

Choices
Week 11: Judas

There are some names that have such a negative history that they become **unusable**. Judas is one of them.

To be called a Judas means that you are a betrayer. You are willing to turn on the people closest to you. The original Judas is one of the **12 apostles** who were **Jesus' inner circle**.

Arrangements for betrayal probably took place on **Wednesday of holy week**. The disciples are probably at the home of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha in Bethany. Judas travels the two miles to Jerusalem. At some point, Jesus snuck out, or made an excuse that because he was the team treasurer, that he had arrangements to make or provisions to buy.

¹⁴Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, went to the leading priests ¹⁵ and asked, "How much will you pay me to betray Jesus to you?" And they gave him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶ From that time on, Judas began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus. Some think this might have been a **down payment**, 30 up front and more when the task is completed. ¹⁷ On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to prepare the Passover meal for you?" ¹⁸ "As you go into the city," he told them, "you will see a certain man. Tell him, 'The Teacher says: My time has come, and I will eat the Passover meal with my disciples at your house.'" ¹⁹ So the disciples did as Jesus told them and prepared the Passover meal there. ²⁰ When it was evening, Jesus sat down at the table with the Twelve. ²¹ While they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me." ²² Greatly distressed, each one asked in turn, "Am I the one, Lord?" ²³ He replied, "One of you who has just eaten from this bowl with me will betray me. The point being, the traitor is at this table. ²⁴ For the Son of Man must die, as the Scriptures declared long ago. But how terrible it will be for the one who betrays him. It would be far better for that man if he had never been born!" ²⁵ Judas, the one who would betray him, also asked, "Rabbi, am I the one?" And Jesus told him, "You have said it." Matthew 26:14-25

Then Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper, or communion. He uses the bread to represent his body, broken for them and the blood, to represent his blood, that will be spilt for them and all people.

At some point, Judas leaves under the guise of making payment for something that the group needed. Jesus and the rest of the group go to the **garden of Gethsemane**, where Jesus prays and asks them to pray with him. He leaves the group and walks further with **Peter, James, and John**. He

asks them to pray with him. The disciples all fall asleep as Jesus prays, asking God to let this cup pass, but not his will, but God's be done.

In verse 44, Jesus returns from praying again...⁴⁴ So he went to pray a third time, saying the same things again.⁴⁵ Then he came to the disciples and said, "Go ahead and sleep. Have your rest. But look—the time has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.⁴⁶ Up, let's be going. Look, my betrayer is here!"

47 And even as Jesus said this, Judas, one of the twelve disciples, arrived with a crowd of men armed with swords and clubs. They had been sent by the leading priests and elders of the people. 48 The traitor, Judas, had given them a prearranged signal: "You will know which one to arrest when I greet him with a kiss."⁴⁹ So Judas came straight to Jesus. "Greetings, Rabbi!" he exclaimed and gave him the kiss.⁵⁰ Jesus said, "My friend, go ahead and do what you have come for." Then the others grabbed Jesus and arrested him.⁵¹ But one of the men with Jesus pulled out his sword and struck the high priest's slave, slashing off his ear.⁵² "Put away your sword," Jesus told him. "Those who use the sword will die by the sword."⁵³ Don't you realize that I could ask my Father for thousands of angels to protect us, and he would send them instantly?⁵⁴ But if I did, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled that describe what must happen now?"⁵⁵ Then Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I some dangerous revolutionary, that you come with swords and clubs to arrest me? Why didn't you arrest me in the Temple? I was there teaching every day."⁵⁶ But this is all happening to fulfill the words of the prophets as recorded in the Scriptures." **At that point, all the disciples deserted him and fled. Matthew 26:47-56**

The rest of the chapter tells the story of Jesus being questioned by the leading priest and religious leaders who had been conspiring with Judas to arrest Jesus. We also see Peter denying Jesus three times.

Chapter 27 begins with the next morning. Very early in the morning the leading priests and the elders of the people met again to lay plans for putting Jesus to death.² Then they bound him, led him away, and took him to Pilate, the Roman governor.³ When Judas, who had betrayed him, realized that Jesus had been condemned to die, he was filled with remorse. So he took the thirty pieces of silver back to the leading priests and the elders.⁴ "I have sinned," he declared, "for I have betrayed an innocent man." "What do we care?" they retorted. "That's your problem."⁵ Then Judas threw the silver coins down in the Temple and went out and hanged himself. Matthew 27:1-5

Today, our purpose is to look at Judas and the choices he made. I know what you are thinking, "Yes, he chose to betray Jesus." It's pretty simple.

But really before he got to the point of conspiring against Jesus he made some other choices that lead him to betraying Jesus and eventually hanging himself. **And even after the betrayal**, he made another important decision. And yes, they were all bad. **This is a cautionary tale of what can come from a man in a really amazing situation who makes these destructive choices.**

We want to look at the...**Destructive choices Judas made.**

At some point Judas decided...**To use his privilege for God or himself.**

One of the twelve, the inner circle...Think about that for a minute. He got to look into **the face of God** and hear **the voice of God**. What a privilege. **The prophets of old dreamed about this day** and this guy of a flexible moral fiber got to be one of them. **Jesus chose him.** I think Jesus **chose him as an apostle**, not simply as the one who would betray him.

Set to be a leader in the church...He could have been one of those **heroes in the book of Acts** that we credit our existence to. He could have seen Jesus alive again. He could have been there on the day of **Pentecost** when thousands followed Jesus and believed.

²⁸ Jesus replied, "I assure you that when the world is made new and the Son of Man sits upon his glorious throne, you who have been my followers will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Matthew 19:28

To exercise authority over the 12 tribes of Israel...Jesus said this about the 12. They would sit on thrones ruling over the 12 tribes of Israel in the Kingdom of Heaven. Picture Judas on a throne!

What privileges do you have? I will speak for myself. I was raised by two **parents who stayed together in sickness and health, literally.** They loved and raised me to **have an opportunity to follow Jesus** and be a productive part of society. **They didn't make it hard to choose to follow Jesus.** My parents could afford to help me go to **college** and even helped me in seminary. Lived in a **safe neighborhood.** Had plenty of **family close** to me. Had **two sisters** who looked out for me. Had many great **Christian friends.** Had a **pastor and youth pastor** who believed in me and my calling. I didn't have anyone **sexually or physically**, or even emotionally, abuse me. I live in America, with a home, transportation, food, and a job which puts me in the **top 11% of wealth** in the world. I've been able to have **good bosses** to work under.

How are you privileged? This isn't about someone else having it better. **Are you using that for God's glory, for his kingdom and for neighbor's good?**

⁴⁷ "And a servant who knows what the master wants, but isn't prepared and doesn't carry out those instructions, will be severely punished. ⁴⁸ But someone who does not know, and then does something wrong, will be punished only lightly. When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required. Luke 12:47-48

He used his position as treasurer as an opportunity to embezzle funds.

He used his intimate knowledge of Jesus to get 30 pieces of silver. The amount 30 pieces of silver was the was the set amount for a slave that had been accidentally gored to death by an ox, but is also a way of saying "a paltry sum."

"The other eleven apostles are all great encouragements to us, because they exemplify how common people with typical failings can be used by God in uncommon, remarkable ways. Judas, on the other hand, stands as a warning about the evil potential of **spiritual carelessness, squandered opportunity, sinful lusts, and hardness of the heart.** Here was a man who drew as close to the Savior as it is humanly possible to be. **He enjoyed every privilege Christ affords.** He was intimately familiar with everything Jesus taught. Yet he remained in unbelief and went into a hopeless eternity." Twelve Ordinary Men, 296-297.

He had every opportunity and more to repent and chose not to betray Jesus. He listened to the teaching Jesus did that would have been directly to his issues. 304

What we can't do with Judas is to say that he was intended to betray Jesus, had no choice, therefore we can dismiss him as one with whom we can relate. He just went robotically to betraying Jesus. Then we miss the point that anyone is capable of betraying Jesus if we, as MacArther said, "spiritually careless, squandered opportunity, sinful lust and hardness of heart." In other words, we can't just rail on Judas, but understand that there's the potential to be a Judas in all of us. Sin and disobedience to God always takes us further than we thought we'd go and costs us more than we thought we would have to pay.

It really wasn't just about the choice to betray Jesus. Judas' second destructive choice was...Disappointment over faith. (831)****

I don't know when it happened, whether it was one event or it was an accumulation of things, but at some point, Judas became disappointed with Jesus. Not the kind of Messiah he was looking for.

Maybe it was when he was upset with the **waste of the expensive perfume** that was poured over Jesus' head and feet. He was critical, saying that it could have been sold and given to the poor. **Jesus rebuked him.** Maybe that was that moment.

This wasn't going where he wanted it to go when he signed up.

The way Soren Kierkegaard put it is that **to get to real, durable, not fragile faith. one must first be offended by Jesus and push through that offense and remain with him.**

Even though Judas hadn't physically left Jesus in his heart, he was not following the real Jesus. He was following the one who he believed could benefit him in some way.

The others also thought the kingdom would be political, with an army restoring Israel to its glory days of King David. But slowly, they understood that Jesus was different. It appears that Judas did not make that transition. **He became disillusioned. He thought that Jesus had stolen three years of his life.**

He didn't trust Jesus anymore because Jesus didn't meet his expectations.

I think we are onto something here. Are you disappointed or offended with God for letting things like COVID...happen? Did you think he was going to pave the road in America **for it to be easy for us who follow him** and now it seems to be getting harder. Did you ask for something that didn't happen?

²² Greatly distressed, each one asked in turn, "Am I the one, Lord?" Matthew 26:22

²⁵ Judas, the one who would betray him, also asked, "Rabbi, am I the one?" And Jesus told him, "You have said it." Matthew 26:25

Again, at the betrayal, Judas calls Jesus "Rabbi" not "Lord."

He didn't have the faith to call him Lord. He didn't trust in Jesus to do what he said he would do. To Judas he was a **Rabbi, or wise teacher, but not the promised Messiah.** He was disappointed.

Even in his remorse, at the end he calls Jesus, "an innocent man." That is a far cry from, "Messiah, Savior, Son of God, The Christ, or Lord."

Judas was disappointed when he didn't act like what he expected of a king. We are disappointed when he acts like a king! We want him to die for our sins and then leave us alone to live our lives the way we want to.

The third destructive choice Judas made was **after completing his betrayal of Jesus**. When the reality of what he had done became clear to him, **Judas chose...Remorse and despair over repentance and hope.**

When Judas, who had betrayed him, **realized that Jesus had been condemned to die**, he was filled with remorse. So he took the thirty pieces of silver back to the leading priests and the elders. ⁴ "I have sinned," he declared, "for I have betrayed **an innocent man**." "What do we care?" they retorted. "That's your problem." ⁵ Then Judas threw the silver coins down in the Temple and went out and hanged himself.

Judas has remorse, but he doesn't seek forgiveness from God and repent, meaning change the direction of his life.

There's a saying, sin takes you further than you want to go and costs you more than you wanted to pay. Did it take him further than he thought he'd do? Yes, he seems surprised that they have sentenced him to death. **Did he want to make some money and then prove that Jesus wasn't the Messiah out of spite? Or did he want to force Jesus' hand to start acting like the messiah he wanted him to be? Either way, he clearly didn't want this.**

Did it cost Judas more than the 30 pieces of silver? Yes, it cost him his friends, his good name, his reputation, and ultimately, his life.

He chose remorse, which is sorry for what his actions had caused, and then that led to despair. Despair is the absence of hope. There is no way out of this.

Repentance is an "I'm sorry" followed by a change of direction. There is behavior that is proof of the sorry and desire to change and even put something right if that is possible. **Judas could have done more than just throw the money at them.** He could have prayed, confessing his sin to God and vowing to trust Jesus, even in this hopeless situation. **He could have faced the music with the other eleven.** He could have **gone to where Jesus was going to be questioned by the Romans** and given testimony for Jesus. **Maybe he doesn't save his own life.** Maybe these attempts get him

crucified with Jesus, but at least he **wouldn't have been alone** and without hope.

In John's version of the story, after they celebrated the first communion, Jesus had said that the one who would betray him was one who had dipped the bread in the bowl. **He then leaned over to Judas and said go and do what you need to do.** The others thought that he had some task as group treasurer that Jesus wanted him to do. **Then there is this prophetic phrase. So Judas left at once, going out into the night. John 13:30**

Is there something that you have done that has caused you to despair instead of repent? You have found yourself with a sense of hopelessness. Hopelessness is simply this, **"I am what I am and I cannot change."** I know this is wrong, but it's the only thing I know.

Judas didn't have to go into the night. He gave himself over to greed, spite, pride...and once he realized that this had taken him too far and would cost him everything, he took his life.

Reality is that choices bring accountability.

Literally, "You yourself have said it." This is a way of putting the responsibility back on the one making the inquiry.

"As the treasurer for the apostolic band and one of the Twelve, Judas Iscariot is responsible not only to carry the gospel message during Jesus' earthly mission, but throughout the age (10:1-6, 17-23). His privileged position would have placed him on one of the twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (19:28). But as events of this section unfold, his privileged position increases his responsibility, which leads to increased susceptibility to temptation—all of which increases his accountability."
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What can we learn from Judas? #1. Take responsibility for our sin as early as possible. #2. Don't give up. If we don't give up and throw in the towel, then God can use our bad choices for his glory and neighbors' good! What a testimony Judas would have had if he had returned to Jesus and been a part of what happened in Acts. Can you picture it?

Choosing to Follow:

1. Acknowledge my disappointment and choose to trust Jesus anyway.

Come on, say it. Be honest and stop pretending. That is what Judas wasn't willing to do.

⁶ So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. ⁷ Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

⁸ Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. 1 Peter 5:6-8

2. List how I am experiencing the privilege of being close to Jesus.

I have a Bible, access to fellowship and encouragement, communion with others, invest my money in the kingdom which will last, pour into another generation so they can follow Jesus, bridge groups, the prayer of the saints, someone who can help you find your calling, the opportunity to sing praises to God every week, no one is trying to kill you because of Jesus...you are in the presence of the living God who came as Jesus.