

Today we're studying the life of what is one of the most frightening individuals in the Bible, *Judas*. It is not that Judas is a Hitler or monstrous. It's that Judas was so close to Jesus for so long but still so far away. It ties in with our Scripture reading this morning, that we really do not know the condition of someone else's heart. The Bible teaches that there are many we know, that we sit beside, serve alongside, who know the right words...yet do not have a real relationship with Jesus Christ. Like Judas, they're **Counterfeit Disciples**.

Personally, I find it heartbreaking. Potentially, it means some sitting here this morning do not really know Jesus. It means that some, though everyone around you believes you're a Christ-follower, it's all a sham and God knows that it is. The bottom line is that you are a **Counterfeit Disciple**.

In a few weeks, an animated version of John Bunyan's classic, *Pilgrim's Progress* (**picture**) will hit theaters. In the book version, as Bunyan closes his allegory, Faithful is almost Home to heaven and Bunyan (**picture**) writes this tragic line: "*Then I saw that there was a way to hell, even from the gate of heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction.*" Bunyan was pointing out something the New Testament makes crystal clear by both precept and example. One can have all the seeming evidences of a Christ-follower and not know Christ, but be a **Counterfeit Disciple**.

That's the case in our passage this morning. We're coming to the end of our series, *Finding Jesus*, the study of the Gospel of Luke. We only have 174 verses to go. Some of you feel like we have been in Luke for years, that's because we have been studying Luke for years.

No one is a clearer example of a **Counterfeit Disciple** than Judas. He's the central character in our passage. Please turn to Luke 21:37 (p. 881) and we're marching right through to 22:6. Judas lives on today as a warning to anyone living a sham Christianity without having placed their faith in Jesus Christ.

Counterfeit Christians aren't atheists or agnostics. In fact, Counterfeit Christians would be offended to be described with such labels. They believe in God. They take seriously their "Christian" traditions, prayer in schools, nativity scenes, or even Linus reciting the story of the birth of Christ during *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. Counterfeit Christianity admires Jesus but doesn't think that He's needed, except to "take the wheel" in a moment of crisis.

The God of Counterfeit Christianity gives little thought to the fact that God is holy and people have sinned against Him. Words such as hope, faith, and love hang on the walls of living rooms as decorations, but the actual words of God only come around when Psalm 23 is read at a loved one's funeral.

Getting those who think they're Christians to see that they actually are not is difficult, yet not unique to our day. The Sermon on the Mount can be a starting point for understanding counterfeit Christianity, where Jesus addressed the distant cousins of our contemporary over-churched, underreached. Those who were religious, but unrepentant. What the Sermon on the Mount directly addresses, Judas Iscariot personifies. If you're taking notes...

**In spite of opposition we must focus on our God-given mission.** "*And every day [Jesus] was teaching in the temple, but at night He went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet. And early in the morning all the people came to Him in the temple to hear Him.*" How do you do when you know a crisis is looming before you? Are you able to focus? Can you work? Accomplish what you need to accomplish?

Jesus knows about the pending Passover Plot and all about the conspiracy. He's always known. In less than 72 hours, He knows that He'll be betrayed, beaten and nailed to a Roman cross, where because of our sin and guilt being placed on Him, Jesus will be separated from His Father for the very first time in all of eternity. Yet, what is He doing? He's sticking to His mission.

Tim McGraw (**picture**) had a hit some years ago, *Live like you were dying*:

*He said "I was in my early forties With a lot of life before me  
And a moment came that stopped me on a dime  
I spent most of the next days, Looking at the x-rays  
Talkin' 'bout the options, And talkin' 'bout sweet time"  
I asked him, "When it sank in That this might really be the real end  
How's it hit you When you get that kind of news?  
Man, what'd you do?"  
He said, "I went skydiving  
I went Rocky Mountain climbing  
I went 2.7 seconds on a bull named Fumanchu  
And I loved deeper, And I spoke sweeter*

*And I gave forgiveness I'd been denying"  
And he said, "Someday I hope you get the chance  
To live like you were dying."*

We're all dying. We just don't know when, as Jesus did. If you're living for Jesus, learning the precise moment shouldn't change much in your life. Each of us has a mission, a God-given purpose. Though knowing His earthly clock was ticking, Jesus sticks to His mission and continues to teach in the temple. To give us an overall picture, this is a map (**picture**) of Jerusalem at the time of Christ.

This passage marks a major transition in Luke's Gospel. It becomes very focused on Jesus' ultimate mission, His sacrificial death and resurrection, the climax to which all that which preceded it has been headed. The cross is the pinnacle of redemptive history. Everything that came before it looked forward to it. It's the central theme of the early church and Apostles' teaching.

Though the shadow of the cross was falling over His life, Jesus teaches thousands every day in the temple courts. If we're wise, we'll do what those throngs did, we'll listen to Jesus.

Yet, something else was happening. Dark chords play in the background of Luke's Gospel. As many flock to listen to Jesus, it both infuriates and worries the Jewish leaders. They're concerned that things will get out of hand and secretly opposed everything Jesus was teaching. The more popular He became, the more determined they were to take Him out. And Jesus knows all that and sticks with His mission. When you think about it, it's amazing.

***What's your mission?*** What's God called you to do? Too many of us are distracted from God's mission for us *today*, because we're grieving about *yesterday* or anxious about *tomorrow*. How did Jesus stay focused? It's our answer, too. He had complete confidence in His Heavenly Father.

Why are we distracted? It's often because we don't trust our Heavenly Father to forgive and clean up yesterday, or we're not sure God has firm handle on tomorrow. Faith and focus go together. Jesus has complete calm before the storm because He trusts in the One who is in control of the storm. Do you?

**2. The religious can be the most ruthless.** *"And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put Him to death, for they feared the people."* Last Tuesday I was listening to the *World News* podcast. Mindy Belz (**picture**) shared a heartbreaking story of Yazidi girls enslaved by ISIS.

Non-Muslim captives are treated as property, not people. These girls were chained to walls, left in dark basements with dozens of women and children, without toilet facilities or even a bucket, for days. Some were starved. Nearly all were raped. Of more than 6,700 Yazidi women and girls captured, 3,000 are still in captivity. Some have managed to escape over the last 5 years. Most are young women, some are girls.

Martine (**picture**) was enslaved by ISIS as a sex slave when she was 8-years old. She was "sold" to an Iraqi fighter in his 40s, a married man with four children. ISIS men receive monthly stipends based on how many women they own; \$50 per woman and \$35 per child. Martine though is the first case of a girl this young used as a sex slave. One has to wonder how these are not war crimes? **The religious can be the most ruthless.** But it's not just Muslims. The history of religion is filled with cruelty and soaked with innocent blood.

Christians are often described as "religious," but we're not. We're not *religious*, we're committed to a *relationship* with Jesus Christ. We're committed to the One who laid down His life for us. We're the people who are to turn the other cheek because our Lord let them snatch the beard from His.

There's a great irony here. Those who hate Jesus believe that they love God and are serving Him, yet ignorantly they're serving a diabolical purpose. It's often the case of those who act in the name of religion. That's how...

***A time for purifying became a period of evil.*** *"Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover."* The feast of Unleavened Bread was one of three major feasts in the Jewish calendar. Pentecost and the Feast of Booths are the other two. It was the be a time for purification.

The Jewish leaders had different reasons for hating Jesus. The chief priests despise Him because He'd hurt them economically. Jesus cleared the money changers out of the temple. The scribes and Pharisees loathe Him because of His relentless assault on their false, legalistic system.

Hatred, loathing or despising someone is never of God. Hatred is a "heart" sin. Any hateful thought or act is murder in God's eyes. Hatred is so heinous before God that someone who hates is said to be walking in darkness. In other words, God says that they're unregenerate. Yet, these religious leaders hate Jesus and conspire to murder Him. It'd be like Tony Evans (**picture**), Beth Moore (**picture**) and John Piper plotting to assassinate Tom Hanks (**picture**)? That's how shocking this should be!

Love for people, not hate, is what distinguishes Christ-followers. Corrie Ten-Boom (**picture**) told of a comment her father made about a pastor who visited them and told them they shouldn't be involved in protecting Jews from the Nazi's; "*Just because a mouse is in the cookie jar doesn't make it a cookie.*"

Luke uses the word "*unleavened.*" The feast of Unleavened Bread was a period before Passover when you were to clear all of the leaven (yeast) out of your home. Leaven is symbolic of sin throughout Scripture. They were to take a candle and diligently search for any of it. At a time when they're to symbolically clear sin from their *homes*, hatred fills their *hearts*. Passover was a time to celebrate life, that their lives were spared, yet the religious leadership plots to end the life the One who came to bring life. Their evil intentions show that even someone in a God-given place of spiritual leadership is capable of the most heinous of sins. It's why we must keep our eyes on Jesus, not men.

But the most vile sins are often big secrets. A spouse hides that they're unfaithful. A Christian will hide that they're visiting porn sites on their phone. A church leader hides that they're a closet alcoholic. Bitterness is cloaked by false piety. These men kept everything hidden from the crowds.

**Fear restrains evil.** "*And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put Him to death, for they feared the people.*" Jesus' popularity was the only thing that restrained their plot. It's estimated that over a million were in Jerusalem for Passover. The Jews wanted to kill Jesus but didn't want to be killed doing it. A healthy sense of fear isn't bad. Amazingly, Jesus boldly teaches in the temple, knowing they're conspiring to kill Him. People with guilty consciences are fearful, yet those who fear God can be fearless.

**3. Evil will always find an open soul, often an unlikely one.** "*Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them. And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray Him to them in the absence of a crowd.*" 2,000 years later this account is so familiar we miss how shocking this was, even for evil Jewish leaders. It'd be like finding out that Vice President Mike Pence (**picture**) was a Chinese spy. None of the Gospel writers vilify Judas. They merely share the story and state the facts, bringing out the enormity of the betrayal by saying that he was "*of the number of the twelve.*"

No other disciples had any suspicions of Judas. His life is a warning to us of the seduction of sin. Judas spent three years with Jesus. He preached, did miracles, went on mission trips – yet ultimately betrays the Son of God. Jesus had to suffer, but Judas didn't have to be the traitor.

We know the *how*, the bigger question is the *why*? There are some foolish theories that Judas was actually heroic and forced Jesus' hand, that He was hoping Jesus would be a political Messiah and rescue Israel from Rome. There's no evidence of that.

We know Judas had a greed problem. John 12 tells us that Judas was the treasurer, but a thief. 30 pieces of silver is a paltry sum. It's the price of a slave. Judas turned on Jesus very cheaply, because as much as the Jewish leaders hated Jesus, they'd no doubt have paid much, much more.

Jealousy seems to have been a motive for Judas, too. He was the only disciple who was not a Galilean. Iscariot may mean "man of Keriot." He's always the last disciple mentioned in every list, never in the inner circle but always on the outside. Can you hear him whining? "*Why is it always Peter, James and John? Why can't it just once be Peter, Judas and John?*" Maybe he's wounded that he's on the outside looking in. Or, just disillusioned with Jesus' lack of taking the kingdom. There's more going on than 30 pieces of silver.

The greater significance of the 30 pieces of silver is its prophetic fulfillment. Five centuries before Christ the Prophet Zechariah wrote, "*Then the Lord said to me, 'Throw it to the potter'—the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord, to the potter*" (11:13).

Judas is a warning that someone can be very near to Jesus, but not know Him. What evil Jewish leaders couldn't engineer is accomplished by someone handpicked by Jesus. It's why we must never trust in our own strength, but humbly rely on God. Apart from His grace, we're sitting ducks.

But at the root of whatever motivated Judas was this key factor: *He wasn't a believer.* It's the vital difference between Judas and Peter. Peter failed miserably, denying Jesus at His moment of greatest need, humanly speaking. Both men felt badly after their failures. The difference was, Peter was truly converted; Judas was not. When God saves you, He changes your heart. False religion lacks true conversion. It's a counterfeit.

Judas wasn't *possessed* by Satan. He's cognizant of what he's doing. Luke is the only Gospel writer to note Satan's hand in the betrayal. Satan "*entered into*" It's a forceful way of stating that Judas yielded to Satanic influence, implementing thoughts he'd entertained for a while. As God is looking for people to be His instruments, so is Satan. Each of us can be an instrument for good or evil, of God or of Satan. Satan couldn't have entered Judas unless Judas first opened the door. There's no handle on the outside of the human heart. It must be opened from within. There's a huge warning for us here...

**Satan knows our soft spot.** We're not sure what Satan used to entice Judas, but the Enemy of our souls knew exactly which buttons to push. He knew Samson couldn't resist lust. Jacob was a liar. King Saul was intoxicated by power. What's your soft spot? Hebrews 12:1 speaks of the sin that so easily trips us up. Phillips renders it, "*the sin which dogs our feet.*"

Each night I come home to this (**Ernie**). Ernie knows that when I come home, I always give him a treat. Ernie is hungry 24/7. So, while I'm taking my coat off and putting my stuff away, he's right at my feet. That's the picture in Hebrews. Satan knows exactly how to *dog* our feet and trip us up.

Lust may not be a problem for you, but you struggle with lying. Maybe pride isn't your issue, but patience is. **Satan knows our soft spot.** Be on guard! Unfortunately, in the right situation, there's a bit of the betrayer in each of us.

There's a diabolicalness here rarely found, "*And they were glad, and agreed to give him money.*" **How sad when sin makes you "glad."** No doubt Hitler was *glad* when he saw piles of dead Jews. Radical Muslims were *glad* as they watched the Towers fall. These Jewish leaders fiendishly grin when they see their conspiracy coming to fruition. It sends chills down my spine.

Philip Ryken (**picture**) in his commentary on Luke, writes, "*Just thinking about getting their hands on Jesus made the religious leaders cackle with evil delight.*" Here were leaders of God's people ecstatic about committing the greatest crime in human history – the murder of God. They yuck it up over Deicide.

**Conclusion:** How do you handle betrayal? As an adult child of an addict, I find that I can handle nearly anything, but being betrayed or lied to. Scream at me. Say horrible things, but don't betray me...and I am so unlike Jesus.

A year before all this Jesus said of Judas, "*Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil*" (Jn 6:70). Our Lord knew what Judas was up to, where he'd been and the diabolical plot he's part of. Yet, Jesus reaches out to Judas with love and grace. We have to look at John's Gospel to see this.

**To betray the Lord Jesus, Judas had to literally climb over every obstacle that Christ put in his way.** Jesus knows the deal has been made to betray Him, but He uses the Passover meal as one last chance to appeal for the soul of Judas. Repeatedly, we see how Jesus reaches out to Judas. Our Lord reaches out to Judas with the full extent of His love to Judas' sinking soul.

**Jesus places Judas in a place of honor** at this banquet to show him that His love and forgiveness could still be extended to him. The very seating arrangements portray the architecture of grace. Remember, they reclined (**picture**) when they ate. Judas reclines at the left side of Jesus, one of the two places of honor at the table. Jesus' head was at Judas' breast. Would you show honor to your enemy?

**Jesus washes Judas' feet.** Jesus goes around the table washing each of the disciple's feet. He washes Judas'. As he washed Peter's feet. he said (John 10:11-12), "*you are clean, but not all of you. For He knew who would betray Him, therefore He said, 'You are not all clean.'*" It's a loving arrow aimed at the conscience of Judas. Perhaps His words caused Judas pain, but not enough.

As the meal proceeded Jesus tells His disciples, "*I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me'*" (John 13:18). The expression "*has lifted his heel against me*" describes "the lifting of a horse's hoof and the delivering a deadly kick." Would you serve your enemy in what was one of the most humiliating acts in that culture, washing feet?

**Jesus serves Judas as a priority.** Jesus dipped the bread in the bowl and offered it to Judas. This as an offer that it's not too late. Judas doesn't have to go through with his betrayal. The offer of the dipped morsel was both a rich, symbolic and a powerful, ultimate appeal. In that culture it was gesture of great honor and friendship. Judas takes the bread, but refused to turn back. Would you make an enemy your priority to serve, honor and reach out in friendship?

Jesus does the same for us. To turn our backs on Jesus, either to refuse His offer of forgiveness or to continue down a path of destruction, we must climb over every obstacle He places in our path. We must climb over the Bible. We must climb over the prayers and attempted intervention of Christians that God puts in our lives. We may turn our backs on Jesus, we may choose to ignore Him and reject His forgiveness but we only do so because we've chosen too.

According to Matthew's account (26:22), after Jesus has delivered His prediction of His betrayal the disciples were grieved, "*And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, 'Lord, is it I?'*"

No one had a clue it was Judas. Hardening his heart, Judas goes straight from the Upper Room to where the Jewish leaders are gathered. He reports to them when and where they can find Jesus, how they could apprehend Him under the cover of darkness and away from the crowds. In order to betray Jesus, Judas had to literally climb over every obstacle that Jesus put in his way.

Jesus loved His enemies, even the ones who betrayed Him and nailed Him to a cross...and He loves me and you. At one time, I was an enemy of Jesus.

After my Mom died, I was very angry at God. I remember looking up and screaming at the heavens, "I hate You." But you don't have to scream at God to be His enemy. All you have to do is sin.

Who killed Jesus? I did. You did. We all did. Our sins nailed Him there. But Jesus willingly gave His life for us. In John 10, Jesus said, *“I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from Me”* (vss. 17-18). Jesus went to the cross for us, even though we were His enemies.

Romans 5:6-10 says, *“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life.”* In Jesus reaching out to Judas, we see Him loving an enemy, a sinner and an ungodly man. He does the same for each of us. Through His atoning death on the cross Jesus paid it all. There is hope for us in our sin. There is deliverance for us from our enslavement to sin. There is reconciliation for the most hardened enemies of God.

Don't run from Jesus. Don't climb over the obstacle of His love. Run to the cross. Commit your life to Him and trust that His death is sufficient and surrender to Him as your Savior and Lord. Maybe up until now you've been a **Counterfeit Disciple**. Today you can be the real thing.

Do you know one of the primary indicators that you're a true disciple? You obey Jesus' revolutionary call. He said, *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another”* (John 13:34). We're to love others with the same sacrificial love modeled by Jesus in reaching out to Judas and on the cross, when He reached out to us. We must give ourselves in loving others even when they persist in their ungodliness and sin. We must love our enemies. We must give ourselves for them. We're to love as Jesus loves. We're to be Jesus to a sinful, hateful world. Do you love your world? Do they see Jesus in you?

Are you a **Counterfeit Disciple**? I implore you today to choose to give it up. It's a worthless faith. Come to the cross. Come to Christ and He will give you the real thing.