

AN UNGODLY ALLIANCE (vv. 5-6)

⁵ They were delighted and agreed to give him money. ⁶ He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.

1. What might this passages suggest about Judas' motivation?
2. Jesus has clearly warned us about the dangers of an unhealthy preoccupation with riches.

LUKE 8:14 The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.

LUKE 12:15: 20-21 Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

²⁰ "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

²¹ "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."

LUKE 18:24-25 The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.

Paul adds,

1 TIMOTHY 6:9-10 Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

How might our preoccupation with wealth and the things of this world not only distract us from pure devotion to Jesus, but open us up to other temptations as well?

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LUKE

A PROMISE KEPT

AN UNSEEN ENEMY | LUKE 22:1-6

Throughout Luke's gospel we have been introduced to a fascinating cast of character. The story opens with an aged priest serving in the temple. There were also Simeon and Anna who longed for the consolation of Israel and were able to hold the baby before their final rest.

The disciples add quite a bit of texture and color. There are a handful of fishermen, a tax collector, and even a radicalized political activist we simply know as Simon the zealot.

There is a Roman Centurion who earns Jesus' admiration for his deep faith, a sinful woman willing to undergo further public humiliation in order to express her undying gratitude for the grace she found in Jesus, a wealthy tax collector who climbs a tree to see Jesus and who will end up giving half of his possessions to the poor, and then a poor widow whose love and devotion to God moves her to drop two small coins in the temple treasury.

There are the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, the purveyors of Israel's deep devotion to Torah. The only problem is that they were so caught up in rules that they missed the heart of Torah, and they didn't exactly love the heart of Torah when they saw it in Jesus. He was full of grace and compassion, far more at home with those they had pushed to the fringes than he was at their lavish dinner parties.

No one is more threatened by Jesus' upside down kingdom than the Jerusalem establishment. Jesus not only threatens their cozy relationship with Rome, he's an even bigger threat to their control and abuse of the temple. The temple has become a center for commerce rather than a place of worship, with its doors wide open to anyone who would come.

There is another character, however, who has been hiding in the shadows.

We first meet him in the wilderness. He confronts Jesus in a moment of weakness and subtly tries to undermine the heart of his mission and his unwavering devotion to God. While he is unable to crush Jesus' ministry in its infancy, Luke concludes the story on a foreboding note. "When [he] had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time (Luke 4:13)."

That moment has finally come.

LEADERS LOSING CONTROL AND LIVING IN FEAR (vv. 1-2)

¹ Now the Festival of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching, ² and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people.

1. The backdrop of "Unleavened Bread" and "Passover" is all important. Passover celebrated God's deliverance of his people from the death grip of Egypt by sparing the firstborn of every home whose threshold was marked with the blood of the Passover lamb. Jesus would appropriate the symbols of unleavened bread and blood to foreshadow God's willingness to offer his firstborn in our place.

What are some other reasons God might have chosen Passover as the background to his ultimate act of redemption?

2. The "chief priests and the teachers of the law" have been Jesus' antagonists from the moment he set foot in Jerusalem. This of course is no surprise to Jesus, or to Luke's readers. Jesus prepared his disciples for this moment early in his ministry.

"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life (Luke 9:22)."

Jesus' criticism of the pharisees might apply to this group as well.

¹⁵ He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God's sight (Luke 16:15).

- a. What are some of the things they may have valued that were highly detestable to God?
- b. What are some of the things we may value that are highly detestable to God?
- c. Why were they afraid of the people?
- d. What are some ways our concern about "what people may think" might crowd out an honest and sincere devotion to God?

A DISILLUSIONED DISCIPLE (vv. 3-4)

³ Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. ⁴ And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus.

1. While Satan is certainly an ominous figure, upon the return of Jesus' disciples from their first preaching and healing mission, Jesus joyfully observes, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven (Luke 10:18)."

In spite of his eminent defeat, however, Jesus will later warn Peter and the rest of the disciples, "Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat (Luke 22:31)."

What do these passages suggest about who Satan is and what he desires to do?

2. Both Luke and John tell us that "Satan entered Judas." The phrase is a bit shocking. While Judas does not fall on the ground and foam at the mouth, he is clearly in Satan's control.

What might have led to such a dramatic moment?

3. What do the following passages reveal about how we should approach the enemy?

¹ PETER 5:6-9 *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. ⁸ Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

EPHESIANS 4:22-24; ²⁶ *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold."

JAMES 4:7-10 *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*