



## Hazelbank Presbyterian Church



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Today we associate the name, “Judas” with treachery. In Germany, parents are not allowed to name a child Judas because of the potential harm it may cause. In Dante's Inferno, Judas is condemned to the lowest circle in Hell, doomed to be chewed for eternity in the mouth of Satan. Renaissance paintings represent him as the embodiment of cowardice. The name Judas is synonymous with the words traitor and treachery. But it has not always been so. In fact the name, Judas, which means “the praise of God” was a popular name. That is, until the name became associated with betrayal. It is easy for us to condemn the treachery of a man who would betray Jesus for money. But before we dismiss him as a man so far removed from ourselves that we need not even compare ourselves... perhaps we should look a little closer. Can we honestly say that we have never sold Jesus out?

When we have played dumb in the presence of non-believers or we joined in the laughter to avoid the ridicule of being associated with Christ, are we not selling out Christ for selfish gain? If you remember last week we read at the end of our reading, verses 10 and 11:

<sup>10</sup>Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. <sup>11</sup>They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

Because this aspect of the account was not what we were looking at, you could almost have missed this point, this fact, that something was stirring inside Judas's mind and heart. Today we read in verses 12-16 of how Jesus had asked his disciples to go and make preparation for the Passover. Such an important meal for the Jews, but now, such an important meal for us.

This was the meal that saw the symbols of the old covenant being replaced with the symbols of the new covenant, the ones we celebrate today. Back then, the feast consisted of the roasted lamb, the unleavened bread and the dish of bitter herbs. The Lamb reminded the Jews of the blood that was applied to the doorposts in Egypt to keep the angel of death from killing the firstborn. The bread reminded them of their haste in leaving Egypt and the bitter herbs spoke of their suffering as slaves under Pharaoh. Now we use the bread and the wine, two common items that were used practically at every meal but Jesus gave them a wonderful new meaning. One commentator writes: When Jesus said, “This is my body” and “this is my blood”, he did not transform either the bread or the wine into anything different.

When the disciples ate the bread it was still bread, when they drank the wine it was still wine. However the Lord gave a new meaning to the bread and the wine, so that, from that hour, they would serve as memorials of his death”. I don't want to belittle the account of the Passover meal and its implications for us today but we get ample opportunity to look at this during our communion season in our church's calendar during the year. While the institution of the Lord's supper is massively important to us, there was something else going on in this passage that needs to be addressed. Let's look at it again.  
Verse 13:

<sup>17</sup>When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. <sup>18</sup>While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, “I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me - one who is eating with me.” <sup>19</sup>They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, “Surely not I?” <sup>20</sup>“It is one of the Twelve,” he replied, “one who dips bread into the bowl with me. <sup>21</sup>The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.” <sup>22</sup>While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take it; this is my body.” <sup>23</sup>Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. <sup>24</sup>“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them. <sup>25</sup>“I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God.” <sup>26</sup>When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

What we have just read was like a bombshell to the disciples. Mark tells us that they were saddened but in actual fact the word used in the greek expresses more a deep hurt to think that one of the 12, one of THEM, would even consider doing this. There is worry that can be heard in their voices as we are told in verse 19:

“one by one they said to him, “Surely not I?”

Jesus answer is simply:

<sup>20</sup>“It is one of the Twelve,” he replied, “one who dips bread into the bowl with me. <sup>21</sup>The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.”

We think we are clever because we have hindsight and we know which one it was. But can you imagine the shock in the ranks of the disciples thinking that one of them was going to betray their master and their Lord. I don't honestly believe that we can begin to imagine the emotions in that upper room. Judas's decision affected everyone...

Let's take a few moments then this morning, using some of the other gospel accounts of this matter to see if we can see in the life of Judas timeless principles about the devastation brought about by a choice following the pathway of sin.

First, Sin is a con and Satan is a Fraud.

Satan entices men to act in a way that they consider is in their own best interest, but which in reality extends his control over their lives. Luke tells us in 22:3

“Then Satan entered Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve.”

Luke's statement that “Satan entered Judas” does not suggest demon possession as such but rather influence. The same idea was clearly stated by Peter when he spoke of the sin of Ananias, the husband of Sapphira, when he said in Acts 5:3:

“Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit”

Indeed Satan seems to have entered Judas' heart but he could not have entered, if Judas had not first of all opened the door. But as we will discover in the life of Judas, when you

cooperate with Satan, there is a massive price to pay. It is sadly possible to be associated with Jesus, to hear His gracious words, witness His wonderful works, yet refuse Him our heart's allegiance and be ultimately lost. Sin never delivers what it promises and...

Secondly, You can be so close to Heaven and yet so very far away.

This is something we thought about a few weeks ago when Jesus said to one of the teachers of the law, **“You are not far from the kingdom of God.”** In verse two we are told that Judas “was one of the twelve.” Judas was not only one of the twelve, the inner circle of Jesus' most intimate disciples, he was also able to work his way into a place of trust, because he ultimately became the treasurer of the group and according to John 12:6 he was able to use his position to pilfer funds.

He had given his life to follow Jesus but he never gave Jesus his heart. Judas is a tragic example of lost opportunity. He is the epitome of wasted privilege. We have every reason to believe that Judas was given the same authority as the other men and that he preached the same message and performed the same miracles. It shows us how close a person can come to the Kingdom of God and still be lost. In Matthew 7:21-23 Jesus warns,

**<sup>21</sup>“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup>Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ <sup>23</sup>Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”**

John R. Rice in his book “Judas Iscariot” Sword of the Lord.” Writes: “Judas was counted as a follower of Christ but was lost. He was baptized and yet he was lost. He preached the Gospel and yet was lost. He was trusted by all who knew him, except Jesus, and yet he was lost! It is a terrible thing to go to Hell from anywhere, but what remorse must be the portion of those who go to Hell from the church.” It is a reminder to us today, that church attendance, church membership, even involvement in ministry is not assurance of being saved. It is possible to be near Christ, to associate with his followers, to even be engaged in ministry and still not be truly saved and...

Third, Jesus didn't make it easy for Judas to betray Him.

Jesus knows that the deal has already been made to betray him but he uses the Passover meal as one last chance to appeal for the soul of Judas. Time and time again, we can see how Jesus was reaching out to Judas. First, Judas was given a place of honour at this banquet to show him that his love and forgiveness could still be his if he wanted. Judas reclined at the left side of Jesus, one of the two places of honour at the table. John was at his right. When Jesus gave Judas the bread dipped in the herbs, it was the gracious act of a host to a special guest. Even this did not break Judas's heart because it was after this that he let Satan in, instead of Jesus' love and forgiveness and he left the room to betray him. Not only did he give Judas a place of honour but, as Jesus goes around the table washing each of the disciple's feet, he also washed Judas'.

As the meal proceeded John tells us in his account in John 13:18:

**“I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: ‘He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.**

The expression “has lifted his heel against me” is describing “the lifting of a horse’s hoof and the delivering a deadly kick.” As Jesus dipped the bread in the bowl and offered it to Judas it is difficult not to see this as an offer that it is not too late yet, he does not have to go through with his betrayal. Judas took the bread but refused to turn back to the master.

So it is today, in order to turn our backs on Jesus, either to refuse his offer of forgiveness or to continue in a path of destruction, we have to climb over every obstacle he places in our path. We must climb over the Bible which is God’s recorded word. We must climb over the prayers and attempted intervention of good Christian people that God puts in our lives. We may turn our backs on Jesus, we may choose to ignore him and reject his forgiveness - because we have chosen too.

Judas apparently went straight from the Upper Room to the where the religious leadership were gathered. When he arrived there he reported to them when and where they could find Jesus. He told them how they could apprehend Jesus under the cover of darkness and away from the press of the crowd. In order to betray Jesus, Judas had to literally climb over every obstacle that Jesus put in his way...

Now I know it is not very Presbyterian of me but there is a final forth point:

Fourth, Remorse with out repentance leads only to despair

In John 13:27-28, it says,

“<sup>27</sup>As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. “What you are about to do, do quickly,” Jesus told him, <sup>28</sup>but no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. <sup>29</sup>Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the Feast, or to give something to the poor. <sup>30</sup>As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.”

The next time we see Judas is in Mark 14:43-46, when his conspiracy of betrayal reaches its culmination. Jesus was arrested and led away to trial where he had been condemned to die.

Only Matthew’s account (27:3) includes an account of the remorse of Judas after the arrest of Jesus:

“<sup>3</sup>When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. <sup>4</sup>“I have sinned,” he said, “for I have betrayed innocent blood.” “What is that to us?” they replied. “That’s your responsibility.” <sup>5</sup>So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.”

He was in a hell of his own making, repeatedly hammered by his own mind for what he had done. Sin always, always brings guilt and Judas’ sin brought him unbearable misery. The King James Version here says that Judas “repented.” Judas had a conscience. He recognized his sin. But his repentance was that of remorse, of despair, and of death. His remorse was boundless. But no amount of remorse can save anyone. Even if we realize our sin, our sorrow alone can not save us, important as that sorrow is. Although he tried to undo what he had done, it was futile. Sadly we are not told that sought the forgiveness of God. He did not cry out for mercy. He did not seek deliverance from the power of sin.

Instead, he tried to sort it out himself; ultimately he tried to silence his conscience by taking his own life. I'll let Warren Wiersbe have the last word today when he writes:

Some people try to defend Judas by arguing that he betrayed Jesus in order to force Him into revealing His power and setting up the Jewish kingdom. Others say that he was nothing but a servant who obediently fulfilled God's Word. Judas was neither a martyr nor a robot. He was a responsible human being who made his own decisions but, in so doing, fulfilled the Word of God. He must not be made into either a hero as we are maybe tempted to say, "After all, somebody had to betray Jesus!" - or a helpless victim of merciless predestination. Judas was lost for the same reason millions are lost today: he did not repent of his sins and believe on Jesus Christ. Wiersbe finishes by saying, "If you have never been born again, one day you will wish you had not been born at all."

But it is not too late – let today be the day you surrender to Jesus Christ.

Let's pray together.