

April 10, 2022
Palm Sunday
Pastor Matt Duerr

“Witnesses to Christ-The Unexpected One”

Grace, Mercy and Peace be to you, from God, our Father and from our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, Amen. As we continue our sermon series on witnesses to Christ, again I'd like to begin with a little recap of where we've been. We began with the forerunner, John the Baptist who prepared the way of the Lord, making strength his paths. But he also identified Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

In our second week we had the insider, Nicodemus, the pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin who came to Jesus at night, who supported his right to a trial, and who ended up breaking ranks with the other Pharisees' and actually buried Jesus.

In week three we had the outsider, a Samaritan woman at the well, who talked with Jesus and ran back to her town saying, 'come and see this man He's told me everything about my whole life. Could He be the Christ?' And the people came out and they met with Jesus, and He stayed with them two days in many of them believe that He was the promised Messiah.

Last week we had the apostle, John. The one who wrote his gospel without focusing on himself at all. But focusing totally on Jesus, his teachings, and who he really was. And then ended his gospel by saying, 'these he has written, so that we might believe, and by believing we have eternal life in Christ. Witness number five is the unexpected one.

I imagine it would go something like this. The attorney would probably say something like; I would like to thank you for coming and joining us today for this proceeding. And I imagine the response would be-believe me, it's my pleasure, anything to change my course or my condition right now. OK, well that being the case, could you please state your name for the court. My name is Judas Iscariot. Is it correct that you are a follower, a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth? Yes, that is correct.

Why were you a follower of Jesus of Nazareth? How did you become one of His disciples? There is really nothing extraordinary about me. Like all the other disciples, Jesus said follow me and I followed Him.

You mentioned disciples, how many disciples were there? There were twelve of us. You just share just because He said follow me why would you follow him? I mean do you follow everybody who just says follow me? Yeah, oh no, no, no, you have to understand. We were all Hebrew people, Jewish people, we've been raised in the Torah in the scriptures. We knew that there was prophecy, there was promise of a coming Messiah. And things had actually kind of hit a fevered pitch. Because one of the prophets, Daniel, had laid out the timing for the coming Messiah. And it was right at that time, and so many children were named Jesus, or Joshua which means he saves. And there were many people who rose up and claimed to be the Messiah and had quite a following. There was this guy named Theudas who had over 400 men following him. But yeah, well he got too big for his britches, and he died, and all his followers were scattered because well he was dead. And then there was a guy kind of like me, whose name was Judas the Galilean. It was the same thing; he had a pretty good following and then he died, and they all scattered.

OK, so what made this Jesus different? That's a good question. Jesus was different because of one word, power. He was a powerful teacher. He knew the Torah like no one else and he just absolutely confounded and befuddled the religious leaders. They just could not argue with him when it came to scripture. But second, signs. He was a miracle worker that was the key. The key? The key what? Well, the key to everything! Power, Jesse confounded the leaders, but when he began to heal people, even raised three from the dead. It was pretty obvious that the power of God was flowing through Him, and with that power he would be able to fulfill the role of the Messiah and overthrow the Roman oppressors.

My buddy Simon the zealot, who also became one of the disciples, boy he really caught on and tied into that. I'm sorry, I'm losing something in the translation; to what? Into the prophecies, the scriptures, to what

was said about the Messiah. The Messiah would quote “bring His people back.” Because so you would overthrow our oppressor the Messiah or you probably will understand this. He wouldn't make us great again; He was going to make us the greatest! The greatest nation ever, forever and ever Amen.

Ok, all right, so that all sounds good, pretty spectacular, but lets go back to why did you follow him what was it for you? What was the draw? Seriously? So, we could get in on the ground floor, be a part, be an insider, be part of His cabinet. All the nations would come to Him, and to us. Because He would be with us in Jerusalem. The nations would bow before Him and us. And they would bring their tithes, their offerings, to us.

We're talking about a whole new world order with Jerusalem right there in the center. Imagine the prestige and the power that would come with being one of the twelve, a cabinet of twelve. We're talking so much bigger than what Israel was used to. Israel, the twelve tribes of Jacob, of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It's a single family in all of history, in all the world. And we're now talking every family coming. This is world dominion, all of it! And I was good with numbers, so naturally I'd made the obvious selection to be their treasure, overseer of the finances. Matthew, Levi was good with numbers too, but he was a tax collector. He'd never get past that reputation, because tax collectors always took people for as much as they could.

But I understand things. Like today, I understand the Taco Bell I understand the McDonald's. Sell cheap, many will come, you'll make more money if you just take less but get a lot to come. We'd have the whole world coming, I just take a tiny percentage, no one would care. I don't need to get greedy. But then again, I'd be wealthier than any tax collector ever!

Oh my, that does sound rather lucrative and prestigious. Oh yeah, indeed it was. People were coming already from all over to see Him. His support group grew, there were there were men and a group of women that were following and taking care of our every need. And of course,

people make donations. Gifts were rolling in but when he would pull off a miracle, boy things really started to happen. Then oh my goodness, in the last weeks there when he raised Lazarus from the dead, man that really ramped things up. Things were going amazing! It's you know what a lead in, an absolutely lead in, if Jesus would just play His cards right and... What? Wait a second? A lead in? Play His cards right? What are you talking about? It's why we're all here on this day, the triumphal entry. I've got to tell you Jesus has class; He knew how to do things right. He came into Jerusalem on a donkey because that would fulfill prophecy in Zechariah 9, verse 9. And the people were so excited. They were proclaiming Him as the victorious Messiah, the One who was. It was almost like He had already overthrown Rome. They were waving the palm branches, a symbol of victory. They were crying out His praise as they put their cloaks on the grounds so that not even the donkeys' feet touched the ground.

And of course, all this noise and all this attention on Jesus, well it made the religious leaders quite jealous. They told Jesus to rebuke the people, tell them to be quiet. And He came back with, if I tell them to be quiet even the rocks will cry out. I tell you I was kind of waiting for that, that would show power, wouldn't it? But He didn't. But yeah, it was just it was amazing, it was fascinating, it was exciting, and it so promising! And to be completely honest, He blew it! Things are at a fevered pitch. He goes to the temple, looks around him, says 'see you later.' And He leaves. The next day, He comes back, goes back to the temple and He clears the temple. And again, He leaves. OK after that in the next couple days, He comes back and what did He do? Well, He teaches in the temple, but He confronts the religious leaders, and He turns them against Him! It was crazy! Crazy? Yes, Crazy, crazy! He needed them. For someone who was so bright and knew so much scripture, He had no concept that it was the religious leaders who would identify the Messiah and say, 'here He is.' They were the ones who would oversee the coronation, shall we say. And Jesus alienated them. He got too big for His britches, just like Judas the Galilean and that Theudas guy. He was heading for a showdown. Not with our oppressor, Rome, but with our own religious leaders.

OK, so what did you do? I did the obvious thing. I sided in with the religious leaders. Jesus had lost His way. He didn't understand. He needed to get back on track. So, I made an arrangement to turn Him over to the religious leaders for 30 pieces of silver. And that way, they could arrest Him, put Him in place, get Him on track, and then together we could move on as a united front and get rid of Rome.

And? Well, I led them to Him, and they arrested Him and then they immediately pursued His execution. They didn't even follow their own law. Hypocrites! They misled me. So, I took the money back and do you know what their response was? "What's that to us? What's that to us?" It was terrible! It was tragic! They put me in such a difficult spot.

What spot did they put you in? I can't believe this. You don't understand? I was stuck. Obviously, there was no place for me with Jesus anymore or those disciples because I had given Him over. And of course, I had no place with the Jewish leaders. They had shown their true colors. And then who in the world would hire me? The crowds loved Him! They called me the betrayer. There was no place for me to go. It was hopeless. I was put in a hopeless spot. So, what did you do? I took my life, committed suicide. Oh my! That's certainly, you were desperate!

I still am. One minute I find myself crying and weeping. I had it all. It's just like that, I lost it all. It's just not fair! How was I to know how Jesus was going to be? How was I to know that these religious leaders were going to act like that? They both took advantage of me. And when I think of that, how they both took so much advantage of me, I get angry. I get really angry. Why didn't He play it different? It could have been so much better! If He had that power, why didn't He just make the people believe? He could have done that, but did He? No! And then on top of that, He had the gall, He had the gall to call me a son of perdition. Do you think anybody is going to hire that son of perdition? He labeled me. He made me an outcast! He ruined me!

Wow! I have to tell you Judas, I certainly did not expect things to go this way today, but yet, I have to say something. I thank you for coming because what you have said really does solidify some things for

me. It explains something that I really struggled with in the past. You've got to be kidding me! What in the world could I have said? I'll put it bring you some sort of closure it sounds like You see there was something that Jesus said that I've always struggled with when he talks about judgment, He says there, 'there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, in that outer darkness.' Yes, yes, so? Well Judas, you just lived it for me. You're weeping, you're crying as you said because you blame Jesus, and you feel sorry for yourself. That makes you angry. I can see you gnash your teeth against Him because you're not willing to look in the mirror and see that you we're the one who rejected Him, not He you. You've made that very clear to me. And it makes it very clear, as I look at the world. There are many who are drunk on power, and in it for themselves, and are not looking for the world to come. In our Saviors' Name, Amen.