

Judas

Matthew 26:20-29

20 When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve; 21 and while they were eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me." 22 And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another, "Surely not I, Lord?" 23 He answered, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. 24 The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born." 25 Judas, who betrayed him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" He replied, "You have said so." 26 While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." 27 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; 28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Judas was a good man. Amen? No, that was a trick question. Judas was a good man. Amen? No. How about this? Judas was a good man until he betrayed Christ. Yes? The name Judas is a very good name. It means praised. It was very popular in the day and very significant because it had a strong historical relevance. Judas Maccabeus was a Jewish priest that led the Maccabean revolt against the Seleucid Empire. That doesn't mean much to us but it means a whole lot to Jewish history. The revolt removed the statues of Greek gods. Today, Hanukkah is a very big Jewish holiday that celebrates this event when Judas Maccabeus led the revolt that restored Jewish worship in Jerusalem 164 years before Christ.

There are a few biblical people with the name Judas. There was another disciple named Judas. He is referred to as Judas son of James. The Gospel of Matthew informs us that Jesus even had a brother named Judas. Saul, before he was known as the apostle Paul, was blinded and when he was in Damascus he was cared for by a man named Judas. In Acts a man named Judas delivered the letter accepting Gentiles into church.

Up until the time that Judas betrayed Jesus, Judas was a good man with a good name. Judas was a disciple just like the other disciples. He was homeless and followed Jesus everywhere. He had all the power and authority of the other disciples. Jesus even trusted Judas with the groups money.

I would like to point out an internal conflict within the followers of Jesus. This doesn't get talked about a lot and I do not know if others agree with my assessment. But this is what I think. The problem starts with an internal conflict. There is a woman that pours very expensive perfume on Jesus' head. This is an act of devotion in preparation for burial. So, she knows the passion on a much deeper level than the disciples do at this time. There is an objection from Judas that this expensive perfume could have been sold and the proceeds given to the poor. Now, I want to point out, that is a very legitimate objection. The action of not using it to benefit the poor goes against teaching and mission priority of helping poor. Judas fails to understand the significance of something that is much more important and the objection by Judas is rebuked by Jesus.

I think this causes Judas to get angry because it is then that Judas goes to the chief priests for money. He asked them "how much will you give me if I betray him to you?" The answer is 30 pieces of silver. We can only guess at the value. We can figure out how much silver it takes for a daily wage and compare it to today. But that would not be accurate due to the vastness of

the different cultures and the advancement of technology. But it was enough money to buy a cemetery.

It is now that the name Judas has the greatest stigma. There is a lesson in here for us in dealing with internal conflict. Someone has an objection, and it could appear to be a very legitimate objection, but when they get upset the emotions overrule logic and they fail to see the bigger picture. When antagonists in the church claim righteousness they end up playing the hand of Judas.

What is significant is Jesus response. Always look at the response of Jesus. I cannot emphasize this enough. Always look at what Jesus said and did. Notice Jesus, even though he was being betrayed, on Passover night Jesus washes the disciples feet, including Judas, but Judas failed to learn the lesson on humility. Even though Judas was in the act of betraying Jesus and Jesus knew it was Judas that was betraying him, Judas was still welcome at the Lord's table. Judas still did not learn the lessons on, welcoming, oneness, and fellowship. The response of Jesus is contrast to human nature. Oh, we would be mad, upset, have a temper tantrum, and quit coming to church, or whatever. But not Jesus. The response of Jesus is that Judas is still welcome at the table.

I think it is when Jesus is brutalized and condemned that this was shocking to Judas and he came to his senses. He was no longer engulfed with negative emotion, or antagonism against Jesus. He repented. Maybe not, we see remorse in the Bible but I don't think we see a biblical account of repentance. He did try to return the money but they refused it. They did not care that Jesus was innocent. The reason for this is that it was the chief priest Caiaphas that came up with the plan to kill Jesus. In John 11:50 he said "it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed."

There are multiple layers to Jesus sacrifice. It is my interpretation that it begins with the internal conflict that got out of hand when Judas got upset and did not follow Jesus completely. There is the political conflict where Jesus is sacrificed, one for all, to keep peace with Rome. The ultimate layer is the divine nature of the sacrifice. The real reason Jesus died is for our salvation. Jesus also died for us! The question for us is how do we respond? How do we show our thanks to God for what God has done for us? I am not going to answer that for you right now. That is for you to discern. But I want you to think about it and reflect upon it. How do we show our thanks to God for what God has done for us?