

“The Twelve Disciples”

Sermon # 6

“Judas: The Traitor”

The other eleven disciples are all great encouragements to us in that they exemplify how ordinary people with typical failing can be used by God to accomplish extraordinary things. Judas on the other hand stands as a warning about the evil that can befall anyone that is careless in spiritual matters,

The name, Judas, appears last in every list of the apostles except the list in Act 1 where it does not appear at all. Every time that Judas' name does appear it is with the notation that he was a traitor. His name has become synonymous with treachery and betrayal. But it was not always so.

In the beginning Judas possessed a good name.

Judas, which is a form of the name Judah, was a common name of the time, and means *“Jehovah leads.”* It would stand to reason that Judas' parents had every expectation that their son would be led by God. His surname *Iscaiot* is derived from the Hebrew term *“ish”* and the name of the town he was born in, Kerieth and means *“the man from Kerieth.”* He is apparently the only apostle that did not come from Galilee. He was likely a man of some education and sophistication, a man of the city rather than from the country. Perhaps he thought himself better than the other disciples or perhaps he considered himself an outsider.

He had no apparent vices.

There are no apparent character faults to which to clue in on his dastardly future. He does not push himself forward as do James and John. There is no record that he makes rash promises or boasts about himself like Peter. He seems to be a quiet and businesslike and by all outward appearances, respectable. At the outset, Judas by all external appearances was just like the other apostles. He too is called by Christ to be a disciple although we are not given the story of his calling.

He ultimately became the treasurer for the apostles and used that position to pilfer funds (John 12:6). The very fact that he was the treasurer indicates the other disciples had confidence in his honesty and a confidence that would remain unshaken up to the very night of his arrest. It is significant that when later Jesus predicted that one of them would betray Him no one suspected Judas (Matt. 26:22-23).

The question that haunts us is: *“How could a likeable respectable man with such a good beginning spend three years in intimate contact with the Lord and then do what he did!”*

His Defining Moment (Matt 26:6-13)

Shortly after the raising of Lazarus, and just before Jesus makes his triumphal entrance into Jerusalem, Jesus and his disciples returned to Bethany. Jesus is invited to a meal at the home of Lazarus and his two sisters Mary and Martha. It is during this meal that in a extravagant expression of worship, Mary showed her devotion to Jesus by breaking a container of very expensive ointment-perfume and anointed the feet of Jesus. It was Judas who observed what was happening and exclaimed that this was a purposeless waste of a precious substance, which would have been better served by selling and giving the proceeds to the poor.

Judas was angered by what he determined was an improper expenditure of funds. Jesus came to Mary's defense and gives Judas a rather mild reproof by pointing out that he would only be with for a short time but the poor would be around (26:10-11).

He went on to recognize that Mary's act was a beautiful gesture that would stand for all time.

This incident seems to be the turning point in Judas' thinking for it at this point that read in we read (Matthew 26:14-16)

"Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests (15) and said, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?" And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. (16) So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him."

The contrast is staggering: The Lord is being anointed with the overwhelming love and worship by Mary at the same time that he is being betrayed by overwhelming hate by Judas.

Having arranged for the money to betray Jesus, Judas came back, blended in with the rest of the disciples and pretended that nothing was different.

His Golden Opportunity

Judas sat at the feet of Jesus for more than three years seeing the miracles, hearing the teachings. Many of those teaching applied directly to the issues with which Judas dealt, greed, selfish ambition and hunger for power and prestige. In the end Judas was lost because he did not apply the truth the heard taught in his own life.

Jesus also warned him, both directly and indirectly, and he gave him chance after chance to repent. In John 13:21 Jesus foretold of his coming betrayal by saying to his disciples, "one of you will betray me." Even at this point the disciples were perplexed to the extent that according to Matthew (26:22) "each of them began to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?" Jesus indicated that the traitor would be the one receiving a morsel he had dipped in the wine, he then gave it to Judas (John 13:26). Even when he says to Judas (John 13:27) "What you do, do quickly" far from being a command to do this terrible thing it was a final reminder that Jesus already knew

what he had in his heart, but was still announcing that the door of mercy was open. Judas apparently went directly from the Upper Room to the enemies of Christ for Judas has secretly seeking an opportunity to betray Jesus ever since making his bargain with the Sanhedrin (Matt 26:14-16).

It is only after the Judas had left the room that Jesus instituted the Last Supper.

So at the very moment Jesus is instituting the Lord's Supper, Judas is finalizing his arrangements for the betrayal of Jesus.

Perhaps the saddest words ever spoken about anyone was spoken by Jesus about Judas when he said in Matt 26:24 "It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

His Heartless Betrayal (Matt 26:47-50)

The next time we see Judas is in at the betrayal itself (Matthew 26:47-50) "And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and elders of the people.(48) Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him." (49) "Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. (50) But Jesus said to him, "Friend, why have you come?" Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him."

John in his account (John 18:4-8) tells us that Jesus tried to spare Judas the indignity of betraying him with a kiss, Jesus made this unnecessary when he stepped forward and identified himself, but Judas kissed him anyway.

His Limitless Remorse (Matthew 27:1-5)

As it so often happens with sin, as soon as the deed was done, Judas' conscience came alive. He found himself in a hell of his own making; he is hammered by his own mind for what he has done. Matthew 27:3-4 reveals,

"Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, (4) saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood."

It may have been that Judas was counting on the fact that the Jews could not impose the death penalty under Roman law but if so he did not count on the determination of Jesus' enemies. But when morning came and he knew that they were carrying Jesus to Pilate and demanding that he be crucified, it was more than he could stand.

In the King James Version, Matthew says that Judas "repented himself" (27:3) but the word here is really remorse. His remorse was not the same as repentance, as subsequent events clearly show. His remorse was with out limits. But no amount of remorse alone can save

anyone. Even if we realize the enormity of our sin, our sorrow alone can not redeem us, as important as that sorrow is.

He was sorry, not because he had betrayed Christ, but because his sin had not satisfied him in the way that he had hoped.

The chief priest and elders were unsympathetic as revealed in the remainder of verse four, "... And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!" *Judas was bad enough to betray his Lord and good enough to be unable to bear the burden of his guilt.*

It should be remembered that Peter and Judas sinned in equally serious ways. Judas betrayed Jesus into the hands of the Sanhedrin. Peter, instead of testifying on the behalf of Jesus in the high priest courtyard vehemently denied him.

Peter like Judas would be filled with remorse. The gospel record says that he went out and wept bitterly after the cock's crowing reminded him of Jesus' warning. As with Judas, Peter remorse does not save him. But unlike, Judas, Peter does not seek to escape accountability for his actions. Instead, with great fear and trembling he faced the Master and sought his forgiveness (John 21:15-17).

The difference between Peter and Judas, is the difference between Heaven and Hell; it is the difference between remorse and repentance.

His Pointless Death (Matt 27:5 Acts 1:18)

Sadly he did not do the one thing that would have brought him relief, there is no evidenced that he ever sought the forgive-ness of God. Matthew 27:5 tells that Judas is so distraught that he sought to silence his conscience by killing himself, "Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself."

Having hanged himself, either the rope or the tree limb broke and Judas fell head-first onto the rocks below. The biblical description is graphic and ugly; (Acts 1:18) "... and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out."

Judas' life was such a tragedy, he could not even kill himself the way he wanted, but he is nonetheless dead.

Conclusion

I want to close tonight with a couple of simple reminders from the life of Judas.

First, Sin Is Progressive

Sin always gains momentum that makes it easier to commit the next more evil sinful act. "Who would have thought that stealing a few coins from a bag when no one was looking would open the door to Satanic possession, and result in a most monstrous crime and suicide's grave? We can never be too careful about shunning so-called little sins, for sin has an awful power for growth." [Herbert Lockyer. All The Apostles of the Bible. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972) p. 106]

The nature of sin is such that Judas fall was not the result of one bad decision but that sin like gravity pulls you deeper and deeper until you find yourself doing things you would never thought yourself capable of.

When James wrote his warn concerning sin in (1:14-15) he could easily have had Judas in mind, "but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. (15) Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death." James tells us that our sinful desires cause us to be dragged away and enticed. James uses a familiar illustration from the world of hunting and fishing, "lured" carried the idea of baiting a trap and "enticed" meant to bait a hook.

Both the hunter and fisherman use bait to attract and catch their prey because no animal is deliberately going into a trap and no fish is going to knowingly bite a hook. The idea is to hide the trap or the hook. In the same way Satan always packages temptation in such a way that it carries with it some bait that appeals to our natural desires. The bait only attracts us, but it also hides the fact that yielding to the desire will eventually bring us sorrow and grief as it did in Judas' case. The devil's bait keeps us from seeing the consequences of sin.

Jesus called Judas "the son of perdition." (John 17:12). The word "perdition" is the same word in the Greek for *waste*. Sin sapped all the finer qualities from Judas' life until all he died a *wasted* life.

Secondly, Remorse and Repentance are not the Same.

Judas' greatest failure was not his betrayal of Jesus, it was his failure to repent and receive the forgiveness of Jesus. As we have already seen, there is not that much difference between the sins of Peter and Judas on the fateful night. Both of the disciples sank to unbelievable lows. Yet one died and one lived...one was lost and one was saved...one repented and was filled with remorse.