

Judas, the Betrayer

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[0:00] Well, there are two things that humans, that people can do to each other that elicit some of the strongest reactions within us. One is betrayal and the other is the despair of suicide.

My first taste of betrayal was in primary school when I fell in love with the prettiest girl in my class. And I plucked up the courage to ask her to date. She said she couldn't because she had to wash her hair.

So I thought, oh well that's silly, I'm going to go to the movies anyway. And I bumped into her with my best friend at the movies. My ex-best friend. But I'll never forget the day I needed, that I had to deal with this despair of suicide.

I needed to go see if a family member had killed himself. And as I drove up to where they stayed, I just remember that sick feeling in my stomach.

Kept on praying, please God, don't let me find them dead. And of course he asked these questions. Why would they think that that is the only solution? How did they get to such a deep and a dark place?

[1:12] Well those two trajectories of betrayal and despair intersect and combine in the life of Judas as he finds himself in that same dark place on the last night of his life.

Alone, rejected, and realizing the awful weight of his actions, he ended his life in the most tragic way. And so what we want to do today is trace the story of Judas to understand how did a follower of Jesus get himself into such a dark place and end so badly.

What we'll see is a sobering portrait of a disciple that pretended to love Jesus, but in fact was never a true believer. We want to trace how his unbelief and his unconfessed sins took him gradually, but inevitably away from Jesus and into despair.

We'll follow the steps of that process to see how we can be sure to avoid the same fate in our lives.

What we'll see is a life filled with fake love and fake loyalty, but it all starts with fake belief.

Fake belief. If you've got your Bibles open to John 6, we'll spend a little bit of time there. And despite all the time that Judas spent with Jesus, years, Judas spent years with Jesus.

[2:45] Jesus' ministry was three years long. Despite all that time with Jesus, and Judas hearing every message, seeing every miracle, Judas never actually believed in the one essential truth about Jesus, that he was the promised Son of God who gives eternal life.

And it was his refusal to see what was right in front of him that began all the trouble for Judas. John 6, verse 63 says, Jesus is having a discussion with his disciples, and Jesus says, The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

But there are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus had known from the beginning which one of them did not believe, and who would betray him.

Well, Judas must have believed something about Jesus. He saw a powerful man who could do amazing things. But Judas never trusted that Jesus was uniquely sent from the Father, that his words carried divine power to forgive sins and grant eternal life.

And you can contrast Judas to Peter. Peter saw and heard exactly the same things as Judas. And yet a few verses later in John 6, when Jesus asks, Do you guys want to leave as well?

[4:11] Because the people are scandalized by what Jesus is saying. And he says to his disciples, Do you want to go as well? Peter answered this, Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God. So here are two men who have the same access to Jesus, seen the same displays of power, heard the same truths come from Jesus' mouth.

One has faith, and the other doesn't. The difference is that Peter is hanging on to every word that comes from Jesus' mouth, as if his life depends on it, because he realizes that it does.

Well, friends, the horrifying truth is that the same thing happens today in churches all over the world. In fact, it happens in this very church.

You could be sitting here week after week, regularly, for years. You could be hearing the same thing as the person sitting right next to you.

[5:27] And yet, you could be missing out on eternal life. So we don't make the mistake that Judas made. That just having access to the truth of Jesus is enough to receive the promises that he makes.

Coming to church and hearing about Jesus is not enough. You need to trust in him. And you'll know when you do that, because you will have his life-changing power in your life, acting, actively making a difference in your life.

Well, outwardly, Judas looked and sounded like all the other disciples, but it was fake. You can fool others into thinking you're a Christian, but you cannot fool Jesus.

However, sooner or later, your fakeness will more than likely begin to show. And for Judas, it was his love of money that added to his downfall.

And so we look at Judas' fake love. We'll turn to John chapter 12. Judas' fake love. Judas pretended to love Jesus and to love the poor.

[6:46] But what he really loved was money. And his fake, outward show of love all begins to unravel when someone shows us what truly loving Jesus looks like.

In John 12, Jesus had a dinner in his honor for raising Lazarus from the dead. The whole family gets together to honor him and to appreciate him.

And Lazarus' sister Mary, in a demonstration of her love and appreciation, pours out an extravagantly expensive gift, the perfume of nard on Jesus' feet.

But Judas, because his love is fake, is outraged. I'm going to read from verse 4. Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected.

Why hasn't this perfume been sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages. But John, who writes the gospel, puts this little insert in.

[7:56] Judas didn't say this because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief. As a keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

You don't get much lower than stealing from the poor. Well, Judas is contrasted with Mary. She pours out her love for Jesus with no thought of the cost to herself.

Judas is the exact opposite. Instead of rejoicing with Mary, he grumbles. He focuses not on Jesus, but on the money, calculating the cost of how much he is going to lose.

Now, if you're a Christian, you may not identify with every aspect of Judas, but there are many who could easily fit into this category. Grumpiness leading to grumbling.

Then, getting into even more of a huff when you're called out for your out-of-place bad attitude, which is what Jesus does to Judas. True love is thankful and enjoys being extravagant generously towards Jesus.

[9:12] Fake love calculates and begrudges every little token of appreciation. A very practical example will highlight this difference for you.

How do you feel when we pass the money bag around the church? Your answer to that may reveal whether your gratitude to Jesus is genuine.

sin? We can easily overlook the seemingly small character flaws in our lives, but our small sins are like weeds in the garden.

If you leave them unattended, they will soon take over and choke the life out of the plants that are meant to give enjoyment. The story of Judas tells us a chilling truth.

If you continually live a life that doesn't look at the small things and remedy them, you will end up at the place of ultimate betrayal. We see this at the Last Supper, where Judas is still pretending to be

a follower of Jesus, even though he's already gone out and been paid 30 pieces of silver to betray him.

[10:22] But at the Last Supper, he's still pretending to be a follower, but it ends up betraying Jesus in the garden, and so we need to look at fake loyalty. Fake loyalty in John chapter 13.

Judas looked like a loyal friend and a follower right up to the Last Supper.

But because he refused to deal with his unbelief and his greed, it opened the door to a much more evil influence in his life. In John chapter 3, verse 2 and 3, the evening meal was in progress and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.

And so at the start of the Last Supper, at the start of this Passover meal, the eternal destiny of Judas' soul lies in the balance. At the start of the meal, the devil is on the outside.

He's busy whispering to Judas, but he's trying to get in. Judas could have not listened to the devil. He could have listened to Jesus. But later on in the same chapter, we read these chilling words as the disciples asked Jesus who would betray him.

[11:44] Verse 26, Jesus answered, It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I've dipped it in the dish. Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas.

As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan, entered into him. Those are very chilling words. At first, Satan knocks at our doors, but then he takes over.

At this point, Judas is lost. He thought he was in control of the situation, but because of his unresolved sin, he becomes a pawn in a much larger cosmic battle.

So many people play this dangerous game to this day with Jesus. they pretend to be loyal, but they don't fully commit. They like to keep their options open.

They think they're playing it safe. But what they don't realize is that there's this unseen battle going on in the spiritual realm with evil forces lurking, waiting, ready to pounce and grab you and make you their slave.

[12:57] love. This warning is a sobering warning. If you only pretend to follow Jesus while your heart remains uncommitted, you may never know when the moment will come when Jesus says, okay, off you go.

I've got nothing more to do with you. so the message is that you must repent while you still have time.

Don't keep ignoring that inner voice that tells you, you know, I really need to start doing business with Jesus. I really need to start doing business with this stuff in my life. The thing is, you never know when that little inner voice will be silenced for good.

for Judas that inner voice was silenced by Satan. John records that Judas stepped out into the night.

Enveloped by darkness, he is cut off forever from the light that could have saved him. We meet Judas one final time in Matthew 27 after the episode in Gethsemane and we see that even then his remorse was fake.

[14:17] It produces tears but no turning back to Jesus. Without true repentance there is just nowhere home. This was Judas' breaking point.

His fake repentance. So, have a look at Matthew 27. after betraying Jesus at Gethsemane, Judas felt bitter remorse.

He even tried to return the money. But he didn't take his sin, he didn't take his remorse to Jesus. he keeps going on his own path.

True repentance is not just feeling sorry, it's turning to Jesus. And it's that one missing step that turns Judas' sorrow into self-destruction and utterly breaks him.

Matthew 27 verse 3, when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned. He was seized with remorse. He's feeling it. And he returned the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders.

[15:39] I've sinned. He realizes he's done something wrong. I've betrayed innocent blood. Ah, what is that to us? They replied, that's your responsibility.

He thought they were his friends. They wanted nothing to do with him. So Judas threw the money into the temple and left and he went away and hanged himself.

Judas' refusal to repent is his utter undoing. This is the one thing that kills any hope that Judas has and the main difference between Judas and every other true disciple.

It's not that Judas made mistakes and others didn't or others don't. Last week we saw the example of Peter. The main difference is that Judas doesn't change.

He doesn't repent. He doesn't go back to Jesus. So friends, this is the number one thing that separates true Christians from fake Christians. Everyone sins.

[16:47] Everyone makes mistakes. we could have betrayed Jesus in our own way a number of times. Denied him like we saw Peter do. Minimize what he does in our life, feel a little bit scared.

We can betray him when we sin, ah, it'll be fine. We betray him when we don't deal with sin in our life, ah, it's a small little thing, it's not a big deal. So we betray him when we don't trust him, that only he can forgive our sins, that he promises you life and life to the full.

And you're saying, ah, but who's this guy? Who does he think he is? He doesn't know. I know. You know. Most of us barely passed my trick.

Here's a man that came from heaven that can tell you about God, and you think you know better than him. Everyone sins.

True Christians take their sin and lay it at the feet of Jesus. Others just try and deal with the mistakes as best they can on their own. No, no, I'll handle it.

[17:59] I'll change. It's not that bad. I'm sure I can do it. I'm sure you're just making a big deal. It's a small thing. No, I'll just make sure I fix it by myself.

and you don't realize the deep rot that's going on in your soul. What you also don't realize is there are spiritual forces out there that are waiting to eat you up from the inside.

Judas wept tears. He seems sorry. He's feeling bad. None of that counts as repentance. It's what you do with your feelings that counts.

It's only as you take your fears and your failures to Jesus that you get forgiveness. The apostle John could well have been reflecting on the life of Judas when he wrote the following.

It's from his letters to the Christians that he was helping. It'll be up on the screen. He writes this, if we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness we lie and do not live out the truth.

[19:15] But if we walk in the light as he is in the light the blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin. Again he says if we claim to be without sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

But if we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

And John just worried that they're not getting what he's saying. He says it one more time. In fact he says it a number of times in his letters. My dear children I write this to you so that you will not sin.

But if anybody does sin we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous one.

He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

So this Easter if you're struggling with divided loyalty if you're feeling the weight of your wrong choices you've made in your life don't make the soul destroying mistake that Judas made.

[20:41] Realize that the very salvation of your soul is at stake. It's hanging in the balance. Don't throw it away. Go to Jesus.

Do business with him. Trust in his life-giving power. Listen to his life-giving words and receive his life-giving forgiveness.

Let me pray for us. Well, Lord Jesus, it's a sober, somber message that we hear about Judas.

And yet, for all the darkness, for all the despair, the light of your love, the truth of your person, your forgiveness, the truth of your words, the reality that we can have our sins forgiven, and be given eternal life in spite of all the betrayals and denials and bad things we've done.

Lord, we are so thankful that that is open to us this Easter time. Lord, put your spirit into our hearts and minds. We ask for you to fight for our hearts and minds and souls, to chase the forces of darkness away, grab hold of us, and make us your own.

[22:08] Amen.