

Sleepy Judas

The Cross (Part 3)

Mark 14:10-16 (Mt.26:14-19, Lk.22:3-13) 3/12/2021

Why did Judas sell out the man he had left everything to follow? Surely it must have been more than just the money, right? Jesus has been preparing us for the answer to that question throughout the whole book of Mark.

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Mark 14:10 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. 11 They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

12 On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?" 13 So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. 14 Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' 15 He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." 16 The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

17 When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. 18 While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me-- one who is eating with me." 19 They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely not I?" 20 "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. 21 The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

Introduction: Divine Providence vs. Human Evil

Imagine you have a 12-year-old son who loves to ride his bike. He's on it every spare minute, it's his constant companion, he loves it. But one day while he's at school you notice there's a crack in the frame—the whole thing could break in half at any time. So you go and buy him a really nice, high-end bike to replace it, and you're going to give it to tomorrow on his birthday. So you bring the bike home, hide it, and you want to make sure he doesn't injure himself today after school, so you set his old bike out with the trash. The garbage man doesn't come in time, and just as your son arrives home from school, he's coming down the street just in time to see some other kid stealing that old bike. The thief doesn't even know it's trash—he just thinks he's stealing a bike that got left out. And now your son is heartbroken because he just lost his bike.

Here's my question: Who's responsible for him losing his bike? If you say the thief, you wouldn't be wrong. But mainly, it was you. The thief played a role, but you were really the mastermind behind it. You and the thief did the same thing—you both took his bike away—but you meant it for good and the thief meant it for evil. Two actors doing the same action but with opposite purposes.

And if you're already thinking Genesis 50:20 then you're way ahead of me. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. They're like the thief, doing evil. But God masterminded that in order to get Joseph down there in Egypt where years later he could end up saving his family's lives.

Genesis 50:19 But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. ... 20 You meant it for evil but God meant it for good."

Right off the bat, in the first book of the Bible, God wants us to have a really clear understanding of this concept that in the very same action, two different parties can be at work. Human beings doing something evil while God is doing something wonderful. God wanted to make that clear, and yet so often it's not clear to people. Christians go around and around arguing about the sovereignty of God vs. the free will of man. One side says, "Man has free will! God doesn't decide what happens, he just responds to what man decides." And the other side says, "No! God has free will. He controls everything."

"No, it's man."

No! it's God."

And on and on it goes. And God is saying, "Would you go back and read the first book of the Bible again?"

Now, why do you think it was so important to God to teach us this concept right away in the first book of the Bible? Why is it so important for me to grasp this concept of there being a human side and a divine side to all the things people do? Here's why: because sometimes it's important for me to look at certain events mainly from the human side. You don't want a judge sentencing a murderer saying, "Oh well, God foreordained what you did from the foundation of the world, so don't sweat it." No. In that moment, God wants us to focus on the human responsibility side.

Other times, God wants us to focus mainly on the divine side—like Joseph did. Like when we're tempted to worry or fret about what people are doing or might do. That's when you need to look from the divine side.

How do we know which kinds of situations call for one and which call for more of the other? We take our cues from God's Word.

But there is one incident that took place in history that God really, really wants us to look at from both perspectives. Both are highlighted in Scripture because both are crucially important. It's the most important event in all of history, and to understand it, we have to have a good grasp of both the human side and the divine side.

The event that I'm talking about is the cross—the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mark 14 begins what is known as the passion narrative, which is the account of the suffering of Christ (“passion” means suffering). God wants to make sure we have a clear grasp of both the human side and the divine side of what was going on with Jesus' suffering.

And the reason I gave that long introduction is because this passage we're studying today in Mark 14 is designed to show us both sides. We get the human angle in vv.10-11, and then the divine angle in vv.12-16. And then there's a third angle we'll see at the end.

The Human Side

Collusion

The human side starts with collusion between two very unlikely parties: the chief priests (Jesus' arch-enemies) and one of the 12 Apostles. Remember how this chapter started.

Mark 14:1 ... the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him. 2 “But not during the feast,” they said, “or the people may riot.”

They want to kill Jesus, but the crowds are a problem. The solution to their problem arrives in v.10.

10 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to hand Jesus over¹ to them.

Problem solved. One of Jesus' own inner circle—he'll know when and where the chief priests will be able to catch Jesus in some private place away from the crowds. And that phrase, “hand him over” is a familiar phrase. Jesus has been saying over and over, “The son of man is going to be handed over to the chief priests.” Now it's about to happen, exactly the way Jesus said it would happen.

And just when you think the chief priests can't get any worse, look at their response.

10 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to hand Jesus over to them. 11 They were delighted to hear this.

That's got to be one of the ugliest sentences in the whole Bible. They were delighted. That word means happy, joyful, rejoicing. This wasn't a somber moment where they said, “We're sorry we have to do this, but he forced our hand.” None of that. They are gleeful over the chance to murder Jesus. That's how much they hate him. Every trace of conscience is gone. When the Jewish nation rejected their Messiah, it wasn't a close call. It's as wholesale a rejection as can possibly be imagined.

¹ Your Bible might say “to betray” but that's not what this word means. There's another Greek word that does mean “to betray.” προδοτης (*prodotos*) “betrayed” is used of Judas only in Lk. 6:16. A similar word is καταμηνύειν (*katamanuein*) “to inform against.” But the word used here is παραδιδόναι (*paradidonai*). It means to hand someone over to his enemies. To give him over to the control of people who would hurt him. Judas hands Jesus over to the chief priests, then the chief priests hand him over to Pilate, then Pilate hands him over to be crucified. When he died, John 19:30 uses this same Greek word to say Jesus “handed over his spirit.” So Jesus handed himself over. And he was also handed over to men in general (Mark 9:31), which implies the one handing him over was God. That's significant because Mark uses that same word for both the human side (what Judas the chief priests did) and the divine side (what God did). God didn't betray Jesus, but he did hand him over.

Love of Money=Sleepiness

So that's the chief priests—what about Judas? What motivated him? One word: money. It's no more complicated than that. He wanted the cash.

And instead of telling us that, Mark shows us by the way he arranges material. Scholars have noted how the section with the woman and the perfume seem out of place. The story would flow perfectly if you cut that part out and just went right from v.2 to v.10. The chief priests have this problem in v.2, and then here comes Judas to solve the problem in v.10. It just flows, but Mark crams the story of the woman and perfume in between to show us Mary and Judas side by side so we can see it's all about money. Mary dumps \$50,000 worth of perfume on Jesus and instead of rebuking her, Jesus praises her. And immediately, Judas goes to sell Jesus out. Mark is showing us: "Here's a woman who loved Jesus more than money. And here's an Apostle who loved money more than Jesus."²

Values

Any time money is exchanged, you learn what people value. If I buy a car from you for \$5000, I'm willing to do that deal because I value that car more than I value the \$5000. And you value the \$5000 more than you value the car. We both walk away happy because we both traded something we valued less for something we valued more.

So what do we learn from this transaction? We learn that Judas valued 30 pieces of silver (the price of a slave) more than he valued Christ. And the chief priests valued the opportunity to carry out their murderous hatred more than they valued 30 pieces of silver. And Mark contrasts all that with the woman, who valued Jesus' honor more than she valued \$50,000.

² Another way Mark shows Judas' financial motive is by the structure of verses 9-10. Some commentators argue that Mark is not presenting money as a motive for Judas because the idea of payment is proposed by the chief priests, not Judas, and only after Judas approaches them about handing Jesus over. They conclude that Judas appears indifferent about the money and it's presented only as an incidental afterthought in the text. This would seem to contradict both what we know about Judas and human nature. Why would the chief priests offer him money for what he was willing to do for free? And if Judas wasn't doing it for money, why did he take the money?

Perhaps a better explanation for the money being mentioned after Judas offer to betray Jesus would be that it is yet another Mark sandwich.

A – Judas seeks to betray Jesus

B – A price is set

A' – Judas seeks to betray Jesus

This chiastic structure draws attention both to the repeated element of Judas seeking to betray Jesus, and the centerpiece of the arrangement, which is the money.

Mark is known for his use of "sandwiches," and he makes heavy use of them in ch.14.

* The Olivet discourse (ch.13) is sandwiched between two stories of women giving lavish gifts.

* The story of the second women is sandwiched between the chief priests looking for a way to arrest Jesus (14:1-2) and Judas's offer to make that happen (14:10-11). The story flows smoothly if you eliminate the account of the woman, which we know happened several days earlier. Mark inserts it between the chief priests and Judas to make his point.

* The last supper is sandwiched between the betrayal of disciples (verses 17–21) and the defection of the disciples (verses 27–31).

* At the center of both these sandwiches is a focus on Christ's body (anointed for burial in the first one and symbolized by the bread in the second).

* Both the story of the woman and the treachery of Judas and the chief priests are sandwiched between references to the Passover (verses 1 and 12).

* The delight of the priests over Judas's offer is sandwiched between statements about Judas' determination to hand Jesus over (verses 10-11).

* The preparation for last supper is sandwiched between references to Judas' betrayal (vv.10-11 & 17-21).

Is Love of Money Enough to Explain what Judas Did?

Some people try to get creative in speculating about Judas' motives. They come up with all kinds of theories because they think, "It can't just be about money. To do such a horrible thing for that amount of money—there's got to be more to it." People who think that way haven't been paying attention to everything Jesus has been teaching about money throughout the whole gospel of Mark. We don't have to look beyond love of money for a motive. Love of money is more than adequate to explain what Judas did because love of money is the exact opposite of love for God. And nothing is deadlier to your faith.

Remember the parable of the soils in ch.4? Jesus warned about how the deceitfulness of wealth can turn your heart into weedy soil that chokes out the work of God's Word in your life. Then remember the rich young ruler? He came to Jesus all excited about becoming a follower, but his love for money slammed the door of heaven right in his face. He went away heartbroken because he wanted to go to heaven, but his love for money wouldn't let him. He was sad to miss out on eternal life with Christ, but he had to do it because giving up his money would have made him ever sadder. Is love of money too simplistic a motive for what Judas did? No. Love of money is the epitome of evil motives.

In Matthew 6, Jesus spoke of two possible masters you can serve in this life: God or money. Those are the only two options. You *will* serve one or the other.

And when he says that, he's using money as a place holder to stand for all earthly treasures. And it's the perfect place holder because of the reason we love money. Think about it—why do people love money? Is it because they are enamored with green paper? No, they love it because it's the thing that enables them to get whatever it is in this world they really love. One person might love money because it can get him a life of comfort and ease. The next guy might love money because it can get him all the girls. The next guy might love money because it can buy a sense of security, so he doesn't have to worry about the future. And he'll be able to afford health care. For someone else it's the prestige and respect he gets when he wears a \$1000 suit and a Rolex or drives that new Beemer or lives in that gated community. We all fall in love with different things in this world. And if you want to know what you really love, just ask, if you won the lottery, what would you do with the money? That's what you love. If you would just stash it all in the bank so you'd have security—security is what you love. Love of money is the perfect summary of evil motives because it encompasses all the treasures of this world.

Judas didn't sell out Jesus because he loved silver for silver's sake. He did it because of what those 30 pieces of silver could get him. What did he want to spend that money on? We're not told because it doesn't matter. Whatever it was, it all fits under that general category of loving this world's treasure, which is the opposite of loving God.

So could love of money drive a man to betray his close friend? Could it drive a man to hand over an innocent, spotless, perfect man to a gang of murders who want to torture him to death? If the price is right. Absolutely. And if that comes as a surprise to you, you need to go back and re-read the gospel of Mark.

And you should do it immediately, because if by this point in the gospel the love of money doesn't seem that dangerous to you—if it doesn't seem like something that could absolutely destroy your faith, that's a sign of spiritual grogginess. Remember, the big warning at the end of the Olivet Discourse was, "Stay awake! Don't fall asleep!" Falling asleep means losing conscious awareness of the spiritual realm. And right after that he started showing us examples of being awake and falling asleep. Last time we saw six indicators that you're starting to drift off spiritually. Here's #7. If you let down your guard against the danger of love of money and some

earthly treasure has a hold in your heart , you're half asleep and you're in serious, serious danger.

Part of Jesus' Passion

That's one purpose Mark has in this passage—to warn us about the very real danger of following in Judas' path. It could most definitely happen to any one of us—all it takes is for us to nod off a little bit spiritually. But he's also doing something else. He's also showing us the extremes of Jesus' suffering.³

The passion narrative (“passion” meaning suffering)—the account of Jesus' suffering doesn't begin with the beatings and whips. It begins here, with his betrayal, which, in some ways had to be even more agonizing than the physical torture. To have one of your closest friends—someone you've poured your life into for 2 or 3 years , someone you've done everything you could do to warn him about spiritual dangers —to see him not only go astray, but to betray you, that's just an exquisite kind of pain. When people reject you, the closer they are to you, the more it hurts. So Mark keeps reminding us that Judas was one of the 12.

Mark 14:10 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests.⁴

Mark 14:43 Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared.

Mark 14:18 ... "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me-- one who is eating with me." ... 20 "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me."

Jesus is tossed to the dogs as something next to worthless by one of his closest friends.

All Support Stripped Away

And Judas isn't just caught off guard like Peter is later. He's actively doing this.

11 They ... promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

That word “watched” is the same word from v.1 where the chief priests were watching for a way to capture and kill Jesus. The wolves are circling. Death is seeking Jesus out from the outside and from the inside—from his enemies and from among his friends.

³ And not just his suffering, but also his humiliation. I don't think it's any coincidence that the price they agreed on was the exact amount that Exodus 21:32 established as the price of a slave. If your bull gets loose and gores a slave to death, you have to pay a fine of 30 pieces of silver to reimburse that slave owner. The only other time we see that amount in the Bible is in Zechariah 11:10-13, where the people pay that amount to Zechariah for his work as a prophet of God, and here's God's reaction: **Zechariah 11:13 And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"-- the handsome price at which they priced me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD to the potter.**

That's such a small amount of money, it's an insult. The chief priests really wanted to kill Jesus, but evidently they were on a budget. The most Judas could squeeze out of them was that lame, insulting amount. But it was still enough for Judas to go ahead with it. If you're selling a car and someone offers you \$10 and you take it, that says something about what you think of that car.

⁴ Mark doesn't mention Satan's role, but in Luke 22:3 we're told Satan entered Judas at this point. Satan pushed Judas to do what he did. Why? Why would Satan want Jesus to die on the cross? He didn't. When Peter tried to prevent Jesus from going to the cross, Jesus pointed out that he was doing Satan's work (Mark 8:33). The cross was the last thing Satan wanted. He's not trying to put Jesus on the cross here—he's trying to weaken Jesus to the point where he won't have the strength to go through with the cross. One of Satan's main techniques for getting us to resist God's way is suffering. If he can make us miserable enough, and he can beat us down and weaken us enough, then all he has to do is say, “Just take the easy way out and the pain will stop,” and we'll really be tempted to do what he wants. So he takes one of Jesus' closest friends and turns him against Jesus, hoping the emotional pain of that will weaken Jesus' resolve.

And we're just getting started. This is going to get worse and worse and worse. That's the point of this whole, long section—from here all the way to verse 50. Before the first punch lands on Jesus' face, we have 50 verses showing all human support being stripped away from Jesus.

Can you imagine how it felt for Jesus, after Mary honored him, when his own disciples responded by saying, "Why this waste"? Then one of the Twelve betrays him. Then his closest friends won't even stay awake with him in his deep anguish. Then Peter denies him, and they all end up abandoning him. His entire support system in the human realm was stripped away piece by piece. Jesus is going to have to endure the worst horror imaginable utterly alone.

The Divine Side

So all that is the story of what led to the cross from the human side. Ugly, wicked, dark, horrifying. But right alongside that, Mark shows us the divine side.

Foreknowledge

You look at each one of these paragraphs leading up to the cross, and they all have one thing in common: Jesus' foreknowledge. In vv.3-9 we see Jesus' knowledge of his coming death and the fact that the gospel about him will be preached throughout the world. The next paragraph, Jesus has foreknowledge of exactly what will happen when the disciples go into the city.

Mark 14:16 The disciples ... went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them.

Then in v.18 he has foreknowledge of the fact that one of the 12 was about to hand him over. Then in v.27 he has foreknowledge that all the Apostles would fall away. In v.30 he knows Peter would disown him three times before the rooster crowed that morning—very specific. In v.42 he knew right when Judas was about to appear. Then down in v.62, he tells the chief priests, "You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

From the human standpoint, we see a man being battered by the forces around him. From the divine view, we see nothing short of divine omniscience. And with omniscience comes omnipotence. Jesus is in full control and mastery of every detail. And that's the purpose of vv.12-16, to show us that.

Jesus Controls Providence

And if you don't see that, you'll wonder why Mark devotes so much space to describing the preparation for the last supper. Mark devotes more than twice as many words to planning for the room than he does to Jesus transforming the Passover into the ritual of communion. If not to show us Jesus' sovereign control, I don't even know why this section would be here.

We left off in v.11 with Judas watching for an opportunity where Jesus will be away from the crowds.

12 On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

And Judas' ears perk up. *Ah ha! Perfect. Wherever it is, all I have to do is give that address to the chief priests, and I've got my money.* Judas steps a little closer to Jesus to make sure he gets the location. *This will be the easiest 30 pieces of silver I've ever made.*

13 So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city Judas inches closer ... and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. 14 Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'

Oh brother. Judas looks at Jesus and thinks, *Is he on to me or what?* Instead of just giving them the guy's address, there's all this cloak and dagger. It's almost comical. Watch for a guy carrying a water jar, follow him to another guy, that guy will show you to a room Judas is thinking, "I can't go to the authorities with that. A guy and a jar and another guy and a room—this information is worthless." What Jesus had planned for the last supper was very, very important to Jesus. He has a lot he wants to do and say, he's not going to let that be the place where he's arrested.

So he tells the two disciples (Luke tells us it was Peter and John - Lk.22:8) to watch for a man with a water jar. Normally only women would carry water jars. Men would carry water in flasks. So this guy would stand out. Kind of like a man carrying a purse.

And when they see him, they don't even say anything to him. They just follow him. The guy with the jar may not have even known any of this was going on.⁵ He may not have even been in on it. They're just supposed to follow him. There's a warrant out for Jesus' arrest in Jerusalem. If any words are exchanged, the authorities could find out. So he says, "Just follow the jar guy until he gets to a house."

14 Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my⁶ guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' 15 He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." 16 The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

Triumphal Entry

If that sounds kind of familiar, it's because this has happened once before in Mark. Can you think of another time when Jesus sent two disciples ahead of him to get something ready and told them everything they would see? The Triumphal Entry in chapter 11. In both passages Jesus sends two disciples into town for a mysterious meeting. And there's no question Mark wants us to connect the two events. He uses all the same language—a lot of it is word-for-word identical in the Greek.⁷

Mark 11:1 He sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the village Mark 14:13 He sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city In ch.11 they're supposed to ask for a donkey for Jesus.

In ch.14 they're supposed to ask for a room for Jesus. Then in both cases, Jesus tells them exactly what they will find and how people will respond. And then there's a statement about how they found things exactly as Jesus had said.

⁵ The word translated, "meet" doesn't imply they spoke to the man or had any close contact (see Lk.17:12).

⁶ Many have wondered why Jesus says, "my" guest room. But it doesn't strike me as that unusual a way to talk. I could imagine staying at a friend's house and saying, "I'll put my suitcase in my room. Which one am I in?"

⁷ There's even a string of 11 consecutive words that are identical in both accounts.

Mark connects these two events because he wants us to see Jesus in total control of the details of his glorious entry into Jerusalem and of his humiliating exit from this world. Jesus is in charge of his glory and his humiliation—his arrival and his departure.

Natural Planning or Divine Providence?

Most commentators assume there's nothing supernatural here—it's just a prearranged plan Jesus had with the homeowner. They assume that even though there's nothing in the text to suggest that. I think it's just a reflection of the anti-supernatural bias of our culture. Liberal scholars reject all miracles and supernatural explanations. But even conservative scholars will accept miracles when it's explicitly stated that it's a miracle, but in a case like this, if there is any possible natural, non-supernatural explanation, they gravitate toward that.

But every indication in the context points toward divine providence, not natural human planning. Is it possible that Jesus snuck off at some point and met with a secret disciple in Jerusalem and said, "Pssst. Hey, in a few days I'm going to send a couple of my guys to meet you"? Sure. But what would be the point of the water jar guy? Why wouldn't Jesus just tell the homeowner, "Hey, I'm going to send my disciples into town. Meet up with them and take them to your house." What kind of a plan is this? "Send one of your guys out with a water jar to wander all around the city"? That's a terrible plan. What if they never run into him? There could be a guy carrying a purse in a Wal Mart and there would be no guarantee you would see him if you don't happen to cross paths in the same isle at the same time. This is an entire city, during Passover when hundreds of thousands of Jews from all over the world were packed into the city. If this were a prearranged plan, it's such a bad plan it would require just as much supernatural help as if there were no plan at all. I think this passage is clear—it's showing Jesus in charge of divine providence.

Jesus in Control

A 100 years ago, Albert Schweitzer wrote a book titled, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. Whenever you hear scholars talk about what they call, "the historical Jesus," usually what they mean is some conception of Jesus other than what we see in the Bible. These men are so educated and so knowledgeable that they somehow know more about Jesus 2000 years later than the people who lived in Jesus' time and knew him personally. The only data they have to go on is the eyewitness accounts from Jesus' time, and based on that data, they determine that what really happened was totally different from what the eyewitnesses said. And when it's all said and done, the "historical" Jesus they come up with looks nothing like the Jesus of the Bible, but strikingly similar to the modern liberal scholars who are doing the research.

Anyway, Albert Schweitzer went on a quest for the historical Jesus and what he found was a man who got in over his head. Jesus was doing well, but then he overplayed his hand and ended up being squashed like a bug. "Jesus ... lays hold of the wheel of the world to set it moving on that last revolution to bring all ordinary history to a close. It refuses to turn, and He throws Himself upon it. Then it does turn; and crushes Him. Instead of bringing in the eschatological conditions, He has destroyed them. The wheel rolls onward, and the mangled body of the one immeasurably great Man, who was strong enough to think of Himself as the spiritual ruler of mankind and to bend history to His purpose, is hanging upon it still."⁸ Jesus tried to stop the

⁸ Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, pg.370-371.

freight train of history and just got run over. He had grandiose plans, but he just got mangled like a rag doll in the gears of history that were just too big even for him.

The reason this paragraph is in the Bible is to teach the exact opposite of that. Jesus was not caught up in the gears of history; Jesus turns the gears of history—the big ones and the small ones. He turns the hearts of kings and superintends where a donkey might be standing or a guy with a jar might be walking. Jesus is the divine clockmaker who designed gears of history and turns them exactly according to his grand design.

Human Responsibility

But as soon as you say that, it immediately raises the question of human responsibility. If God is controlling everything, including the actions of Judas, then can Judas really be held responsible? Isn't he just a helpless pawn who is forced by divine providence to do what he did? That question shows a complete misunderstanding of what divine providence is. Providence is not God forcing human will. Providence is when God allows humans to use free will and decide whatever they want, and still sees to it that the outcomes are exactly what he planned. That's what's so mind-boggling about it.

And if you don't understand how God can do that, that's fine. All you have to understand is two things: God controls everything, and you and I are responsible for what we choose. If you can grasp those two simple truths, you get the point of this passage. Both parts are stated side by side in verse 21.

21 The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.

The "it is written" language points to God's preordained plan. God preplanned exactly how his Son would die and it was all spelled out in the Scriptures ahead of time. But was Judas forced to do what he did? Not. He freely chose it and he is fully culpable for it. No one forced Judas—not even God. God didn't force him. Satan didn't force him. It was his own love for money that forced him to do it. And that love of money was his own fault.

Did Jesus trick Judas into betraying him in order to carry out his divine plan? No. All the influence Jesus exerted on Judas was in the other direction. Jesus had warned him about the danger of loving money. He warned him about the danger of spiritual sleepiness and failing to stay alert to the spiritual world. Jesus worked for years to keep Judas from doing what he did. Even in this text, as we'll see, Jesus is still giving him a chance to repent. But Judas resists it all. He freely chose to do what he did and deserves the punishment he will receive. And that punishment will be so severe, it would be better for him if he had never been born.

So that's the human side and the divine side. Mark is doing the same thing in this passage that Luke does in Acts 4, where he puts both the human part and the divine part side by side.

Acts 4:27 Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. 28 They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

God took the bike and thieves stole the bike. God was doing something good and deserves to be praised, and men were doing evil and deserve to be punished.

Your Side (It Could Be You)

So those are the two sides. But I told you I'd show you a third side. There's a third angle to look at this from. Let's move on to v.17.

17 When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. 18 While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me-- one who is eating with me." 19 They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely not I?" 20 "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me.

Four times Jesus tells the whole group—"It's one of you." Jesus knows it's Judas, so why does he say this to the whole group? Why does he put them through the whole process of each one of them having to ask if it was them? And notice, when they each say, "Surely not I, right Jesus?" he doesn't answer. He doesn't reassure anyone. He doesn't tell John, "Oh no, don't worry John—it's not you." He lets them all think it might be them.

Jesus wants them to realize, it really could be any of them. They were all capable of it. Sometimes we make the mistake of thinking Judas was an outlier. He was just this strange, oddball bad apple that somehow got thrown in with 11 good apples. Eleven good guys and one monster. I've heard pastor after pastor say, "Judas was never sincere. He never truly believed. He was never genuine, otherwise he never would have fallen away. He was completely different from the others." That is not the picture we have in the gospels. All 12 of the disciples have been getting everything wrong all through the book. And in a few verses Jesus is going to tell them that they will all fall away and reminds them to stay awake. Judas is not presented as being some kind of black sheep oddball. Just the opposite. What does Mark keep telling us about Judas? We don't get any info about his background or personality or family or anything like that. There's really just one main thing Mark wants you to know about him: he was one of the Twelve. Mark doesn't disassociate Judas from the other eleven. Just the opposite—he goes out of his way to remind us that he was one of them.

The point here is, every one of those guys was capable of doing what Judas did. When they were all saying, "Surely not I," if Jesus had reassured one of them and said, "No, you're not the one I have in mind," that very comment may have made that disciple so overconfident that he may well have ended up betraying Christ like Judas did. Jesus wanted all of them to realize they were all capable of betraying him and falling away so they would keep up their guard and stay awake.

And Mark wants us, the readers, to realize the same thing. If they were all capable of it, so are we. It could be any of them, which means it could be any of us. And so all of us should be rattled by what Jesus says in v.21.

Warning for Judas

21 ... woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

Such a horrifying statement. The punishment Judas is suffering in hell is unimaginable. "Can't Judas be given a second chance?" Yes, that's exactly what he's getting right here. That's what Jesus is doing when he says this. Judas hasn't handed Jesus over yet. He's looking for an opportunity, but Jesus took that opportunity away and instead provides an opportunity to repent. Judas sinned when he made the deal with the chief priests, but he could come back from that. What he did isn't irreversible yet. He should have seen in this moment how Jesus knew everything and really was in control. He could have run straight back to the chief priests and said,

“Here’s your money back, I’m not going to turn him over to you.” But once again, sleepy Judas ignores Jesus’ warning.

Conclusion

And so do all the others. Look down at verse 27.

Mark 14:27 "You will all fall away," Jesus told them.

They all failed to stay awake, and they all ended up falling away. And Mark is writing all this to us to plead with us, “Don’t make the same mistake they did.”

We all have our own way of loving the world’s treasure instead of God—whether it be looking to money for our security, our comfort, happiness, hope, rest—letting your heart believe those things come from money is spiritual suicide.

Stay awake. That’s the lesson to take from the human side of all this.

What about the divine side? Take comfort in divine providence. The Lord Jesus Christ is in full control of every detail of your life. He’s in charge of who you happen to bump into at the store, he controls who crosses your path, he decides what happens to you and what doesn’t happen. And everything that happens, no matter how much evil might be involved on the human side, he planned it for good.

Harmony

Matthew 26:14 Then one of the Twelve-- the one called Judas Iscariot-- went to the chief priests 15 and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. 16 From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

17 On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?" 18 He replied, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.'" 19 So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.

Mark 14:10 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them.

11 They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money.

So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

12 On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?" 13 So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. 14 Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' 15 He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." 16 The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

Luke 22:3 Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. 4 And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus.

5 They were delighted and agreed to give him money. 6 He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.

7 Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. 8 Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover." 9 "Where do you want us to prepare for it?" they asked. 10 He replied, "As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, 11 and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' 12 He will show you a large upper room, all furnished. Make preparations there." 13 They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

Matthew 26:20 When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. 21 And while they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me." 22 They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely not I, Lord?" 23 Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. 24 The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

25 Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" Jesus answered, "Yes, it is you."

Mark 14:17 When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. 18 While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me-- one who is eating with me." 19 They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely not I?" 20 "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. 21 The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

Luke 22:14 When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. 15 And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God." 17 After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. 18 For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." 19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." 20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. 21 But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. 22 The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed, but woe to that man who betrays him." 23 They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this.

John 13:1 It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. 2 The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus.

3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." 8 "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." 9 "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" 10 Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." 11 For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean. 12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. 13 "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 16 I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. 18 "I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.' 19 "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He. 20 I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me."

Summary

Judas betrayed Jesus because of love of money, which this gospel has shown to be the prime destroyer of faith. Jesus wanted all 12 to realize it could be them so they would keep stay awake. And the same goes for us. That's the human side of Jesus' suffering. On the divine side, Jesus is shown to be in control of providence.