

Mark 3:13-19
Twelve Unlikely Men (Part 3)
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We find ourselves in Mark's gospel, Mark 3, looking at the twelve most unlikely men Jesus chose to be His apostles. There are occasions in life when a person can reach the point which they wish in some ways that they had never been born. The darkest of trials perhaps, forsaken by someone you loved. It's the greatest expression really of utter despair. Or on another occasion someone may in a fit of rage say to another person, "I wish you had never been born." In that case it is the ultimate expression of human hatred. On rare occasions a person might be threatened with this same expression find themselves in extreme danger under the control of an evil person, and that person might say if you don't cooperate you will wish you had never been born. In that case it is the ultimate expression of human cruelty.

But what if God Himself were to say that to someone? It would have been better if you had never been born. That is exactly what Jesus Christ says about Judas Iscariot. In Matthew 26:24 He says this, "The Son of Man *is to* go, just at as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born." That's not a threat. That is the ultimate expression of divine wrath.

John Broadus writes in his commentary, "If he had never lived, then while losing all the good of life, he would have escaped the dreadful guilt he is incurring and the horrors of future retribution. For him, that is for Judas, life was really not worth living." Tonight, we meet a man about whom God said, "It would have been better if he had never been born."

We find ourselves in the middle of a study of the twelve unlikely men that Jesus chose to be His disciples in Mark 3:13 - 19. Here we find that Jesus' sovereignly chose twelve men to be His official representatives. But, without exception, all twelve of them were the most unlikely choices to be His official representatives after His ascension. Just to briefly review what we've looked at so far. We looked at the moment of the choice. He went up on the mountain. And we saw in Luke's gospel where more is added to that, He prayed all the night before, and it was the right occasion. We looked at the Master, He summoned those who He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. And He gave them this mission. He appointed twelve. He literally made twelve. He constituted twelve so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach

and to have authority to cast out demons. “Send them out” is the verb form of the word from which the word “apostle” comes. The sent ones, not in the sense of an ordinary messenger, but in the sense of a direct representative who can act in another person’s place in a way that is authoritative and legally binding.

And then we began last week, we looked at the men. In verses 16 - 19 of Mark 3 you see a list of the twelve men Jesus chose. Last week we examined the first eleven apostles. They were all faithful to Jesus Christ to the end. Ten of them died as martyrs for Christ, sealing their testimony with their blood. Only the apostle John died a natural death, but even he was in prison for a number of years on the isle of Patmos.

But tonight, we come to the twelfth apostle, the one listed last in all of the biblical lists. We will examine the life of human history’s most tragic character. His name is synonymous with everything bad because he was the one who betrayed the Son of God. His name is Judas Iscariot. In Mark 3:19 it simply says, “And Judas Iscariot who betrayed Him.”

In the other gospel lists, in Matthew 10, it says, “and Judas Iscariot the one who betrayed Him.” And in Luke, Luke puts it this way, “Judas Iscariot who became a traitor.” In each of those three designations, in each of those three recognitions of this man, Judas, he’s identified in two ways; by his background, Iscariot and by his sin, he betrayed Him. Literally, in the Greek text, he’s “the one who delivered Him up.” He was a traitor. Let’s trace the tragic story of this man’s life of whom Jesus said, “it would have been good if he had never been born.”

Let’s start with his birth and background. Judas, his name, the name given him by his parents, comes from the Old Testament name Judah which means praised or celebrated, the chief of Jacob’s sons. Undoubtedly, named by a parent with the best of hopes, with the desire that he would become a leader, that he would be all that this parent desired him to be in the naming of him with this great biblical background. His father’s name we know, his name was Simon. Like Judas, he’s also called Simon Iscariot. Understand that Iscariot is not a last name. But rather, it’s meant to distinguish these men from all the other Simon’s and all the other Judas’s.

“Iscariot” probably comes from a Hebrew expression, “Ish Carioth”. It means “man of Carioth”, man of Carioth. It describes where Judas and his father were from originally. Carioth is a little town in the tribe of Judah that’s mentioned in Joshua. Just to give you a little position, it would have been south of Jerusalem down in the very south region of Judea. The fact that both father and son are called men of Carioth implies that at one time they both lived in that little town, and

it implies that they no longer lived there. If I still live in Dallas and call myself Tom, man of Dallas, it doesn't help distinguish me from all the other Toms that live in Dallas. If, on the other hand, I moved to Boise, Idaho, and called myself, "Tom, man of Dallas" then it helps to differentiate me from the other Toms who live there.

So, the fact that they are both called men of Carioth implies that they have moved away from their home town. It's very possible, perhaps even likely, that they had moved to Galilee since the other eleven apostles lived in Galilee, and much of Jesus' ministry occurred in that region. This also means that, of the twelve, only Judas was not originally from Galilee. But Judas was born in Carioth. Krumacher the classic book on Jesus' passion writes,

"About the same time that the word became flesh in Bethlehem there was joy also in the cottage of Simon of Carioth in the tribe of Judah. For there, likewise, had a son seen the light of this world. His parents thankful and hopeful called the boy Judas that is the praise of God, and thus recognized the Almighty who had graciously given him to them. It was not written on his forehead what he would eventually become. We now regard that domestic event with other eyes and look upon the unhappy parents with poignant grief."

That was his beginning, man of Carioth. Let's look at his spiritual interests. According to Acts 1 the qualifications for being an apostle are that you had to have been with Jesus during His entire earthly ministry beginning with the baptism of John. So, that means that Judas was with Christ from the time of Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist. It's possible as well that Judas had been baptized by John, and it was John the Baptist that brought Jesus and Judas together. That means it's possible that he had expressed some repentance, not genuine as we discover, but certainly, some expression of repentance. But regardless of that he certainly had had to acknowledge that he believed in Jesus as Israel's Messiah, as his King. So, he was a man who apparently began with an interest in spiritual things, certainly influenced by his parents and the faith of the Old Testament.

But the next thing we learn about this man comes when Jesus appointed him to be one of His official representatives. You remember how that happened? Luke tells us that Jesus went off to the mountain to pray, spent the whole night in prayer to God, and when day came He called all of His disciples to Him, and He chose twelve of them whom He named as apostles. About a year and a half into His ministry, Jesus called all of His disciples to Him and out of all of them; He appointed twelve of them to be apostles. What does that tell us about Judas? It means Judas had

publicly identified himself as a disciple of Jesus Christ. In other words, he had expressed, like his colleagues, repentance and faith in Christ and the gospel. That was Jesus' message, you remember back in Mark 1. It also means that for a year and a half he had closely followed and even accompanied Jesus at sometimes. He had distinguished himself among the followers of Jesus by his apparent spiritual zeal and spiritual interests. But Jesus wasn't fooled. All of his colleagues were, but Jesus wasn't. John 6:64 says, "... Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him." From the beginning, Jesus knew.

Now we need to answer this question, because I know it's in many of your minds. I get asked this question from time to time. If Jesus knew that Judas would betray Him, why did He choose Him to be an apostle? Well obviously, it's because it was the divine plan. John 17:12, Jesus in that great High Priestly prayer, prays this to His Father, "While I was with them, I was keeping them," [Speaking of the disciples] "in Your name which You had given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled." This was part of God's great sovereign eternal plan. In eternity past when He determined to give as a love gift to His Son certain people, He also determined that Judas would be one of the apostles. That he would be the betrayer.

In Acts 1, turn there for a moment, Acts 1:15. You remember, Judas is now dead, they are trying to choose a successor, Peter stands up in the middle of the 120 that have gathered there. And verse 16, he begins like this, (how do you begin a speech about Judas Iscariot and what he had done, just a few days before?)

"Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry."

[This is what's written, verse 20 says, "... in the book of Psalms,] 'LET HIS HOMESTEAD BE MADE DESOLATE, AND LET NO ONE DWELL IN IT;' and 'LET ANOTHER MAN TAKE HIS OFFICE.'"]

Peter begins his speech about Judas and the need for a replacement by saying it had to happen, the Scripture had to be fulfilled. What were the prophecies that had to be fulfilled? Psalm 41:9, "Even my close friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me." Psalm 55:12,

For it was not, it is not an enemy who approaches me, Then I could bear *it*; Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me, Then I could hide myself from him. But it is you, a man my equal, My companion and my familiar friend; we who had sweet fellowship together walked in the house of God in the throng.”

Jesus uses these verses to point to Judas. In John 13:18, “I do not speak of all of you. [He says,] “I know the ones I have chosen; but *it is* that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.’”

It had to happen. It was prophesied. It was God’s great eternal plan. But, and this is very important to understand, Judas’ choices were merely an expression of his own sinful heart. He was fully responsible for what he did. In Matthew 26:24, the verse I shared with you at the beginning, “The Son of Man *is* to go,” [He’s going to die, He’s going to be betrayed.] “but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!” [Judgment on that man] “It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.”

Here you see in this text the divine sovereignty married to human responsibility. It has to happen, it’s written; but woe to that man who does the act, who betrays his Lord. It’s true. Judas had a destiny to fulfill. But God did not make Judas the monster he became. It was an expression of his own evil heart, and he will endure God’s greatest wrath for all eternity because of it.

Let’s look at his ministry. It seems strange to say, but it’s true. He did have a ministry and a very effective one. In one sense, Jesus’ ministry is copied and mirrored by the disciples. You remember, He chose them to go out and do exactly what it was He Himself was doing. So, in one sense, Judas’ ministry would have been no different than that of Jesus and certainly no different than that of the rest of the apostles. You see it in Matthew 10, turn back there with me. In Matthew 10 we read this, Matthew 10:1, “Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.”

So, he says He summons the twelve. He gives all of them that authority, and then it lists the twelve, and then, of course, Judas is included in the twelve. Verse 4, “... Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him.”

If you fast forward to 11:1, “When Jesus had finished giving [these] instructions,” [The whole chapter 10] “to His twelve disciples, He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities.”

And Mark tells us, He sent the disciples out in pairs. Mark 6:7. Based on the way the lists in Matthew occurs, it appears that Simon the Zealot was the ministry partner of Judas. Do you understand that if Judas hadn’t done what the other apostles did, it would have been obvious to everyone? So, he did those things. He preached the gospel. He was used to accomplish miracles of healing. He was used to cast out demons. When they come back from their ministry tour, Mark 6:30 says, “The apostles gathered together with Jesus and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught.”

And there’s the ministry pair of Simon the Zealot and Judas giving their report as well. You say how could that happen? Remember what Jesus said, and I quoted the verse this morning in Matthew 7, “Many will say to Me on that day [at the judgment,] ‘Lord, ...’ [did we not do these miracles] “... in Your name, did we not cast out demons, in Your name ...?” And ... I will ... [say] to them, I never knew you, DEPART FROM ME YOU ... [WORKERS OF] LAWLESSNESS.’ Judas will be among that number. A powerful ministry and yet, Judas.

But Judas’ primary ministry was as the treasurer of the group. This was his ongoing ministry. He was apparently uniquely gifted with finances. He just automatically seems to know the value of things. As we saw this morning, when Mary pulled out the alabaster jar with the expensive pure nard in it, he knew its value. He was the one who said it’s worth three hundred denarii. So, Jesus gave him the responsibility of being the treasurer of the group. The money box, as it’s called. The money box was a small box that could be secured. It was designed originally to hold the mouthpieces for musical instruments. In fact, in the Greek text that’s what it’s called, the tongue box, literally the box for the tongues of musical instruments. But eventually, it came to describe any small secure box in which valuables were carried.

You see there were wealthy people who gave of their resources to support Jesus and His ministry. The clearest reference perhaps is in Luke 8:1 - 3; Jesus goes on this ministry tour, preaching, the twelve with Him.

“and [there were] *also*,” verse 2 says, “some women [with Him] who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Herod’s steward and Susanna and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means.”

So, here you have these people whom Jesus had healed who had been rescued and saved and they're supporting Jesus and the disciples out of their financial means. And Judas was responsible to keep all those funds and disperse them as needed.

Here's another insight into his ministry in John 13:29, you remember at the last supper, he goes out and when he goes out nobody thinks anything. Some of them were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, buy the things we have need of for the feast or else that he should give something to the poor. So, Judas used the resources that were given to them for two basic purposes; providing for the expenses of the disciples and for giving to the poor and those in need. He was the keeper of the money.

You say well, if Jesus knew Judas was a thief, why would He assign him the duty of a treasurer? It's clear that Judas had a natural gift for finances given to him by God, so it made perfect sense for him to use that gift for the good of the kingdom, for the good of Christ, for the good of the group. It was Judas' choice, and Judas' choice alone, to prostitute that gift and to use it for sin. It's really no different than today, God gives people a variety of gifts and many of those people who have those abilities use their natural abilities that God gave them for the good of others for evil, for selfish ends.

Every time some new scam comes on the scene, every time some new computer virus comes along I find myself thinking, if only those people would use those abilities that God has given them for good. Imagine what the world could be. So, people prostitute the gifts God has given them all the time and Judas was no exception. He was the treasurer, because he'd been gifted by God in that way. But he chose to use that gift for selfish ends. So, he had a ministry. Do you understand that? Think about that for a moment. Judas looked like, behaved like, had similar ministry to all of the other apostles. In addition, he was the treasurer; he had a position of importance in the group.

That brings us to his tragic plot. The first indication that everything isn't right comes in the summer of 29 AD, a number of months after the appointment of the twelve, after Jesus has chosen the twelve. It's in John 6. John 6, turn over there with me. In John 6:70, you remember the confession. This is really the first glimpse that the disciples get that all is not well among them, that there's something rotten in the state of Denmark, to quote Shakespeare. Something isn't right because, "Jesus answered and said, 'Did not I Myself choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?'"

Must've been a shock; they looked around, who could it be? But you see Judas perhaps had begun with some bit of tenderness in his heart toward Christ and the things of God, but the Scriptures make it clear that over time his heart was hardened by the truth, because the same sun that melts the wax, hardens the clay. And as that word of Christ was softening the hearts of the other disciples, it was hardening Judas' heart. And so, he began to evidence himself, he was becoming like his father the devil. And Jesus pointed it out to the disciples.

Now fast forward another nine or ten months. It's just before the final Passover, just before His death in April of 30 AD. It's the same time period we were in this morning. In fact, it's the same event. It's Saturday of the Passion Week, and in John 12. (Now remember the first indication the disciples have gotten is the passage I just read to you in John 6 and that was about nine to ten months before this event. And they still don't know anything here. John is looking back, having had it revealed to him, but Judas' heart was revealed at this point at least to Judas and to Jesus.) In John 12 you remember the story as we looked through it this morning when Mary anoints Jesus with this incredibly costly perfume. Verse 4 says,

Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, [Who was looking for a way to betray Him? Had already made the decision.] "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?" [But it wasn't] ... because he was concerned about the poor [verse 6 says, it was] ... because he was a thief, and ... he had the money box, [and] he used to pilfer what was put into it.

It's interesting the Greek word for "pilfer" is like our English word "carry". It can mean to carry something, to bear it, or it can mean "to carry something as in to carry it off". So, it's kind of a play on words. He carried the box and he carried off what was in it. This is what was going on behind the scenes. He was preaching he was using the gifts God had given him through Christ; he looked like one of the other apostles, but inside his heart was becoming hard. He was driven by his own desires what he wanted, and he was stealing out of the box.

Now, if you remember on Sunday Jesus enters Jerusalem, presenting Himself as Israel's rightful King. On Monday and Tuesday of the Passion Week, that's coming up these next couple of days, Jesus cleansed the temple for a second time in His ministry, and He essentially takes control of the temple compound. He answers the questions that come. He controls everything for those couple of days over that massive temple complex. But Wednesday is a down day. Wednesday is a day that apart from the actions of Judas we really know of nothing else Jesus and

His disciples did on Wednesday. Providentially, it was on Wednesday that the leaders of the nation met to plot Jesus' arrest and death. You see it in Matthew. Turn back to Matthew 26, Matthew 26, and look at verse 1.

When Jesus had finished all these words, He said to His disciples, "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is *to be* handed over for crucifixion." Then the chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered together in the court of the high priest, named Caiaphas; [So, here's an official gathering of the leadership.] "and they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth and kill Him. But they were saying, "Not during the festival, otherwise a riot might occur among the people."

I love that. Here's why. Because God's sovereign purpose is going to override their intentions to wait. They say, not this week, let's wait. But that's not God's plan from all eternity. God's plan from all eternity is that Jesus will die on Friday, on Passover at the very time the Passover lambs are being slain, the afternoon sacrifice on the day of Passover. He has to die on Friday of the of the Passover week. So, what is God going to do to change the minds of these men? You see God's providence, because at the very time they're meeting, perhaps as they've made the decision and are about to disperse; Judas shows up.

It's the first chance he's had since they arrived in Bethany for the Passover because they would, they were either staying in Bethany or on Mount of Olives each night they would go out of the city. So, he hadn't had the opportunity, so Judas shows up while the leaders are finalizing their decision with an offer that they can't pass up. Look down at verse 14.

Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests. and [he] said, "What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?" And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him. From then on, he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus.

The question is why? What was going on in the heart of Judas? What possibly could have been Judas' motive for betraying Christ? Well, clearly it had to be a work of Satan. John 13:2 and verse 27 both say that Satan had entered his heart, that Satan had put it in his heart to do this. But Satan didn't make Judas do this against his will. Judas was a willing participant. So, the question is what was the source of the temptation? What kind of temptation did Satan use to draw Judas into his schemes?

Well, there could have been several motives or perhaps a combination of them. One might have been fear of the authorities. You remember an order, an arrest warrant was out for Jesus. If anybody knew where He was, you better turn Him in. I don't think that's true, but it could've been. It might have been injured pride. Remember on Saturday night Judas tries to make this deeply spiritual point about helping the poor when, in fact, he's just after his own self-interests. And Jesus rebukes him publicly in front of the other disciples. Maybe that just pushed him over the edge. Perhaps it was disappointed expectations. The triumphal entry had made it clear to Judas that Jesus was not going to be the kind of political ruler, the kind of king that he really wanted Him to be. Besides that, he'd heard Jesus talk about this impending death. So, perhaps he's getting out while he can. He figures the game is up, so, he might as well cash in his chips. It might have been from frustrated ambitions. He wanted to be great. He wanted to be one of the leaders in a political kingdom. Like James and John, he wanted a place of priority, but he wanted it now in this world.

But whatever his other motives had been, and they may have been any of these, one motive is crystal clear in the Scripture: and that is greed and covetousness. The verse in John 12, he was a thief and used to steal what was in the money box. In Matthew 26, the passage we just read, what does he say when he shows up to the leaders of Israel, he doesn't say you know I've decided to be loyal to the nation, and therefore I can't keep supporting this Man. You've asked for people who know about His whereabouts to turn Him over so I'm here to do that. That's not what he says. Look at what he says.

"What are you willing to give me to betray Him?" Here is a man who is overwhelmed with greed and covetousness. By the way, this detail about the thirty silver coins, that had also been prophesied. Zachariah had said it would happen. "The Lord said to me, throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them", which is a tongue in cheek sarcasm, "so I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the Lord."

Thirty pieces of silver, do you know what's interesting about that, tragic about that? In Exodus 21:32, thirty pieces of silver was the compensation you owed if your ox, accidentally, it wasn't a purposeful thing, but if there was an accidental goring of your neighbor's slave, then you had to pay thirty pieces of silver to him. Don't miss the irony of these thirty pieces of silver. Alfred Edersheim writes, "Mark the deep symbolic significance of it all in that the Lord was paid for out of the temple money which was destined for the purchase of sacrifices, that He who took on Him the form of a servant was sold and bought at the legal price of a slave."

So, what was Judas' motivation? It was money. It's hard to imagine isn't it? But think for a moment about the temptations you face. Think about the struggles that you encounter day after day, those sins that are the most difficult for you. How hard is it to say no to those things in spite of the cost? For Judas, who didn't know Christ, who had no Holy Spirit within him, who didn't have the regenerating power of Christ in his heart his sin was completely overwhelming and compelling. He was in slavery to his greed. He sells the Son of God for the price of a common slave.

That brings us to the last supper and the betrayal in the garden. The next time we see Judas, it's on Thursday evening in the Upper Room. So, on Wednesday he arranges to betray Jesus, on Thursday night he finds himself in the Upper Room as Jesus, and His disciples have gathered to celebrate the Passover. For this I want us to turn to John 13. In John 13 we're given a number of insights into what transpired that evening. It's really quite remarkable. John 13,

During supper, [Verse 2 says,] the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon, to betray Him, and Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, [Knowing all of that,] *Jesus* ... got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself.

As I said this morning there was no slave in in the Upper Room, no low slave on the service rung to come and wash their feet, and so no one would do it. None of the disciples were willing to go that low. Jesus Himself takes that responsibility. It was the supreme act of humility and love.

But when He arrives at Judas, think for a moment about that moment. When he arrives at Judas to wash Judas' feet, it was one of the most poignant moments in all of human history. Jesus knew. Judas knew. And there is Jesus humbling Himself, the Son of God, the King of Israel to wash the feet of His betrayer. It was an expression of grace to Judas. Verse 10,

Jesus said to them when He had finished, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, [In other words, you've been completely cleansed; you are forgiven of your sins,] "but not all of you. For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean."

Verse 18,

“I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but *it is* that the Scriptures may be fulfilled, ‘HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.’ From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am....”

After those comments Jesus tells the twelve that one of them will betray Him. He tells them outright. He’s already told them that one of them is a devil, that was the only thing they knew, and now He comes outright and says in verse 21,

When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.” The disciples *began* looking at one another, at a loss *to know* of which one He was speaking.

And then with what you would expect from the disciples, they began looking at each other and they began asking, “Lord, is it me? Am I the one?” And with incredible hypocrisy and hubris Judas asked if it’s him. He’s already got the silver coins. He’s already made the arrangements. He knows when it’s going to happen even. What a hypocrite.

To understand what happens next, you have to remember that what we talked about this morning about how a meal would have been eaten in the first century. At a table just off the floor with cushions that came off at an angle you would have lain on your left elbow and left side at a forty-five-degree angle off the table and would have eaten with your right hand. The next person’s head would have been near your chest because they too would have been near the table, and that’s what it means when it says that John had his head on Jesus’ chest. He was positioned next to him on his right. It appears that Judas was on the left because Jesus is going to dip; you remember the sop and give it to Judas. So, on one side is Judas the betrayer on the other side is John the beloved. Verse 23,

There was reclining on Jesus’ bosom [Again he’s next to Jesus on His right,] one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. [That’s John,] So Simon Peter gestured to Him, [It’s possible that Simon Peter was across the U-shaped table and he gestures to Him and said ...] “Tell *us* who it is of whom He is speaking.” He, [was] leaning back thus on Jesus’ bosom, [You could picture John leaning on his left side sort of leaning his head back talking to Jesus who’s just behind him and saying,] “... who is it[, Lord?] Jesus then answered, “That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.” [So, there’s this private interchange

going on between John and Jesus. And Jesus tells John who it's going to be, and] He took it and gave it to Judas," [Apparently sitting next to Him, the next person over at the table,] "*the son* of Simon Iscariot. After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly." Now no one of those reclining *at the table* knew for what purpose He had said this to him. For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying ... [go] "Buy ... [what they] ... need ... for the feast" [or] give something to the poor.

Do you understand what that's saying? That even after that full interchange, there was no suspicion of Judas. That says both that the interchange between John and Jesus was private. It also says that Judas looked like the real deal. No one of the apostles guessed it was Judas, even when the other eleven are still there, and he gets up and leaves right after Jesus says one of you is going to betray Me. So, Judas left. He arranged to lead a group of soldiers to arrest Jesus. He knew where Jesus would be. John 18 says, "Judas also who was betraying Him, knew the place. For Jesus had often met there with His disciples." He knew where to go.

So, in the meantime after Judas left, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper which is just for believers. You see that even in the timing of how He teaches it. And He taught His disciples so many things. They ended the evening by singing the typical Passover hymn, and they left the room for the Garden of Gethsemane. Somewhere along the way, Jesus prays the High Priestly prayer of John 17. That verse I read earlier, "I guarded them and not one of them perished, but the son of perdition so that the Scripture would be fulfilled."

They arrived at the Garden of Gethsemane, and Jesus prayed to the Father. And about midnight after those several times, Jesus comes and goes with the three of the intimate circle, Jesus knew that Judas was near. Look at Matthew 26. Matthew 26:45,

Then He came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand and the son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!" [Jesus knew it was coming and then Judas arrives, verse 47,] While He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a large crowd with swords and clubs, who came from the chief priest and elders of the people.

Both temple police, Jewish temple police as well as Roman soldiers according to the other gospels. A large crowd arrives to arrest Jesus. It's amazing in this account the courage of evil you see in Judas. He had guided a multitude of the soldiers and temple police to arrest Jesus, and when he came up to Jesus he had arranged as you know to point Him out with the sign of a kiss, as if he were still His loyal follower and friend.

Think about that for a moment. Think of what Judas had seen over the three years of Jesus' ministry, the miracles Jesus had wrought. He was on the boat when Jesus told the wind to calm and the storm to go away, the seas to be quiet. But he is so consumed by his sin, that he brashly comes up to the Son of God, and kisses Him as if he were still His friend. He betrays Him.

The last part of his story is his tragic suicide. Because the last time we see Judas alive is about six hours after that encounter in the Garden of Gethsemane, it's on Friday morning just after daybreak. You see the moment the soldiers trudged off, Judas began to feel remorse. I love the way Alfred Edersheim describes it, this isn't just true of Judas' sin, it's true of our sin. He says, "The instant before and after sin represents the difference of feeling as portrayed in the history of the fall of our first parents." It's just like it was with Adam and Eve. Before they got it, they wanted nothing more, but the moment they had it, they despised it, and realized what it had done. He says,

With the commission of sin, all the bewitching, intoxicating influence which incited to it has passed away and only the naked fact remains. All the glamour has been dispelled. All the reality abides. If we knew it, probably scarcely one out of many criminals would give all he has, yes even his life itself if he could recall the deed done or awake from it to find it was only an evil dream. But it cannot be, and the increasing terror is that it is done, and it is done forever.

[That's what Judas felt. What have I done?]

You read about it in Matthew 27:1, it says,

Now when morning came, [This is after the three Jewish trials, the third trial is mentioned here, they they] ... the chief priests and the elders conferred together against Him to put Him to death; ... they bound Him, [then] ... led Him away [to] ... deliver[ed] Him to Pilate...."

There were two, night trials by the Jews, one at daybreak so it could be counted a legal trial. And they take Him away to Pilate. Then verse 3 says,

... when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned,”
[When he understood what was happening, whether he was watching from close up, probably not, more from afar, when he understood that He was being taken to Pilate and what that meant, crucifixion, he felt remorse.] he felt remorse [It wasn't repentance. But it was deep profound regret.] and [he] returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priest and elders, saying, “I have sinned....”

Some of the chief priests and elders would have gone with Jesus to Pilate, apparently some of the others stayed behind at the temple to carry on their normal temple duties that morning. It was Passover after all, and Judas shows up at the temple and he says,

“I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” But they said, “What is that to us? See to that yourself.” And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself.

Now you'll see that in verse 5, the translators have chosen to translate it the “temple sanctuary”. The Greek word that's used there always refers to the temple proper. Think about what's going on here. Let me remind you. This is a display. It doesn't show up real well on the overhead there, but that's a display of what the temple would have looked like in Jesus' day; the configuration. This large court in front is the court of the women. This, just before the great building there, would have been the court of the priests, and the court of Israel where Israelite males could have gone. And in the middle would have been the court of the priests where the sacrifices were slain. The large building jutting up in the middle is the temple proper, the holy place and beyond that the holy of holies. The Greek word used here is for the “temple proper”, that large building standing up there.

So, in a reckless sense of desperation it appears that Judas ran into the court of the priests, where the animals were being sacrificed, or perhaps ran into those doors themselves and threw the money into the temple. The coins clanging against the marble, it's as if his remorse drives him to give the money back to God. He can't keep it and the priests won't take it, and so he runs into the temple itself, and he flings the money with all of his might into the temple. And then he left and hanged himself.

Peter fills in some of the details in Acts. Acts 1:18,

(Now this man acquired a field for the price of his wickedness, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all of his intestines gushed out. And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

Judas, apparently, hung himself off a cliff nearby, near the city of Jerusalem. But either the rope broke or the limb broke, and his body plunged over jagged rocks, and the result was that on impact his body literally burst open, and some of his organs fell out. Later, the blood money, the money that was used to purchase Jesus, couldn't be put into the temple treasury, and so the leaders used those thirty silver coins to buy the property where Judas died and dedicated it to the burial of Gentiles. What a tragic end. Nothing but remorse and regret to the extent that all he can do is kill himself.

What's the moral of Judas' life? There're several that come to mind. First of all, it's possible to be connected to Jesus and His followers and not be a genuine disciple. There can be no clearer example of that than Judas, can there? The fact that you are attached to Christian people, that you are in a Christian family, or you're in a good church, or you know other Christian friends doesn't make you a disciple, a follower of Jesus Christ. It reminds us that there is an inherent danger in hypocrisy. Judas didn't begin as a traitor of Jesus Christ. His hypocrisy led him into it.

A person can look to every Christian around like the real thing and not be. Think about that for a moment.

It's even possible to be active in ministry and not be a Christian. Judas was an apostle of Jesus Christ.

A fourth moral of his life is: it's possible to be exposed constantly to the truth and to have around you great examples of devotion to God and to choose exactly the opposite. Think about Judas for a moment. He heard every sermon Jesus ever preached. He lived for at least a year and a half, night and day, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week with the Son of God, the Perfect One. There's a great warning here not to become hard to the truth for some of you young people, who are here because your parents insist that you be here. And the truth kind of gets in

the way. Listen, beware of what the truth will do to you. It will either soften your heart to God, or it will harden your heart. As I said before, the same sun that melts the wax, hardens the clay.

And with Judas he heard Jesus Himself, and yet his heart only grew harder and harder and harder to the truth. By the way, there's an encouragement of sorts here to Christian parents who weren't perfect but who tried to live consistently before their kids and their kids have chosen their own way. Judas sat under the best teaching, Judas had the best example, and yet, he chose his sin.

There's a fifth moral. The life of Judas shows the growth of sin in the heart. There is every indication that he initially confessed Jesus as Lord and Savior, that he showed real significant zeal and enthusiasm for spiritual things. But over time that original desire was choked out. It reminds me of the soils we studied together. Matthew 13 talks about the kind of heart that receives the Word of God with joy; springs up, looks like the real thing, but then is choked out, the seed is choked by what? The deceitfulness of wealth. First Timothy 6:10 says, "loving money, loving money is the root of all kinds of evil." What better illustration could there be of that than Judas.

Number six, Judas reminds us that we can feel deep regret for sinful choices without real repentance. How much more regret can you feel than that. He at least had his coins. But he couldn't keep them; his conscience wouldn't let him keep them. He had to throw them back in the temple and then go and kill himself. The extreme expression of regret, and yet there was still no repentance. Corinthians reminds us there is a worldly sorrow that doesn't produce real holiness, and there is a Godly sorrow. He never knew that, he never knew true biblical repentance. Understand, that regretting what you have done, regretting the choices you've made, regretting the mess you've made is not the same as repentance. Repentance is a willingness to turn from it to God, and Judas never evidenced that.

Judas is also a wonderful example of the patience and longsuffering of God. Jesus was never anything but kind to Judas. I think the most powerful illustration of that is in the garden. You remember when Judas comes up with this crowd of soldiers, I forget which of the gospel accounts, but in one of the gospel accounts Jesus says to him, "Friend." Judas was anything but a friend to Jesus, and Jesus knew what was in Judas' heart. But you see nothing but grace and kindness, nothing but human grace and kindness from Jesus.

And finally, for those of us who are in Christ, the tragic life of Judas reminds us that regardless of how wicked a person may be, regardless of how evil their plans against God and against His purposes might be, that person cannot in any way effect or change the eternal plan of God. Instead, all of Judas' scheming played into God's great plan. There's great encouragement in that isn't there? In many ways the most wicked human heart that ever existed could not change a single point of God's great plan. Instead, he cooperated with it. I don't care how evil a person is in your life and what influences they may have in you or on you, they cannot affect or change the eternal purposes of God for good for you if you're in Christ.

The moral of Judas' life: examine yourselves to see if you're in the faith, and take great confidence in God's sovereign purposes. He does His will, and nothing can stay His hand.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for our time together tonight. Thank You for even this tragic life for the lessons that we can learn. And I pray Father, that You would help us to contemplate these things for ourselves in our own hearts, as well as those around us, our children, our friends, and family. Father, I pray that You would help us to take this tragic lesson seriously, to thank You, O God, that You are gracious. And that if Judas had been willing to repent, that he could have been received.

But there wasn't that willingness and Father, we confess to You in us there is a desire to repent to truly turn from our sin and embrace Jesus Christ as Lord. Thank You that our Lord didn't lose one of those who committed themselves to Him like that. He guarded them. He protected them. O God, guard and protect us as well.

We pray in Jesus name, Amen.