

The Savior Exposes the Betrayer Among His Disciples

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Dear congregation, next Lord's Day we hope to have the Lord's Supper celebrated among us as such, a rich and gracious gift that the Lord has given to his church throughout the ages to the end of time, a gift that so points to himself, a gift through which he himself gives his grace, a gift which is all about the Lord Jesus Christ. And that can make us wonder, perhaps, as you saw the text this morning, why then would we have a preparatory sermon on Judas, one who sat down with Jesus but didn't belong at the Lord's Supper? And the one can say hearing about Judas can make it so hard because then I ask, "Is that what I am still, a hypocrite? Why a sermon on this text?" Well, this is in the word of God, isn't it, and all that is in God's word is for our instruction and for our profit, also this text which is so close to the first Lord's Supper, the Last Supper that took place in this very same chapter. To ignore the reality that there are those who have no place at the Lord's Supper does not help anyone. It doesn't help those who do belong there. It doesn't help those who don't belong there. It's a reality that we need to face but, again, we can ask why focus on Judas if the Lord's Supper is all about the Lord Jesus? Well, this passage is not just about Judas. This passage is about the Lord Jesus.

Our text, these verses 21 through 25, the words of Jesus and the dealings of Jesus towards Judas, and even through Judas as he goes forward to suffering. And so let us listen to this passage under the theme "The Savior Exposes the Betrayer Among His Disciples." The Savior exposes the betrayer among his disciples and, first, we see tested disciples; second, the exposed betrayer; and third, the suffering Savior. The Savior exposes the betrayer among his disciples: the tested disciples, the exposed betrayer, and the suffering Savior.

First then, these disciples, these 12 disciples were so highly privileged, weren't they? Jesus had called them to follow him. One had come from the tax booth. Others had come from their fishing boats. Others had come from elsewhere. But the Lord Jesus had called them all and brought them all under his care and made them his disciples. He was their Master. They had been with him for several years. They heard him teach. He led them in prayer. They saw the miracles that he did. They knew his care towards them. And now we meet them in the Upper Room. In verse 20 we read of how, "the even was come and he sat down with the twelve." And again, that's such a privilege. They sat down for the Passover meal with him. Normally that took place in a family setting and you would have

the father and he would sit down together with his family and he would lead the Passover meal and what took place there, and here the Lord Jesus is their Master and he takes that role and he includes them all as his family and he eats it with them.

They sat down, and we shouldn't think of the way that you may sit down for dinner later today around a table with chairs, but they would recline perhaps on their left elbow and they would have their right hand free to reach out to receive food and to eat it. And so they would be there in a circle around that food, and as they are there in that familiar intimate setting, the Lord Jesus opens his lips and says those words which they had heard so often before, "Verily I say unto you." He's said it so often because whatever he says is true. "Verily" is literally, "Amen, I say to you. It's faithful. It's true. This is something that you are to listen to. This is something important. This is something that you are not to question and you are not to doubt because I say it," and Christ is that chief prophet who says the truth, "Verily I say unto you that one of you shall betray me." Betray me? Had they heard it right? One of them would betray him?

"Verily I say unto you." The Lord Jesus was honest. He had already said earlier, "I will be betrayed, the Son of man will be betrayed," repeatedly but now he comes closer and he says, "The betrayer will be one of you." One of the 12. That's a small circle. In John, we read, "But then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake." Can you picture it? James looks at Peter, "No, it couldn't be Peter." Christ said that the Father had revealed to Peter that Jesus is the Christ. Maybe James looks at John but, "No, it couldn't be John." John so loves the Lord Jesus. He looks at Andrew and he looks at Thomas and he looks at the others and he thinks, "It can't be any of these." He looks at Judas, "He has that position of responsibility among us. He's our treasurer. It couldn't be him." Who are you left with then? If you look around and you think it couldn't be any of them, you're left with yourself. "Lord, is it I who will betray?" At this moment, they're not standing in pride in thinking, "Oh, if someone is going to betray, it will certainly be someone else." No. They all ask that same question, "Lord, is it I?"

Why do they ask that question? Is it because they're all harboring plots to betray the Lord Jesus? Is it because they feel this pressure to do so and they think maybe, "We have no reason to think that." Peter and the others would soon say, "Though I die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." They don't want to see the Lord Jesus delivered to death, and yet they ask, "Is it I?" Why? Is it because they don't trust themselves? Is it because they realize the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and they don't dare point fingers at others but they point within and they ask, "Is it I?" Literally they say, "Lord, it is not me, is it?" They ask the question in a way that wants a "no" answer. They don't say, "It's me, isn't it?" When you put it that way, then you're wanting the answer, "yes." But literally, they're saying something like, "It's not me, is it?" Because they don't want it to be them. They don't want to betray the Lord Jesus but they want to know what the Lord Jesus means when he says, "One of you will betray me." "Lord, if it's me, tell me."

Notice also their tone. Some may have many questions about themselves, but they have in the first place sorrow. It says they were exceeding sorrowful. Already in Matthew 17,

we read Jesus said unto them, "The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall rise again, and they were exceeding sorry." And now, when again the Lord Jesus raises this reality that he will be betrayed, and that by one of them, then it says again they were exceeding sorrowful. They can't bear the thought of it, and on top of it that it will be one of them, one of his own close circle that will do so. These words are like daggers in their souls that fill them with sorrow and pain.

Congregation, do we know that pain, that sorrow? God's word is very clear that there are tares that mix with the wheat, that there are bad fish mixed with the good fish in the net of his kingdom, and that means also among us there are those who reject the Lord Jesus Christ, would rather deliver him up than lose what they value or fail to get what they want. And we nod our heads and we say, it's true, there's people who are unconverted among us, but my question is, does it fill you with sorrow that there are those who treat the Lord Jesus in such a way? Who turn their backs on the Savior and who go for the world's 30 pieces of silver rather than Christ? If that reality has never pained you, filled you with sorrow, then you have to fear you're one of them. Who grieve over the reality that there are those who turn against Christ? Is it not those who love Christ? Who are filled with sorrow at the thought that they may still turn against a gracious Christ? Is it not those who have come to value this gracious Christ and have come to see how dishonoring it is to live apart from him? A test of whether we love Christ is not, in the first place, whether we say we love Jesus but whether we're pained by the thought that Christ is mistreated in such a way of betrayal, of rejection, whatever else it may be. Is that your grief? As you know that this is a reality, is that also your grief when you find that sin within which rejects the Lord Jesus and chooses other things rather than him, that that's become a grief to you? We read in the Form about loathing and humbling yourself before God on account of your sin. Is that also what makes that question, "Lord is it I," such a fearful one because you can't bear the thought of being one who would be characterized as a betrayer, as a rejecter, as a Judas?

It's these disciples who grieve deeply when they hear that Christ will be betrayed by one of them, and these are the disciples that the Lord Jesus will have the Lord's Supper with. But someone can say the question still remains for me, "Lord, is it I?" If you ask because your focus isn't just others but yourself, that's an encouraging sign. And if you ask with sorrow, it's also an encouraging sign. If you ask with a longing to hear that it is not so, it's also an encouraging sign. If you ask out of a sense of self-distrust, it's also a good sign. The worse condition to be in is blind complacency that never asks the question. And yet in stating this is not to encourage doubt in any way, it's not to glorify unbelief in any way, it's not to prescribe it, certainly not, but it's to acknowledge that there can be this question, "Lord, is it I," as a real question that someone may have because you're afraid of your own heart.

"Lord, is it I?" But maybe with this question within you, you say, "But I can't be comforted by the fact that even the disciples asked that question. I need to know how it is? How will you know?" Do you notice that first word they utter? "Lord, is it I?" They don't simply just begin to look within themselves and analyze and reason and look back

and look forward and look within, no, they bring it all to the Lord and their first word is "Lord. Lord, is it I?" They bring that question to the one who knows all things before whom they're an open book and they say, "Lord, thou dost know. Lord, is it I?" And therefore, if there are questions within your heart in a week of self-examination when you are to examine your heart and the condition of your heart and the state of your heart, and you have that work to do and it's hard to do and maybe there's still questions and there's still confusion, where are you to bring those questions and confusion, is it not to this God, to this Christ? "Lord, how is it with me? Show me." A week of self-examination is not just a week of staring into your heart, but it's a week of coming before the Lord, "Search me, O Lord. Try me and show me what's in my heart, what my heart is really like." Because he's the one, he's the one who says in Jeremiah 17, "I, the Lord, search the heart." "Lord, speak." Do you believe he can answer your every question?

Do you believe he's the prophet that we heard of recently who teaches by his word and Spirit? You can have questions about yourself, but you can't have questions about him. You can't question his ability to teach you and show you what you need to see about yourself. He speaks. How blessed when the Savior is testing, and that's really what the Lord Jesus is doing here to the disciples. He's testing them. What a blessing when the Savior is testing, brings us back to him in prayer. "Search me O God. Do so." He loves to hear such cries and he loves to give his light.

But the opposite is also so true, how sad and terrible when these things are lacking and we see that in the exposed betrayer of our second point. Peter, John, James, the others, they ask, "Lord, is it I?" And Jesus doesn't look at Thomas and say, "Thomas, no, it won't be you. And John, no, it won't be you. Bartholomew, no, it won't be you." What does he say? Verse 23, "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me." This answer that is given to all here is different from what we read in the gospel of John. There, Peter asks John to ask Jesus who will betray, and Jesus says, "He it is to whom I shall give the sop, and when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot." It appears that was only for John, for Peter.

But in Matthew, he simply says, "He that dippeth his hand," and the 12 did not know it was Judas at this point because who were dipping their hands with him, was it not all of them? The Passover meal would include that bowl filled with a thick broth and mashed fruit and spices and vinegar, and they would take bread and they would dip it in and they would eat, and they were all doing it. "He that dippeth with me in the dish," that was them all, was it not? And what it was showing is that the one who would betray is the one who would be so close to the Lord Jesus Christ. He would accept the good gifts in the hospitality of the Lord Jesus. This one would deliver him up to his enemies shortly after. That is what made this betrayal so wicked.

"One who dips with me in the dish in this meal of fellowship with me." But doesn't that make the question press the more on the disciples, "Lord, will it be one who shows affection for thee outwardly betrayed thee? Is it I?" And so the Lord Jesus is testing them all the more, isn't he, in this answer that he gives, and it shows that sometimes when you cry for light and cry for an answer, sometimes it can seem to get darker, seem to get more

difficult, or your fears may increase or your griefs may intensify. What is he doing? Christ is exposing. Christ is, as it were, driving them the more to himself. Also, in a week of self-examination, struggles would intensify. Don't be discouraged. Is it not Christ's way to only drive you the more to himself?

The Lord Jesus continues stressing the terribleness of this crime in verse 24, "woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born." There's nothing worse than to turn away from the Lord Jesus who has shown such kindness to you, who has stretched out his arms willing to save you, who tells you of your sin, who warns of its reward. "Woe," he says, "unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed." That man is fully responsible for what he has done, or what he is doing. He can never say, "I'm just fulfilling God's plan and I'm fulfilling the scriptures." No, that man is guilty, inexcusably so.

"It had been good for that man if he had not been born." The fate, the end of such a man is too terrible to describe. Who can describe the agony of eternal regret? "Oh, that I had not turned from this Jesus, the Messiah, and betrayed him." You see the beginning of that regret in Judas shortly after he had seen the Lord Jesus be led away, and there he was on trial, as that lamb silent, and as he was upon the cross and Judas realized, "I've betrayed innocent blood. What a regret. I have betrayed innocent blood." Who can describe what went through him as he fled the scene and threw the money at the chief priests and as he went and hanged himself? Who then can describe the wrath of God that fell on that one who had betrayed the Son of God? Who can describe the torments that will forever plague Judas because he betrayed the Son of God? He trampled upon the blood of Christ. He despised the one who's worthy of all esteem and valued some money more than Christ. Who can describe the wrath of God that comes upon those who reject the Son of God?

"It had been good for that man if he had not been born." What a solemn warning comes from the lips of this merciful Savior. He doesn't let the betrayer go and do his deed without a warning about what he is doing, and in that warning there is still the call to turn from his sinful way, to stop before it is too late. Some people derive secret satisfaction from uncovering a hypocrite and telling about how bad he is, but Jesus is so different; he's the one who wept over those who rejected him even in all their apparent piety. Some can issue such orthodox but cold warnings about hellfire but that is not the Lord Jesus. He's the one who's motivated by compassion and when he sees a hypocrite among us, he doesn't rejoice now he's found one, he's grieved and his heart of compassion is moved that there's ones who have enmity against him beneath their pious clothing.

He doesn't issue a cold "woe" but a compassionate one. Mercy moves him to warn and if you resist the warning of Christ, you are resisting the mercy of Christ. Maybe you say, "But I'm not a Judas. I'm like the other disciples." That's what Judas thought he was, "I'm like the other disciples." He joined with them, he joined with them even in his words asking, "Master, is it I?" Did he really want Jesus to answer? That's another point. But he goes along with all the others asking, "Master, is it I?" This question only has one word difference and that is Rabbi instead of Master. Rabbi is the official title. It's actually used

in the gospels most often for those who were not true disciples. It was a term of respect. And does this just term of respect show a distance between Judas and Jesus whatever it be?

The Lord Jesus hears that question of Judas and he knows the answer and he does not say, "Yes. Judas," he simply says, "Thou hast said." We don't know who heard it or how they understood it but we can be sure that Judas sensed, "Jesus knows what I've done, that I've gone off to those Jewish leaders and I've bargained to get as much as I could of silver for my act of betraying the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus knows that I have been watching him, seeing how I would find an opportunity to betray him." Jesus knows. Is that not enough to send a shiver up Judas' spine and tears to his eyes? Would that not make him break down? But instead we don't read anything of the sort. We read another account, he later just simply got up and left. If it wasn't recorded in scripture, would we be able to believe that man's heart can be so hard and so unmoved in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ?

And my friend, this is a question for you and for me: does that hardness still characterize your or my heart? The Savior's hand that pointed towards these 12 and says, "One of you will betray me," that same Savior still looks out over the congregation and he sees those whose hearts are still like Judas, valuing money over him, valuing pleasure over him, valuing honor over him, valuing ease over him. He sees ones who may be sitting here and who may be disappointed with the Lord Jesus because he never satisfied their desires and their dreams, and you've come to resist him and resent him because of what he's been, and he sees you.

Is it you? Have you ever felt addressed when sinners have been warned or have you just given all those warnings to other people? Don't deflect that message by saying you're a member of the church. Judas was a child of Abraham, part of the church. You may come to church, you may like to hear a powerful preacher. Judas heard none less than Jesus himself as he spoke with authority like none other. Don't hide behind the fact that you're a serious person. Judas was too. He left what he was doing. He was following the Lord Jesus day by day. You can say you join with those who follow Jesus and your name is Christian. Judas was one of the very 12. Don't hide behind the fact that you have a position of trust. Judas was a treasurer for the disciples. He had the bag of money. You may say, "But I know a lot." Judas knew a lot too. He had spent years with the Lord Jesus, that perfect prophet. You can even say, "I have a special office in the church, a special task." What did Judas do? He had gone together with another disciple preaching the gospel, and that men should repent and they cast out many devils, and now he's far from repentant and the devil is filling him. You can say, "But others respect me and they don't question whether I'm a Christian. They say that I'm a Christian." But when Jesus said, "One of you shall betray me," they didn't all point their finger at Judas and say, "I'm sure it will be Judas." No, they didn't suspect him at all. He's a disciple. Who is Judas? A disciple and yet Judas had an evil heart of unbelief nonetheless. You can say, "But I've partaken of the Lord's Supper before." Judas had certainly partaken of the Old Testament Passover and perhaps even of the Lord's supper and yet his heart was wrong. The Lord

Jesus had come so near to Judas. How much closer could he come? And yet he was a betrayer.

My friend, what makes you differ from Judas? With all your church attendance and respectability and decency, and even outwardly outward sincerity, if that's all, what makes you differ from Judas? You say, "What is the problem with Judas? What is he missing?" Is he not missing Christ? Is he not missing that union with Christ? Is he not missing that salvation of Christ and therefore that love to Christ, and that trust in Christ and that devotion to Christ because Judas had never lost his life and found life in Jesus Christ? Judas had never broken before the Savior as a sinner and found grace in him, never become one with the Savior and experienced his love and his grace and therefore, despite all that the Savior had shown him, he maintained himself and at his heart he was still only bound to the things of this earth. Therefore, that question comes: are you, am I a Judas still bound simply to the things of this earth in spite of all our religiosity and all our amazing privileges of Christ coming so near to us?

If we're not different from Judas, how can you eat with the Master? Won't it be hypocrisy to have your heart bound to the things of here below like Judas and not bound to Christ and then still to come to the Lord's Supper and eat with him? Don't come just to fit in. Judas was there doing the same things the others were doing just to fit in. Never do so. It's not about just fitting in and avoiding people's questions why were you not there? That's what Judas's do and eat and drink judgment to themselves. But if you don't come because there's not that bond with Christ, do you realize what you're saying? You're saying there's still that rebellion, there's still that resistance, there's still that rejection of Christ who come so very close to you. And if that's so, how can you live on another day with such a heart that does not love Christ in sincerity and does not want to let go of everything else? My friend, then you can't look down on Judas who chose other things rather than Christ, because then that's what you're doing, and if that's what you're doing, that only shows how much you need this Christ.

This suffering Savior, our final point. This whole account is not simply about tested disciples and an exposed betrayer, but about the suffering Savior. This whole account is about him as is going forward. And we see how he goes forward. We see what is in his heart as he goes forward. It's a heart that's full of mercy. We saw that already in his dealings with Judas. If you knew that one you had opened up to, one you'd become vulnerable to, one whom you had showed kindness to, if you knew that one of those friends you had was going to give you up, was going to betray you, was going to turn you over to your enemies, how would you treat that one? How did the Lord Jesus treat Judas? He treated Judas just like he treated the other disciples, such that when he said, "One of you will betray me," none of them said, "Oh, it must be Judas," because the Lord Jesus had been acting very coldly towards Judas lately. No, he showed that same kindness even to a Judas.

What a Savior who came not to condemn but to save. Maybe you have a hard time believing that. You think he's just out there to get you, to punish you. It's true if you despise that mercy of Christ, one day you will meet the wrath of the Lamb but it's only

because you despised his mercy. But the flip-side is also a reality, how Christ suffered from this rejection of one to whom he had come in his kindness and in his mercy. The greatest hurt is when the ones you've come closest to turn against you, and what suffering this was for Christ to be betrayed by none less than one of his own 12 disciples. Later, he would ask in the garden, "Friend, how camest thou hither? Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" And yet Christ was willing to endure such rejection, such betrayal. Maybe some of us have experienced a little of this, but what Christ endured was far worse, and he was pleased to endure it and to go forward in this path of betrayal, of rejection.

See him as he sat at this table with his questioning disciples and the betrayer is right there and he knew it, and he knew what awaited him. He knew all that Judas would do, and yet he let Judas go on and do his work. He didn't stop him. It would have been easy enough for the Lord Jesus to say, "Disciples, Judas wants to betray me," and they would all maybe pounce on Judas and they would not allow him to do so. But he raises it and he lets that Judas fulfill the evil plots of his heart. And as he speaks of the betrayer, he says in verse 24, "The Son of man goeth, the Son of man is going on. I am continuing on. I will not turn back. I will not stop him. I will continue on and I will let myself be betrayed into the hands of wicked men. I will allow them to do their worst."

The Son of man is simply going on that path that God had established for him. Why? Because he knew, "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him." He had already told the disciples earlier that the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men. He knew that because the scriptures had prophesied of that. In John 13, he quoted Psalm 41, which we sang before the sermon, "I speak not unto you all. I know whom I have chosen, but that the scripture may be fulfilled, he that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." It's written that he'd be betrayed by a seeming friend, and Christ came to fulfill scripture, also to fulfill the the scripture that he would be betrayed.

Why was that prophesied? Is it not because that was God's plan to deliver up his Son into the hands of sinful men? Behind Judas' wicked hands that received the money and betrayed Jesus was God's sovereign hand and counsel. Behind Judas' abominable sin, which was inexcusable, which he did of his own will and led to his perdition, was God's decree that his Son be delivered up. That's why Jesus did not abort Judas' plan. To stop Judas' plan would be to stop the plan of God himself. Here we come to deep mysteries but it's mysteries that are to fill us with awe at the God who sent his Son in the flesh to go this way of betrayal by a disciple to deliver enemies, sinners, from that path of destruction that Judas was going on.

And congregation, is that not what the Lord's Supper is all about? This suffering Savior who didn't turn aside but went the way of betrayal, rejection of men, of the cross, of the shedding of his blood, of the endurance of the wrath of God, is that what draws you to look forward to coming Lord's Day, that your hope is that he took that woe that he pronounced against Judas, that woe that you deserve to hear because of your sin that you've come to confess, "Lord, I just deserve one word, woe." But your only hope is that he took that woe on himself and he bore it in all its fullness. But your only hope is that he did it for ones who are no better than Judas by nature. And you know, this morning, that

left to yourself, you would be no better than Judas. You would reject Jesus for some money, for some friends, for some honor, for some whatever. You don't look down on Judas because you see displayed in his deeds that sinfulness that dominated you by nature and that still lurks within you even after grace and would choose other things rather than Christ. But all you see in your own heart that makes you fear because you identify with that sin. What's it make you do? It drives you out, doesn't it? Drives you out. Doesn't drive you away from this Christ, but it drives you to this very same Savior who shed his blood for enemies. You only have one plea, his blood, his righteousness, and then when you look at yourself and you look at the future, then you can be afraid of the tests and the trials and the temptations that you may face, and you can fear at times that you will not be able to stand, you may fear what you may yet do, but those fears only drive you to one place, don't they, to this Christ, this Christ who said to Peter, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." This Christ who shed his blood to also preserve in that salvation which he gives. Christ is the only one who makes a difference between a Judas and a Peter, a hypocrite and a believer today, and therefore your every fear based on your own weakness and your own remaining sinfulness, is only to make the Christ the more precious.

"Is it I?" That's a question that may go with us into this week of self-examination. "Lord, is it I? Am I still a hypocrite like Judas or one who can't live without Christ?" Whatever the outcome may be of that question, there is one thing there can be no question about: Jesus is no hypocrite, Jesus is who he says he is and the grace that he gives is real and the salvation that he gives is real, and the blood that he shed is real. Amid all the questions, "Lord, is it I," what a blessing to hear him say, "I am he." He points to himself as such a Savior. In the gospel, at the table, he says, "It is I. Be not afraid." Amen.