

Scripture Reading:

Luke 9:1 “1 Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. 2 He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. 3 And He said to them, "Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece. 4 Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. 5 And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them." 6 So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.”

Serving With Apostates Among Us

This morning we continue our journey through the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. We come to chapter nine of Luke’s orderly account which is seen by most as a transitional chapter. We see Jesus focused on the training of His disciples, we see the climax of His manifestation with the mount of transfiguration and then when the time comes for Him to be received up as the sacrifice for the sins of His people, Jesus “steadfastly sets His face to go to Jerusalem.” Our short morning reading revealed the 12 Disciples being sent forth to serve, preaching the Gospel, with power & authority over the demons and healing the sick. At the beginning of chapter ten we will see Jesus send out seventy disciples all leading up to the sending of His Church with the Great Commission to disciple the nations.

- **The twelve disciples here begin to learn that the Kingdom that Jesus is establishing will fill the whole earth!**

We will spend a good deal of time discussing the work of the Disciples in this chapter and much of the rest of Luke and Acts, so I will not focus on that this morning.

What I DO want to consider are a couple of facts that don't often get a lot of attention in this passage:

- **Jesus sends out twelve disciples**
- **Judas, the betrayer of Jesus, was sent as one of the twelve?**

In both cases we come face to face with questions that cannot be fully answered or understood outside of the mind of God:

- **Why was Judas one of the 12?**
- **And why twelve Disciples?**

Does the number twelve ring a bell? Anything from the Old Testament come to mind? Abraham had twelve sons who became the twelve nations of Israel... BUT that still leaves us with the question of why twelve??

- **How about 3x4? Three [the number of our Triune God] time four [representing the four corners of the earth] to give us 12?**

Maybe, and maybe not... Very *Speculative!*

Fact is, we are not told explicitly in the same way we don't know why God chose seven days for Creation:

- **But 12 sons and seven days have been revealed & so we should take careful note when we see these numbers in the Scriptures.**

So, the twelve disciples should remind us of the twelve tribes. As Jesus instructs them and then commands them to go and disciple the nations, another picture from the Old Testament should come to mind.

- **It involves the number 70, which is linked to the 12 tribes:**

If someone asks you what is contained in the early chapters of Genesis, how would you answer? We could outline it like this:

Creation & Fall of Man

-- promise given to Adam

Cain & Abel

The Flood

-- promise given to Noah

Tower of Babel

Calling of Abram

-- promise given to Abraham

That would be good and have a nice focus on God's promises...

It also leaves out most of those boring lists of names you missed!

- **There is much more between the flood and Abraham than a few verses about the tower of Babel**

Here God lays the ground work for the work of His Kingdom: After the flood, in Genesis chapter ten, we are given a LONG list of the descendents of Noah's children who became the nations of the earth: With the conclusion in verse 32: "These were the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their nations; and from these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood."

We are quickly told how they were divided at Babel at the beginning of chapter 11 and then MOST of that chapter gives more details about the children of Shem which bring us to Abram. So if you look carefully in chapter 10, you will find 14 descendents from Japheth, 30 from Ham and 26 from Shem which gives us seventy nations: Abraham then has twelve sons whose calling was to minister to these 70 nations: Genesis 22:18: "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." The promise is repeated to Isaac in Genesis 26:4 "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed"

They were to minister to the nations and that will now be fulfilled in Jesus as HE sends forth His Church with the great commission.

Among all the 12's & 70's in the Bible [*and there are many!*], we see a glimpse of this promise as God's people journeyed from Egypt to the promised land in Numbers 33:9 "At Elim were 12 springs of water & 70 palm trees; so they camped there."

- **Twelve springs to water the seventy trees: A picture of 12 tribes blessing the 70 nations!**

We have 12 Patriarchs becoming twelve tribes and now 12 Disciples who become twelve Apostles, so it should NOT surprise us to see the twenty four thrones before God in Revelation chapter 4!

- **All of this reminds us WHY we should be people of the Word!**

I trust that I have shown that we have an important group of 12 disciples being trained and sent out to do some pretty important work:

And having established that, we come to our second question... The question that will lead to our “practical” applications for today!

- **Why was Judas numbered among the twelve disciples??**
- **The question of Judas obviously raises the issue of apostasy:**
- **Apostasy... A falling away, rejecting the faith or betrayal as with Judas**
- **It does happen!**
 - A critical pastoral question –**
 - discipline cases**
 - family members**
 - public scandals**
- **The question of apostasy is ultimately related to the assurance of our salvation!**

Judas would betray our Lord and be replaced by another faithful disciple in Acts chapter one: This was foreshadowed in the tribes when we find Dan replaced by Manasseh the son of Joseph when the tribes of Israel are sealed in Revelation, just as Jacob predicted long before as he blessed his 12 children in Gen 49:17 “Dan shall be a serpent by the way, A viper by the path, That bites the horse's heels So that its rider shall fall backward.”

BUT any discussion of apostasy must be carried on within the context of our Biblical understanding of the security of our salvation – very practical.

As we have proclaimed these past two weeks, the Bible clearly teaches that those who are given the gift of saving faith are secure in the hands of our Savior Jesus:

No one can take us out of His hand and we saw that He comforts His people in whatever circumstances they may find themselves!

This is the great Reformation doctrine of the preservation of the Saints which we boldly proclaim!

- **So why do we find in the New Testament warnings about falling away? Warnings like those in the Book of Hebrews that we use in the order of worship today?**

This is a very important issue to wrestle with AND we want to make sure that we do so looking at ALL that the Scriptures have to say:

- **As Pastor Doug Wilson has pointed out many times, those who believe in the security of salvation should not have “their” set of verses like John chapter ten, while those who think Saints can loose their salvation have “their” verses and can quote Hebrews.**

NO, we must have a view of salvation that conforms with ALL the verses in Scripture and if we run into some that are difficult then we must continue to refine our understanding of salvation until it conforms with all of what the Bible clearly reveals!

- **Obviously, there have been debates raging for centuries regarding this issue & we won’t have the final word on the matter this morning!**

But I am amazed at how little of the discussion has centered on Judas, who I believe gives us the best Scriptural example of just what apostasy is and what it is not!

- **It demonstrates how we serve with apostates among us and gives a glimpse of the why this is so...**

Let us think about some questions that might be asked:

- **Was Judas a member of God’s covenant people?—Yes, he was circumcised**
- **Was Judas a disciple? – Yes, he was called by Christ Himself!**
- **Did Judas serve as a disciple? – Yes, he was empowered & sent out**
- **Was his betrayal a surprise to Jesus? – NO, John records the final prayer of Jesus where he says in part: “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.”**
- **Was Judas saved? – NO, Jesus said it would have been better if he were not born**
- **Did Judas loose his salvation? – Biblically we must say NO, because those who are saved are chosen from before the foundation of the**

world and Jesus promised that He would lose NONE of those who the Father gives Him!

Now these are questions that we can give clear answers to from the Scriptures and if we stuck to them, there would be much less confusion in the Church!

Here are some we often want to ask:

- **Did Judas think he was saved? – Maybe and maybe not**
- **Did Judas think he was doing the right thing? – Perhaps if he wanted only an earthly messiah**
- **Did the other Disciples think Judas was saved – certainly appeared that way**
- **Could the other disciples tell that Judas was going to betray Jesus? – they should have since Jesus warned them, something we will meditate on at the Table...**

These types of questions create much discussion & speculation but provide little insight that is of value

- **And then there are the \$64,000 questions WE can't resist asking:**
- **Why was Judas one of the disciples?**

Here we don't much like the answer that we must give IF we are faithful to the Scriptures:

- **We simply do not know because God has not revealed His reasons!**
- **And in the same way we ask why were the other eleven chosen for heaven and glory and Judas condemned to hell?**
- **Why did God choose some and not others?**
- **How can God who did not choose Judas for salvation hold Him accountable for his sin?**

These are similar to the questions that the Apostle Paul wrestles with in Romans chapters 9-11, with a good example found in 9:9...

“Why does [God] still find fault? For who has resisted His will?”

- **And in our flesh, we don't much care for Paul's answer:**

“But indeed O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to Him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this? Does not the potter have the power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?” We often pass over what we can clearly know to ponder what God tells us we should not ponder: God chose and granted His saving grace to Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, *the Son of Alphaeus*, Thaddaeus, and Simon giving them eternal life...

- **But He left Judas destined for damnation according to His just and righteous purposes**
- **The betrayal of Judas took Jesus to the Cross**
- **The eleven took the Good News to the world.**

As Paul says at the end of Romans 11 “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!”

- **There are some questions where it is beyond our ability to have full answers as creatures: We must humbly accept God’s purposes!**
- **Now I went through all of these questions to make the point again that the situation of Judas should be front and center when we consider the question of apostasy..**
- **Apostasy happens and apostacy happens in our midst.**
- **Just like the disciples, we as Saints in the Church today serve Jesus with apostates in our midst.**

Jesus explains this clearly in one of His parables about the Kingdom in Matthew chapter 13: [explain the parable]

- **A pretty straight forward parable, but the disciples needed some more explanation!**

In verse 36 we read: “Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." 37 He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. 39 The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the

end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. 40 Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. 41 The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

- Some might object that we can easily tell wheat from weeds – How does this apply to Judas?
- Must remember that Satan comes as an angel of light...
- And perhaps an even clearer & more helpful image comes from Jesus at the Last Supper just after Judas left to betray our Lord...

John 15: “1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

- So the question was not whether Judas was circumcised
- The issue was not whether Judas was called to be a disciple
- The issue was not whether Judas was empowered and served as a Disciple of Christ

The issue was whether Judas was abiding in Christ and bearing fruit

- He was a branch, certainly
- He was alive certainly
- BUT he bore no fruit!

- **Those who are God’s elect have the promise that they as His sheep will hear His voice: EVEN when it is calling us to faithfulness and warning against apostasy.**
- **We will serve with apostates among us: BUT we need never fear becoming one!**

This does not mean we never have an occasion to ask as the disciples did at the Last Supper: “Lord is it I.” BUT it does mean that we, as His sheep, will hear Him say to the Father, “Of those you have given me I have lost none!”

- **Judas was no longer there to hear those comforting words!**

In closing let me quickly review a few things that apostasy is NOT so there is no confusion, especially with our young people!

- **You are in NO danger of apostasy because you have honest doubts:**

Think of the young father who cried, “Jesus I believe, help my unbelief!” or even doubting Thomas -- Judas made no cry for help!

- **You are in NO danger of apostasy because you have some of your theology wrong**

Think of Peter who got it so wrong that Jesus had to say “get behind me Satan!” or even later when Paul had to rebuke him publically. We have seven letters to churches in Revelation for our instruction: Consider how much doctrine had to be corrected there! -- Judas was unteachable

- **You are in NO danger of apostasy because you sin**

The example of King David certainly comes mind and we are called to confession throughout our Christian walk with John saying we call God a liar if we say we have no sin. The question is not whether we sin, but whether we confess & repent! -- Judas did NOT repent: Even when he clearly saw that what he had done was wrong!

- **Apostasy is often not obvious**

What if we compared Judas and Nicodemus at this point: Judas proclaiming the Gospel & healing the sick, Nicodemus sneaking around at night & being rebuked by Jesus

-- In the end, Judas was hanging himself in the field of blood as Nicodemus came to bury Jesus

➤ **We must NOT compare our walk with that of others...
Our eyes must be on Jesus!**

➤ **Because the bottom-line is that apostasy does NOT happen to God's elect, the sheep who hear His voice, the branches on the vine that are bearing His fruit!**

We should not wring our hands and wonder if we are going to someday be revealed as the Judas of our time:

➤ **We should rejoice as God's people who serve the Lord:**

Our Lord, who saved the 11 disciples The ones who doubted, stumbled, sinned, ran and hovered in fear...

And ALL of this as they were on their way to turning the world upside down for Jesus!

YES, like them, we will serve with apostates among us... Like Judas

➤ **Jesus has said it will be so until the final harvest when He comes in all His Glory**

BUT we serve as the sheep who hear the Shepherd's voice –

As those pruned branches, who abide in Jesus and bear much fruit!

Communion Meditation:

John 6:60 "When many of his disciples heard it, they said, This is a hard saying; who can listen to it? 61 But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, Do you take offense at this? 62 Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64 But there are some of you who do not believe. (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) 65 And he said, This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father. 66 After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. 67 So Jesus said to the Twelve, Do you want to go away as well? 68 Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, 69 and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God. 70 Jesus answered them, Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil. 71 He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him."