

## **Our Transformation in the Journey to Easter: Judas and Jesus** **9am Service Message      John 13:1-5, 10-11, 18-30**

When we begin to think about the most despised name in the History of the world, whose name pops into your mind? There is quite a few to choose from past and even present. One name that bubbles to the top of the list for me is the one whom no one it would seem would want to be their own name or the name of their child and therefore do not. The name which makes this the person with the most despised name in history- Judas! In New Zealand I believe that Judas is not on the list of banned names that you can register with Births Deaths and Marriages as per legislation- parents simply choose never to call their child Judas.

In the Bible "Judas" is Greek for "Judah," one of the most significant names in Jewish history. It means "Yahweh leads," and was given to one of the sons of Jacob. His descendants became the largest tribe in southern Israel. After Assyria destroyed the ten northern tribes, Judah became the name of the surviving Jewish nation. To be named Judah or Judas would be like being named "Auckland or even Aotearoa " today.

As a result, Judas was a popular and honored name for centuries. Judas Maccabeus was the famous and venerated leader of the Jewish rebellion which led to a century of Hebrew independence (166-63 B.C.). One of Jesus' half-brothers was named Judas (Matthew 13:55); the biblical book of Jude was written by him. Another of Jesus' 12 disciples was named Judas as well (John 14:22; this disciple is called Thaddeus in Mark 3:18). Judas was like "William Hobson," the first name of our nation's first Governor. However, everything we associate with this name changed one night in a garden on the outskirts of Jerusalem. Today, who names their son Judas?

Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus is introduced in scripture as exactly this by all the gospel writers whether it be Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. Luke first called him a traitor which is just another name for 'betrayed' which is the most common word attributed to Judas in the New Testament- Judas the Betrayer! So it should come as no surprise to us that Judas features as one of the most, if not 'the' single most, despised name in history.

Judas is the one who in the true sense of the biblical meaning of the word *betrayal* gave Jesus into the hands of the Jewish chief priests and elders of the people of Israel. Judas gave up Jesus giving him into their power

delivering him to their custody to be judged, condemned, punished, tormented, scourged or whipped and beaten, and put to death. All of these things together represent and describe the full meaning of the word- *Betray, Betrayal, Betrayer*. So traitor is a little light, betrayer is better.

I begin the Lenten series on transformation with the character of Judas because he was the one to get things started and set things in motion from the moment Jesus dipped the bread into the dish and gave it to Judas telling him, "What you are about to do, do quickly." So Judas ate the bread and left so the passion or suffering of Christ on the journey to the cross was then set to begin.

### **What stands to get in the way of our own spiritual transformation?**

It may surprise you but if we are seeking from God *transformation* in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit during this period of Lent we can well stand to ask ourselves the question, "Could we in any way, shape or form, just like Judas, be a traitor to Christ because we have betrayed him in at least one area of our hearts and lives without even perhaps knowing or being aware of it? Could you or I have sold out Jesus, just as Judas did, and betrayed him? Asking this question is important because if the answer is yes, then we have in our life something that stands to get in the way of our own spiritual transformation, just as something stood in the way of Judas'. How and when does Judas' story cross over and ever link with our own story? Let's examine from scripture some more of the story of Judas' life.

Judas had listened to the wrong voice and followed the wrong prompting of his heart and mind v.2 when he got into league with the Jewish religious rulers Matthew 26:14-16. The funny thing is this group did not actually need Judas to capture Jesus' – they just Used Him! They used him just like the devil uses all his servants whether they are self aware, or not. And just like the devil the religious rulers utterly despised Judas in using him, abusing him by sending him away eventually in a total uncaring manner Matthew 27:1-5 which is when he got the light treatment from them after repenting of his treacherous deed, throwing his 30 silver coins on the floor in front of them, "I've betrayed innocent blood". Well they just laughed at him. Again, the Devil does not treat his servants well, never has and never will. "What is that to us" "That's your problem- your issue. We don't care about you and your tears. We don't need you, go somewhere else and cry. So after Judas had done his dirty deed, done cheap for 30 silver coins which equates to about half a year's wages for a day worker, as we will

learn in weeks to come, he was definitely not needed for either the trial or the crucifixion either.

### **How could Judas Iscariot betray Jesus?**

We have already learnt that the devil had prompted him, and if we ourselves are not aware of who is talking to us then we too could unknowingly or unwittingly end up serving the wrong master as 'spawn of Satan'.

How could someone who knew Jesus so well betray him like this?

Judas had been specifically called and named by Jesus, appointed from among hundreds to be one of the twelve apostles commissioned with Jesus' authority and empowered by the Holy Spirit to share the good news of the kingdom of God, which included miracles of healing the sick and delivering people from demons, evil spirits. He heard and witnessed for three years Jesus' teaching and loving ministry of power which included raising the dead. He along with Jesus and the disciples spent most of these three years ministering, eating, sleeping and probably doing their laundry together when they were on the road, which was for most of the time.

How could someone who was challenged to his face and did not desert Jesus when many disciples did [John 6:60] when they heard and could not accept Jesus' hard teaching? And by hard teaching I mean, hard to accept – not hard to understand. Judas had chosen to remain with the other 11 apostles who believed and knew that Jesus was the 'Holy One of God' v69 How could he stay with Jesus at this time let alone betray Jesus when Jesus concludes in John 6

<sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup> We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.' <sup>70</sup> 'Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!' <sup>71</sup> (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)

Judas the only non-Galilean among them, religiously and politically the one because he was from Judah in the South should have been the least likely candidate in the group to betray Jesus, but as we know and that Jesus knew the devil is involved and it was in the spirit of Satan that Judas would oppose Jesus Christ the 'Holy One of God'. So what might have been Satan, the devils way into Judas' heart when he acknowledged Jesus as the Holy One of God and live with him as a follower?

Well, in John 12:1-10 when Jesus was anointed at Bethany six days before the Passover in Lazarus' house, with Mary pouring a very expensive pint of perfume on his head, Judas objected. This is where we learn that there was only one position created within their group by Jesus and that was a Treasurer for one of the apostles to be appointed to and that it was Judas who was appointed by Jesus to be the keeper and carrier of the group's money bag which would indicate that he was a man of reliability and honesty. But here we learn that the opposite is in fact true, for right under their noses Judas was helping himself whenever he wanted, stealing money for himself. Here we learn that Judas is a selfish dishonest greedy thief who did not really care for the poor therefore betraying the trust that had been put in him in the position of Treasurer and as Christ's disciple. These are the beginning of his sin and poor motivation of heart which served to open himself further to a change of heart and therefore working for Satan as his servant whether he knew it or not. Living this sinful double life could easily have grown in him the sin of pride. Through unconfessed sin Judas has allowed the devil open access to his mind and heart. This open rebuke by Jesus was easily used as a catalyst by Judas for going to the Jewish religious leaders after which Satan would yet fully enter him by his spirit to control him in John 13:27 when Jesus gave Judas one last chance to repent. But as we know Judas had made his wilful decision to proceed and oppose Jesus Christ in the spirit of Satan, such was the determination of his own sense of pride in maintaining his planned course of action.

Unconfessed sin that we are unrepentant for not only forms a barrier between us and God but also allows us, even as Christians, to be oppressed by the enemy the devil, affected in our heart and mind because of such unconfessed sin Satan can accuse and freely trouble us all he wants. And as one area capitulates to sin, there can end up a domino effect where we give ourselves license to sin in other ways in other areas much to the glee and with the encouragement of the devil who may even through cumulative and a growing number of unconfessed sins move from the directive oppression of our souls to right out possession as in the case of Judas whose sin of pride maintained an open door to his heart and mind for the devil to eventually possess and control by his spirit v27.

In the upper room the place where Jesus and his disciples gathered to celebrate the Passover meal in the midst of which Jesus washed the disciples feet to teach them a great lesson in humility as opposed to pride

and what selfless service in his kingdom really looks like on earth when you are willing in your heart to joyfully do even the most lowly task, even after this Judas now knowing that Jesus knew what his planned to do maintained his willful pride and took the bread from Jesus, and "Satan entered into him" and Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly" (John 13:27).

After receiving the bread, Judas "immediately went out. And it was night" (v. 30). In this act Judas becomes the single most despised name at least in Christian history and set in motion Jesus' journey to the cross. Judas knew the location of the private garden where Jesus often went with his disciples. Jesus knew that Judas knew its location, and chose to go there precisely so he could be found by the authorities. Judas led the soldiers to him identifying Jesus with a kiss. Passover always occurs at full moon, so that the soldiers would have been able to see Jesus well. However, Judas arranged this sign in case the soldiers confused Jesus for his disciples. Without it, Jesus might possibly have escaped but Judas made his mark for when he "Kissed" Jesus the word means to kiss repeatedly and fondly (Matthew 26:49). There was no way the mob could miss or mistake him.

After Jesus' arrest, Judas "changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood'" (Matthew 27:3-4). He threw the pieces of silver into the temple and "went and hanged himself" (v. 5). Later his corpse fell headlong, "burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out" (Acts 1:18).

So ended the story of the man who betrayed the Son of God, ***or did it?***

For today, this is where Judas and Jesus' journey to the cross intersects with us as we can ask ourselves when or what was the last time you and I disobeyed or dishonored our Lord? We can ask ourselves why did I do it? But the more important question is, have I truly confessed my sin and in a spirit of genuine sincere and humble repentance turned to God to ask for forgiveness and the cleansing power of the name and blood of Jesus to free us from all sin and restore us to a right relationship with God today? Do you need to personally acknowledge and renounce any such sin in your life today? Do not let pride, greed or mammon [money and wealth] hold you captive just like it did Judas, free to be oppressed, directed and then possessed by Satan. Instead open yourselves to receive afresh the grace

and mercy of God, to His glory, and with it the transforming and strengthening power of God's Holy Spirit.

To encourage you just remember how Jesus washed the filth off all the feet of each disciple during the last supper including Judas when he already knew that sin had captured him. It's the same with us, knowing what we might have done, by his name and blood if we turn to him in humble repentance he will wash away the filth of our sin today making it just as though we never sinned!

So to Conclude: Do not let or allow anything to stand in the way of your own spiritual transformation as we journey together with Jesus to the cross during this period of Lent.