. Let's put this on a blog. So they've been praying. They see this man as an answer to their prayers. They got a peace about it and

they're all too eager to walk through this open door of providence.

These religious leaders, they're so full of their own self-importance, aren't they? They're so assured of their position that they couldn't possibly be seeing things wrong. They couldn't be lacking information, because they sit at the top of everything and they know all things; they're in charge, after all. They've got people who inform them about everything. They've got degrees after their name. They're very well studied. They got all angles covered. What could they be lacking?

Well, in their pride they're completely blind. It's so totally off in their judgements. After all, wasn't it they who accused Jesus of doing miracles by the power of Beelzebul, the chief of demons, also known as Satan? And it's Satan himself who inhabits the man with whom they're conferring. He's in Caiaphas' living room, utterly blind to the demonic inspiration at work in Judas's plan. It's so often the case in religion and I, I cast a broad net when I say religion. I include our own Christianity in that.

It's often the case in religion. The religious, pride is the most blinding pride of all, and it's the most damning pride, because people in their positions convince themselves that

they're right, others are wrong, and they've got a righteous reason for it. Watch your own heart, beloved, that you're not walking in the darkness of any religious pride. We must examine ourselves every day. Call God to expose our hearts. At the end of Psalm 139, "search me and know my heart, try me and know my anxious thoughts, see if there be any wicked way in me." Most of all, Lord pride. Don't let there be pride in me, that blinds me to the truth.

Apart from a blinding pride, which is a key, it is the key connecting point that joins, that Satan makes between the religious leaders and Judas Iscariot. Both of them, overcome blind by pride, the pride of unbelief, and he sees a key connecting point to bring these two parties together. But having said that, because really, pride and unbelief are at the root of all sins, let's consider what else it was that drove Judas Iscariot.

What is it that motivated him? What made Judas, after three years of walking with the Savior, after his heart filled with truth, after watching power and miraculous deeds done and, and gracious feeding people concerned for their welfare as he's watching on? What is it that makes him susceptible, in his heart, to commit such, profound betrayal to act in such

disloyalty to this wonderful savior, who's been nothing but good to him, such that it's made his name synonymous with treachery? What's going on?

It's interesting to me that the New Testament spends little time actually speculating about Judas's motivations, and yet it does give us enough to observe in what is written, that we can draw some tentative conclusions and, and actually make some applications and guard our own hearts to give us some ability to do some self-examination. Maybe we'll go through that together here.

First and just give you a few things to think about with regard to Judas's motivations, for why he would be willing to commit such, such betrayal. First, as we see in Luke 22:5, pretty obvious, the leaders agreed to give Judas money. It's the very crassest of motivations for this betrayal at the surface, may have been greed, may have been covetousness, a love of money, "which is at the root of all kinds of evil," according to 1 Timothy 6:20. We do want to be on guard for that. Paul writes that to Timothy, tells him too, that wealthy people should watch out that their own hearts are not covetous and loving money.

It's not just the wealthy, who need to be cautious about coveting money. You know who's playing the slots in Las Vegas?

Poor people. They love money, too. But in the parallel account in Matthew 26:15, we see even more cause to be concerned about his love for money. Judas asked the chief priest, point blank, he said, what are you willing to give me to deliver him up to you? What are you willing to give me?

They weighed out to him 30 pieces of silver. It's maybe four month's worth of wages. So wasn't, it's not an insignificant sum. It was the price of a slave according to Exodus 21:32. Man, that's really cheapens the relationship, doesn't it? As he thinks of Jesus, his master, his discipler, his Lord, his, his benefactor, the one who's been kind to him over three years, provided for everything, as he thinks of him as nothing more than cheap sum of the cheap prices of slave. Jesus did make him the slave of all, make himself the slave of all. So it's kind of ironic, isn't it?

But this sum, though not insignificant, four months wages maybe, it's nothing to retire on, nothing you could go start a business with, nothing you could start a new, buy a new life with. I don't believe Judas was primarily motivated by a love of money. I think he did like what money could buy him or get him, but I don't think that was his primary motivation.

In fact, I really think that he sought payment from the chief priest, not as a money making endeavor. He sought payment from the chief priest to keep these men honest after the deed is done, so they couldn't claim plausible deniability of his treachery, making him the scapegoat. Judas is smart. He's conniving, he's creating a transaction with the religious establishment of Jerusalem here. He's getting them here to pony up, get some skin in the game, exact payment from them and have a transaction history, payment for services rendered.

This payment is his evidence that they entered into the arrangement freely of their own volition, hired him for the job, provided him with a little insurance if things go South in the public view. So I think it's a security. Some who are in support of Judas motivated by greed, they point to him being called a thief in John chapter 12. In fact, if you go back to John, the Gospel of John and look at John 12, just briefly, consider the possible motivations for Judas betrayal.

I think it's significant that both Matthew and Mark actually, insert this John 12 account, and, and it's out of chronological order, but they show this account right before they show Judas collaborating with the chief priest to betray

Jesus. So they take it out of its chronological order and insert it just before Judas goes to betray Jesus.

Here's the account John 12 verse 1, "Jesus, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. And so they made him a supper there, and Martha was serving, and Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with him." Very cool. He'd raised him from the dead, brought him out of the tomb. Now he's having dinner. Mary then took a litre of perfume, a very costly pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

"But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples," who was going to betray him, "said, 'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor.'" A little footnote from John again. Now, "he said this not because he's concerned about the poor, but because he's a thief." And, and as he had the Money Box, he used to take from what was put into it.

Now the fact that Judas had control of the Money Box, that meant that he is the treasurer among the apostles, among the disciples. This means that they trusted him. He's good with figures. He's known to be a careful, conservative, frugal man,

would have made a good banker. He's watching all the money, exercising control over the finances, look at principal and interest statements, balance sheets, getting, getting requisitions. Yeah, he's a thief. He's dipping into the till, helping himself to communal funds. But we know, having tracked with these men for so long, the band of disciples who were travelling with Jesus, are not living large, they're not staying in fancy hotels. So was this about money? Perhaps. I don't think entirely, though.

In this John 12 account, we see maybe two more potential factors that motivate Judas to betray Jesus. And this is a second if you're writing these down, I think Judas was, was corrupted and, and plagued by false expectations. He had some expectations about how this whole thing should go. This whole messianic program. We're going to storm into Jerusalem. We're going to kick out the Romans. We're going to take over as Jews. I'm going to be on a throne along with these other guys. I'll quickly rule over them. But I'm going to be here with Jesus, with the Messiah, and we're going to rule the world together.

And one way for a man like that to track what's important, we see this of those who track what's important for on an individual level, a family level, an organizational level. One

way to track what's important to an individual, to a family, to, to an organization is to track the finances, is to see where the money goes, for where your treasure is and where the treasure goes, there your heart will be also. Right? Judas has put himself into the position to track the income and the expenses. This is giving him the insight into what this group of disciples' values what's important to Jesus and his men.

He had certain expectations about where this whole thing is headed and what it would take to make it happen. Three hundred denarii's worth of perfume poured down the drain to anoint someone's feet, well, that irritated Judas and he ends up spreading his indignation about this to the other disciples as well. When we read Matthew and Mark their accounts, they tell us that Judas got all the other disciples, stirred up, discontent, complaining against this poor woman, against Mary, even scolding her until Jesus told him to stop it.

Jesus rebukes them, and I think this points to a third possible motivation for Judas's betrayal. He didn't like being confronted, exposed, and offended. The gist of the response is in John 12:7-8, that you can see there. It's just a boiled down version of it. But the fuller account is what I'll read to you now from Mark 14:6-9, as Jesus is hearing all of them scold this

poor woman, Mary, who's anointed his feet with this costly perfume, filling the home with the fragrance, and they're rebuking her. What a waste of money. What have you done?

"Jesus said, 'let her alone; why do you bother her? She's done a good deed to Me, for the poor you always have with you. Whenever you wish you could do good,' and do good, 'to them; but you don't always have Me,' do you? 'She's done what she could; she's anointed my body beforehand for My burial. And truly I say to you, that wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, that also which this woman has done shall be spoken of in memory of her.'"

Why in memory of her? Is it because she's some great thing? No, it's because she's evidencing what a true worshipping heart looks like. Here's Jesus, and here is the corresponding appropriate response to Jesus. Spend money on him. Pour it down the drain for him. Give up my best, my greatest gifts to pour it on his feet, because I love him, because he's forgiven me of my sins, because he's my Savior, because he's my Lord. That's why wherever the Gospel is told, is really fitting, that this woman's worship is a counterpart. So we see what it looks like when the gospel gets a hold of somebody.

Soon, rebuking his disciples, Jesus calls attention to what makes a good deed truly good. It's not frugality that counts with the Lord, but loving devotion. That's something eleven of the Twelve, apostles, they could understand that. Eleven out of the Twelve got this; Jesus' rebuke, hit home with them. It resonated in their regenerate hearts, made sense to their believing minds. It added up perfectly in their calculus of faith. Judas, though, he had no such heart, for the Lords, of this rebuke: Stung him, offended him.

He's the one who started this whole rebuke of the woman. And so tracing back, Jesus rebuke of the disciples goes right back to him. He's just taking a step down in the credibility, in the sight of his other apostles. In his unbelief, Judas did not, could not, would not see Jesus the way this woman saw Jesus as an object of her devotion, her affection, her love, her worship.

The other disciples understood it immediately, and they were silenced and instructed. Their complaining, their sinful indignation, their harsh scolding, all of it soundly rebuked by Jesus and believing hearts were instructed, minds of faith were informed. Errant emotions were put in check as they repented, and they adjusted their minds, and adjusted their behavior.

Not so for Judas, he's soured. He became embittered in his soul. He began to soothe his troubled heart by making plans to get out of here to escape. He starts planning his exit, get away from this band of losers and start preparing for his future. After all, he's got a life to live.

The final nail had to have been driven home for Judas, when he heard Jesus predict once again his own demise, and this time in a way that was inescapably clear right after the Olivet Discourse in Matthew. Matthew 24:25 is that whole section and right after teaching the Olivet Discourse and immediately before this account in Matthew 26:1, when Jesus had finished all these words of the Olivet Discourse, that we've just been through in Luke, he said something to his disciples that drove Judas right over the proverbial edge.

This is the last straw for Judas. Jesus said to his disciples, Matthew 26:1 and then verse 2, you know that after two days the Passover is coming and the Son of Man is to be delivered up for crucifixion. That did it: Crucifixion. Three years of my life I've given to this, these people, to this guy, followed him around and we're heading for crucifixion. No thanks.

That's the most explicit prediction Jesus had made about his death up to this point. Nobody's wondering about any metaphors here. He leaves no room for doubt. The group is headed for the cross, which is what he told his disciples from the very beginning. If anyone wanted to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, follow me. That's where I'm going. It's not like he's been unclear. It's just they didn't get it.

Their false expectations continue to blind them to what Jesus was actually teaching. They continue to interpret him through their own ignorance, through their own false expectations, through their own pride. This group is headed for the cross. They're headed for the official pronouncement of capital punishment from Rome. They're headed for an execution that only the Roman government had authority to carry out. That's it. Judas is out. He's done. He is gone. All that's needed, is, now is for Satan to enter his heart, influence his mind, help him get connected to the right people, the chief priest, the scribes. Judas and the religious leaders find each other, they understand each other, they sympathize with each other, and they're able to now conspire together to lay a claim to what each of them are after.

We look again at Luke 22 and verse 5 and Luke tells us that they were glad and they agreed to give him money. In their minds, that is money well spent. That's an easy decision. Didn't even need a purchase order for this one. They can just pay the pittance out of petty cash. Send Judas on his way to do their bidding and says they were glad. That's kind of an understatement. The verb is *Chairo*, rejoicing. I mean, they're ecstatic over how things are turning out for them. It's Alford Plummer, who says that the offer of Judas to betray his master and at such a low price, quote, "was wholly unexpected. And it's simplified matters enormously." Yeah, they're glad.

I've seen men trade their marriages and their families for the devil's pittance. I've seen, tragically, a young woman that Melinda and I know, and Melinda grew up with, trade the chance to know Jesus Christ as her savior. She traded that, to have traded having many sins forgiven, traded that for a young man that she wanted, who thought, she thought wanted her, who eventually they married. But he eventually cheated on her, left her. She received the devil's pittance.

I've seen pastors, preachers, trade their credibility for money, for some dalliance with some woman not their wife, to escape reality, go through the midlife crisis or whatever it is.

It's the devil's pittance. I've watched people leave what's good, righteous, holy and wise in order to preserve their life, maintain the pride of spiritual superiority with religious judgements and opinions against others. That's a devil's pittance.

All this, the devil's pittance, the ticket price to remain enslaved, as we really see from Judas in Luke 22:6, he consented, he agreed, he bargained, he began seeking an opportunity to betray him, to see, to them apart from the multitude. So tragic. Judas makes the bargain. He enters into the agreement, he takes the money, completes a transaction, and now you know what? He will never go free. Never.

The conspirators' dilemma, that's answered by the betrayers' solution, only results in making Judas their slave. They're looking for an opportunity to kill Jesus and now Judas is the one looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus to them to death, trying to hide, avoiding the people, they need to keep themselves hidden in the background, behind the curtain, in the darkness. But now Judas is the one out there slinking around, doing their bidding, losing his freedom, forfeiting his soul.

Truer and sadder word could not have been spoken about Judas Iscariot than this one by our Lord. Later in Luke 22, Luke

(20) 22, verse 22, Jesus says, "for indeed the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed." Perhaps that verse will prompt you to think about something, maybe, that came up in your mind ever since verse 3, which reminds us Judas belonged to the number of the Twelve. And we have to back up and say, wait a minute, didn't Jesus make that call? He did indeed.

In fact, Jesus chose Judas Iscariot to be numbered among the Twelve way back in Luke chapter 6. He'd spent an entire night in prayer to God over this matter, in Luke 6:12. Jesus is going to say, in prayer, not long from this moment, and he's going to say speak in prayer, confessing in his high priestly prayer, recorded in John 17, he's going to say, "I guarded all those whom you gave me, Father, I guarded them. Not one of them has perished, except the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled."

Listen, it's not the conspiracies of men that matter, nor is it the work of Satan himself that ultimately matters. It's not elections, politics, even militaries and warfare that ultimately matter. It's not all of this combined together that seals Christ's fate and ensures his crucifixion. We need to realize at the end of the day that men and angels are just

creatures. They're mere tools in the omnipotent hands of God to carry out his will.

Jewish leaders, Judas himself, Satan, they're just proximate causes of Jesus death; they're not the ultimate cause. It's God who is the ultimate cause of all things that come to pass, including this thing as we read earlier in Isaiah 53, "he was pleased to crush him." Peter confessed this along with the church. And I just want to draw your attention to this as we close, leave you with a bit of theology to reflect upon about all this, so we can start to understand, kind of, this issue of causation and how God in, in using human causation is played out because it's going to play out all through the narrative ahead. And I want you to understand this.

Turn, just very quickly, very brief, just got a couple, couple, things to say, turn to Acts 4:24. Acts 4:24. After Peter and John are released by the Sanhedrin, who commanded them to stop preaching, but they failed to stop them from preaching. Peter and John are praising and thanking God along with the church. And I want you to listen to their, as them, as they lift their voices to God over the one accord with the church.

And they say this in Acts 4:24 middle of the verse, "O Master," sovereign Lord is another way to translate that, "it is

you who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them, who by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of our Father David your servant said," this is Psalm 2, 'Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples devise vain things. The kings of the earth took their stand. The rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ. Oh, for truly in this city they were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel.'" And then this, "to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur."

In the crucifixion of Christ, the Passion narrative, we're going to see in narrative form some of the most profound of all mysteries. These things have been cited as paradox. They've been used by the enemies of the Bible to scoff as evidence of contradiction. But upon closer inspection, all these things are answered by good sound theology of the Bible. We see an interplay, here in this text, between divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

We see human causation, but at work behind the scenes is divine causation, doing whatever your hand and your purpose predestined. And yet it was by the hand of Herod and Pontius Pilate and the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel and the rulers

of Israel and Judas Iscariot and Satan himself, all of them were involved, and yet they did whatever God's hand and purpose predestined to occur. We see an interplay between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, both true.

We see an interplay of divine causation working through human causation. That's what Peter said when he was preaching; if you back up just a couple of chapters in Acts 2 and verse 23, this is what he preached to his fellow Jews at Pentecost. He said, "Jesus was delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, and yet you nailed him to a cross by the hands of lawless men and put him to death." Peter cites God, doesn't he, as the ultimate cause of the crucifixion.

God takes ownership in Isaiah 53. He accepts personal responsibility as an outworking of his free, uncoerced choice, predetermined plan, the foreknowledge of God. But the efficient cause of Jesus crucifixion, like who actually literally hammered the nails into his hands and feet is the efficient cause of Jesus crucifixion; Peter sites the hands of lawless men. What's he talking about? The Roman soldiers who literally nailed Jesus hands and feet to the crossbeams?

Were the soldiers guilty for this act? Were they culpable for the crucifixion? Well, for each individual soldier, God

knows the answer to that, depends on what each of them knew about Jesus and what they, I mean, they crucified people all the time. They were the executioners, for the state, in Romans 13, guarantees and defends their right to bear the sword. They don't bear the sword in vain, there were true insurrectionists that were crucified by these soldiers. Was this Jesus of Nazareth, was he one of them? They don't know; they're just doing their job, perhaps. God knows; he's going to bring all in the heart to account at the bar of divine justice in the end.

But notice where Peter lays the human blame and the moral culpability for crucifying Jesus on the cross. He cites the proximate causes, those who were informed, those who knew what they were doing, the people who said, "his blood be on us and our children forever." The people who said don't give us this Jesus, give us Barabbas, a murderer, instead. In dramatic fashion, Peter indicts his fellow Jews as if they themselves and not the Roman soldiers, but as if they themselves were hammering the nails. He says, "you nailed him to a cross." You use the hands of lawless men to do it, but you were swinging their arms. You put him to death.

Folks, God chose to crucify his Son as the Lamb of God, slain from before the foundation of the world. Revelation 13:8,

"God's caused the iniquity of all his people to fall on Christ." Isaiah 53:6. According to Isaiah 53:10, "He was pleased to crush him as an atoning, perfect sacrifice." So though God was the ultimate cause of the crucifixion, we understand he bears no guilt for the sins committed in crucifying the innocent Son of God. Why? Because God's intent from start to finish has always been good, and wise, and righteous, and perfect, to give a redeemed people to his son as a gift, that they may honor the Son and honor the Father, that He might be glorified.

Every intention of God's is good. Not so the sinners. Not so the proximate and even the efficient causes. Moral culpability is with them. It was always God's sovereign plan, before time began, to slay his one and only Son, so the sinners could be reconciled to him. And the writer to the Hebrews puts it this way, "So take care brethren. Take care lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart in falling away from the living God." I don't want any of you in the sound of my voice to commit a like apostasy to Judas Iscariot.

You've heard, now, the pages of Scripture, God's eternal word that calls your heart to account. Don't despise it, don't turn away from such a great salvation. If you are not reconciled and have your sins forgiven and know God is your savior because

of Christ, today, let it be the day of your salvation. If you're a believer in Christ and this salvation is your salvation, but you haven't been living as if it matters to you; you too repent. But all those who belong to Christ and with a good heart, Christian, take heart. We're going to see in this narrative in Luke 22, 23, 24, we're going to see what transpired to secure your salvation. I'm telling you, there's so much to see, so much to rejoice in, so much to give glory and praise to God in, and I want to do that now as we close in prayer.

Our Father, it's just a, introductory message into this great section of Scripture, this climactic culminating point of the Synoptic Gospels. We are so grateful for the salvation that we have been granted by you and by your grace. We pray that none of us would take it lightly. None of us would despise your grace. None of us would be unbelieving, hard hearted. None of us would turn away and apostatize and defect like Judas. You chose him to be part of that inner circle, those Twelve for a reason, so that we would take note, that there can be people who are attached to Christ, who proclaim his name, who are with him years and still walk away.

Oh Father, I pray that that would not happen here, even though it happens all the time. I just pray that you would



protect us, protect these, these, dear ones here and help us all
to, of one, with one accord, pray the prayers of Peter and John
in that early church, who gave praise to you, the sovereign God,
for your good plan of redemption. It's in Jesus' name we pray,
Amen.