

Judas and Us

Luke 22:1-6

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Benedict Arnold and Judas Iscariot. These two names have become synonymous with betrayal. They are two of the most famous traitors in human history. As Stephen Davey continues our study through Luke, the attention now turns to Judas, the man who sold out the Messiah for 30 pieces of silver. But before we point fingers at Judas, we need to consider the numerous ways we can—and often do—betray Jesus as well. And let us rejoice at God’s grace, the same grace that Jesus offered Judas on many occasions.

With the help of thick fog hanging over the waters of the Hudson Bay, a British warship, named the Vulture, glided quietly and unnoticed and anchored just off American shores.

A conspiracy that was certain to succeed was underway.

The mastermind was a middle-aged, successful businessman who had volunteered for military service under General George Washington. He soon showed military genius by participating in several key battles. He was even wounded in one of his legs.

In February 1777, Congress created five new major general positions, and everyone knew that this successful military genius deserved to be promoted. But George Washington passed over this older man, by the name of Benedict Arnold, and chose younger generals instead.

Benedict became embittered and tried to resign, but George Washington personally pleaded with him to stay on. He agreed and was sent to New York where he successfully commanded troops in the Battle of Saratoga. That victory turned the tide of the American revolution.

But in that battle, Benedict Arnold was wounded again, this time leaving him crippled for life to some extent.

His bitterness hardened into resentment and, ultimately, disdain for the American cause.

Benedict Arnold made plans with the British, promising to betray West Point and New York; he gave carefully designed plans to a British officer and spy named John Andres.

As Major John Andres carried those plans to the Hudson River, to rendezvous with the Vulture, the fog was beginning to lift, and the battleship was at risk of being seen.

Andres was nearly there when he was stopped at a checkpoint by soldiers. As he was being questioned, the soldiers noticed something John had overlooked. Under his American military uniform, he was still wearing his British boots. They searched him and found the plans drawn up by Benedict Arnold.

Benedict learned that he had been discovered, and quickly boarded the Vulture with his family and sailed to England where he would live out the rest of his life.

To this day, his betrayal of America has not been forgotten. I have yet to meet anyone who's named their son Benedict. Even though at times they might be tempted!

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language defines betrayal: "to give aid or information to an enemy; to violate allegiance; to be false or disloyal."

I found it interesting that this dictionary chose as its primary illustration of betrayal not Benedict Arnold, but Judas Iscariot.

[The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language](#), Fourth Edition (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000)

It's one thing to betray your country; it's another thing to betray your Creator. I have certainly never met anyone named Judas.

The name Judas seems to hiss with deception and the conspiracies of a serpent named Satan.

As we dive back into our study, the crucifixion is now a matter of hours away, the conflict of the ages is now reaching a crescendo here in Luke's Gospel account.

We arrive today at Luke chapter 22. It's a long chapter with 71 verses and several scenes that we will explore together.

And this first scene, ***Luke records for us***, sets the stage for everything that follows; it is the conspiracy of Judas to betray Jesus.

Now verse 1 gives us another time stamp that is critical to notice, he writes:

Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover.

Luke 22:1

Every Jewish male 12 years and older longed to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem along with their families to celebrate their freedom from slavery in Egypt centuries earlier.

Following their Passover meal of a lamb they had either purchased in the temple or brought with them from home, they would celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

This feast recalled the Israelite's joy as they scrambled to pack and leave Egypt as fast as they could before Pharaoh could change his mind again. Their bread didn't have time to rise, so they would eat it on the road, so to speak, unleavened.

Centuries later, all of these memories and commemorations were bundled underneath the title "Passover."

It was not a coincidence that Jesus planned for this to be the time of His death. He was to be sacrificed for the sins of the world. He was the final Passover Lamb.

And anyone who by faith applies His shed blood to the doorway of their hearts, so to speak, will be saved from the judgment of God.

Now we know that the Jewish leaders wanted to catch Jesus and kill Him after Passover—after all these tens-of-thousands of Jewish travelers left Jerusalem and returned home.

Luke writes here in verse 2:

*And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death,
for they feared the people.*

Luke 22:2

They're not deciding *if* they will kill Him, they're trying to figure out *how* to kill Him without causing a riot.

But listen: Jesus already knew the details of when and how.

- He knew that His hands and feet would be pierced (***Psalm 22:16***).
- He knew that His death was in our place, for our sin (***Isaiah 53:12***).
- Jesus even knew the detail that He would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (***Zechariah 11:12***).

So, at the outset, beloved, understand that we are about to watch a series of events. As one author put it, not a series of "accidents, but a series of appointments."

The first appointment Luke records, in rather blunt fashion, is between Satan and Judas.

Luke writes here in verse 3:

Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve.

Luke 22:3

Now I don't believe that when Judas was chosen that he had any intention of betraying the Lord, although the Lord knew that he would.

Judas never came around to believing the gospel, he was a consummate actor. He was a professor of Christ, but not a possessor of Christ.

John's Gospel gives us more details of the slow decline in Judas' life over these brief years.

But as early as chapter 6, John had written:

(Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.)

John 6:64

Which is another way of saying that Jesus wasn't just a man; He was the omniscient God-man. He knew the heart of everyone; He knew their past and their future just like He knows yours and mine.

Although **Luke** doesn't give us the details in his account, **when he records here in verse 3**—"Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot"—John's Gospel tells us that this moment was when the disciples were eating the Passover meal with the Lord in the upper room.

It's at this last supper when **Jesus announces** that one of them will betray Him.

None of them looked over at Judas and said, "I knew it! I knew he couldn't be trusted!"

Part of the problem in reviewing the biography of this betrayer is that we picture Judas Iscariot as this little beady-eyed man who was always slinking around in the shadows, isolated, alone, never smiling.

A second grade Sunday school teacher was teaching this account, and she asked her class who betrayed Jesus. A little boy raised his hand and said, "Judas the scariest!"

That's how we view him. But not these disciples.

Matthew's Gospel records Jesus saying in that upper room:

“Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.”

Matthew 26:21

Now I personally believe this was an invitation for Judas to come clean. Satan has yet to personally possess him, which means to dominate his mind and emotions and heart.

And Satan will only do that because Judas is going to open the door through his unbelief and defiance.

But now Judas hears Jesus announce that He knows who the betrayer is!

Matthew writes in verse 22:

And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, “Is it I, Lord?”

Matthew 26:22

Nobody’s pointing at Judas. They are all immediately evaluating their own hearts.

But I wonder what Judas’ pulse rate was, his pounding heart, his guilty conscience.

But he plays along; he says to Jesus in Matthew’s account:

“Is it I, Rabbi?”

Matthew 26:25

He’s imitating the surprise of the true disciples, and according to **Mark 14**, Judas has already had at least one meeting with the religious leaders to plan this betrayal.

With that, the Lord hands Judas a morsel of bread, an act of honor by the host of the meal. I believe it’s another invitation for Judas to repent. Jesus is essentially telling Judas that he doesn’t have to board the Vulture; there’s still time.

But Judas takes the morsel and then leaves the room.

And **Luke simply says here** in his account that “*then,*” *at that moment*, Judas’ unbelieving, defiant heart is now an open door for the devil to do his worst.

The other disciples evidently thought Judas had been sent on some errand related to the Passover celebration.

Let me tell you, had they known what Judas was up to, had they known that Judas was the betrayer, I don’t think he would have gotten out of that upper room alive.

And from what we see Peter try to do with his sword later on in the Garden of Gethsemane, it's obvious that Peter needed some practice.

When you consider the biography of this betrayer, it's clear that Judas had opportunity after opportunity to believe.

Yet over time, his heart, like Pharaoh before him, grew hardened in unbelief.

But just like Benedict Arnold, there are some background clues to his defection and betrayal of the King of Heaven.

First of all:

Judas had an unrestrained attraction to money.

In **John chapter 12**, Mary comes and anoints the feet of Jesus with a costly perfume and the house was filled with the fragrance.

John records here in 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?"

John 12:4-5

How do you argue against that? "Think of all the poor people out there!"

But Jesus certainly caught the implication. Judas was rebuking *Him*; Judas was implying that *Jesus* was being selfish to accept this gift, which Jesus explained was a symbolic preparation for His burial.

But this is pretty bold of Judas. It reveals that his bitterness and resentment with Jesus is reaching a boiling point. He's openly rebuking the Lord.

But he made it sound so spiritual, didn't he? "Think of the poor people," and the other disciples are probably standing there thinking, "Yeah, that's a pretty good point!"

But John's gospel adds this commentary in the **next verse**:

[Judas] 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.

John 12:6

Don't miss this: at the end of three years of ministry training, Judas was more dishonest than ever. He was more calloused than ever.

John writes, "**he was a thief.**" The Greek word is *kleptes* which gives us our word "kleptomaniac." Judas was constantly stealing.

On the outside, Judas was considered trustworthy, reliable, and careful. The disciples had very little money and as they received donations along their journey, who better, they thought, than Judas to administrate their money?

Little did they know they were only watering the seeds of covetousness and greed in Judas' heart.

But let me tell you, just as it's hard to imagine Benedict Arnold betraying his country, it's still hard to imagine one of the twelve betraying the Lord.

Someone who had watched Jesus perform miracle after miracle: walking on water, healing the terminally ill, commanding the wind and sea, giving sight to the blind and raising the dead.

How can you *not* believe in Him?

But Judas had a secret life. Silver blinded his perception.

You can take two quarters and hold them up to your eyes and you can't see, and it only took 50 cents.

Luke writes here in chapter 22 and verse 4 that:

He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. And they were glad, and agreed to give him money.

Luke 22:4-5

That's what Judas wanted. He's at least going to get 30 pieces of silver for wasting the last three years of his life following a failed Messiah!

In today's economy, this would be worth around \$10,000. Benedict Arnold had wanted \$2 million to betray his country, but for Judas, \$10,000 was enough to betray the Lord.

We're told here by Luke that the Jewish leaders are **glad—they're rejoicing**. And that's because this was almost too good to be true for them. This is going to change their entire timeline now. They're going to move everything forward now.

And that's because they've got somebody on the inside, somebody who knows where Jesus is staying, somebody who is willing to betray Him.

So, they strike a deal with Judas. The verb translated here in Luke's account: **"they agreed,"** means that the silver was paid then and there.

R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel (Augsburg Publishing House, 1946), p. 1035

They gave him his cash because they probably wanted to make sure Judas wouldn't change his mind.

Now the average Sunday school lesson assumes that this betrayal meant that Judas was going to identify Jesus with a kiss and that was it.

But that was the easiest part of the deal. The Sanhedrin already knew who Jesus was and they knew what He looked like.

Perhaps for the benefit of the soldiers, at night, Judas will identify Jesus; but Judas was agreeing to fulfill a point of Roman law, a point of law necessary for the Supreme Court of Israel to carry out the murder of Jesus.

According to Roman law, a person could not be brought to trial until an indictment had been officially lodged against him, charging him with a crime. Today in our country, we put it this way: "somebody has to file charges."

And according to Roman law, the person filing charges has to appear in court to give testimony against the accused for the prosecution.

So, Judas is agreeing here to become a witness in court against Christ. This shows you now the determination of Judas, the depth of his resentment and disappointment with Jesus.

J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ (Zondervan, 1981), p. 415

Now that leads me to the next biographical clue. Not only did Judas have an unrestrained attraction to money, secondly:

Judas had a nationalistic obsession for Israel.

Just like the thousands of Jewish people, living in and around Jerusalem, who were thrilled to hear Jesus talk about the coming kingdom, Judas assumed Jesus was going to overthrow Rome and return Israel to power and glory.

Judas loved his country and his people and there's nothing wrong with that.

He was fiercely dedicated to his nation, his kinsmen, and his synagogue.

He wasn't the kind of person who would slip into church and sit on the back row.

But over time, Judas became disillusioned. Jesus kept talking about dying, about the temple being destroyed. What kind of Messiah was that?

And disillusionment turned into bitterness and into resentment and into hatred and eventually into betrayal.

There's one more clue from the biography of Judas, third:

Judas had a burning hatred for Rome.

He is identified by the Gospel writers as ***Judas Iscariot***.

Iscariot can be related to Kerioth, perhaps his homeplace; but it also relates to Latin term *sicarius*, which was the designation of a radical Jewish group during the time of Christ.

They were called the sicarii, in honor of the sica, a dagger that they concealed in their robes and used to take the lives of Romans and disloyal Jews alike.

In **Acts 21:38**, a revolt had recently occurred—one thousand men were a part of it, these men were called *sikarios*, translated “assassins.”

Josephus, the first century Jewish historian, wrote, “The Sicarii hated Rome and any Jew suspected of leaning toward Rome.”

It made sense for Judas to put away his dagger now and follow the One who will bring Rome to her knees and return the glory to Israel. He had found someone to fulfill his own vision.

Listen, I've met a lot of people over the years who would be offended if I compared them to Judas, but they happen to be following Jesus only because:

- It looks like He will be good for their business.
- He will make them feel better about themselves.
- He will give them that promotion.
- He will enhance their self-esteem.
- He will provide that wonderful life they believe they deserve.
- Jesus just might give them what they always dreamed of having.

“I'll follow Jesus as long as He fits my agenda.”

Is that you today? Is it your agenda or His?

Well, the answer is finally clear to Judas here. He knows that the end of Christ's life is on the horizon and there isn't a promotion for Judas, there isn't a throne in Jerusalem for Judas after all.

So, with that, Judas wants nothing to do with this "failed Messiah." He's wasted his time and money. It's time to get out while he can; he'll take his \$10,000 and leave Jesus and the other disciples for good.

The Bible informs us that Judas is later filled with regret, and he returns the money and admits **"I have betrayed an innocent man."**

But don't misunderstand, regret isn't repentance. And he never betrayed an innocent *man*; he betrayed the *Messiah*.

Now it's one thing to talk about Judas and leave here saying, "What a terrible man. How could he do something like that?"

Well, let me hold up the mirror of the Word and let's see our reflection in the biography of Judas.

It's possible to appear to walk with Christ and yet conceal secret sin without any desire for repentance.

On the outside, everything appears right, but you and God alone know that on the inside, everything is wrong.

You haven't betrayed Him, but you've started stealing from the money bag. Just a few little sins at first, and nobody noticed.

- You stole from the government last month on your taxes, but nobody will notice.
- You will not include him in your dating relationship which is immoral.
- You won't allow Him access to your financial records which are dishonest.
- You won't give him control of your computer because it's pornographic.
- You won't ask Him for career advice; you never tell anyone at work that you belong to Him anyway.

These are all betrayals of Jesus.

The problem isn't just Judas. The problem is Judas and us.

Here's something else to consider:

It's possible to associate with Christians without ever accepting Christ.

It's as if when Luke writes here, "**he was one of the twelve,**" he writes with a pen dipped in sadness and sorrow, as if to say, "Can you believe it? Judas was one of the twelve."

Another principle to consider is this:

It's possible to withdraw from fellowship with God because of what God is withholding from you.

Maybe God is not paying off. And we can look around at other Christians who seem to be getting their way and wonder, why not us?

- We know God can restore.
- We know He can rescue.
- We know He can bring about conception.
- We know He can open that career door.
- We know He can protect our children.
- We know He can heal our diseases.

He can do all of that with one flick of His divine finger. So why is He's sitting on His divine hands?

At that point we have two options. **One: to follow Judas** as he gets on board the Vulture and sails away in resentment and bitterness and despair as he follows through with his plans for betrayal.

Remember, the definition of betrayal isn't just for unbelievers—it isn't just for Judas—betrayal is defined:

"To give aid or information to an enemy; to violate allegiance; to be false or disloyal."

American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language

Every time we sin, we are guilty of aiding the enemy of our soul, and of being disloyal to Christ.

The problem isn't just Judas. The problem is us!

The second option is to trust the Lord's promise to never leave you or forsake you, to work everything out so that it fits within His good purposes for your life even though, at the moment, you can't read the fine print.

The truth is, we are all battling the biography of Judas; we can fail Him and betray Him and deny Him, but we can admit our sin and run to Him for forgiveness, as Martin Luther, the Reformer wrote 500 years ago, “We can make repentance a daily companion in life.”

It’ll keep you from getting on board that ship that leads to nowhere good.

Benedict Arnold would live with bitterness and regret for the rest of his life. He would be unloved by both countries because of his betrayal.

That British spy who was captured was hung just a few days later. But his biography had a different ending.

Major John Andres had been raised in England in a home with a godly mother. She prayed for him for many years. All those years he rejected the gospel, lived an immoral life, and essentially ran from God.

She kept praying.

Now captured, condemned to die, alone in his cell, the truth of all those messages his mother had given him—the gospel that Jesus would forgive him and accept him if he repented and trusted Christ—all flooded back into his mind and heart during those final hours.

There in his cell, he knelt down and wept tears of repentance and trust in Christ as his Savior.

We’re not told who it was—maybe a pastor or a friend—but someone gave him a copy of a poem entitled Hiding Place. It had been written four years earlier by Jehoida Brewer.

John Andres had memorized this poem and began quoting it as he mounted the steps of the gallows.

I couldn’t help but think of Judas, who committed a great crime, but never repented and turned to God.

And I think of John Andres, who committed a great crime, but trusted in the grace of God. Some of the lyrics go like this – and with this I close:

*“Hail, sovereign love, which first began
The scheme to rescue fallen man!
Hail, matchless, free, eternal grace,
That gave my soul a Hiding Place!*

*Against the God who built the sky
I fought with hands uplifted high,*

*Despised the mention of His grace,
Too proud to seek a Hiding Place.*

*On Christ almighty vengeance fell,
Which must have sunk a world to hell,
He bore it for a sinful race,
And thus became a Hiding Place.*

*A few more setting suns at most,
Shall land me on fair Heaven's coast,
Where I shall sing the song of grace,
And see my glorious Hiding Place."*

Adapted from <https://themajestysmen.com/gospelpost/major-john-andres-hiding-place>

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Study Guide

Sermon Summary

The essence of betrayal involves aiding an enemy and violating allegiance. This definition not only applies to historical or biblical figures but resonates deeply with each of us. Every sin we commit can be seen as a form of betrayal against Christ, aiding the enemy of our souls.

The narrative of Judas Iscariot, who conspired to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, serves as a stark reminder of the perils of unchecked desires—whether for money, power, or recognition. Judas walked closely with Jesus, witnessed miracles, and had every reason to believe and remain faithful. Yet, his heart grew distant, hardened by greed and disillusionment with Christ's mission, which did not align with his worldly aspirations.

Are we like Judas, following Christ superficially, driven by what we can gain materially or socially? Or are we genuine in our faith, seeking to align our desires with God's will, even when His plans do not conform to our expectations?

From these reflections, we are reminded of the power of repentance and the boundless grace of God. Martin Luther famously noted that we should make repentance a daily companion. This practice is not about dwelling on our failures but about continually realigning our hearts with God's will, embracing His forgiveness, and walking in the freedom He offers.

Key Takeaways:

1. The daily practice of repentance, as advocated by Martin Luther, is essential for spiritual growth and freedom. It involves acknowledging our shortcomings and realigning ourselves with God's purposes, thus preventing the gradual hardening of our hearts as seen in Judas's life.
2. Betrayal, as defined, involves more than just grand acts of treason; it encompasses every sin that aligns us against God. This perspective should not lead us to despair but to a vigilant examination of our daily actions and thoughts, ensuring they align with God's will.

Discussion Guide

Bible Reading: Luke 22:1-6 | Matthew 26:21-25

Observation Questions:

1. What events and emotions surround the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover as described in Luke 22:1-6?
2. How do the disciples react when Jesus announces that one of them will betray him according to Matthew 26:21-25?

Interpretation Questions:

1. Why do you think the chief priests and scribes were seeking to put Jesus to death during such a significant Jewish festival?
2. What might be the significance of Judas speaking directly to Jesus after He announces the betrayal? How does this interaction between Judas and Jesus in Matthew 26:25 deepen the understanding of betrayal?

Application Questions:

1. Reflect on a time when you felt betrayed by someone close to you. How did you handle the situation, and what could you have done differently based on the principles of forgiveness and repentance shown in the Bible?
2. Considering Judas's actions, what are practical steps you can take to ensure that your daily decisions align with God's will rather than personal gain or comfort?
3. Identify a recent situation where you might have compromised your values for personal benefit. What is one concrete action you can take to rectify this and realign with your spiritual commitments?
4. Think about a conversation you might have this week where you could be tempted to hide your faith or compromise your beliefs. How can you prepare now to stay true to your convictions during that interaction?
5. Is there a specific area in your life where you feel you are 'selling out' on your values or faith for material or social gain, much like Judas? What is one step you can take this week to begin correcting this course?