

Politics of the Passion: **Mar 18: The Traitor without a Cause** Luke 22:47-53

Intro: I want to think with you about Judas and why he betrayed Jesus. As we do this, I want to keep the question in mind, “Could I betray Jesus also?”

How do you picture Judas? (Show Michelangelo’s Judas).

I was surprised to learn that the great-grandfather of Benedict Arnold, the famous traitor of the American Revolution, helped Roger Williams establish the colony of Rhode Island and actually served as its president. According to John Barry, Williams’ biographer, Arnold was no friend of Williams, but he did care about his own property. Self-interest ran in the family I guess.

The root word for “traitor” in the NT is *prodidomi* which means “to give forward into the hands of another.” This is the picture of “hand him over.” I hold something in my hands, but it is not precious to me. I give it to someone who seeks to destroy it. My actions declare that I do not value what is in my hands, but I value instead what the transfer can bring me.

Judas turned against Jesus (Matthew 26:14-16): *Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests 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. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.*

Here are a few things we learn from the story of Judas:

**I. Familiar Does Not Mean Faithful:** *a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them* (Luke 22:47)

A. Judas knew Jesus of Nazareth as well as anyone. He traveled with him in the inner circle for three years. He was at the supper table in the Upper Room (Luke 22:21). But as it turns out, he was not faithful to Christ.

B. You can be familiar with the teachings of Jesus and the gospel of Christ, but not be faithful to them.

C. People who are familiar but not faithful betray Jesus because FAITHFULNESS is the core of the teaching of Jesus. He is the one who said, “I am the Good Shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).

**II. Affection Does Not Mean Devotion:** *He approached Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus asked him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”* (Luke 22:47-48).

A. I think Judas chose the kiss because he wanted Jesus to know that he cared for him even though he was betraying him.

1. “Jesus, I love you, man, but you are not who you think you are, and you are not going where I want to go.”

B. You can have affection for Jesus of Nazareth and like him a lot without being devoted to him and to his cause.

1. People the world over admire Jesus of Nazareth as a moral teacher and an upright man. They delight in his stories and regret his terrible death.

2. But they do not follow that affection with a commitment to Christ as Savior. They are not devoted to him as Lord.

C. People who have affection but not devotion betray Christ because they care for him not as he was but as they want him to be. Jesus claimed to be God: “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). To have affection with devotion is to treat Jesus with pity and condescension, as if he were insane, claiming to be God.

**III. Cooperation Does Not Mean Consent:** *Judas had the bag* (John 13:29).

A. Judas appeared to be the treasurer of the group. He objected to the anointing of Jesus by Mary because, he said, the money could have been given to the poor. His focus on the money was the problem. John recorded, *He did not say this because he cared for the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it* (John 12:6).

B. You can cooperate with Jesus when his interests intersect your own without giving consent to his claims to be Messiah.

1. Judas never bought into the King on a Donkey idea, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah. He wanted Jesus to be the Son of David in the way that David was king.

2. People today do the same thing. They will follow Jesus as long as his steps lead where they want to go. But if Jesus veers into servanthood and suffering, they part ways with him.

C. Jesus demands consent. It is a betrayal the essence of his teaching to walk with him only in the easy steps, the steps that feed your ego or materialism.

1. The way of Christ is the way of serving. It is laying down your life. Do not call yourself a Christian if you are not willing to deny yourself and take up your cross.

**IV. Hearing Does Not Mean Understanding:** “Every day I was with you in the temple courts” (Luke 22:53).

A. Jesus was daily in the temple courts teaching the people. His enemies were listening to his words. We know the essence of his message because we have his stories and his discourses.

B. Judas heard the teaching. So did the servants of the high priest. So do many others today.

C. But hearing does not guarantee understanding. Sometimes we have not “ears to hear,” as Jesus said often. Sometimes we refuse to understand plain English but consent requires a life change, the surrender of practices and attitudes that contradict the Savior.

D. Many people in our churches are “Christianized” but are not Christian. They have a form of godliness but they deny Christ the power to change their lives. They have never sincerely trusted Christ. This is not something new. It is something old. Like Judas and Ananias and Sapphira and Demas, who loved this present world, they are hearing but not comprehending.

E. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). What do you do with that? Do you receive it and believe it or dismiss it? It is not an aside or a detour in the teaching of Jesus. It is right at the core.

**V. Remorse Does Not Mean Peace:** *he was seized with remorse* (Matthew 27:3).

A. Matthew 27:3-5: *When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. “I have sinned,” he said, “for I have betrayed innocent blood.”*

*“What is that to us?” they replied. “That’s your responsibility.”*

*So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.*

1. Luke records the demise of Judas in this way in Acts 1:18-19: *With the reward he got for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called the field in their language Akeldama, that, Field of Blood.*

The guides will show you near Jerusalem the traditional site for this field with a cliff on it. Taking the two accounts it is likely that Judas hung himself over a cliff where his body fell.

B. Judas betrayed the Savior, but he had no peace about it. He did not sleep well at night knowing that he did the right thing.

1. He told himself it was the right thing to do, that Jesus was headed down a dead end path.

2. But in the end he knew that his betrayal of Jesus was for selfish motives and displayed a weakness of character.

3. He could not live with himself, so he took his own life.

C. The temptation to betray Jesus, to be familiar but not faithful, to give affection without devotion, and to cooperate without giving consent is not the path to peace.

1. Jesus is a complex figure in history. But he is not self-contradictory. We can see the various facets of his life. But we malign him when we treat him as schizophrenic or morally flawed, a good man who was mistaken about his own identity or pretended to be God’s Son.

2. The only consist way to relate to Jesus is as Savior and Lord. Everything else requires betrayal at some level.

D. THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE for Jesus as Savior. To deny his Lordship is to be at sea without a rudder.

1. “Will you also go away?” Jesus asked his disciples when the crowds got angry and departed. Peter replied, “To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that are the Holy One of God” (John 6:68-69).

2. Then Jesus said (John 6:70), “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!” (He meant Judas, John wrote).

3. We do not escape the MORAL IMPLICATIONS of our betrayal of Jesus. If we fail to receive him as Savior, we certainly will face him as Judge.

**Conclusion:** “No more of this!” Jesus said when Peter cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant. Jesus was bringing to an end the idea that the sword could accomplish what God wanted done in his world. He was insisting that “swords and clubs” were not strong enough to achieve the victory he sought in the human heart. Only the Donkey King could bring such peace.