

“Betrayed for Me” // Matthew 26:1–36

// *Instead of Me #1*

So how many of you like exams? I know our college students don’t... and many are gearing up for their mid-terms in the next few weeks.

- One of our college students at Duke told me he was taking an ornithology class—know what that is? He took it because he thought it sounded fun and he needed an easy-A, but said it turned out to be really difficult, but he really needed a good grade in it, so he studied his rear end off for the final exam... **That story is not true**, but it probably reflects how some of you feel. **Nobody likes an exam that doesn’t accurately reflect** how well you’ve mastered something.
- **Thankfully, I don’t have to take a lot of exams anymore**, but one I do have to take that I don’t like is the annual physical. There are numerous reasons I don’t like it, that those of you who are over 40 will understand, but one of the main reasons I don’t like it is the blood test, because I am always afraid of what is going to come back. I feel fine—what if it shows I am *not* fine? **The best indicator of my health is not always how I feel, but what those blood tests show.**

Well, we’re going to spend several weeks looking at the events leading up to the crucifixion and **see how through these events, God was doing an examination** of the human soul. **The Gospel of Matthew** tells the stories of the arrest and trial of Jesus are in such a way that we see that the human race is really the one on trial. It looks like Jesus is on trial, but in God’s eyes, it is us.

NOTE: Much credit in this series is due to James Macdonald and a series of his that served as the inspiration for this one which walked through the similar passages.

Works Consulted:

“The Last Supper,” Tim Keller

“Betrayed for Me,” James MacDonald

“Denied for Me,” James MacDonald

“Washes Feet,” Craig Groeschel

We should see ourselves in these stories—and as we do we’ll learn why Jesus came and had to do what he did.

This is a great series to bring someone to—someone with questions about Christianity or that you are trying to introduce to Christianity.

Our first exhibit is **Judas**. **And his** story starts in an unusual place.

Matthew 26:6–36 (CSB)

⁶While Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, (i.e. a leper that Jesus had healed) ⁷a woman approached him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume. (Other Gospel accounts will tell us this woman was **Mary, Lazarus (whom Jesus had raised from the dead)**’s sister.) She poured it on his head as he was reclining at the table. ⁸When the disciples saw it, they were indignant. “Why this waste?” they asked. This kind of perfume was a **family treasure**. It was kept in a sealed alabaster container that you could only open by breaking, so it could only be opened once. It was passed down from generation to generation. The text says it was worth **300 denarii**—something like \$10,000 today. I’ve never seen a \$10K bottle of perfume (and if you have, please don’t tell my wife about it). And **she just pours it out** in Jesus’s hair and on his feet!

They object: ⁹“This might have been sold for a great deal and given to the poor.” (You know, **these stories are very familiar** to me because I’ve known them all my life, but I learned something new this time through: “they.” The objection to the woman’s actions came from *all* the disciples. Previously I had thought it was only Judas, because one of the other Gospels says specifically that he was the one to say this.

Evidently it was the common consensus of the group; Judas was simply the one to give voice to it.)

¹⁰ Aware of this, Jesus said to them, “Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a noble thing for me. ¹¹ You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me. (He’s not saying they should neglect the poor, of course, like “hey, you can’t do anything about poverty so don’t even try”—his whole ministry was about caring for the poor. He’s simply saying that **this is a unique moment** they should be taking advantage of like she is) ¹² By pouring this perfume on my body, she has prepared me for burial. ¹³ Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.” (IOW, “One day you’ll be telling the story of my death and resurrection to the whole world, and you will recount how dull you were and how perceptive she was.”)

¹⁴ Then one of the Twelve, the man called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests¹⁵ and said, “What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?” So they weighed out thirty pieces of silver for him. (Inn today’s terms, about \$7,500) ¹⁶ And from that time he started looking for a good opportunity to betray him. The Jews didn’t want to arrest Jesus in public, because he was so popular it would have caused a commotion. And **evidently Jesus was really secretive** about his private hide-outs, probably both for his own protection as well as so he could get away from the mobs. **But the bottom line** was the Jewish leadership didn’t know where they could take him privately so they needed someone on the inside to reveal his location).

Meanwhile, Jesus and his disciples have found a private place to celebrate the Passover and Judas joins back up with them. ²¹ While they were eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.” ²² Deeply distressed, each one began to say to him, “Surely not I, Lord?”

OK, let’s talk here for a minute about Judas. Sometimes we have this idea that Judas was this **sinister presence with shifty eyes**—how you UNC fans think of Coach K—who hissed when he talked (a *parselongue*)—the **shady disciple** who slipped out after dark to smoke weed and told dirty jokes when Jesus wasn’t around—**you say, But that’s a totally wrong picture of Judas.** Notice, when Jesus said somebody would betray him, they didn’t all look at each other and say, ‘*Obviously, it is Judas.*’ **No—nobody suspected him!**

- **Judas was, in fact, one of the most respected of all the disciples**—we know that because he was the one elected to carry the purse, and you don’t choose a shady guy to be your accountant!
- **And he had genuinely believed Jesus was the Messiah.** We’ll talk about that in a minute.

So, **when Jesus tells them someone will betray him**, they all start to look around and say, “Lord is it I?” ²³ He replied, “The one who dipped his hand with me in the bowl—he will betray me. (In John’s account, **Jesus dips the bread and hands it to Judas**—basically the same thing—Jesus is just saying, “The one who shares this piece of bread with me is my betrayer.”). ²⁴ The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for him if he had not been born.” (Now, you may wonder how this didn’t make a scene, with it being **obvious** he was giving the bread to Judas. But the implication is that there was a lot of conversation going on at the table and Jesus said this loud enough only for a few people to hear.)

Then ²⁵ Judas, his betrayer, replied, “Surely not I, Rabbi?” “You have said it,” he told him (privately). (**Judas may have asked this** because he was still wondering if he had the courage to go through with it, or maybe he was just asking Jesus to see what he knew. At any rate, when Jesus says this, Judas gets up from the table **and he goes to get the soldiers** to ambush Jesus.)

I want to do two things with the story of Judas today: the FIRST is that I want to show you that **Judas represents all of us**. He's not just this lone villain out there. Matthew tells the story in a way to show us that he is you, and he is me. **SECONDLY**, I want to explore **why Judas betrayed Jesus**—and show you how people still do it today, for the same reasons.

(Judas as Us)

First: Why do I say Judas represents us? Well, you can see it in how the story is told.

- **Matthew shows us that all of the disciples have the same reaction** of disgust when the woman pours out this perfume on his feet.
- When Jesus tells the disciples that someone will betray him, he presents it more as a question. He doesn't say, "**We have a traitor in our midst, and there he is.**" He leaves out the "who."
- The word he uses for **betray** means "to hand over" or "sell." Jesus is **basically saying**, "One of you will sell me out for the right price. Is it you? Look into your hearts..."
- They understood the question, because **notice how shaky and uncertain their response is:** (v. 22) "*Is it I?*" Greek commentators say the way the question is phrased, it implies a **decided lack** of confidence. You should almost read that as, "*It's not I... Is it?*"
- **Jesus goes on to tell them**, it is not just *one* of you who will sell me out—**vs. 31, "You will all fall away."** They **may not have sold Jesus out for 30 pieces of silver**, but none of them will go all the way with Jesus, either. **They have a price whereby** they will walk away from Jesus. **And a price is a price.**
 - It reminds me of the story I heard years ago attributed to **Winston Churchill: The story goes that he was trying to make a point about why England should never compromise with evil.** A newspaper reporter told him he was extremist and a warmonger so he asked her, "Ma'am, if a king offered you 100 million pounds to sleep with him, would you do it?" She thought for a moment and said, 'yes.' He then asked, "Would

you sleep with me for 50 lbs?" She said, "Mr. Churchill, I'm not a prostitute." He replied, "With all due respect, ma'am, **we've already established what your identity was, I just wanted to know your price.**" **Now**, I have strong reasons to believe this story is made-up, but it still makes the point. A price is a price.

- The question being asked to these disciples is, "What is **your** price? Look into your hearts and ask."
- Judas may do it spectacularly, but they **all will do it eventually.**

Peter, **the most outspoken of them**, will cave and end up denying that he ever even knew Jesus!

So, again, **Judas's betrayal is presented** as a (?): **What is YOUR price?**

- **When I lived overseas I had a situation** where we had brought in a short-term team to do Bible distribution and things went really wrong and a riot started. The police captured the guys and put them in prison and the mob burned their car and a police car to the ground, demanding that they release these 4 guys.
- They didn't have any proof that I was connected, but they placed me under a kind of house arrest. That was a dark and lonely time, and I thought at any moment the mob would come for us.
- Now, **I was very committed to Jesus.** I had obeyed his call to go the mission field. Before I left, we had this little ceremony where I threw my stick in the fire. But it's one thing to say you are willing to give up your life for Jesus; it's quite another when you think that someone is about to take you up on that offer.
- **I was ready to walk away. I told Jesus I didn't want any more of this, and I wanted to go home.** It was a low time—maybe the lowest of my life—because I had found my price. **God there began a time of rebuilding** in my life.
- But **the point is that I was just like these disciples.** I had a price. I could talk a big game...

What is your price? Maybe you are willing to follow Jesus when it is **convenient**, but at what point do you stop?

- Maybe **you downplay your commitment to Jesus** in front of your friends because you don't want them to mock you or think of you as strange.
- Maybe it's an **area of your life you just don't want to let God** have control of yet—maybe God has told you go somewhere and do something and you are resisting him. Go with 1 of our church plants.
- Maybe God has called **one of your kids to do something** and you don't want to let them go.
- Maybe God has **convicted you of something like your music or our entertainment habits** or a certain relationship and you don't want to give it up.
- For some of you, you know you should **not be living with your boyfriend or girlfriend** and you should not be sleeping together.
- Some of you **know you work too much and neglect** your family and never take a Sabbath.
- Maybe he is calling you to **put him first in your finances** and trust him with a tithe and generous giving, and you are resisting him.
- Maybe it is **simply committing to the church**—joining, getting involved, getting off your blessed assurance and getting in the game. You **know you should**—but you don't because it feels inconvenient and you like the freedoms that come with being non-committal. Your **commitment to Jesus stops at inconvenience**.
- **Getting baptized...** we'll give a chance in a few weeks.
- **Whatever it is, that's your price.** That's where your commitment to Jesus stops and you sell him out.

All of us have one; or have had one. **When Mark tells the story of all these disciples forsaking Jesus (which happens a couple of hours later in the Garden of Gethsemane), he adds a curious, small, but I think very important detail: Mark 14:51 And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, 52 but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked. Why is that detail in there?** TWO reasons, I think:

- **One, it's interesting!** Any time you are telling a story and somebody runs through it naked, you have to include that. Right? If **somebody naked runs through church today**, later when someone asks you how the sermon was, you're going to bring that up, even though it had nothing to do with the sermon.
- But second, **many commentators think that in this picture of naked man fleeing from the Garden of Gethsemane we are being given a metaphorical picture of human race**. Remember, Adam and Eve had fled from the Garden of Eden, naked, from the presence of God.
- And so, the **whole human race** is being depicted here. All of us, even Jesus's closest disciples—have **abandoned him**.
- Jesus has been nothing but loyal to us, but for the right price we all sell him out.
- In this moment the ultimate **failure of the human race** is put on display. We **abandoned the one** who never abandoned us!

So again, let this sink in—Judas represents you. Sure, maybe you haven't actually done what he did, but that's probably because you weren't put in the same situations he was in, under the same pressures. **But the stuff in our hearts is the same.**

- You see, **the Bible teaches us that the reason some of us turn out better** than others has more to do with restraining graces God has put in our lives than it does some inherent goodness in us.
- Sometimes **when I hear the stories of people** who have really messed up their lives, maybe ended up prison—and then I hear about the pain and dysfunction and sometimes abuse they went through growing up, I **wonder had I grown up in similar conditions** if I would have made similar decisions. I'm not trying to excuse the crime or that they shouldn't be held accountable...
- **I'm just saying that God put so many graces and privileges in my life** that I had absolutely nothing to do with and can take no credit for. I had good parents who loved me. I had good examples of character lived out before me. I never faced the kind of poverty or discrimination that pushes you to extreme action. I was taught the Word of God from my childhood.

- **Those were all gifts to me. Do I have reason to boast?** **Illus:** Say that you and a friend decided to rob a bank. Before you did it, you came to see a friend and your friend said, "I won't let you do it!" and grabs both of you by your shirts. But your friend's shirt rips and he gets away and goes through with it, and gets arrested. Can you really feel proud about not doing it? This is what God has done in my life. He put graces that kept the sin in my heart from destroying me.
- **Yet even with all of these graces,** I still had a price whereby I "sold" Jesus. Betrayal, and a willingness to sell Jesus out for a price, was in my heart just like it was Judas's.

At the end of the day our salvation is **solely by grace**. "By grace" Paul says, (grace—unmerited favor) **we have been saved through faith** (faith means simply trusting in what Christ has done for me, not in what I intend to do for him), **and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God; not of works, that no one can boast.**" About anything.

- **Illus.** Not drowning, coming up to Jesus to save me, but face down.
- **We're not saved because of how committed we were to Jesus, but because of how committed he was to us.**

Second question:

Why did Judas betray Jesus?

Short answer: He was disappointed with him. Judas had expectations about the Messiah that Jesus didn't meet.

Note: Judas was not alone in this. All the disciples had problems with this. **Peter**, in John 6 (had so many questions he was angry at Jesus; in fact, at one point Jesus called him "Satan." **JTB – Luke 7. Thomas.** In fact, one of my favorite scenes in the entire NT: **Matthew 28.** Jesus had resurrected from the dead and spent 40 days—more than 5 weeks—with his disciples, eating, drinking, and talking. And how he gathers them on a mountainside. Matthew 28 says he begins to ascend to heaven and then comes the verse, Matt 28:17, "When they

saw it, they worshipped him. But some doubted." "Guys, *he's floating in the air...*" The problem was that what Jesus was doing was still so confusing to them—why had he not overthrown the Romans? Why was there still suffering and injustice and oppression? These are real questions.

Like most Jews, Judas had assumed a couple of things about the Messiah.

(1) Judas wanted a Messiah who would punish evil and reward the righteous. Jewish people were **waiting for a Messiah that would deliver** them from the oppression of the Romans and punish the wicked. And there is nothing wrong with this. We are **right to cry out for deliverance** from oppression and injustice.

But **Jesus showed up with a different agenda.** The **first time Jesus announced his Messiahship** was in Luke 4. Here's what he said: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives... to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (**Luke 4:18–19**). The Jews are thinking, "Hey, that's us! And so, it says, **"And they all spoke well of him."** (vs. **22**) Patted him on the back. "You're going to make a fine preacher someday."

But then Jesus does something totally unexpected. He goes on to explain how **in Israel's history, God always showed compassion** to the people that Israel considered outsiders, even enemies. He says, **In the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, 26 Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.** Of all the hungry people in Israel, the only one that God showed mercy to was not even a Jew! **27 And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.**) God only healed Naaman, the captain of the enemy army!

Instead of showing up to punish evil and reward the insiders, Jesus came preaching grace to outsiders. And this made people mad, because when you think you are a rule-follower, nothing makes you madder than when God rewards those who don't follow the rules like you do.

And so, the crowd listening to the sermon that morning went from patting him on the back to, "They rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff." I've had some bad responses to sermons, but none ever ended that way. Then a great verse: **30 But passing through their midst, he went away.** I'm not sure how he pulled that off—some kind of Jedi mind trick I guess. "*I am not the droid you are looking for.*"

Jesus's message was that all of us, at our very best, fall far short, and need a Savior. We are all alike wicked before God. Both oppressor and oppressed have the same sinful heart that needs to be redeemed. We are all outsiders who need to be rescued. Thank God he extends grace to outsiders, because that's the only kind of people there are. That God Jesus saves bad people because there are no other kinds of people!

But Judas didn't want to see this about himself. He preferred to see himself as a someone better than others, some worthy of respect, worthy to be rewarded. So, **he missed Jesus altogether.**

You know who did get this? The woman who came in to anoint Jesus. She was so overwhelmed with love and gratefulness to him that she washed his feet with her tears. In a similar situation, Jesus explained, "The reason people like her love me so much is she realizes how much I've forgiven her." *He's not saying that she actually had been forgiven more, just that she realized it.* The **reason some of us love Jesus so little** is that we have little awareness of how desperate our condition was before he saved us!

So, **(1) Judas wanted a Messiah who would punish evil and reward the righteous.** The woman understood the Messiah came to bestow grace because there were none righteous.

(2) Judas wanted a Messiah who would bestow power and riches. He thought the Messiah would give him the good life. **The woman understood that knowing Jesus was the good life.**

Judas's reaction to the woman anointing Jesus is very revealing—he thinks that the perfume poured out on Jesus was wasted!

And in one sense he is right. The Puritan theologian Jonathan Edwards said the thing that is so shocking about Mary's act was its total *uselessness*. Think about it:

- It was **useless to Jesus**: He didn't need that expensive of an anointing. It smelled good for a few hours and then was gone.
- It was **useless to Mary**. You see, Mary knew she didn't need to earn Jesus's favor. **Mary's brother was Lazarus**, whom Jesus raised from the dead, and if you read the account in John 11, Jesus had promised them his commitment to them and that they'd be with him forever in heaven. So, she **doesn't need to gain his favor**.
- The **act served only one purpose**: to declare love for Jesus and put his worth on display. To say, "You are worthy!!! You are worthy of 10 billion bottles of perfume."

And therein you see the **difference between Mary and Judas.**

- For Judas, Jesus was a **means to an end**: "*If I follow Jesus he'll give me power and riches.*" For Mary, Jesus was the end. Knowing him was the riches.
- Judas served Jesus **to get things**. Mary was willing to give up *anything* to know more of Jesus.
- Judas says, "**If Jesus is not going to get me riches and power and health and wealth**, then what good is he?" Mary says, "**Were the whole realm...**" Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe.

- **Judas thought of Jesus as useful; Mary thought of him as beautiful.** (Something that is “useful” is a helpful tool to obtain something else you want. If God is useful to you he’s the means to heaven, good health, career success... But something that is “beautiful” you love in itself for itself. A tire iron is useful. I keep it in my car because of what it can do for me. And if it breaks, I throw it away. My kids and my wife are beautiful to me. I don’t love them because I think they can bring other things—millions of dollars—into my life. That would be a nice benefit. But that’s not why I love them or keep them around.) **Judas’ finds Jesus useful; ‘Marys’ finds him beautiful.**

That means that **you can tell whether you are Judas or Mary by how you respond** when life disappoints you. If you say, *“God, this may not be my preference—and it may hurt like crazy—but if you can use this to help me know you more; if you can use this for your glory to help others know you, I’ll take it, because knowing you is a better treasure than an easy life,”* then you are Mary.

How you respond to suffering and pain is the measure of your understanding and embrace of the gospel!

But if you get angry with God and say, “God, you are not keeping up your end of the deal! If you don’t start giving me what I want—health, a boyfriend, a raise, or whatever—then you’re not worth following,” then you are probably Judas. Jesus is only a means to an end to you. **I have a feeling that some of you are at this crossroads this weekend**—things are going wrong in your life, times are hard; you feel confused, even angry at God, and you are asking, “Jesus, are you **really worth following?**” **He is,** but **not because** of the things you can get from him in this life, **but because of who he is** that you will possess for eternity!

- **(FAJAR—“this is the spirit of Mary.** I’ll give up everything to have him.”) **OR** A Summit member was diagnosed with cancer in 2017 and had been praying for years to be a missionary right where she was. During her chemo treatment and because of what she was experiencing and because she was forced to slow down, she was given opportunities to share the gospel with

several women in her neighborhood, one of whom accepted Christ on her porch. “I didn’t have strength to do anything but point her to Scripture. It didn’t seem like it in the moment, but God used my pain for his glory...God used that time to draw me and others toward him, whether it was to salvation or people just needing to be heard. He used that time to show me how simple it is to share him with other people... He disciplines us for our good. That poison [chemo] was for my good. You have to have death to have life.... Hard does not equal bad. Hard is hard. I wouldn’t choose it for anything. But it was a good thing because it changed my heart in good ways.” **And knowing Jesus is worth going through all the hard things in the world.** *That’s the heart of a Mary.*

In sum, Judas represents a “religious” approach to God: “I serve God to get things from God, and I expect to be rewarded for my behavior.” **Mary is the person who understands the Gospel:** “I deserve nothing, but God has given me everything in Christ, and Christ is a treasure worth losing everything else for.”

The praise for Mary is incredible—her sacrifice meant so much to Jesus that he makes her story a permanent fixture of the gospel that will forever symbolize what responding to the gospel looks like. **I like to think that that perfume** was still in his nostrils as we stood before Pilate, bringing joy to his heart.

The verdict on Judas is devastating—it still sends a chill through my body. ²⁴ **“It would have been better for him if he had not been born.”** The only way this statement can be true is if Jesus means that Judas went to hell and hell lasts forever. Judas had surely had some good times in his life. If he simply ceased to exist, then it would not have been better for him not to be born. It would just be a bummer way to end. In order to say, “It would be better for him not to have been born,” that must mean that his **eternal condition is so bad** that it would have been better for him never to have existed in the 1st place. That means he is in hell today.

This is God’s verdict on every Judas—that is, every person who **does not surrender fully** to Jesus without condition and without price. This is **his verdict** on those who do not consider him the ultimate treasure, on those who will not give up everything to follow him.

Puritan Jeremy Taylor: God threatens terrible things on those who refuse to be insanely happy in him!

Is this you? What a terrible thing to say about you: It would be better for you *never* to have been born!

The Last Supper

We're going to end this service by taking the Lord's table together, because this represented the last offer that Jesus made to Judas to turn from his ways and receive him as Savior. It embodies the heart of the gospel—and an invitation he gives to each of us.

I'm going to go ahead and call our teams forward to distribute the bread and the cup...

Now listen, what's interesting is that Judas wasn't there for this part—he'd already left. And part of the reason for this is because this celebration was only for believers—1 Corinthians makes that clear—which is one of the reasons we always say that if you are not a believer, you shouldn't take these things. **Jesus waited until Judas** was gone to celebrate this with them.

But before Judas left, Jesus had offered him a portion of the Passover bread. The point at which Jesus dipped the bread into bowl was a moment in the feast called "**the Korech.**" You'd dip the bread into a sauce made of bitter herbs and that symbolized the bitterness of sin and slavery and offer to deliver us from it. **And here's the kicker.** Jewish tradition was that the host would offer the bread dipped in the bitter herbs to someone in the room that he **knew well and loved deeply.** It was an honor to receive it—the host was saying, "You are special to me." **Jesus hands that piece**—he gives that offer—to Judas. It was one last invitation. Judas rejected it.

For those who are not followers yet—this same thing is offered to you, today—and you can have it if you will surrender to Jesus without price, and treasure him above all things, and say with her, "*Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small...*"

What will you do? Will you take it?

*The bread and the cup are symbols that **Jesus didn't just die for me, but he died instead of me. Before we take this together, let's pause for a moment and take a look at this reminder, then I'll come back and lead us through taking the Lord's Supper together.***

