

The Twelve: Judas Iscariot

Luke 6:16

April 9, 2017

Perhaps you've never thought about it before, but it's remarkable to note that our Lord intentionally and prayerfully chose Judas Iscariot to be one of the twelve Apostles. Our Lord knew full well exactly what he was getting into with Judas. I want you to notice in Luke Chapter 6, verse 12: "In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he names Apostles, here's the list we've already covered: Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, and [he chose] Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor."

As you know, we've covered eleven of those twelve names over the past number of weeks. And we have discerned some of the purposes of Christ in selecting those men. None of them were perfect, we know that, by any means, but we can see positive

work of Christ in each one of their lives. Today, we're going to look at a wholly negative example, Judas Iscariot. It's interesting that apart from a few hints of Judas 'betrayal during Jesus 'ministry, what we know about Judas comes from the end of his life. Judas makes a decision to betray Jesus, and it comes late in Jesus 'ministry. He colludes and collaborates with the chief priests; he makes the agreement with them. Then he proceeds with the betrayal of Jesus, leading to the arrest and crucifixion of our Lord. The Bible records even Judas 'remorse, his suicide, but no heart for repentance, no repentance leading to salvation.

We know that the other disciples failed, too. They all abandoned him when he was arrested. Peter even failed miserably, denying Christ. Their remorse was what the Bible calls "godly sorrow," or "godly grief"—2 Corinthians 7:10. "For godly sorrow produces repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly sorrow"—that's what we see in Judas—remorse without repentance. Worldly sorrow is a tortured conscience with no heart change. Worldly sorrow produces nothing but death. We know that Judas is a tragic case, but in the sovereign wisdom of God, he has become a lesson for the believing church, for all of us.

Today, we're going to begin to make the case that the inclusion of Judas Iscariot among this original list of twelve Apostles is not only intentional, but it becomes essential. Judas became just as important as all the other Apostles in fulfilling, in his own way, God's purposes. That may seem somewhat surprising to you. It does to all of us when we stop to think carefully about the role of Judas Iscariot. He became notorious as the anti-Apostle, as the apostate. He was a skilled hypocrite all along the way. He's the one who betrayed the Son of Man. When he spoke, he spoke with a forked tongue, and then he approached Jesus with a serpent-like kiss. It seems almost too hard to believe that Judas would be an intentional choice on behalf of our Lord, but he was. There is almost nothing on this earth more universally despised as a betrayer. Even the unbelieving world hates a traitor. There are ancient examples of treachery, like Brutus and Cassius, who betrayed Julius Caesar. Examples from American history are Benedict Arnold, or even more recent examples like Aldrich Ames or Robert Hanson, selling secrets to the Soviets. Those names are synonymous with treachery and betrayal. They're spoken with a despising. More damage has been done proportionally by the subtle subversion of traitors than by any other force. It's impossible to calculate

the extent of damage that they've caused. Money wasted, partnerships dissolved, friends turned against one another—all because we trusted someone who proved to have bad character and evil motives. That's Judas Iscariot. He's the prototype for all future betrayers. Every future betrayer is compared back to him because of the gravity of his treachery.

So why did Jesus choose him? Perhaps Judas seemed to be a good prospect—had a promising future—and sadly he turned on Jesus and just let everybody down. Do we simply shrug and say, "Well, one out of twelve isn't bad. Jesus did okay there. Pretty good average. After all, everyone has a free will, right? Judas shows even Jesus can't predict the free actions of human beings." Look, do we really think Jesus didn't see this coming? No. Jesus knew. Jesus told his disciples in John 13:18, "I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled. He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me." Judas Iscariot's betrayal did not take Jesus by surprise. Jesus had known about Judas from the very beginning. And I want to show you that if you'll turn to John 6. We'll start in John 6 this morning and I'll show you that.

Jesus is talking to the large group of disciples who'd been following him, and just before, he had peeled away because they couldn't handle his teaching. They didn't like what he was saying. In John 6:64, Jesus says, "There are some of you who do not believe." It's interesting that they named themselves "disciples." They followed Jesus for a time, but he says, "There are some of you who do not believe." Then John narrates the scene by telling the readers, "For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was [singular] who would betray him." And as Jesus predicted, many of those disciples did turn away from him. They turned back and they no longer walked with him. But those twelve remained, didn't they? And that didn't surprise Jesus at all because he knew believer from unbeliever. He knew true disciples from false pretenders. And so to teach his disciples about the sovereignty of God and to assure their hearts about their own condition, he told them in John 6:65, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." Verse 66: "After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the twelve, 'Do you want to go away as well?' Simon Peter answered him, '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.' Jesus answered them, 'Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a

devil.' He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him."

Sobering, isn't it? But clear. Jesus is not surprised by Judas 'defection. Not at all. In fact, it was because of Judas 'defection and betrayal—in the very forefront of Jesus 'mind that was in full consideration of this evil outcome—that Jesus chose Judas and included him among the twelve. Before making his selection, we must remember as we opened up this morning in Luke 6, Jesus had spent all night praying to his Father on the mountain. His decision about those men was saturated in prayer. This not an unknown. It's not an oversight. Jesus was deliberate. He prayed about it. And he came away from prayer convinced that selecting Judas to be one of the twelve Apostles conformed with the sovereign will of his Father. Jesus said in John 5:19: "Truly, truly I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing."

So it's important that we recognize from the very outset this morning that the inclusion of the Judas Iscariot among the twelve was the foreordained, predetermined will of the Triune God. But we're still left with that nagging question: Why? What did Christ have in mind? What is the God-glorifying, Christ-exalting purpose for numbering Judas among the twelve? I see two overarching purposes of God in ordaining Judas Iscariot to have his part in this initial part of the apostolic ministry—two purposes for including him as one of the twelve. The first is an ecclesiological purpose. The second is a redemptive purpose. The redemptive purpose is the most foundational, and we're going to look at that next week. We're celebrating the resurrection next Sunday, the resurrection of Christ, and we're going to see how God ordained that everyone, including Judas Iscariot, would testify to the perfect redemption of Jesus Christ. That's one foundational purpose of God in ordaining Jesus to choose Judas Iscariot, to include him among the twelve. But that's for next week.

For today, we want to look at the ecclesiological purposes of God—at least a part of it. As Christ intentionally added Judas Iscariot to this very exclusive group of twelve Apostles, and all of this for the sake of the church. That's what I mean

by "ecclesiological." The word *ekklesia* literally means "called out of," "called out from." It meant in that day and age, "assembly." There were called-out assemblies who would gather in the market square, gather at a pagan temple, or gather politically or for other purposes. So it's an assembly—that's what *ekklesia* means. When applied to an assembly that gathers in the name of Jesus Christ, we're talking about a Christian assembly, which in the earliest days was the assembly of the local church. Ecclesiology, then, is the study of the biblical doctrine of the church. And what I'm saying is that God ordained his son Jesus Christ to select Judas Iscariot, to name him as one of the twelve Apostles with a view to instructing the church. Was he a true Apostle? No. He was replaced by Matthias later, but with a view to instruct the church, Jesus included him.

There are several things we learn by the inclusion of Judas Iscariot that inform ministry in the local church. We're going to look at the main one for today and touch on the other one next week. The ecclesiological purpose—what does Christ intend for his church to learn by including Judas among the twelve? Well, by observing Judas Iscariot, we learn some lessons of warning. That's what you see in your outline there in your

bulletin. The bottom line, what Christ wants us to learn from Judas Iscariot, which is absolutely foundational for the life and the health of his church—is discernment. In my mind this has been one of the perennial problems within the evangelical church of our day—its utter refusal to discern. God would have his people to be discerning people, armed with clear-headed black-and-white thinking, so that Christians are able to make good and safe, holy and righteous decisions. When Christians are discerning Christians, they are not “tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes,” according to Ephesians 4:14. When Christians are discerning, it means they’re mature.

Sadly, biblical and theological discernment has not been the mark of evangelical Christianity over the last five or six decades. We are the worse for it. Evil of all kinds is now tolerated within the ranks of the church, even embraced. In some cases, it’s even celebrated along with the unbelieving world—whether it’s in the interest of political expediency or co-belligerency or just wanting to be liked, which is really the fear of man, right? Not the fear of the Lord. But whatever the reason, whatever the motivation, Christians have refused to be

discerning, and we've tolerated and embraced all kinds of error in doctrine, all kinds of bad behavior that we ought not to embrace or accept. From the very beginning and foundation of God's people, we see God's call for his people to be a discerning people.

Remember, God tested Eve in the garden. He allowed a serpent to slither into her world and offer her an alternative to God's truth. It was a test. He wanted Eve to think, to make a distinction between what she was hearing and what she knew to be true. Both Cain and Able brought sacrifices to the Lord, right? They offered sacrifices to God. What are we to discern from that? Jacob and Esau came from the same womb, didn't they? When you look at Israel, God's instruction the nation, the law of Moses, every law of God forces his people to discern. "What doctrine will I believe? Will I listen to this self-professed prophet, or will I scrutinize everything I hear by the written word of God? Will I choose to worship and serve God, or will I serve idols?" Even on a practical level of daily living, many such questions would come to their minds because of the law. "Will I eat this forbidden food, or will I eat only the food on the clean list? When I find evidence on my body or on the body of one of my loved ones of a skin disease, will I submit myself

and my home to the scrutiny of the priests to determine whether or not I need to be quarantined, or will I just let it go and cover it up?"

In New Testament times as well, the situation for God's people is no different. We already talked about the Apostle John, who wrote in such antithetical language—light versus darkness, truth versus error, life versus death, love versus hatred, and on and on. What is he doing there? He's promoting discernment in the church. Peter as well warned Christians, pointing back to the Old Testament, which was replete with evidence about this—what he's about to warn. He exhorted Christians to stay grounded in the written word of God and to be discerning. Why? Because as Peter says in 2 Peter chapter 2, "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many of them will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words."

You know in that warning what's interesting for our day? It says, "Many will follow their sensuality." Do you know what "suality" is? It's being driven along by your senses, your five senses. Just running after whatever your five senses tell you is good and right for your life. Boy, do we live in such a world? And hasn't that attitude infected the church? Peter says, "Watch out, be on your guard." God's people must be a discerning people. And, beloved, that is why Jesus chose Judas Iscariot to be numbered among the twelve. Judas provides the church with an enduring and abiding word of warning, one that is etched into the very foundation of the church itself—that not everyone who is with us is truly of us.

Now we want to be careful here. We don't want to become like the discernment police, right, because we're "truth people"—driven by pharisaical pride and arrogance that we are in the truth and all those people over there are not in the truth. That's not what we're after here, wearing doctrinal clarity like a badge on our puffed-out chest because we're discernment police. That's not at all what's going on here. But listen, if you understand the shepherding concept that is thematic in all of Scripture from the very beginning to the very end, Jesus Christ himself being identified as the Chief Shepherd, we have

to realize then that a key concern in shepherding, that whole mindset has to do with not just the feeding, but the protection of sheep. Safe sheep are happy sheep, thriving sheep, well-fed and productive sheep. But sheep that are neglected by hirelings, sheep that are harried by threats, that are chased and torn to pieces by wolves, sheep that are used to make profit out of—they're sad sheep. They're bewildered, they're beguiled, they're dirty and defiled, they're degraded and scrawny, unproductive. As Jesus said in John 8:31 to 32, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Listen, truth is freedom. Error is bondage. Truth is joy and liberty in God. Lies—they're snares, traps, pitfalls to destruction. And that's why our Chief Shepherd Jesus Christ included one such as Judas Iscariot among the twelve as a warning to all of us. We must be discerning Christians; sheep must be discerning sheep. Specifically now, what should we discern? What is the first and most fundamental sphere in which we need to exercise discernment? Do you know where it is? It's in the heart, isn't it? You might jot that down as a subpoint in your outline. In fact today I have three subpoints for you for your outline. We'll get to the rest of it next week.

But here's the first subpoint: Be discerning about the condition of your own heart. And again, I just want to emphasize at this point, we're not talking about somebody else's heart. You can't see or know anybody else's heart. Man sees not as God sees, right? Because man looks on the external and outward appearance. What else can we do? God looks on the heart. We can't see that. We see what we see on the outside. We're fruit inspectors, sure, but we don't know the heart. Only God does. So we need to be watchful and discerning first and foremost about our own hearts. That's the first area of discernment. Solomon warned in Proverbs 4:23, "Guard your hearts with all vigilance for from it flow the springs of life." Why do we need to be on our guard? Because Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick; who can understand it?"

We must discern the condition of our hearts as a regular habit of life. Judas Iscariot would have done well to pay attention, pay heed to the warning signs in his own heart. And I think that's the first warning of Scripture about Judas even from his earliest introduction, which we read in Luke 6, and each of the synoptics tells us. It comes from the apostolic

list, just this warning in Matthew 10:4, Mark 3:19 and our text Luke 6:16. He's called Judas Iscariot, literally, a man of Ish Kerieth. John 6:71, as we read, tells us he's the son of Simon Iscariot, which is evidence that Iscariot is not a family name, but it's actually a name that identifies his origin. This is where his people are from—Kerieth. Kerieth is a town in Judah. Joshua 15:25 refers to it. It's located about 25 miles east of the Dead Sea, and that makes Judas the only man among the twelve who is not a Galilean. He's a Judean. He has Judean interests, which, by the way, go hand-in-hand with religious-political interests. That's a big deal in Israel.

I mentioned last week that Matthew and Mark's lists place Judas Iscariot immediately following Simon the Zealot. That may provide us with a little bit of an insight or a slight clue about an affinity between these two men politically. However, whereas Jesus turned Simon the Zealot away from temporal political goals and means, transforming him and ultimately saving his life, from wasting his life on temporal political solutions, Jesus allowed Judas to go his own way. But besides his name, besides his Judean origin, whatever else we might surmise or suspect about his political leanings, all three synoptic Gospels, the authors provide a warning to us in their

apostolic lists about the nature of Judas 'trajectory and his treachery. It's interesting, none of them calls Judas, as we do, "the traitor," "the betrayer," which would point to something that is native in his character. Rather, the Gospel writers use the verb form to describe his action of betrayal. Judas is, in both Matthew 10:4 and Mark 3:19, "the one who betrayed him." Luke's language is subtle, but he calls us to reflect when he includes Judas Iscariot the one "who became a traitor." It's as if to warn us: "Beware, dear reader, even Judas wasn't born a betrayer. He didn't start out that way; he became a traitor." It's a warning, it's a word of caution to us.

So what's in the heart of Judas Iscariot? What's driving him? What led Judas to betray the Son of Man? What will always be the worst act of treachery in the human race? What caused this to happen? When I think of Judas, I am reminded of the Apostle Paul, who is always careful to distinguish his ministry from the interests and motivations of all the false teachers and the peddlers around him. In 1 Thessalonians 2:5 he wrote, "For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness." In Philippians 1:17, you may remember, he refers to some who preach the Gospel, but their hearts weren't right. They proclaim Christ, not sincerely, but

out of a heart that is dominated by selfish ambition. Sadly, it is tragically apparent that Judas was never set free from his bondage to covetousness, to greed, selfish ambition. He brought that kind of a heart with him to the ministry of John the Baptist, where, like all the other Apostles, he professed repentance in the waters of John's baptism. Verbally he spoke those words. When Jesus came, Judas was also listening to what John was teaching about Jesus, and like the other disciples, he too, left John's ministry to start following Jesus. And then Jesus came down from that mountain in Luke 6:13. He called all those disciples to himself, and then he appointed Judas to be one of his twelve. Judas' heart was never with him. It was never with the rest of the disciples.

Turn in your Bibles to a familiar story, Mark Chapter 14. We're going to start here looking at Judas by looking at a really beautiful story familiar to you, especially as we're anticipating the resurrection story in one week. But remember Good Friday comes first. And as we remember the death of Christ on the cross for our sins, what we're about to read is a beautiful act of worship and devotion. As we find out in this story, it is recorded for all posterity to reflect upon. Look at Mark 14:3: "And while he [Jesus] was at Bethany in the house of

Simon the leper, as he was reclining at the table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. There were some who said to themselves indignantly, 'Why was the ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.' And they scolded her."

Stop there for a second. Three hundred denarii are the equivalent of a year's wages for a common laborer. That's a lot of money that this woman—her name is Mary by the way, the sister of Lazarus—but it's a lot of money she had saved up to spend on this ointment. The men here are accusing Mary, and they're rebuking her for squandering such a large sum of money just to pour it all on Jesus. Look how Jesus responded. Verse 6: "But Jesus said, 'Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly, I say to you, whenever the Gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.'"

Guess what? That was just fulfilled right now, again. As important as it is to show concern for the poor, there is something greater, isn't there? There's a greater principle here in showing honor for Jesus Christ. And that's a principle that we will recognize illustrated in this beautiful act of devotion from this grateful, worshipping woman. Do you know what else is going to be remembered wherever the Gospel is proclaimed in the whole world? Well, because of what the Apostle John wrote in his Gospel, his parallel narrative where he recounts this story, we're also going to remember that man who instigated the rebuke of this woman, stirred up the disciples' indignation. John tells us in John 12:4 through 6 that it was Judas who led the protest. "But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, 'Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?' He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it."

Look, John, who wrote this, recognized Judas' deviousness in retrospect, but not at the moment. He realized greed is what characterized Judas, as a thief, all along the way. In fact, the verbs in John 12:6 are in the imperfect tense, continuous

action, past time. It was his usual habit to dip into the till, to lift coins out of the moneybag all along. That means Judas is in bondage to his covetousness. He had been driven by selfish desire all along. His association with Jesus had very little, actually nothing, to do with love for God and love for righteousness. Instead, it had everything to do with what he could gain for himself. Clearly, Judas believed at some level, along with the other disciples, that Jesus is the Christ. And he had ample opportunity all along the way to depart, to walk away. We just read that from John 6. Jesus gave him and the other Apostles an opportunity to leave. None of them joined the so-called disciples, the fair-weather disciples. They didn't depart from Jesus; they all remained with Jesus, including Judas. What made Judas stay? If he'd had no love and affection that drew him magnetically to Jesus to worship him, what made him stay?

Look, Judas is here exposed. He's an insider, so he's exposed to Jesus' teaching. He's exposed to Jesus' miracles. Judas saw Jesus' character; he saw it up close. He saw Jesus' character when the pressure was on. He heard him in those intimate conversations in those inner rooms. He heard him in the crowds and away from the crowds. He saw him at all times. So Judas is exposed. He's an insider. Judas knew Jesus is the

Messiah. At least on an intellectual level. He even called him, "Rabbi." What remained unchanged and unmoved in Judas were his affections. He had no heart for Christ. Apart from spiritual regeneration, knowing Jesus 'true identity did not move Judas to worship him. His fallen nature and his unbridled avarice used that intellectual knowledge not for worship but for selfish gain. For Judas, knowing Jesus as Messiah, he saw dollar signs or denarii signs. Jesus as Messiah simply became an opportunity for him. Jesus as Messiah meant a means to his own self-centered ends. Judas saw Jesus as an avenue to self-advancement, to self-satisfaction. There is a lot of that going on today, isn't there?

Judas had gained the trust of the other Apostles as well, so much so that they felt confident putting the money bag in his care. And that made Judas the apostolic treasurer. So in Judas ' mind, if everything continued according to the Messianic plan that he had mapped out, he'd soon be promoted, and he'd take the title, "Kingdom Treasurer." So far, Judas held the right of precedent over the other Apostles. He'd been able to gain and maintain their trust so far. But through their trust, he had been able to embezzle funds, taking advantage of their trust. He had been able to embezzle without anybody's notice. Clever, very

clever. So surely, in his mind, this could only get better for him if he just could carry on and hang on just a little bit longer. If he kept playing his cards right, Judas would have control of the finances, not just for this little band of Apostles, but for the entire millennial kingdom. Pretty lucrative.

Certainly at the very foundational level, Judas had not examined his heart. He had never considered the evil of his motives; much less did he repent of any of his sin. He remained trapped in bondage to his greed. Folks, Judas provides a warning to all of us to guard our own hearts, to examine ourselves regularly, often. There may be some who are like Judas, who are false professors and false disciples. May God grant mercy on you, give you grace by his Holy Spirit. May he send the Spirit to convict of sin and righteousness and judgment. May he regenerate you, grant you the gift of saving faith that you can repent of your sin, put your faith in Jesus Christ, escape the bondage of sin and death because of the perfect atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross. And for any here who may feel conviction, who may feel like, "Hey, I may be like Judas, still trapped in bondage to my greed, my selfish ambition or any other

sin," look, come talk to one of us after the service. There is still time while you have breath for Jesus to set you free.

But for most of us here, repentant believers, beloved, all of us need to examine our hearts regularly to see if there are any sinful motives that have crept into our service for Christ. The allurements, the enticements of sin are so subtle, aren't they? But if we pray often as David prayed in Psalm 139:23-24, God will keep us safe if we pray this: "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!" Do you know what "try me" means? It means "test me, put me through tests." Do you know what that is? Trials. It's difficulty, it's hardship, it's pain, it's suffering. "Try me and know my thoughts, [expose them]! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." That's what every single true believer prays. If we'll pray that in all sincerity, we can trust that God will expose our sins, and when he does, we need to be quick to repent. We need to be eager to reconcile with him and others and zealous to walk with him in purity and integrity and in truth because we love him dearly. Judas Iscariot, then, is a warning to examine our own hearts first, to examine our thoughts, our motives, the nature of our ambitions.

There's a second lesson, though, here, of warning from the fact that Judas Iscariot is numbered among the twelve. You can jot this down as a second subpoint. Be discerning, not just about your own heart, but be discerning about people who come to church. Look, we need to grow in discernment to realize, to recognize that false professors may very well attach themselves to the church. Why would you do that? Because you all are such friendly, wonderful people. They want to be around you. Do you know what else they think? You're gracious people. You understand sin, you're gracious with them. They want to take advantage of that. Remember none of the Gospel writers called Judas "the betrayer," "the traitor." They refer to him as the "one who betrayed him"—that's a focus on the act. The one who became a traitor, a focus on the process. So that provides an additional call of discernment for us because we need to recognize that none of the Apostles saw this coming. We need to understand that not everyone who professes to be with us is truly of us. There are some very clever false believers out there. There are some very practiced intelligent pretenders.

Turn in your Bibles to John 13:21. I realize that we are skipping around just a little bit in the story. We're trying to draw out some of these important vital lessons for practical

life, exercising discernment in the church. By this time, though, in John 13, Jesus has washed all the disciples 'feet, including Judas 'feet, by the way. It's an incredible act of love, isn't it? Then Jesus sat down at the table again, sat down to teach them the meaning of what he has just done for them. In John 13:13 to 15 he says: "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, you Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you." But then it says down in verse 21, "After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit and testified, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.'" Side comment, footnote here: Jesus is troubled. He's not indifferent or cold to Judas at all. He loved Judas. He loved his betrayer, and he's troubled by this defection. It hurts. Isn't that interesting? Just keep that in mind all the way through this. Verse 22: "The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved [that's John], was reclining at the table at Jesus 'side, so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, 'Lord, who is it?' Jesus answered, 'It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.' So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon

Iscariot. Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, 'What you are going to do, do quickly.' Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, 'Buy what we need for the feast,' or that he should give something to the poor. So after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night."

Again, until that moment, no one suspected Judas Iscariot. John learned the fact from Jesus. At Peter's behest, he learned the identity of the one who would betray Jesus. But everyone at the table that night thought nothing of Judas' departure. All of them assumed good motives, good intentions, at the very least, a harmless, innocuous purpose. Think about that, too. This is Jesus and his twelve Apostles. Satan's there, right? If Satan is there among them and he enters among one of them and causes him to depart, do we think of ourselves as any better? I like to say this sometimes, "You know what, Satan goes to church." Everybody saw Judas, assuming the best. He had the moneybag and they thought, "Well Jesus is telling him to go and get something for the feast or that he should give something to the poor." Why? Because Judas is all about the poor. "Hey Judas, I thought we had a little bit more money in the moneybag." "Oh, it's because

I've been giving money to the poor." "Wow, what a holy guy that is. He's so concerned for the poor. He's got such a big heart, so tender and compassionate for the poor." None of them saw it coming.

It is significant to note that once Judas departed—look there at John 13:31—it tells us, "When he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.'" We're going to talk about that more next week as we learn about God's purposes for Judas in the plan of redemption. But at this point, only Jesus knew and fully understood what Judas was about to do. Even though John and Peter had discovered the identity of the betrayer, it had to be very hard for them at this point to accept. "Judas? Okay, maybe Simon the Zealot or one of those other guys whose name I don't even know, but Judas? No way!" From John 13, turn over just a page or two to John 15:1-6. This is such a precious illustration of us for believers, right? Jesus says: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit." I don't know about you, but I think pruning hurts a bit. It hurts to be cut, but he just wants us to bear more fruit. "Already you are clean because of the

word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered and thrown into the fire, and burned."

Do you know who that is describing? Judas Iscariot. Do you know the connection? Read back there in verse three, "Already you are clean because of the word I have spoken to you." Do you know what he said earlier back in John 13:10? "And you are clean, but not every one of you." Now he makes no qualification. There is no exception. "Already you are clean [all of you] because of the word I have spoken." "Now that the betrayer has gone out of your midst, the unclean one is gone." Why? He has been cut from the vine. He was superficially attached to Christ, but like an unproductive branch, Judas is cut off; he quickly withered and is thrown into the fire. The disciples didn't fully understand this at the moment, but they did later on, which is why John includes this in the Upper Room discourse. At the moment, in the presence of Jesus Christ, the idea that Judas

could be anything but what he seemed to be was something that had to be utterly impossible to their minds. Even when he was completely unmasked in the garden of Gethsemane, he comes at the head of the arresting party, and I believe they couldn't believe their eyes. The shock of his hateful betrayal just intensified their dismay.

In fact, turn if you will over to Luke 22:47. Let's look at that scene just quickly and look at what really comes across as cold hatred, calculating hypocrisy involved in Judas 'treachery here. Judas 'betrayal of Jesus is followed by a cascading set of injustices. We all know the story about the arrest, the speedy trial, really a kangaroo court. They already knew the verdict before they started the trial. Then a hasty crucifixion. The disciples are completely disoriented as their entire world unraveled in a single night. In their minds, what started it all? What was the catalyst? It had a human face. It's a face of a familiar friend. This is someone with whom they've broken bread for three years. He's someone they trusted, and he turned on them wholesale. Judas 'hatred is apparent in the hypocritically spiteful sign of his betrayal. Look a verse 47: "While Jesus was still speaking, there came a crowd, and a man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near

to Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus said to him, 'Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?'"

The rest of the Apostles are thinking, "Is this some kind of mistake? Surely Judas was captured first and he's being forced at sword-point to lead the soldiers to us. What is going on?" It's bewildering to the disciples, but Jesus knows exactly what's happening. We read in Matthew 26:48, "Now the betrayer had given the chief priest a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; seize him.'" Judas could have chosen any sign, any signal. He chose a kiss. He's calculating here in his expression of hatred, feigning friendship so he can come close and insert the knife. The next verse pictures him doing just that. Look at verse 49. "And he came up to Jesus at once and said, 'Greetings, Rabbi!'" And he kissed him. Jesus said to him, "Friend"—even calling him "friend" at that moment. "Jesus said to him, 'Friend, do what you came to do.'" At that moment, Jesus unmasked his betrayer. And now the other Apostles knew, too, that one so close, so intimate, though he was among them, he was never of them.

And again, folks, it's hard to fault the disciples for failing to discern Judas Iscariot's heart or intentions. Would you have? Would I have? It's only God who knows the hearts of men, truly. Not only that, the appearance of Messiah, the inauguration of the Messianic Age—that's something that's totally unprecedented. I mean, when else could they have seen something like this before, right? This is new. And besides that, didn't Jesus himself choose Judas? How could they have seen this coming? But for us, for you and me having read about Judas Iscariot as one of the twelve, listen, beloved, we have no excuse for being naïve. In fact, we're not allowed to put our heads in the sand, refuse to exercise discernment about people who come into the church. For the sake of the health and the purity of Christ's body, for the sake of the true glory of Christ, and for the good of Christ, beloved sheep, we must be wary of hypocrites and liars. Hypocrites—skilled, studied, well-practiced hypocrites—they will draw near to the church. They'll feign loyalty, they'll flatter you with fine-sounding words, they'll butter people up with gifts, pleasantries, handshakes, smiles, pats on the back, but their hearts are roaming in very dark places. We won't always be able to detect their true nature until after they've done their damage and departed from us.

We can't be foolish and undiscerning. We cannot sympathize with this modern spirit of tolerance, which is tolerant of every form of doctrinal error and wicked behavior, but utterly intolerant of those who are committed to truth and holiness. We can't be like that because this isn't about us. It's about Christ. It's about his beloved sheep. Jesus said in Mark 14:21, "For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." We might extend the same warning to hypocrites in our midst because not only do they deceive themselves, continuing to suffer in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, but they also cause others of Jesus 'sheep to stumble. And we should remember what Jesus said to those who cause little ones to stumble—something about millstone necklaces, right? Being thrown into the depths of the sea for a deep, deep dive. It's scary.

I realize that is difficult and perhaps, for some, some very unpleasant teaching, but, listen, it's so necessary. None of us really likes to look at the World Health Organization website and learn about all the diseases that are going to kill us. None of us likes to read food labels to see what's actually in there. Let's just consume, right? Just keeping eating those

burgers, fries, milkshakes. Sorry. I just had some last night, so they're still on my mind. I didn't read the label either. But, listen, in hard teaching like this, it's so important for us to see the grace of God because a discerning church—Ephesians 4:14—is a healthy church. It's a thriving church. It's a mature church. We must be ever vigilant, mustn't we? Starting with ourselves. As Paul told young Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:16, "Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching." We must watch our hearts diligently, self-examine regularly so that we're wary of ourselves, that we're clear before the Lord, clear with others, but then we need to be wary of false professors and hypocrites in our own midst.

Well, next week, we're going to finish our survey of Judas Iscariot—I'm not done yet, by the way. Don't get up. I just want you to know we're going to look at some more positive, encouraging words for the church, as well. I want you to understand that. There are some very good things to see here about Jesus 'love and Jesus 'assurance. We need to hear those things. And that's point two in your outline in your bulletin Reasons for worship. We're going to see the most foundational purpose of all, which is our redemption. But even today as we draw our study to a close, we want to ask a question. What

happened to Judas? He became the betrayer. "Became." There's a process there. What caused him to do that? And not just to walk away—many walked away—but to react with such antipathy and spite, to react to Jesus with such venomous hostility.

There's a third subpoint for your notes. Be discerning not just about your heart, not just about people who come into church, but be discerning about the cause of apostasy. Let me state this point very simply, very plainly. The reason people apostatize and walk away is because they do not love the Lord Jesus Christ. They don't love Christ. So listen, if you find your own love for Christ waning, growing cold, watch out. "Remember from where you have fallen"—Ephesian church in Revelation Chapter 2, right? "Remember from where you have fallen." Repent and do the first work and remember your first love, Jesus Christ. Return to him in prayer, cry out for his restoration because those who fan into flame their love for Christ, they remain. Obviously, Judas' heart wasn't right from the very beginning. He was a man enslaved to greed, a man driven by selfish ambition. He saw Jesus as a means to his own ends. Every opportunity that he received from Jesus, every intimate exposure that he was privileged to enjoy, every honor that was bestowed upon him—none of it engendered humility or gratitude. None of it

caused affection for Christ. All of it simply cemented him in his pride and his high self-evaluation. He was wise in his own eyes. And that's why I believe it was the simple, but effusive and generous remarkable act of love and devotion with Mary anointing Jesus. Jesus' commendation of that act—that's what pushed Judas Iscariot over the edge. He couldn't stand that.

Turn to John 12 and let's take a closer look at that scene. I want you to see something here in discerning the heart of Judas and what caused him to walk away. Some commentators believe that Judas betrayed Jesus because of his own disappointed political ambitions. That is, when he saw Jesus was heading for the cross and not for immediate glory, he jumped ship and decided to take a little cash on the way out. Other people say it had to do with Judas' insatiable desire for money. So when he realized the apostolic purse was about to run dry, become pretty light pretty soon, he decided to profit from Jesus just one more time. And I don't doubt some of that thinking informed Judas' blackened heart. I actually think God in his wisdom painted a contrast in John chapter 12 between the ugly heart of Judas and the beautiful, forgiven heart of a forgiven woman named Mary. Look at John chapter 12. "Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was,

whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they gave a dinner for him there." As we read earlier, that's Simon the leper's house. "Martha served and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Again, the same Mary who sat at Jesus' feet in Luke 10:39. I think the ladies heard about this scene on Friday night. Mary's heart is filled with love and devotion, filled with humility and gratitude. She'd been saving up all this money, a whole year's wages for a common laborer. She saved up this money to purchase this expensive ointment, and she wants to offer the greatest gift she can think to offer. It's interesting; she suspected he'd eventually be captured and killed, and when you look back to John 11:55-57, you can see the word was out about Jesus. There's an all-points bulletin put out about him in verse 57, that "If anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him." Bethany is close to Jerusalem and Mary knows that she doesn't have much time or opportunity. She doesn't like the idea of anointing a dead body; she wants to honor him while he's still living. Can you blame her? So Mary

performs this simple but beautiful act of love and devotion, anointing the feet of Jesus, wiping his feet with her long hair. That was more meaningful than even she knew. It provided more symbology than she knew. And, by the way, it was more useful than she knew because that simple act is what the Lord used to expose the heart of the hypocrite Judas Iscariot and push him to his inevitable end. Look at verse 4. "But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, 'Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?' He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. Jesus said, 'Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.'"

Again, there's Judas Iscariot, his own heart filled with greed, caring nothing at all for the plight of the poor. He acts like he cares; he pretends to be concerned about altruistic higher principles. He speaks words of compassion and mercy, but in fact he's just a hypocrite filled with greed, and the greed left no room in his heart for loving Christ. John doesn't show the connection, but in Matthew and Mark, do you know what

happens immediately after this scene? Right after Mary anoints Jesus for burial, Matthew 26:14, "Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What will you give me if I deliver him over to you? 'And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him." Interesting. That pushed him over the edge, didn't it? Disappointed political ambitions? Maybe. Probably. He didn't see his role as millennial treasurer coming to fruition. But is this just an opportunity to make money? No, not likely. Thirty pieces of silver? It's a pittance. Exodus 21:32 tells us it's the price of a slave. Judas probably could have run away with the moneybag and had more money than that.

No, thirty pieces of silver indicates that Judas Iscariot despises Jesus. His pride is offended. His heart is burning with anger at being exposed by the simple devotion and love of Mary. He's filled with bitterness because his true feelings for Jesus are exposed in the sight of everybody. Unlike Mary, unlike the other disciples, Judas doesn't love Jesus at all. In truth, he hates him. It makes him angry that Jesus showed him up in front of this simple girl Mary and all the others. Jesus 'words of correction are even more stinging because they're directed at him. Matthew and Mark record that all the disciples were

expressing indignation over Mary's apparent waste of money. They're all indignant, but it's because they didn't understand. They had misinterpreted Mary's love. They misunderstood the higher principle that she's rightly operating by. But we learn from John that it was Judas who led them into their indignation. So Jesus 'rebuke ultimately, fundamentally was aimed at Judas. It exposed his lack of love for Christ.

What's amazing about that is that after making the deal with the chief priests, Judas returned to the twelve to have dinner. Evidently, he felt his cover hadn't been fully blown. He's confident he can keep the ruse going. It's a high estimation of himself, isn't it? So he returned to the Apostles and joined them in the upper room. Look again at John 13 verse 2. "During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that he Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples 'feet and to wipe them with the towel that as wrapped around him.

There's Judas. He lets Jesus wash his dirty feet. He even hears Peter's protest over at his side and he keeps his own mouth shut. The devil had filled Judas 'heart with hatred, had brought him to the point of no return, and Judas returns here to play the hypocrite. But Jesus had his number, didn't he? In John 13:10, Jesus said to Peter, "You are clean, but not every one of you, 'for he knew who was to betray him." Later on, as they're eating, Judas received from Jesus 'hand the morsel dipped in the sop, an offering of friendship, a token of honor, one last overture of mercy and love. And before Judas could break down in agony of his conscience that had to be burning within him, John 13:27 says, "After he had taken the morsel, Satan had already entered into him." No way Satan wanted his plan to unravel. He was holding on to this one. And then Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly." Interesting, isn't it? Jesus is there still in charge. He's commanding Judas Iscariot and the devil inside of him to do what the Father had ordained from the foundation of the world.

We're going to come back there next week because Judas is the catalyst for all that unfolds with the arrest, the trial, the sentencing, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ—all for your redemption. There are two purposes of Christ in Jesus choosing

Judas Iscariot. I mentioned one ecclesiological, one redemptive. So next week we're going to finish this, considering some reasons for worship, and it's naturally going to involve the redemptive purpose of God. We're going to see the fundamental reasons that Christ chose Judas Iscariot and why he included him among the twelve. Because he fulfilled, in all of this, an apostolic service that no one but Judas could fulfill. The loveless Apostle is about to become the catalyst God is going to use to accomplish the redemption of all those who do truly love Jesus Christ. Let's close in prayer.

Heavenly Father, we thank you, just awestruck at the wonder of our own redemption. We thank you that we are not like Judas, with a heart that's cold toward you. We thank you that you have put within us a believing heart, a love for Jesus Christ. What could we do but say, "Thank you," to see the horrific end that we could have come to apart from your saving sovereign grace? We thank you, Father. We commit ourselves to you once again fully, completely, wholly. We want to love Jesus Christ and honor him with our lives.