

One of the Twelve
Luke 22:1-6
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November 15, 2020

Who was the most evil person in human history? Here is the list some historians came up with....Most evil person ever #1 Adolf Hitler. Killing six million Jews in the holocaust earned him that title. #2 was Joseph Stalin. This communist leader was responsible for about twenty million deaths while he ruled the Soviet Union. Others who made the top ten were Vlad the Impaler, Pol Pot, Heinrich Himmler, Saddam Hussein, Idi Amin, Ivan the Terrible, Leopold the 2nd, and Kim Jong-Sung, the grandfather of the current North Korean Leader, Kim Jong-Un. Now, the only one of those folks I didn't know much about was Leopold. As the king of Belgium he ruled over the Belgium Congo in African from 1885-1908. According to Wikipedia, Leopold was responsible for the deaths of probably ten million Congolese, about half of the countries population. Not, on the list...at least in the top ten, was Judas Iscariot.

Judas was not a mass murderer, but he committed one of the most heinous, evil acts imaginable. He betrayed a friend. He took money for information that would lead to his friends death. And this friend, happened to be the only truly innocent person to ever live on this planet. Judas' betrayal was worse than other sins, because it was a betrayal of pure goodness and love. Friends, this morning our journey through the Gospel of Luke brings us to Chapter 22 where we will explore Judas' story. If you have a Bible go ahead and turn there, otherwise the verses will be on the screen. Let's pause and pray that even from the story of evil, the Lord would help us to learn and grow.

Luke 22:1 – The Festival of Unleavened Bread, which is called Passover, approaching. This is week long feast, extending from the 15th to 21st of Jewish month of Nissan, which would be March/April on our calendar. **Luke 22:2 – The chief priests and the scribes (both Sadducee's and Pharisees) were looking for a way to put him (Jesus) to death, because they were afraid of the people.** They are afraid the crowds will embrace Jesus as Messiah, which would mean the loss of their power and prestige. They also feared Rome might crush the Jewish people even more. Their solution to keep this from happening was to murder Jesus. Yet, they were uncertain about how

they could do this, since Jesus was so popular with the people. **Luke 22:3 – Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, who was numbered among the Twelve.** This is shocking. Satan has entered one of Jesus' twelve disciples, one of his closest friends. I do not think this is demon possession. Judas never was really a true believer in Jesus and had become very disenchanted with being His disciple. Satan apparently enters Judas and gives him the push, the courage, to do what he really wanted to do.

Luke 22:4 – He (Judas) went away and discussed with the chief priests and temple police how he could hand him over to them. (Here is the solution Jesus' enemies ha been looking for. They will be able to arrest Jesus when he is alone, away from the crowds.) **Luke 22:5 – They (the Jewish leaders) were glad and agreed to give him silver.** Matthew tells us it was 30 pieces of silver. This would not be worth a lot of money today. But in the 1st Century Israel, it was probably three or four months worth of normal wages. It was a significant, but not extraordinary amount of money. **Luke 22:6 – So he accepted the offer and started looking for a good opportunity to betray him to them when the crowd was not present.**

As we continue in this chapter Luke mentions something Jesus says during the last supper. **Luke 22:21,22 – But look, the hand of the one betraying me is at the table with me.²² For the Son of Man will go away as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!** In other words, Jesus, the Messiah, will follow the path of suffering and crucifixion. That is God's plan. Yet, Judas, the one who betrays Jesus, is still responsible for his actions and will face God's judgment. Luke then reports Judas' act of betrayal in **Luke 22:47,48 – While Jesus was still speaking, (To the disciples in the garden) suddenly a mob came, and one of the Twelve named Judas was leading them. He came near Jesus to kiss him,⁴⁸ but Jesus said to him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”** The answer would be yes, because that is the signal Judas agreed to give to Jesus' enemies.

Ok, that is Luke's account of how Judas, one of the twelve disciples, betrayed Jesus. Now, in 2006

National Geographic published an English version of “The Gospel of Judas.” This document was likely composed between 250-300 A.D. By a group called the Gnostics, an early Christian cult. Judas is obviously not the author of this so called “Gospel” because he had been dead for over 200 years when it was written. However, it claims Judas was actually the only disciple really faithful to Jesus. It says he was merely following Jesus’ instructions when he helped the high priests arrest Jesus. Some describe this as an alternative to the traditional story of Judas, but it is clearly fiction. The accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are based on what actually happened. So, do not get distracted by attempts to revise what the Bible says. This morning we will focus on three lessons we learned from Luke’s, God inspired account.

#1 Judas reminds us that God uses evil, even evil people, to accomplish His purpose. All four Gospels indicate Jesus knew ahead of time that Judas would betray him. Open Theists, those who claim God can know what decisions people will make in the future, have said Jesus was just making a good guess when He predicted Judas’ betrayal. Yet, that is not what the Bible teaches. Even when Jesus chose Judas as a disciple, He knew what would happen. In **John 6:64** Jesus says, “**But some of you do not believe me.**” and then John adds (**For Jesus knew from the beginning which ones didn't believe , and he knew who would betray him.**) Before Judas was ever born, before the universe was created, God knew Judas would betray Jesus. So, why then, would Jesus choose this man as His disciple, as one of the Twelve? I do not know. I would call that classified information, something to which God alone is privy.

However, we are given a big clue in what the Apostle Peter says in **Acts 4:27,28 – “For, in fact, in this city both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, assembled together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, ²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your will had predestined to take place.** Herod, Pilate, the Roman soldiers, the Jewish leaders and I would add Judas, were all involved in committing the most evil acts in the history of the planet, the execution of Jesus Christ. Yet, what they did was all part of God’s plan. His plan was to take this horrible event, and use it to accomplish something incredibly good...our eternal salvation, the salvation of all who turn to

Him. It is the cruel, totally unjust death of Jesus that pays the penalty for our sin, satisfies the wrath of God and then reconciles us to Him. What Judas did was horribly evil. But God used what He did to accomplish something magnificently good.

“So, Pastor Dan, Judas is just a helpless pawn God uses to get done what he wants done. Someone needed to betray Jesus, so God made Judas do it.” No..No..Judas, like Herod and Pilate, and the Roman soldier and the Jewish leaders, is responsible for his own actions. Judas, like Pharaoh, and Nebuchadnezzar, and Nero chooses to do evil, evil that God planned and used for good. This is something which trips people up sometimes. If it doesn’t trouble you great, but if it does, give me a call and we can chat. The Bible is clear that every human being is responsible for the bad choices, evil choices they make. Yet, all these choices are made under the umbrella of God’s sovereignty. None of these choices catches Him by surprise. He chooses to allow the bad choices to be made because we are not robots. Yet, the Lord ordains to take all human choices and use them to accomplish His purpose. As **Ephesians 1:11b** says, God is **The one who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.** Or as the NLT says **God makes everything work out according to his plan.** That plan is described in **Romans 8:28 – And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose**

for them. Indeed, if you are a believer in Jesus, God has caused even the terrible betrayal by Judas to work for your good. His act is part of what led to Jesus dying on the cross in our place.

That is important for us to remember today, November 18, 2020. In the Bible we see how God used Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar and Nero to accomplish His purpose. We see how He used Judas, Pilate and the Jewish rulers to accomplish purposes. There has never been and will never be a human ruler so evil that God could not use that person to make everything work out according to His plan. Almost half the people in our country, including many in this room, didn’t vote for Joe Biden for president. A lot of folks do not think he is really a good person. They believe he will make wrong decisions, even evil choices, that will harm our country. We should be praying that is not the case. Yet, even if it is, God will still use Joe Biden

to accomplish His plan. Post-election anxiety, disappointment, even depression are common for those who supported the loosing candidate. But as a Christian, there is never a reason for panic, never a reason for despair, because not matter who sits in the Oval office, God is still on the throne. No matter what happens in the days ahead, God will continue to cause everything to work together for His glory and the ultimate good of His people.

#2 Lesson: Hanging around Christians doesn't make one a Christian. Turning water into wine, calming storms by simply speaking a word, feeding 5000 people from a little boys lunch, healing countless people of all sorts of different diseases and disabilities, bringing a man back to life after he had been dead for four days, yes, Judas had seen it all. He was there when Jesus performed these spectacular miracles, all signs that He was indeed the Messiah. Judas had listened to Jesus give the sermon on the Mount and heard all sorts of Jesus' teachings. He had never heard anyone speak with such authority and clarity, nor utilize such powerful and persuasive logic. And then there were all those nights where the disciples, including Judas, sat around the fire, listening to Jesus, laughing with Him, experiencing first hand His incredible concern and compassion for each and every individual. Judas was, as Luke says, one of the twelve. But, even though was clearly a follower of Jesus (a disciple) on the outside, I do not think he ever was a believer on the inside, I do not think Judas ever had genuine faith in Jesus.

Now, if you asked Judas what he believed about Jesus, I am not sure how he would have responded. He may have said, "Yes, Jesus is the Messiah God promised." But this was not something he embraced. It was not for him. I do not think Judas was ever born of God or born again. His betrayal of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane is evidence of that. The Apostle John also tells us **John 12:6b – Judas was a thief. He was in charge of the money-bag and would steal part of what was put in it.** Apparently Judas served as the treasurer for the band of disciples. I do not think the other disciples knew Judas was stealing until after Judas was dead. But Jesus knew. Jesus knew that even though on the outside, Judas looked no different than the other eleven, on the inside there was a big problem. Yes, Judas was hanging around with disciples of Jesus, but he really was not truly a

disciple. He was not a believer in and follower of Jesus.

Friends, some people today hang around Christians, hang around the church, but are not truly believers in Jesus. These folks may be regular church attenders, even church members. They may believe truth about Jesus. They may agree that Jesus died on the cross, rose from the dead, and will one day return. They may sing songs about Jesus with great enthusiasm. But, they do not embrace Him as their Savior and Lord. They have faith on the outside, but not on the inside. They are not born of God, not born again. And ultimately will not experience God's salvation through Jesus, they will never be in heaven. I suspect these are the people Jesus was talking about in **Matthew 7:21 – "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.** I believe doing the will of the Father begins with trusting in the Lord Jesus to save us from our sin.

Friends, that is a sobering thought. Even more sobering is the thought there may be someone or someones in *this room*, falling into this category. One of my greatest fears, is that *one of you* may be like Judas. You may hang around Christians, attend church, but not really be a believer in Jesus. Friends, I have tried to be diligent in proclaiming and explaining the Gospel. I have reminded you often that salvation is by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ alone. I have sought to warn you that good deeds, religious rituals, sincere spiritually, the right political beliefs or anything other than Jesus will not bring you to salvation you desperately need. Yet, even though you have been sitting in this room numerous Sundays, or have been watching the live stream, those words about trusting in Jesus have kind of gone in one ear and out the other. Or maybe those words never really made sense. Whatever the case, you have been hanging around Christians, but you are not a Christian, you are not trusting in Jesus Christ. And friends, that means you are in danger of big time eternal trouble, you are in danger of hell. That brings us to....

#3 Lesson. Even if you have failed or betrayed the Lord in some way, you do not have to end up like Judas. There is still time for you to turn to the Lord. Let me tell you about Jeff, he is my friend

Joe's brother, so you have not met him. Jeff grew up going to church with his parents and siblings. He remembers a couple of times repeating a prayer for Jesus to be his Savior, but he was just doing it because other kids did. It never really meant anything to him. When he was in high school, Jeff went to church because his parents made him, and because there were a couple of really cute girls in the youth group. It was during those years that he started experimenting with sex, drugs and alcohol. When he got to college, those things became a big part of his life, especially the alcohol. He also took a Psych class from a really cool professor who happened to be an Atheist. After that Jeff was not sure whether he believed in God or not. Oh, he still called himself a Christian, and still went to church whenever he was home, but God was not part of his life.

Three years after graduating from college Jeff had married Darla, had a little baby boy, and a good paying job. Things seemed to be going well. But, two years later he met Jane, and decided she was more fun to be with than Darla. At that point his brother, my friend, Joe, drove four hours to have dinner with Jeff. He told him, "Jeff, what you are doing is wrong. Darla is your wife. God wants you to be faithful to her, and to your little boy." They talked for three hours, but at the end Jeff said, "Joe. I really think I will be happier with Jane, so I am leaving Darla. I do not really care what you think. And I do not care what God thinks. I do not even believe there is a God. And if there is, all I want Him to do is leave me alone." Well, that ended the conversation with Joe. Jeff did divorce Darla, and married Jane. That marriage ended after four years. Jeff then moved in with Cindy but that lasted less than a year. Jeff had started to drink in even more than he had in college. Oh, somehow he continued to succeed at work, but on the inside felt so empty. One night, when he was drunk, Jeff called his brother Joe. He tearfully told Joe how miserable he was and how he wanted to turn to the Lord, but knew that after all the horrible things he had done and said, God would never forgive or accept him. Joe listened patiently and didn't say a lot. The next day however, he called Jeff, when Jeff was sober. Joe reminded him of the marvelous truth of the Gospel: no matter who you are, what you have done, how many times you have done it, or what has been done to you, the Lord is willing to forgive and accept anyone who turns to Him. Jeff insisted that the Lord would never accept him, but Joe

reminded him of what Jesus says in **John 6:37 – Everyone the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will never cast out.**

That is the message the Lord has for each of us. "The one who comes to me I will never cast out." Friends, you probably know someone like Jeff. You may even be someone like Jeff. These folks have often lost hope because they think it is too late, or they think that God simply can not forgive them. Friends, we need to let them know that is not the case. We need to let them know that it doesn't matter what they have done or said or what has been done to them. Anyone who comes to Jesus, will never be cast out. But, before we do that there is often an obstacle we have to overcome. Some of the "Jeffs" would like to get in a right relationship with God. They could use some help, but they do not think the church is where they will find it. They hope God is willing to forgive them, but they do not believe the church, people in church, can forget what they have done, or said, or what has been done to them. Friends, we need to show these folks they are wrong. By our words and actions we need show these people that we are able to get past their past, that we won't judge people on the basis of who they were yesterday, but will focus on who they are today, on who, by the grace of God they can be tomorrow.

Friends, may the Lord enable us to embrace this amazing grace in our lives, and point others to it as well.