

JUDAS: Palm Sunday

INTRO: Today we commemorate Palm Sunday. This morning, and on the day we call Good Friday, I want to give you the story of Judas Iscariot. So, let me begin by giving you some of the events that led up to Palm Sunday. Jesus had started his trip to Jerusalem a few days earlier. He came from the Galilee area. He came down on the far side of the Jordon River. The Sea of Galilee is some 685 feet below sea level. From there he goes down to Jericho, which is close to the Dead Sea and the Dead Sea is 1300 feet below sea level. Here he stayed at Zacchaeus' house for night. Zacchaeus was a tax collector who got saved that night when Jesus stayed there.

The next day He begins His journey to Jerusalem from Jericho. Jerusalem is about 2500 feet above Sea Level. The Dead Sea is 1300 feet below sea level, and so I expect Jericho may be around 1000 feet below sea level, to Jerusalem, which is some 2500 feet above sea level. Yesterday some of us went up to Talbot Lake. We are at about 1,000 feet above sea level. Here. And after three hours traveling yesterday, we were at 2500 feet. For us here up north, that is a long way up. We climbed about 1500 feet.

From Jericho to Jerusalem is, I think it is about an 8-10 hour trip on foot. And the clime is about 3500 feet. So they went 'up' to Jerusalem. He arrives in Bethany, just over the Mount of Olives from Jerusalem, at the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. This is where He likes to stay for night whenever He goes to Jerusalem. It was not too long before this that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead.

In my estimation it is now Thursday evening. On Wednesday of the next week He will be crucified. Go to John 12 (read 1-2). I think Jesus arrived Thursday evening. Alford Eedersheim thinks it was Friday evening. It says they made Him a great supper there. Now I think they would not have had time to plan a big supper if He only arrived around supper time, or maybe a little earlier. I think He arrived, and they all decided to have the Shabbat meal together. Palm Sunday, if we are right on the days, is, of course, the day after the Sabbath. The Sabbath supper is held Friday evening on our calendar. Since the Sabbath begins Friday after sunset, I believe this is the regular Sabbath meal, but it is a special neighborhood Sabbath meal.

Now Matthew 26:6 tells us that they held this meal in Simon the Leper's house. No doubt he was no longer a leper. And I have no

doubt that he is a leper that has been healed by Jesus. I have recommended before, he may have been that one leper that returned to thank Jesus when he healed ten of them. He may still be showing his gratitude in hosting this special Sabbath meal, in the village of Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

On this day of Palm Sunday and on Good Friday we want to consider Judas Iscariot, not the most uplifting of characters in Scripture. You see, this man was with Jesus on the trip from Galilee to Jericho and then up to Jerusalem, and he is with the disciples now, as we will see. This morning we are going to consider the life of Judas leading up to this Sabbath meal and then to Palm Sunday. Just two days before Palm Sunday, if my calculations are right, something happens to Judas.

I. JESUS' CALL OF JUDAS

Let us begin at the first reference to this man. We find it in Matthew 10. You might wish to turn there. As soon as Jesus' official ministry began, when he was 30 years old, He began to call disciples. He would eventually end up with 12. Who knows who the first apostle to be called was? You might jot down Matthew 4:18-21. It seems He called two at the same time, Peter and Andrew, his brother. But Peter heads the list.

So we go to Matthew 10 (**read** 1-4). "1 And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. 2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him."

It is an interesting thing that in all lists of the 12 disciples, Judas is always last. But note here that his name is Judas Iscariot. Now the name 'Judas' is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew 'Judah.' The name 'Judah' means *praised*, or *he shall be praised*. Amazing name for this man, is it not?

It has further been suggested by some that the name Iscariot might mean 'assassin'. That is not without reason, but it is more likely that it means Judas 'of Kerioth'. One

writer suggested that Kerioth was a city of Moab near Hebron. I think his name means Judas of Kerioth.

But notice further in Matthew 10:5-8 that Judas is included in being empowered by Christ. It says, "5 These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: 'Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. 6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' 8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give."

You have to picture this man Judas now. He went about preaching, and it is well possible that he healed people, cleansed lepers, raised the dead, and cast out demons. And that begs us to ask this question: Was Judas saved? Well, I think he was. I would not be upset with you at all if you disagreed with me.

There are several reasons I think he was a believer. You may wish to turn to John 17. First, I think he was likely a believer because Jesus chose him. Surely Jesus did not do that without some good reason. Then in Psalm 41:9 David, speaking prophetically of Judas said, "Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me." From those words it seems Judas was a good man. He was a friend of Jesus. The word 'familiar' friend is *shalom* friend. It is the Hebrew word for peace and in human relationships can speak of friendship.

And third, let us read John 17. In His prayer He said in verses 4-6, "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. 5 And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. 6 I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. **They were Yours**, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word." From this passage there is evidence that Judas was given to Jesus as a disciple by God (verse 6).

Then in verses 11-12 He prays like this: "11 Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. 12 While I

was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." One might conclude that the fact that Jesus says He lost Judas, indicates that at one time He had him.

There is a further point I would like to make here. It is regarding the words in verse 12, "...none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." Judas was lost in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. And here is the question one needs to wrestle through. You must put your thinking caps on now: Did God, in eternity past plan all that should take place? Did He plan that somebody had to kill Christ in order to make His plan work? So He put one devil in among Jesus' disciples to do this dirty deed and that disciple had no choice in the matter? God had pre-ordained it?

Here is the alternative to that: God, in His omniscience knew when He made man all that would transpire. In His foreknowledge He knew what Judas would do of his own free will. And so He foretold that in Scripture. So God's prophecies are not based on preplanning, but on His foreknowledge. Maybe that is a little over simplified, but this view is the one that I hold to.

II. JESUS FOREKNOWLEDGE OF JUDAS - BETRAYAL FORETOLD

Well, not only did God foreknow about Judas, but Jesus did too. If Judas was ever saved, it appears that he began to leave Christ quite early. We go to John 6. Jesus had spoken to the Jews about some things that offended them. He spoke of His being the bread of life and that unless they ate His flesh and drank His blood, they had no life in them (6:53). Well, He had a lot of followers, or disciples, and when they heard this, they were so offended that they left Him. So look at verses 66-71 (read).

Jesus had some very difficult things to teach, and some of it was offensive. Let me say this, for dabblers in Christianity, some things taught in the Bible are offensive as well. In Christ's day, those offended by His teaching simply went back to Judaism, which they had grown comfortable with. It says they walked with Him no more. In our day, people sometimes divide the church over those

things or they simply go to another church. You see, what Jesus was teaching was truth.

So Jesus asked the disciples, "Will you go away too?" Now listen to this. Peter said, "Lord..." Well, that actually says it all. But he continued, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of life." Those who are true Christians do not leave over hard things that are true. Those who are play acting leave over things that are true, if they are hard for them. And Peter said, "Also, we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Are you here as a Christian? Have you become so sure Jesus is the Christ that you can handle some hard things? Or, when things get a bit hard, are you tempted to leave? Or, worse yet, like Judas, are you playing the Christian? Look now at verses 70-71 (read). Jesus said Judas was a devil. The word 'devil' is *diabolos*, a slanderer. The Online Bible says that when this word is used metaphorically, it may be, and I quote, "...applied to a man who, by opposing the cause of God, may be said to act the part of the devil or to side with him."

Maybe you are in church and you are playing the Christian. But maybe you have already left the Lord. But family pressures and life in general keeps you hemmed in. Or maybe, like Judas, there is some benefit in staying in church. And you stay there, but in your heart you are not there. That is Judas. You see, I think Judas had found this Christian life a place of easy money. We will see this later. And just like Jesus knew Judas, He knows my heart and He knows yours.

III. SABBATH MEAL

We come now to another crucial step in the life of Judas. It is interesting that after John 6:71, we do not hear of Judas again until John 12. This is just days before Christ is crucified. In the introduction I told you about when Jesus came to Bethany, and they had the Sabbath meal in Simon the Leper's house. That is where we are now and it is here that we meet Judas again. I want to read the account, putting it together from all four Gospels.

"And now, when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came unto him a woman

having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, of spikenard. And she brake the box, and poured it on his head as he sat at meat. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?"

It is Matthew's Gospel that tells us that it was the disciples (plural) that were indignant about this woman's use of perfume. And Mark's Gospel says they were indignant within themselves. So it was not only Judas that was upset. It is possible that, because the others were indignant as well, that gave Judas the courage to voice his indignation. Listen as I read on: "Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, 'Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? For this ointment might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor.'" "

Now there we have a spiritual man, right? If a person is going to waste perfume, why not give it to the poor? To Judas, even that is almost like throwing it away, but at least somebody would get something out of it. Judas, you are so loving and so caring. Trent spoke to us about various kinds of lies a while ago, and here is a lie. Judas has painted a picture that makes him look more spiritual than Christ Himself! Christ allows this waste without even saying anything!

Hebrews 4:12, speaks of the Word of God as being sharper than any two-edged sword. It can divide between the thoughts and the intents of the heart. The word 'discerner' is the word *kritikos*, from which, no doubt, we get our word 'critical'. The Word of God can judge between our thoughts and our intentions, and they are not always the same. The word 'thoughts' is the word 'enthumeesis' and has as its root the word indignation or anger. And the word intents is the word 'enoia', with the idea of thinking, consideration, meditation, notion, or conception.

So listen to what the Word of God says, putting all the information from the Gospels together: "This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." Note first,

except for poor Judas' own self, he did not care about the poor. Oh to be honest with our words! Second, he was a thief! You see, it says he had the bag. That means he was the treasurer for Jesus' ministry.

I want to propose to you that Judas was the treasurer from the beginning. He was good with money, and it was his job. I suspect that not long into the ministry he found out just how easy it was to filch a little here and there and then it grew. It may even be, and I think it likely, that he began his own savings account from being a treasurer. Let me ask you, how much money do you think Jesus' ministry generated?

Go to Luke (read 1-3), "Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, 2 and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, 3 and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance."

Notice that they provided for Christ's ministry of their substance. Note that the wife of Herod's steward is there. John Gill says, "This man, here mentioned, was Herod's steward; a steward of Herod the "tetrarch," of Galilee. The Arabic version calls him his "treasurer"; and the Vulgate Latin, and the Ethiopic versions, his "procurator"; and some have thought him to be a deputy governor of the province under him; but he seems rather to be a governor, or "chief of his house," as the Syriac version renders it: he was one that presided in his family, and managed his domestic affairs; was an overseer of them..."

Now consider this. Sometimes great crowds followed Jesus. He had disciples who had been reasonably well to do. How much money do you suppose was donated by thankful people who had been healed, like Simon the Leper and many, many others? When do you think Judas started to pocket money? You see, we are told he was a thief.

Judas was a deceiver. Certainly by the time we come to this meal, he is fully in this ministry for his own personal gain. And now look at this woman, pouring out a whole expensive bottle of perfume. Enough to make a thief fume. A thief could have gotten this by recommending it be saved

and used to feed the poor. Here a whole pile of money could have gone into his bank account. He clearly indicates he knows the monetary value of this perfume. But couched in his very spiritual words is the hiss of the serpent. Judas said one thing, but the Lord accurately discerned the evil intent behind.

And what was the value of this bottle of perfume? Judas says it was worth more than 300 pence, or denari. A denari, we have learned, is worth about a day's wages. If this bottle was worth over 300 denari, it would be worth about a year's wages. And Judas is recommending that if they had given her a good deal, they could have bought it for 300 denari. Why that could have fed a lot of hungry mouths. And most certainly Judas would have been glad to distribute it!

Well, the passage further says, "And they murmured against her." Note the word 'they' as I read on: "And when Jesus understood it, then he said unto them, *Let her alone; why trouble ye the woman? for against the day of my burying hath she kept this. She hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: for in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial, she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.*"

(2000 words to go. Skip to **?) Now consider this woman. She is not the first woman to have used perfume on the Lord out of a grateful heart. There we have another such account. Go to Luke 7. Jesus told an account of a woman who did this in the house of a Pharisee. Well, that was enough to get the Pharisee going. It seems like the Pharisee was a Christian, but his hospitality had been seriously lacking. And Jesus indicated that it was because he had been forgiven little. Now look at verses 36-38 (read). Now why would a woman do that? But look at the Pharisee in verse 39 (read).

Well, in the rest of the story Jesus shows this Pharisee that this woman is doing this out of the gratitude of her heart. She has found forgiveness through Him. She was a sinner, but her sins were confessed, and she was clean and she was thankful. So Jesus said in verse 47, "Therefore I

say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven." What was the proof? She loved much! The Pharisee? He loved little!

**I propose to you that the woman the disciples were complaining about had been forgiven much. It was a joy to her to spend a year's worth of perfume on the One who forgave her. Her heart was so clean, she gave with gratitude. But Judas was not clean, and he complained.

Well, Judas had revealed something very, very dangerous when he opened his mouth at that Sabbath meal. His greed, his hunger for money had opened the door to Satan. And he tried to cover the malice in his heart with his supposed spiritual concerns. Let me now read on: "And then entered Satan into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, being one of the number of the twelve." What an incredible thing! You see, when Satan personally enters someone, we have an earthshaking evil about to take place. What we have now is Satan himself indwelling a man who has opened the door to his heart by allowing sin to rule him. Only once more do we read of Satan himself indwelling a person, and that is the antichrist. We take warning here that the love of money may open the door for demons. Scripture says the love of money is the root of all evil.

The accounts in the Gospels then go on to say that Judas now went to the chief priests and captains to find a way to betray Jesus to them. Judas is not aware of it, but his thinking is now not his own. Let me read on: "And he went his way, unto the chief priests, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them."

And with those words, in my understanding, we have just entered Palm Sunday and we will now consider that day in the life of Judas.

IV. PALM SUNDAY - PLANS TO BETRAY JESUS

When the passage we read said, "And he went his way, unto the chief priests, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them," it could have been right after the Sabbath meal. But I think it was not until Palm Sunday. The Sabbath meal was held on what we would have as Friday evening. When the sun set, the Jewish Sabbath began. This meal would have ended when it had been

dark for some time already. And the Sabbath continued from this evening until the next evening at sundown. Since the Jews were not allowed to travel on the Sabbath, it is not likely that Judas went on that next day either.

Furthermore, it is not likely he could have gotten a hearing with the overly scrupulous Jewish leaders until after the Sabbath. And it would not seem likely he would have been able to arrange to meet with them after sundown after the Sabbath. And if he is to betray Jesus, he has very little time left to get his work done. So no doubt he went to it as soon as he could, and so I think he begins on Palm Sunday.

Now, you see, the next morning was the first day of the week, Sunday. It is what we commemorate today as Palm Sunday. And it was a work day for the Jews. So we go to Luke 19 (read 29-32). I expect that most likely Judas went into the city with these disciples. And while the disciples went to get the donkey for Jesus to ride into Jerusalem on, Judas was busy making plans to betray Jesus. So, let me continue reading from the account I began earlier:

"And he went his way, unto the chief priests, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them, And said *unto them*, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And when they heard *it*, they were glad, and covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And he promised. And from that time he sought opportunity, how he might conveniently betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude."

If I am correct in my reasoning, throughout that day, while the disciples went to get the donkey for Jesus to ride on into Jerusalem, and brought it to Jesus, and while Jesus rode the donkey into Jerusalem and all the events of that day took place, Judas was busy meeting with Jewish leaders. And no doubt, all this had to be done in top secrecy.

Our passage says of Judas, "And he went his way, to the chief priests, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them, And said *unto them*, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And when they heard *it*, they were glad, and covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And he promised. And from that time he sought opportunity how he might

conveniently betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude."

Now notice what takes place. Judas went to the chief priests. An internet article said, "The high priest stood at the apex of an elaborate hierarchy of temple personnel. Directly beneath him in rank were the chief priests, an exclusive group of about 200 highborn Jews. The most important of them was the captain of the temple, second only in rank and power to the high priest. His duties included supervision of the whole body of priests and of all temple activities. Other chief priests had charge of the daily and weekly temple services, the temple treasury and the maintenance of the sacred vessels."

Now these chief priests had a lot of money and a lot of prestige; and they were very jealous of the following Jesus gathered wherever He went. They wanted nothing more than to kill Him. They were a very religious but very vicious lot. The captains of the temple were the temple guards. Now, this was the Passover time of year, and these priests were representatives out of all the nation. This time of year they all made their trip to Jerusalem. It was essential for the priests all to be there.

Luke 22:3 says Judas communed with them. They spoke together. They deliberated as to how to do this dastardly deed without causing an uproar among the people. This job took demonic cunning. And then Judas, ever money conscious, and having lost out on the woman's perfume, said, "What will you give me if I betray Him to you?" I think he knows how to do this in a way that the people won't get a chance to raise an uproar. Can you see this man? Can you see the cunning?

Matthew says they agreed to the price together. It would be thirty pieces of silver. I could not find any reliable way of determining how much thirty pieces of silver was worth. Estimates range from several hundred to thousands of dollars. But I do know this much, it was enough to buy a burial plot for himself and a plot large enough to bury other strangers who died in Jerusalem. And furthermore, a potter's field would have been quite a worthless piece of ground. Why would Judas do this for a sum that was not that great? Could it be that if he could get rid of Jesus, he would have freedom to start using his stash of money, if indeed he had one? Possible.

When Haman, in the story of Esther, built a huge gallows to hang Mordechai on; unbeknown to him, he had furnished his own death machine. When Judas agreed for 30 pieces of silver, he had earned enough to buy a burial plot for himself. The way of transgressors is hard. Let me make a note. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Here is an interesting thing. Hell is earned. Heaven is a gift. And Judas bought his own burial plot. Joseph of Arimathia, a rich man, provided a burial plot free of charge for Christ.

Well, after Judas and the Jewish leaders came to agreement on the amount of money he would get for the con job, Mark 14:11 says, he sought how he might conveniently betray Him. The word translated *conveniently* is *eukairos*. It is a time that will suit well. We know already that on the feast day would not suit well. And this day, when all the people were shouting Hosanna, would not be a good time either. A time at night, in the dark, that would be a good time!

I am still working on the chronology of the Gospels to seek to put everything in chronological order. There are a number of things I would not be dogmatic on. When Jesus finished giving Matthew 24-25, that we have looked at not too long ago, I believe it was Monday evening. Go to Matthew 26 (read 1-2). I think that by this time Judas has made his covenant with the Jewish leaders, and he is looking for the right time to betray Him. It is now only two days before the Passover, and look now at verses 3-5 (read).

Now, you see, they have murder on their mind. But they do not want to kill Jesus on the Passover, so they now have but a short time to kill Jesus. But everything has to be right, because they might cause an uproar among the people. How many people would have been in Jerusalem for the Passover in the time of Christ? An internet article said this: "It is often asked 'How many lived in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus?' But there is really no reliable source that would indicate any population figures during the time of Jesus. The main sources available estimate a population of around 80,000 to 100,000 citizens. But hundreds of thousands of Jews from the Diaspora which numbered around 4,000,000 visited Jerusalem for the

Passover and other festivals yearly with an estimated 3,000,000 people, both Jews and Gentiles, visiting Jerusalem during the Passover when the Lamb of God was lifted on a Roman cross." So an uproar could have been disastrous for both Judas and the Jewish leaders. Many people from all over Israel loved Jesus, and many of those were there for the Passover.

CONCL: And so we conclude this section of the story of Judas. We have looked at his call to be one of the 12 Apostles. I recommended that he was a saved person. And it seems that he ministered for some time. But it may be that early on, having the responsibility to take care of the finances of Christ's ministry, that the love of money set it. We are told that he was a thief. It is possible that he was putting money away for himself.

And then, as this grew, he may have finally just been along, playing the Christian for what he could get out of it financially. It is quite early on in the ministry of Christ that Christ said one of them was a devil. Would you not think that Judas should have made a discovery by then? But he continues on in the ministry. No doubt many a minister or missionary has traveled this path.

And then came that fateful Sabbath meal, and Judas indignation finally spilt over. Maybe he thought something like this, "Lord, how can you sit there and let such a waste take place? This bottle of perfume, Lord, don't you know how many poor it would feed?" And Satan stood ready. He needed somebody for a very important job, and here is his open door, and he entered. And from there on, with Satan abiding within, Judas is bent on getting rid of Christ. Oh, blind sin!

And in the next message, on the day we call Good Friday, we will do Paul Harvey's, 'The rest of the story.'