

“What If Judas Had Lived?”

“24 Hours That Changed the World” part 7

Matthew 26:14-30, 26:45-50, 27:1-10, Psalm 51:1-4

Have you ever messed up? Have you ever been really sorry about something? Have you ever looked back at a decision you made and wished you could take it back?

If you have, then maybe you know a little bit what it was like to be Judas. You see, this evening, I want to focus specifically on one of the disciples who was there with Jesus the whole time. He walked with him, ate with him, saw the miracles, and yet in the end, he betrayed Jesus.

We often blame Judas for being cold hearted. We use his name in a derogatory fashion, like “Benedict Arnold”, as an accusation of someone who is a traitor. But I believe we all have moments when we betray Christ. We all submit to temptation at some point. We all have put our own selfishness first at least once in our lives, if we are honest.

What makes the story of Judas even more intriguing, is that Jesus knew Judas would betray him. The Gospel of John tells us that Jesus even pointed out Judas as the betrayer during the Last Supper. Listen to this passage in John 13:26-30.

Jesus said, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

“What you are about to do, do quickly,” Jesus told him, but no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. Since Judas was in charge of the

money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the Feast, or to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night. (John 13:26-30, NIV)

The story of Judas is tragic. It is bitter. But there is something important I have to point out. Jesus washed Judas' feet at the Last Supper. It's right there in the Bible. On Holy Thursday, we usually point to the act of foot washing as the symbolic, commanding act that Jesus did for his disciples, and then we say, "Go and do likewise." That's why we offered people a chance to pay for someone's load at the laundromat today. We were following Jesus' example to serve others.

But Jesus didn't just wash the feet of the disciples who were "nice" to him. He washed Judas' feet as well. And Jesus knew that Judas would betray him. That takes guts. That takes humility, to serve the one who wants to kill you.

I don't know what Judas' motivation was. Maybe he was impatient, disappointed, frustrated that Jesus would not reveal himself publicly as the Messiah and save Israel. Maybe he was trying to force Jesus to be someone other than who he was. But the fact is, Judas gave up on Jesus, handed him over for thirty pieces of silver, and then, after betraying him with a kiss in the Garden of Gethsemane, Judas was filled with regret, filled with remorse. He ran back to the Jewish authorities and confessed he had betrayed an innocent man. But it was too late. The chief priests took the money back, but they went ahead and had Jesus killed anyway. Judas, stricken by what he had done, unable to go to Jesus himself to beg for forgiveness, went and hung himself.

In my opinion, it is the saddest story in the entire New Testament, possibly in the whole Bible. But, can we engage our imaginations for a moment. What if....what if Judas had lived? What if he had waited until Sunday, instead of killing

himself? With that question in mind, I want us to watch this four-minute video of Adam Hamilton as he reflects on that very question.

(VIDEO)

Of course Jesus loved Judas. Of course Jesus forgave Judas. And the important thing to know tonight is that Jesus forgives you too. You and me. That is why we will receive the sacrament of Holy Communion tonight. This meal is a physical reminder of the forgiveness that Jesus offers to us, who were once his enemies, every bit as lost and guilty as Judas himself.

Forgiveness starts with the words, "I'm sorry." The only way to deal with our pride and our sin is to confess them. So let us begin this holy meal by joining together in a prayer of confession.

Most merciful God,

we your Church confess

that often our spirit has not been that of Christ.

Where we have failed to love one another as he loves us,

where we have pledged loyalty to him with our lips

and then betrayed, deserted, or denied him,

forgive us, we pray;

and by your Spirit make us faithful in every time of trial;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Who is in a position to condemn? Only Christ.

But Christ suffered and died for us,

was raised from the dead and ascended on high for us,

and continues to intercede for us.

Believe the good news: In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven! Glory to God. Amen.

Let us offer one another signs of reconciliation and love.

THE PEACE

As forgiven and reconciled people, let us offer ourselves and our gifts to God. Tonight's offering will support our summer camp scholarship fund.

OFFERING

The pastor stands behind the Lord's table.

Please join me in the Great Thanksgiving. The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts. *The pastor may lift hands and keep them raised.*

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing,

always and everywhere to give thanks to you,

Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

From the earth you bring forth bread and create the fruit of the vine.

You formed us in your image, delivered us from captivity,

and made covenant to be our sovereign God.

You fed us manna in the wilderness,

and gave us grapes as evidence of the promised land.

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven

we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

The pastor may lower hands.

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

The pastor may raise hands.

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ.

When we turned aside from your way and abused your gifts,
you gave us in him your crowning gift.

Emptying himself that our joy might be full,

he fed the hungry, healed the sick,

ate with scorned and forgotten, washed his disciples' feet,

and gave a holy meal as a pledge of his abiding presence.

By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection

you gave birth to your Church,

delivered us from slavery to sin and death,

and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

The pastor may hold hands, palms down, over the bread, or touch the bread, or lift the bread.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread,

gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said:

"Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me."

The pastor may hold hands, palms down, over the cup, or touch the cup, or lift the cup.

When the supper was over he took the cup,

gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:

"Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant,

poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The pastor may raise hands.

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,

we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving

as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us,
as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

The pastor may hold hands, palms down, over the bread and cup.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here,
and on these gifts of bread and wine.

Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ,
that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

The pastor may raise hands.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ,
one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world,
until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet.
Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church,
all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and for ever.

Amen.

And now, with the confidence of children of God, let us pray:

THE LORDS PRAYER

BREAKING OF THE BREAD, LIFTING OF THE CUP

GIVING OF THE BREAD AND CUP

“The body of Christ, given for you.”

“The blood of Christ, given for you.”