

Solving the Jesus Problem

Luke 22:1-6

November 3, 2024

Well, we are entering into the final section of Luke's gospel this morning. It's a very long chapter at 71 verses, second only to the first chapter of Luke, which we have survived. So you'll survive this one too. Chapter 1 of Luke is 80 verses, this is only 71, so we're, we're going to cruise right through it. Turn to Luke 22 in your Bibles this morning.

I realized that this is a political season and we are heading into an election on Tuesday and there are consequences as there are at every election. And we don't want to minimize that or disdain what the time and the place that the Lord has put us into and its importance in, in life and our responsibilities that attend to those things. We also want to put into perspective and in historical perspective, I really can't remember the different political machinations, maneuvers and all that were going on, even though I've read about it in Rome or in Greece or in Assyria or Babylon. Great empires have come and

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gone, and great kingdoms and great nations rise and fall, and ours is going to be in the list along with all of them.

Should the Lord be pleased to extend some help to us in this season, may he do so. Should He choose to give us the leaders that we deserve, may God use that to glorify his great name and to strengthen his people, to refine his church, to draw many to salvation, to see an end of all hope in politics and in the strength and power and wisdom of men, and instead turn all their attention to Christ, to his wisdom, to the power and wisdom of God in Christ and his gospel. Let's preach that this election season, shall we?

Luke 22 and 23 is where it's at; this is the passion narrative, and it refers to the suffering of Jesus Christ for our sins. Passion comes from a, a Latin word that means to suffer. It's talking about his, his suffering, the suffering aspect of his incarnation mission. He's the Lamb of God, the atoning sacrifice, who takes away the sins of the world and then after he takes away the sins of the world, after he is put to death on the cross, he dies, he's buried in the tomb, and after three

days he's raised out of the tomb. And that's Luke 24, the resurrection chapter.

We see in that great chapter his victory over sin and death, as he was raised for our justification. And you might think, Oh no, we've gone all this way through the, through lead up to the culmination, the climactic chapters in 22 and 23. So much time spent in his suffering, in his passion, and only one chapter on his resurrection glory. Ah guess what, Luke wrote a Part 2, It's called the book of Acts, which if God tarries and God allows us, we'll go through that, too, together. But let's stick with where we are, shall we? Let me not get ahead of myself.

These are the climactic chapters in the Gospels, and really the climactic point in the Gospel itself, the message of salvation. This is the watershed moment of history. It's the hinge point that propels all humanity forward into the last days, all by God's divine plan, with everything happening perfectly, right on schedule, all according to the divine timetable. The next events that we're going to see or the world is going to see will surround Christ's return, as we have just studied in Luke 21.

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First though, we have the privilege of studying together the Passion of Christ, culminating in the crucifixion, which sealed his obedience, that secured our salvation. In Luke 22, the chapter is mostly about preparation. As Jesus enemies, here at the beginning, prepare to kill him, as Jesus then prepares his disciples for that eventuality and prepares them for what lies ahead. And then finally, as Jesus prepares himself by praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, which is yet another wilderness like temptation from the devil coming to visit him and discourage him.

In Luke 22, this is mostly about preparation and Luke begins the chapter really by preparing us, by preparing the readers of his Gospel to see what, what's really going on behind the scenes. So that we understand the motivations of the various players at work in the conspiracy to murder Jesus. So that we can understand, as readers of the Gospel, what is otherwise utterly unexplainable. So that we can, you know, unscrew the inscrutable. I mean, how is it that Jesus Christ, the most perfect, sinless, glorious man, who ever lived, would be hanging on a cross to be shamed before the entire world, scorned, spit

at, mocked, cruelly treated? How does this happen? What gave rise to this?

This is the greatest crime ever committed. It's the most heinous miscarriage of justice that's ever been perpetuated on anyone, since Jesus is alone, the only sinless man, who ever lived; so he, of all people, of all of us, did not deserve to die and yet he died. What's going on?

Let's read the opening 6 verses, this first narrative in chapter 22. "Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread which is called the Passover was drawing near. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might put him to death; for they were afraid of the people. And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, who belonged to the number of the Twelve. And he went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them. They were glad and agreed to give him money. And so he consented and *began* seeking a good opportunity to betray Him to them apart from the crowd."

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We're going to divide those 6 verses into just two points for this morning. First, the conspirators' dilemma in verses 1 and 2 and second, the betrayer's solution in verses 3 to 6 or if you prefer the, the problem and the solution. Problem/solution, that's how this is constructed. How it's, how it's, how it's really broken down by Luke. It's a simple outline and though it's simple, it's going to give us some basic structure as we, that allow us to meet the key players in the passion narrative, those who are on the side of the bad guys, those who are the, the, really the proximate cause, if I could use that language, proximate causes in killing Christ. They, these are the ones who bear the real guilt in the death of Jesus Christ, in his murder. So we're going to consider their motivations. And along the way, we'll sprinkle in some comments of reflection for ourselves because we wouldn't want to simply look at them without considering ourselves.

So here's a first point. We'll jump right in number one: the conspirator's dilemma. The conspirator's dilemma, or if you prefer, the conspirator's problem. Luke has actually started to prepare us, as readers, for this chapter in how he ended the last chapter in verses 37 to 38. Those two verses at the end of

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the Olivet Discourse are not merely transitional in nature, but they are really a setup to understand, to help us understand what it is that's troubling the leaders.

After giving the great Olivet Discourse, after teaching his disciples, encouraging their hearts about the second coming, he, Luke, wants us to see this; get us a, get us a snapshot again. "Now during the day," verse, chapter 21, verse 37, "Now during the day He was teaching in the temple, but during the night He would go out and spend," the night, "on the Mount," of Olives, the Mount, "called 'of Olives'". And all the people would get up early in the morning to come to Him in the temple to listen to him."

These are eager listeners of sermons, but they love to get up early to listen to Jesus teach. Who wouldn't? They recognize something in him that was powerful, strong, convicted, well informed, theologically accurate, doctrinally sound, thoroughly saturated with Scripture. They loved listening to him because even though he was that well informed, seemingly a PhD in something, and yet he had never gone to seminary. But here's a

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man who could speak in the colloquial wisdoms of the common day. He could speak in the idioms of the people. He used metaphor and story. He really was able, like no one else, to grab attention and hold attention and convey the most profound truths and the most plain common language. He's incredible, incredible. I wish I could hear that. One day I will. One day I will. I wish I could have been there. If I had a time machine, that's where I'd go right here.

All the people listening to him, refers to not only the residents of Jerusalem, Judea, the surrounding areas, but there were also hundreds of thousands of Jewish pilgrims who had been, who were visiting at this very moment to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Luke 22:1, called the Passover, which Luke tells us was approaching, just a couple days away. This is going to commence and verse 2 says, that "the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might put him to death." They were seeking, imperfect tense, so it's a continual past, you know, past, look at the past, and kind of, this continual *seeking* on their part.

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They're always trying to find a way, evidently being frustrated in their attempts, but always trying to find a way, how they might put him to death. And then what looks like an explanation of this, "for they were afraid of the people," that doesn't explain their motivations in trying to kill him, it explains their reasons for not getting the job done. They were afraid of the people.

Now, at this point in the story, we're not really surprised, are we, as Luke's, as the readers of Luke's Gospel. We're not surprised by the murderous plot. Murderous plot was hatched long ago. Jewish leaders have been dogging Jesus steps for a long time. They have been after him. They have been hovering in the background all the time, watching him, trying to get him to, trying to see if he'll trip up in his words, if he'll do something inappropriate, something that violates the law of Moses, because they want to discredit him.

They want to malign him and tell all the people that he really is aligned with the devil. That's where they come to. He does the miracles that he does. We can't deny the miracles

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themselves. I mean, this guy who was not walking, we all know him; he's now walking. This one who was blind now can see, this one who was dead, Lazarus is now raised from the dead and walking around. Everybody knows it. Can't deny that.

So how do we explain it? Oh, he's actually aligned with Satan, Beelzebul, the chief of the demons. So that's what they've come to. That's the only option they're left with. They can't take him down for his teaching because he's teaching according to the truth. Can't find any holes in his doctrine because, well, he's the one who the doctrine is about. They can't find any errors in his theology because in the mind of the Son of God, everything is consistent. There aren't, you know, four views of everything, he understands the only view of all things. They can't trip him up there.

They can't trip him up in his character, he's righteous, perfect, he speaks the truth, he, he does so in love. He's filled with mercy and compassion. And they can't criticize him for any of that because he uses all of his power to heal the sick, to cast out demons. Who is this guy? And since they

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cannot, will not bow the knee to him, which would cause them to sacrifice their entire life, which is what Jesus demands of every disciple. "If you would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." They say, no. And so they're left with a dilemma: How am I going to justify myself in the face of this decision to reject him? Well, he's devilish.

So the plot to murder Jesus; they had to do away with him. They had to do away with this problem, the Jesus problem and this plot to murder Jesus came to a vote well before he ever showed up in the city. As he made his way into Jerusalem for Galilee, he was travelling through Samaria and Perea, and we've followed him along all this journey. He visited the home of Lazarus, his friend, along with Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha, and that was in Bethany.

In fact, I'd like you to turn over into John Chapter 11, which is, you'll remember, this is the resurrection chapter, but this is where we see Jesus at the home of Lazarus with Martha and Mary. I want to read a bit from the account in John 11. This, what I'm about to read starting in verse 25. This is before

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Jesus raised his friend Lazarus from the dead. Remember he's having this conversation with Martha, the sister of Lazarus.

And in John 11:25, he assures Martha of this truth to comfort her in the death of her brother. He said, Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life, and he who believes in me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." Then Jesus asked Martha this most important question, knowing what she's going to say, to evoke from her a response, a believing response, that's, that's true and confessed by every single Christian ever since. He asked Martha, "do you believe this?" Martha answered with a good confession. She spoke the same language Peter used in his own good confession in Matthew 16. "Yes, Lord, I have believed that you are the Christ, the Son of God, even he who comes into the world." That's a confession that we could confess as a church together, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the one who comes into the world.

It was after Martha's confession, then that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. An amazing miracle, but also an object lesson

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just to confirm her faith. And in John 11:45, it says that many of the Jews, because of this, believed in Jesus. But verse 46, "some went away to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done." Look at verse 47, "Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the Sanhedrin together, and they were saying, 'What are we doing? But this man is doing many signs. If we let him go on like this, all will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.'"

There you have it right there. That is the motivation of the chief priests and the scribes. It's a motivation of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. It's the motivation of all those religious leaders who were in power at that time. Jesus is a threat. He's doing many wonderful signs, including this raising of Lazarus from the dead. By the way, just a footnote, later in the chapter we find out that they wanted to kill Lazarus too, to get rid of the evidence of his revival, his restoration, his resuscitation, unbelievable hardness of heart. If we let him go on like this, what's going to happen? The Romans are going to come, they're going to take away our place, our nation. We have national interests; we have political interests. We got a

future. I got a family to feed. I got a boat payment. Can't let that happen.

"One of them," verse 49, Caiaphas. "Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, 'You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish.'" Now a little post, a little footnote from John, "Now he did not say this from himself, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation and not for the nation only, but in order that He might," he might, "also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad." Wow. "So from that day on," they agreed with Caiaphas plan, "they planned together to kill Him." There you have it. There is an official decision of the gathered body of the Sanhedrin, presided over by Caiaphas, the high priest on this day and their decision, official decision, kill Jesus.

Now we're going to see the results of this decision kind of worked out through the passion narrative, as they, kind of, cobbled together their really lame case. They're trying to

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stitch together, like a patchwork quilt, a fabric, a tapestry of accusations against him that don't match, all over the next two chapters in Luke's Gospel. Absolute travesty of justice, a violation of all and any jurisprudence.

But listen, here's what we know so far just from our own study and observation in Luke's Gospel. We know that Caiaphas ascended into his position by nepotism. He buried the daughter of the previous high priest, Annas. And like other chief priests, most of them Sadducees, they were old money with many, many political connections and Nexus of relationships, old relationships going back generations in Jerusalem. Caiaphas then is perched at the top of the food chain of power and authority, presiding over the Sanhedrin, but also running the issues of the temple and the temple complex.

Caiaphas made his money and traded on the temples' credibility. He used the authority of his position to take financial advantage of everyone's religious devotion, as they came to the temple and follow the Law of Moses. He took advantage of their devotion to enrich himself. A cynical man, he turned the temple

into a den of robbers by creating and executing and, and enforcing franchise contracts for the opportunity to, to take up a, a booth in the temple. He got a percentage of the profit. He got, probably, a payment for the contract itself, but then a percentage of profits as he contracted with those who sold approved sacrifices for the worshippers of the temple; as he provided currency exchange services for all those who are travelling in from different parts of the empire.

So when Jesus, as we have seen after his triumphal entry, when Jesus comes barging into his own temple, driving out his clients, overturning money tables and disrupting everybody, getting all the merchandise out of the temple environment. And by the way, he did that twice in his ministry, once at the beginning, once at the end. Well, this Caiaphas, he sees his, this is an existential threat, he sees his business model threatened, he sees, he sees this disruption, all the trade has slowed down and, and right before Feast of Unleavened bread, right before Passover. Has this man no sense of propriety. This Jesus has to go.

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You say, wait a minute; back up. Did you just say that God allowed a true prophecy to be spoken by this murderous hypocrite, Caiaphas? Does seem hard to fathom, and we wonder sometimes at how God does what he does. But we remember that God prophesied through Balaam, a false prophet, didn't he? And he also spoke by his more righteous donkey, by the way, so animal, human alike; God spoke through Saul, spoke through the witch of Endor. We, we see that all creatures are God's creatures, and they're tools in his hands. And there are times when he does remarkable things that really are outside the norm. They are not what we expect because God does set a pattern of speaking through prophets and righteous men. This is strange and it does jar us and call us to focus.

Skip down a couple of verses, if you're still in John 11 to verse 55, and notice there that, "the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem from the region before the Passover to purify themselves. And so they were seeking Jesus, and were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, 'What do you think? That He will not come to the feast at all?' That the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that

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if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it so they might seize Him.”

Word has gone out through Jerusalem; as the pilgrims come through the gates, they're handed little leaflets saying, if you see this guy, if you see this guy, they're wondering, is Jesus going to show? I've heard tell about him. I want to see him. I want to hear him for myself. I'm wondering, is he going to show up? All this attention. I don't believe that they knew the murderous intention, at that time, of the leaders in Jerusalem, because that's exactly what the leaders are scared of, that the people who love Jesus, who see him, he's the popular teacher. They don't want to make their intentions fully known.

This is as much as a, a month before Jesus entered Jerusalem at the triumphal entry. There's a contract on Jesus' life. Word on the street; report him. The chief priests, the Sadducees, the temple guards want to have a word with this man. There's intrigue afoot. Now go back to Luke. Let's just track this from what we've seen. We know that during this time, the city is

bursting at the seams. It's swollen with pilgrims and numbers of pilgrims coming to the, for the feast.

And he, as we've already seen in Luke 19, he entered into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, just as Solomon, King Solomon had done, which ushered in the golden age of Israel's dynasty. Luke 19:37 tells us that all these people who were thronging Jerusalem praise God, rejoicing. They were saying blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord, peace in heaven, glory in the highest. Oh, the people love him. The people want more of this man.

Jesus' first stop after he came into the city of Jerusalem. He had no interest in visiting the Sanhedrin. He didn't want to go see the ruling political body. He didn't want to confer with any of the religious authorities. He didn't want to talk about his political platform. He didn't want to discuss his plan for renewal, religious social reform. He didn't want to outline his agenda. He didn't say, go sign up on my website. He didn't start, as we've been peppering people with text messages continually telling us who to vote for.

So his first stop after entering into Jerusalem, he goes to his father's house. He goes to the temple to take back the temple from the robbers who had been wrongly occupying it, to reclaim the temple for God's purposes, "That it might be a House of prayer for all the nations," a place of preaching and teaching, a place of mercy and compassion, which is so fitting with offerings of sacrifice and worship and prayer. Luke tells us in Luke 19:47 he was teaching daily in the temple.

Matthew adds in Matthew 21:14, that the blind and the lame came to him in the temple and he healed them. It's a beautiful scene. Did the chief priests, as they're overseeing the temple in the complex and seeing all this happen, did they rejoice in this? Did they rejoice over the teaching? Were their hearts warmed to the sermons that Jesus was preaching to them? Did they love the doctrine? Did, did the theology just cause their hearts to burn with passion and flame? Did they love the, the healing, the consistency of good doctrine, and mercy, and compassion, and love, seeing that all together in this man's ministry? Luke says Luke 19:47, "The chief priests and the scribes, the leading men among the people were trying to destroy him and they couldn't

find anything that they might do for all the people were hanging upon his words.”

Chief priests, scribes, elders, these are members of the Jewish Sanhedrin and in Luke 20 they all approached Jesus. Luke 20 verse 1 and following, all of them in turn, they try to attack his authority. And the chapter, Luke chapter 20 catalogues their failed attempts to make Jesus look foolish, to diminish his, his credibility and his standing with the people. And the harder they try to undermine him, the more foolish they look. They only succeed in increasing *his* standing in the eyes of the people and diminishing their own. The people love it. People love this, don't they? Where they love it, when the people who are in authority are look, are made to look like fools. This is like the gossip column lived out before them.

So we read in Luke chapter 20, verse 19, the scribes and the chief priests, they tried to lay hands on him at that very hour, but they're handcuffed, they feared the people. They failed to trap him in public. They couldn't embarrass him before the people, verse 26. And so, “marveling at his answers, they became

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silent." Oh, this is frustrating. Oh, this is enraging them inside, but it wouldn't look good for them to throw a tantrum and might get the robes wrinkled. So they wait. They're seething inside. They're biding their time.

After all their failed challenges to his authority and trying to call him to account for cleansing the temple, Jesus now turns their guns back on them. Look at Luke 20:46, he says, this to his disciples, but he says it while all the people are listening in. "Beware of the scribes." Your theologians, those guys, you so highly esteem. Those guys with all the letters after their name. They love to walk around in long robes. Oh, they love respectful greetings in the marketplace. Oh doctor so and so. They love the chief seats in the synagogues. Oh sit over here, don't sit down there, sit over here. They love the places that are honored at banquets, the best portions, and yet they devour widows' houses. And really, they're hypocrites because for appearance's sake they offer long prayers that they don't mean. These will receive the greater condemnation.

That's just a summary of his indictment, for if you want the whole thing, 110 proof, go to Matthew 23. Man, he lets them have it, woe to you, woe to you, woe to you. It's again, we come to the time after Jesus delivered the Olivet Discourse, come through chapter 21, that likely happened on the Tuesday evening of the, his final week and he's back the next morning after delivering the Olivet Discourse.

According to Luke 21:37, he's back teaching in the temple all throughout the day and the people, verse 38, they get up early to go to the temple. They're listening intently to his teaching. They're hanging on every word. So it was Jesus popularity with the people, it was his boldness, it was the biblical confidence with which he issued his condemnations and judgements against them. It was the fact that this man could not be bought. It was the fact that he was inflexible in his righteous resolve. It was his, at the same time, he wasn't hard; he was soft, meek. It was his graciousness as he served the people with teaching and with mercy.

All the while and their failure to undermine and by any other means, man this, this, this is a problem we've never encountered. This is a man who must die, that's what they came to. They're in a bind. Time is ticking away. They've got this order from the Sanhedrin. It's like an open action item from their board minutes which says: Kill Jesus, time; ASAP, get her done. And though the chief priests and the scribes are seeking how they might put him to death, verse 2; they have thus far been frustrated in their efforts or they were afraid of the people.

What are they afraid of? The parallel in Matthew 26:3 to 5, makes this really clear by giving us a little more detail. If you just want to write that down, I'll read it to you. Matthew 26:3 to 5 says, "The chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered in the court of the high priest Caiaphas; and they were plotting together to seize Jesus by stealth and kill Him. But they were saying, 'Not during the festival, lest a riot occur among the people.'" Okay, there's their issue.

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Arresting this popular teacher, this messianic figure, this beloved of the people, arresting him in the presence of the crowds with this level of popularity, no way; a riots going to ensue. That's going to get the attention of the Roman governor, that's going to jeopardize their power, their position, their nation, their standing, their, their livelihood. Can't afford that. After all, that was the whole point in trying to get rid of Jesus in the first place, because he's a threat to their place and their position, their power over the people. A riot in Jerusalem would accomplish the same effect, have the same effect. It would do the same damage to their standing, to their position. So it's out of the question.

They can't grab him in the temple that's packed with people. They can't snatch him off the street, throw him in the back of a van with a hood on. He's always in the, in the company of his disciples. There's an entourage of people following him all the time. Too many witnesses just can't happen. Whenever he retreats to Mount Olivet, they know he's going down into the Kidron Valley and up the other side. They, but they can't find him in the dark. They don't have night vision goggles. They have to go out looking in the dark with lit torches. I mean not that's not

the British term for flashlight. He they have lit fire going through. Everybody can see them coming. Hey, what's going on over there?

That's the dilemma facing these conspiring murderers. The Passover is drawing near just a couple days away. The week-long feast of unleavened bread that follows it from Nissan 15 to 21, that's just about to begin. Everybody's there, everybody's watching, and they are running out of time. And so they're thinking, we got to postpone. So while the chief priests and the scribes are wringing their hands in the House of Caiaphas, as they're unable to get themselves past this dilemma, they can't get what they seek. That is, how to kill Jesus away from the people. Suddenly, in walks Judas Iscariot.

So here's the second point in our outline number two: The betrayers' solution. The betrayers' solution. In introducing Judas into the narrative in verse 3, Luke wants us to see, to know, to understand without any shadow of a doubt that Judas' solution did not originate with Judas. It says there, "Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, who belonged to the

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number of the Twelve and he went away and discussed," went away, that is to went away from the disciples, went away from Jesus. He went away from them and then, "discussed with the chief priests and the officers how he might betray Him to them. And they were glad and agreed to give him money. And he consented, and he began seeking a good opportunity to betray Him to them apart from the crowd."

We can see here that every point of the leader's dilemma in verse 2, every single point is answered by Judas' solution. They're seeking how they might put Jesus to death, but away from the people. And here comes Judas offering that exact solution. How do I hand Jesus over to them? Verse 4, But to do so stealthily out of sight, verse 6, apart from the crowd, problem addressed, problem solved. He's a problem solver.

Several players we can see here, we've got Judas Iscariot, the chief priest, who we have seen, the scribes, we've also got these officers; this is the first time in Luke's Gospel, first mention of them. And so we want to identify who these officers are, what they did, really they, they worked for the office of

the high priest. They worked with the chief priest. The word is *strategos*, which refers to a military leader. And so if Rome deployed the *strategos* to oversee, have some kind of a administrative authority, they would go oversee a Roman colony, maybe as a chief magistrate or some kind of high official.

You may remember in Acts 16 that Paul and Silas encountered these *strategoi*, the chief magistrates who falsely imprisoned them in Philippi. They had administrative oversight over the city. They wanted to send them out secretly, when they realized they were beating Roman citizens and they couldn't do that lawfully. And so Paul said, no, you come offer an apology, then we'll leave. Here, they're not Romans. This word used of those who were deployed in service of the temple, where no Gentile is allowed to enter, the *strategoi* here are Levites. The chief *strategos* is the captain of the temple police force. He's second in command of the chief priest, the high priest himself, and he enforces temple security.

So Luke wants us to see what it is that brought the solution of Judas into the home of Caiaphas to meet with the chief priests

and the *strategoi*. These, these magistrates are temple police officers, temple guard. He wants us to see what it is *that* brought Judas into their company, because there was no natural way for Judas to mix with these religious leaders. He'd been travelling with Jesus and his disciples for three years. He'd been on the road. He'd been away. So without a natural way for Judas to mix, a supernatural connection had to be made. Enter Satan, an invisible spirit who's been hovering over the entire scene and all the way through ever since he encountered Jesus in the wilderness and tried to tempt him and cause him to sin.

It says at the end of his temptations and Luke 4, Matthew 4 as well, it says that the devil left him for a more opportune time. He's back, here he comes entering into Judas Iscariot in order to make the necessary and supernatural connection. He just loves building bridges, this one. He loves making connections, loves bringing sinner to meet sinner, helping them achieve their goals, helping them reach their full potential.

Now we've encountered some demon possession in our study of Luke's Gospel, haven't we? Not a pretty picture. We got the

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demoniac in the Gerasenes inhabited by a legion of demons. We've got demons that cause mutinous, cause it to throw children into fire. I mean, we've got all kinds of problems caused by demonic possession, right? Notice here, when Satan enters into Judas, he doesn't become a raving lunatic, does he? Judas has his wits about him, he's of a sound mind, he's articulated in his speech. He comes with a good plan to them. He's able to reason with them. He's able to cut a deal to solve their dilemma with his help. This demonstrates his moral responsibility even though possessed by Satan himself.

So as Judas enters into the home of Caiaphas, knocks at the gate, they bring him through. And, we got Judas Iscariot, here, says he's one of the Twelve, says he wants to talk with you, cut a deal. We know exactly what these men are thinking, don't we? They're religious leaders, they're very familiar with their Bibles. You know they're going to be prone, aren't they, to spiritualize what's happening, aren't they? Here comes Judas, knocking on the door, wanting to meet with the high priest. He's called Iscariot, literally a man of Kerioth, Ish Kerioth.

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John 67:71 says he's the son of Simon Iscariot. So he's really Judas, son of Simon. But so Iscariot is not a family name, it's a regional name. It's a name that identifies where his family is from, it's, it's from Kerioth. According to Joshua 15:25, Kerioth is a town in Judah, Judah and it's located just 20 miles east of the Dead Sea. And so that makes Judas the only one of the Twelve who is not a Galilean.

A Judean disciple comes into the House of Caiaphas. Oh, that's not lost on the chief priests and the scribes. Ah, it just may sub, it may be that his interests align with ours. How convenient. They're feeling more comfortable with this guy by the minute. This Judas called Iscariot. Not only is he called Iscariot, not only is he Judean, but he belongs to the number of the Twelve. This isn't some insignificant disciple. This isn't some fringe guy. He's a long-term disciple. He's a member of the Twelve. He's from the inner circle. He's an apostle. This is one of the guys that, that Jesus personally selected. What could be better?

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What are these guys thinking? I'll tell you what they're thinking. They're, they're seeing this as God's favor on them. This is evidence of providence or in terms you may have heard before, maybe you've used this before, this is an open door. It's an open door. Look what God has done. Clearly this is God's will. After all, they've been praying about this. I hear that all the time. Oh, we've been praying about it. We got a peace about it. Really. So your prayer and your peace, Trump's what's clearly not a good idea and not righteous. They've been praying about this. They've got a peace about it and their peace is growing by the moment.

Now that this Judas, a Judean from Kerioth has come, he's numbered among the Twelve, and he's finally come to his senses and he's going to tell his deconversion story. Can't wait. Let's put this on a blog. So they've been praying. They see this man as an answer to their prayers. They got a peace about it and they're all too eager to walk through this open door of providence.

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These religious leaders, they're so full of their own self-importance, aren't they? They're so assured of their position that they couldn't possibly be seeing things wrong. They couldn't be lacking information, because they sit at the top of everything and they know all things; they're in charge, after all. They've got people who inform them about everything. They've got degrees after their name. They're very well studied. They got all angles covered. What could they be lacking?

Well, in their pride they're completely blind. It's so totally off in their judgements. After all, wasn't it they who accused Jesus of doing miracles by the power of Beelzebul, the chief of demons, also known as Satan? And it's Satan himself who inhabits the man with whom they're conferring. He's in Caiaphas' living room, utterly too blind to the demonic inspiration at work in Judas's plan. It's so often the case in religion and I, I cast a broad net when I say religion. I include our own Christianity in that.

It's often the case in religion. The religious, pr, pride is the most blinding pride of all, and it's the most damning pride,

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because people in their positions convince themselves that they're right, others are wrong, and they've got a righteous reason for it. Watch your own heart, beloved, that you're not walking in the darkness of any religious pride. We must examine ourselves every day. Call God to expose our hearts. At the end of Psalm 139, "search me and know my heart, try me and know my anxious thoughts, see if there be any wicked way in me." Most of all, Lord pride. Don't let there be pride in me, that blinds me to the truth.

Apart from a blinding pride, which is a key, it is the key connecting point that joins, that Satan makes between the religious leaders and Judas Iscariot. Both of them, overcome blind by pride, the pride of unbelief, and he sees a key connecting point to bring these two parties together. But having said that, because really, pride and unbelief are at the root of all sins, let's consider what else it was that drove Judas Iscariot.

What is it that motivated him? What made Judas, after three years of walking with the Savior, after his heart filled with

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truth, after watching power and miraculous deeds done and, and gracious feeding people concerned for their welfare as he's watching on? What is it that makes him susceptible, in his heart, to commit such, bu, profound betrayal to, to act in such disloyalty to this, to this wonderful savior, who's been nothing but good to him, such that it's made his name synonymous with treachery? What's going on?

It's interesting to me that the New Testament spends little time actually speculating about Judas's motivations, and yet it does give us enough to observe in what is written, that we can draw some tentative conclusions and, and actually make some applications and guard our own hearts to give us some ability to do some self-examination. So may, maybe we'll go through that together here.

First and just give you a few things to think about with regard to Judas's motivations, for why he would be willing to commit such, such betrayal. First, as we see in Luke 22:5, pretty obvious, the leaders agreed to give Judas money. It's the very crassest of motivations for this betrayal at the surface, may

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have been greed, may have been covetousness, a love of money, "which is at the root of all kinds of evil." according to 1 Timothy 6:20. We do want to be on guard for that. Paul writes that to Timothy, tells him too, that wealthy people should watch out that their own hearts are not covetous and loving money.

It's not just the wealthy; you need to be cautious about coveting money. You know who's playing the slots in Las Vegas? Poor people. They love money, too. But in the parallel account in Matthew 26:15, we give, we see even more cause to be concerned about his love for money. Judas asked the chief priest, point blank, he said, what are you willing to give me to deliver him up to you? What are you willing to give me?

They weighed out to him 30 pieces of silver. It's maybe four months worth of wages. So it wasn't, it's not an insignificant sum. It was the price of a slave according to Exodus 21:32. Man, that's really cheapens the relationship, doesn't it? As he thinks of Jesus, his master, his discipler, his Lord, his, his benefactor, the one who's been kind to him over three years, provided for everything, is he thinks of him as nothing more

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than cheap sum of the cheap prices of slave. Jesus did make him the slave of all, make himself the slave of all. So it's kind of ironic, isn't it?

But this sum, though not insignificant, four months wages maybe, it's nothing to retire on, nothing you could go start a business with, nothing you could start a new, buy a new life with. I don't believe Judas was primarily motivated by a love of money. I think he did like what money could buy him or get him, but I don't think that was his primary motivation.

In fact, I really think that he sought payment from the chief priest, not as a money making endeavor. He sought payment from the chief priest to keep these men honest after the deed is done, so they couldn't claim plausible deniability of his treachery, making him the scapegoat. Judas is smart. He's conniving, he's creating a transaction with the, the religious establishment of Jerusalem here. He's, he's getting them here to pony up, get some skin in the game, exact payment from them and have a transaction history, payment for services rendered.

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This payment is his evidence that they entered into the arrangement freely of their own volition, hired him for the job, provided him with a little insurance if things go South in the public view. So I think it's a security. Some who are in support of Judas motivated by greed, they point to him being called a thief in John chapter 12. In fact, if you go back to John, the Gospel of John and look at John 12, just briefly, consider the possible motivations for Judas betrayal.

I think it's significant that both Matthew and Mark actually, insert this John 12 account, and, and it's out of chronological order, but they show this account right before they show Judas collaborating with the chief priest to betray Jesus. So they take it out of its chronological order and insert it just before Judas goes to betray Jesus.

Here's the account John 12 verse 1, "Jesus, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. And so they made him a supper there, and Martha was serving, and Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with him." Very cool. He'd raised him from the dead,

brought him out of the tomb. Now he's having dinner. Mary then took a litra of perfume, a very costly pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

"But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (who was going to betray him), said, 'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor.'" A little footnote from John again. Now, "he said this not because he's concerned about the poor, but because he's a thief." And, and as he had the Money Box, he used to take from what was put into it.

Now the fact that Judas had control of the Money Box, that meant that he is the treasurer among the apostles, among the disciples. This is, this means that they trusted him. He's good with figures. He's known to be a careful, conservative, frugal man, would have made a good banker. He's watching all the money, exercising control over the finances, look at principal and interest statements, balance sheets, getting, getting requisitions. Yeah, he's a thief. He's dipping into the till, helping himself to communal funds. But we know, having tracked

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with these men for so long, the band of disciples who were travelling with Jesus, are not living large, they're not staying in fancy hotels. So was this about money? Perhaps. I don't think entirely, though.

In this John 12 account, we see maybe two more potential factors that motivate Judas to betray Jesus. And this is a second if you're writing these down, I think, je, Judas was, was corrupted and, and plagued by false expectations. He had some expectations about how this whole thing should go. This whole messianic program. We're going to storm into Jerusalem. We're going to kick out the Romans. We're going to take over as Jews. I'm going to be on a throne along with these other guys. I'll quickly rule over them. But I'm going to be here with Jesus, with the Messiah, and we're going to rule the world together.

And one way for a man like that to track what's important, we see this of those who track what's important for on an individual level, a family level, an organizational level. One way to track what's important to an individual, to a family, to, to an organization is to track the finances, is to see where the

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money goes, for where your treasure is and where the treasure goes, there your heart will be also. Right? Judas has put himself into the position to track the income and the expenses. This is giving him the insight into what this group of disciples' values what's important to Jesus and his men.

He had certain expectations about where this whole thing is headed and what it would take to make it happen. Three hundred denarii's worth of perfume poured down the drain to anoint someone's feet, well, that irritated, je, Judas and he ends up spreading his indignation about this to the other disciples as well. When we read Matthew and Mark their accounts, they tell us that Judas got all the other disciples, stirred up, discontent, complaining against this poor woman, against Mary, even scolding her until Jesus told him to stop it.

Jesus rebukes them, and I think this points to a third possible motivation for Judas's betrayal. He didn't like being confronted, exposed, and offended. The gist of the response is in John 12:7-8, that you can see there. It's just a boiled down version of it. But the fuller account is what I'll read to you

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now from Mark 14:6-9, as Jesus is hearing all of them scold this poor woman, Mary, who's anointed his feet with this costly perfume, filling the home with the fragrance, and they're rebuking her. What a waste of money. What have you done?

"Jesus said, 'let her alone; why do you bother her? She's done a good deed to Me, for the poor you always have with you. Whenever you wish you could do good,' and do good, 'to them; but you don't always have Me,' do you? 'She's done what she could; she's anointed my body beforehand for My burial. And truly I say to you, that wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, that also which this woman has done shall be spoken of in memory of her.'"

Why in memory of her? Is it because she's some great thing? No, it's because she's evidencing what a true worshipping heart looks like. Here's Jesus, and here is the corresponding appropriate response to Jesus. Spend money on him. Pour it down the drain for him. Give up my best, my greatest gifts to pour it on his feet, because I love him, because he's forgiven me of my sins, because he's my Savior, because he's my Lord. That's why

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wherever the Gospel is told, is really fitting, that this woman's worship is a counterpart. So we see what it looks like when the gospel gets a hold of somebody.

Soon, rebuking his disciples, Jesus calls attention to what makes a good deed truly good. It's not frugality that counts with the Lord, but loving devotion. That's something eleven of the Twelve, dis, apostles, they could understand that. Eleven out of the Twelve got this; Jesus' rebuke, hit home with them. It resonated in their regenerate hearts, made sense to their believing minds. It added up perfectly in their calculus of faith. Judas, though, he had no such heart, for the Lords, of this rebuke: Stung him, offended him.

He's the one who started this whole rebuke of the woman. And so tracing back, Jesus rebuke of the disciples goes right back to him. He's just taking a step down in the credibility, in the sight of his other apostles. In his unbelief, Judas did not, could not, would not see Jesus the way this woman saw Jesus as an object of her devotion, her affection, her love, her worship.

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The other disciples understood it immediately, and they were silenced and instructed. Their complaining, their sinful indignation, their harsh scolding, all of it soundly rebuked by Jesus and believing hearts were instructed, minds of faith were informed. Errant emotions were put in check as they repented, and they adjusted their minds, and adjusted their behavior.

Not so for Judas, he's soured. He became embittered in his soul. He began to soothe his troubled heart by making plans to get out of here to escape. He starts planning his exit, get away from this band of losers and start preparing for his future. After all, he's got a life to live.

The final nail had to have been driven home for Judas, when he heard Jesus predict once again his own demise, and this time in a, in a way that was inescapably clear right after the Olivet Discourse in Matthew. Matthew 24:25 is that whole section and right after teaching the Olivet Discourse and immediately before this account in Matthew 26:1, when Jesus had finished all these words of the Olivet Discourse, that we've just been through in

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Luke, he said something to his disciples that drove Judas right over the proverbial edge.

This is the last straw for Judas. Jesus said to his disciples, Matthew 26:1 and then verse 2, you know that after two days the Passover is coming and the Son of Man is to be delivered up for crucifixion. That did it: Crucifixion. Three years of my life I've given to this, these people, to this guy, followed him around and we're heading for crucifixion. No thanks.

That's the most explicit prediction Jesus had made about his death up to this point. Nobody's wondering about any metaphors here. He leaves no room for doubt. The group is headed for the cross, which is what he told his disciples from the very beginning. If anyone wanted to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, follow me. That's where I'm going. It's not like he's been unclear. It's just they didn't get it.

Their false expectations continue to blind them to what Jesus was actually teaching. They continue to interpret him through their own ignorance, through their own false expectations,

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through their own pride. This group is headed for the cross. They're headed for the official pronouncement of capital punishment from Rome.

They're headed for an execution that only the Roman government had authority to carry out. That's it. Judas is out. He's done. He is gone. All that's needed, is, now is for Satan to enter his heart, influence his mind, help him get connected to the right people, the chief priest, the scribes. For they, as Judas himself is, are also driven by a complex, inter, interwoven set of... Judas and the religious leaders find each other, they understand each other, they sympathize with each other, and they're able to now conspire together to lay a claim to what each of them are after.

We look again at Luke 22 and verse 5 and Luke tells us that they were glad and they agreed to give him money. In their minds, that is money well spent. That's an easy decision. Didn't even need a purchase order for this one. They can just pay the pittance out of petty cash. Send Judas on his way to do their bidding and says they were glad. That's kind of an

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understatement. The verb is *Chairo*, rejoicing. I mean, they're ecstatic over how things are turning out for them. It's Alford Plummer, who says that the offer of Judas to betray his master and at such a low price quote, "was wholly unexpected. And it's simplified matters enormously." Yeah, they're glad.

I've seen men trade their marriages and their families for the devil's pittance. I've seen, tragically, a young woman that Melinda and I know, and Melinda grew up with, trade the chance to know Jesus Christ as her savior. She traded that, to have traded having many sins forgiven, traded that for a young man that she wanted, who thought, she thought wanted her, who eventually they married. But he eventually cheated on her, left her. She received the devil's pittance.

I've seen pastors, preachers, trade their credibility for money, for some dalliance with some woman not their wife, to escape reality, go through the midlife crisis or whatever it is. It's the devil's pittance. I've watched people leave what's good, righteous, holy and wise in order to preserve their life, maintain the pride of spiritual superiority with religious

judgements and opinions against others. That's a devil's pittance.

All this, the devil's pittance, the ticket price to remain enslaved, as we really see from Judas in Luke 22:6, he consented, he agreed, he bargained, he began seeking an opportunity to betray him, to see, to them apart from the multitude. So tragic. Judas makes the bargain. He enters into the agreement, he takes the money, completes a transaction, and now you know what? He will never go free. Never.

The conspirators' dilemma, that's answered by the betrayers' solution, only results in making Judas their slave. They're looking for an opportunity to kill Jesus and now Judas is the one looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus to them to death, trying to hide, avoiding the people, they need to keep themselves hidden in the background, behind the curtain, in the darkness. But now Judas is the one out there slinking around, doing their bidding, losing his freedom, forfeiting his soul.

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Truer and sadder word could not have been spoken about Judas Iscariot than this one by our Lord. Later in Luke 22, Luke (20) 22, verse 22, Jesus says, "for indeed the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed." Perhaps that verse will prompt you to think about something, maybe, that came up in your mind ever since verse 3, which reminds us Judas belonged to the number of the Twelve. And we have to back up and say, wait a minute, didn't Jesus make that call? He did indeed.

In fact, Jesus chose Judas Iscariot to be numbered among the Twelve way back in Luke chapter 6. He'd spent an entire night in prayer to God over this matter, in Luke 6:12. Jesus is going to say, in prayer, not long from this moment, and he's going to say speak in prayer, confessing in his high priestly prayer, recorded in John 17, he's going to say, "I guarded all those whom you gave me, Father, I guarded them. Not one of them has perished, except the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled."

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Listen, it's not the conspiracies of men that matter, nor is it the work of Satan himself that ultimately matters. It's not elections, politics, even militaries and warfare that ultimately matter. It's not all of this combined together that seals Christ's fate and ensures his crucifixion. We need to realize at the end of the day that men and angels are just creatures. They're mere tools in the omnipotent hands of God to carry out his will.

Jewish leaders, Judas himself, Satan, they're just proximate causes of Jesus death; they're not the ultimate cause. It's God who is the ultimate cause of all things that come to pass, including this thing as we read earlier in Isaiah 53, "he was pleased to crush him." Peter confessed this along with the church. And I just want to draw your attention to this as we close, leave you with a bit of theology to reflect upon about all this, so we can start to understand, kind of, this issue of causation and how God in, in using human causation is played out because it's going to play out all through the narrative ahead. And I want you to understand this.

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Turn, just, just very quickly, very brief, just got a couple, couple, things to say, turn to Acts 4:24. Acts 4:24. After Peter and John are released by the Sanhedrin, who commanded them to stop preaching, but they failed to stop them from preaching. Peter and John are praising and thanking God along with the church. And I want you to listen to their, as them, as they lift their voices to God over the one accord with the church.

And they say this in Acts 4:24 middle of the verse, "O Master," sovereign Lord is another way to translate that, "it is you who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them, who by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of our Father David your servant said," this is Psalm 2, "Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples devise vain things. The kings of the earth took their stand. The rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ. Oh, for truly in this city they were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel." And then this, "to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur."

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In the crucifixion of Christ and the Passion narrative, we're going to see in narrative form some of the most profound of all mysteries. These things have been cited as paradox. They've been used by the enemies of the Bible to scoff as evidence of contradiction. But upon closer inspection, all these things are answered by good sound theology of the Bible. We see an interplay, here in this text, between divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

We see human causation, but at work behind the scenes is divine causation, doing whatever your hand and your purpose predestined. And yet it was by the hand of Herod and Pontius Pilate and the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel and the rulers of Israel and Judas Iscariot and Satan himself, all of them were involved, and yet they did whatever God's hand and purpose predestined to occur. We see an interplay between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, both true.

We see an interplay of divine causation working through human causation. That's what Peter said when he was preaching; if you back up just a couple of chapters in Acts 2 and verse 23, this

is what he preached to his fellow Jews at Pentecost. He said, "Jesus was delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, and yet you nailed him to a cross by the hands of lawless men and put him to death." Peter cites God, doesn't he, as the ultimate cause of the crucifixion.

God takes ownership in Isaiah 53. He accepts personal responsibility as an outworking of his free, uncoerced choice, predetermined plan, the foreknowledge of God. But the efficient cause of Jesus crucifixion? Like who actually literally hammered the nails into his hands and feet is the efficient cause of Jesus crucifixion; Peter sites the hands of lawless men. What's he talking about? The Roman soldiers who literally nailed Jesus hands and feet to the crossbeams?

Were the soldiers guilty for this act? Were they culpable for the crucifixion? Well, for each individual soldier, God knows the answer to that, depends on what each of them knew about Jesus and what they, I mean, they crucified people all the time. They were the executioners, for the state, in Romans 13, guarantees and defends their right to bear the sword. They don't

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bear the sword in vain, there were true insurrectionists that were crucified by these soldiers. Was this Jesus of Nazareth, was he one of them? They don't know. They're just doing their job. Perhaps God knows he's going to bring all in the heart to account at the bar of divine justice in the end.

But notice where Peter lays the human blame and the moral culpability for crucifying Jesus on the cross. He cites the proximate causes, those who were informed, those who knew what they were doing, the people who said, "his blood be on us and our children forever." The people who said don't give us this Jesus, give us Barabbas, a murderer, instead. In dramatic fashion, Peter indicts his fellow Jews as if they themselves and not the Roman soldiers, but as if they themselves were hammering the nails. He says, "you nailed him to a cross." You use the hands of lawless men to do it, but you were swinging their arms. You put him to death.

Folks, God chose to crucify his Son as the Lamb of God, slain from before the foundation of the world. Romans 13:8 or Revelation 13:8, "God's caused the iniquity of all his people to

fall on Christ." Isaiah 53:6. According to Isaiah 53:10, "He was pleased to crush him as an atoning, perfect sacrifice." So though God was the ultimate cause of the crucifixion, we understand he bears no guilt for the sins committed in crucifying the innocent Son of God. Why? Because God's intent from start to finish has always been good, and wise, and righteous, and perfect, to give a redeemed people to his son as a gift, that they may honor the Son and honor the Father, that He might be glorified.

Every intention of God's is good. Not so the sinners. Not so the proximate and even the efficient causes. Moral culpability is with them. It was always God's sovereign plan, before time began, to slay his one and only Son, so the sinners could be reconciled to him. And the writer to the Hebrews puts it this way, "So take care brethren. Take care lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart in falling away from the living God." I don't want any of you in the sound of my voice to commit alike apostasy to Judas Iscariot.

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You've heard, now, even in this hour or a little more. You've heard in this hour the pages of Scripture, God's eternal word that calls your heart to account. Don't despise it, don't turn away from such a great salvation. If you are not reconciled and have your sins forgiven and know God is your savior because of Christ, today, let it be the day of your salvation. If you're a believer in Christ and this salvation is your salvation, but you haven't been living as if it matters to you; you too repent. But all those who belong to Christ and with a good heart, Christian, take heart. We're going to see in this narrative in Luke 22, 23, 24, we're going to see what transpired to secure your salvation. I'm telling you, there's so much to see, so much to rejoice in, so much to give glory and praise to God in, and I want to do that now as we close in prayer.

Our Father, it's just a, introductory message into this great section of Scripture, this climactic culminating point of the Synoptic Gospels. We are so grateful for the salvation that we have been granted by you and by your grace. We pray that none of us would take it lightly. None of us would despise your grace. None of us would be unbelieving, hard hearted. None of us would turn away and apostatize and defect like Judas. You chose him to

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be part of that inner circle, those Twelve for a reason, so that we would take note, that there can be people who are attached to Christ, who proclaim his name, who are with him years and still walk away.

Oh Father, I pray that that would not happen here, even though it happens all the time. I just pray that you would protect us, protect these, these, dear ones here and help us all to, of one, with one accord, pray the prayers of Peter and John in that early church, who gave praise to you, the sovereign God, for your good plan of redemption. It's in Jesus' name we pray, Amen.