

Judas

Portraits of Repentance

Matthew 26:14-25

EXPLORING THE SERMON

- * What did you hear?
- * What did you think or feel about what you heard?
- * What is one thing you can take away from the sermon this week?

KEY VERSES

Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests ¹⁵ and said, "What will you give me if I betray him to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶ And from that moment he began to look for an opportunity to betray him. ¹⁷ On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?" ¹⁸ He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, 'The Teacher says, My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.' " ¹⁹ So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal. ²⁰ When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve disciples,^[c] 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."

We continue our Lenten focus on the key figures of Holy Week, and how they each offer us our own invitation to repentance. This week we turn our attention to Judas. The setting of our story is the Thursday before the crucifixion, as Jesus predicts Judas' betrayal at the Last Supper. Judas has schemed with the chief priests and elders to carry out their plan in the shadows of night, away from the people who "might rebel." **Imagine the depth of pain Jesus now carries, the knowledge of betrayal from His trusted friend. How have you experienced this type of pain?**

Judas and others like him illustrate the pattern of our total undependability as humans. Though ultimately betrayed by others than just Judas, Jesus still trusts His Father's will to the very end, giving His own life freely as a sacrifice rather than having anyone taking it from Him. The burden of human accountability is what Judas is left with, and his story comes to a heartbreaking end when he takes his own life.

We'll never fully understand Judas' motives, whether dissolution, jealousy, fear, or impatience in Jesus' establishment of His kingdom - Judas made a terrible choice and was faced with the consequences. Just as we impose harsh judgment on Judas and those like him, we do likewise for those who betray us.

Judas teaches us that we all have the capability to betray Jesus; there is a fine line for us between commitment and betrayal. **Jill beautifully suggested many ways in which we are capable of betraying Jesus. Where might you find yourself?**

- 1) at home when we betray those who depend on us
- 2) in the workplace when it costs too much to act like a Christian
- 3) before a watching world when we fail to love one another
- 4) when we fail to serve & protect the poor
- 5) in our hatred of enemies and the withholding of grace

As strongly as Judas betrays Him, Jesus' response is the ultimate example of the power of love and forgiveness. When betrayed by Judas with a kiss (v.26) Jesus responds: "Friend, do what you have to do." We recognize the power in this kind of love when we have been deeply forgiven. **How do you think these words of Jesus made Judas feel?** Though failure can shape our lives, none of us want to be remembered for our most shameful act. And to us who have received such extravagant mercy, we are called to extend that to others. **What act of betrayal is difficult for you to forget? How can this time of Lent help you lay down a burden of guilt and shame through forgiveness, or by reaching out to someone who can help you move forward?**