

Turning Our Back on Jesus

On Maundy Thursday, we are reminded that Judas Iscariot was the disciple who betrayed Jesus. In our anger over his betrayal, it is easy to forget that Jesus chose Judas to be His disciple. We may also miss the point that while Judas betrayed Jesus, the other disciples abandoned Jesus, too. No one was without fault. The disciples, including Judas, didn't understand Jesus' earthly mission. They expected Jesus to save the people from Roman oppression, but Jesus had a different mission – to save the people from their sins. When Jesus kept talking about dying, the disciples didn't fully understand and felt a mixture of anger, fear, and disappointment. They couldn't comprehend why Jesus had asked them to follow Him if the mission would fail.

We don't know precisely why Judas betrayed Jesus. But we can see that Judas let his desires become so important that Satan was able to control him. Judas was disloyal and paid 30 pieces of silver to turn over Jesus. He lacked commitment to the cause, which made him vulnerable to Satan. Satan seized the opportunity.



The Bible tells the story of Judas Iscariot: *Then Satan entered Judas, who was called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. They were delighted and agreed to give him money. He consented and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present (Luke 22:3-6).*

Judas tried to undo the evil he had done by returning the money to the priests, but it was too late. Judas was “sorry for himself,” but he never repented. How sad it is that Judas ended his life in despair without ever experiencing the gift of forgiveness God could give to even him through Jesus Christ.

Judas made the greatest mistake in history by betraying Jesus. But just the fact that Jesus knew Judas would betray him doesn't mean that Judas was a puppet of God's will. Judas made a conscious choice. God knew what that choice would be and made it part of the plan.

Judas' actions can help us if they make us reevaluate our own commitment to God. Is God's Spirit in us? Are we true disciples and followers or uncommitted pretenders? We can choose disobedience and death or repentance, forgiveness, hope, and eternal life. Judas' betrayal sent Jesus to the cross so that we can choose repentance, forgiveness, hope, and eternal life. Will we accept Christ's free gift or—like Judas—betray him?

Each of us has the potential to act like Judas or the disciples who abandoned Jesus if we act on our sinful desires, rather than stay strong in the faith. Satan used Judas, and he will use you if you let him. A lack of commitment puts us in a vulnerable position. Evil motives and desires leave us open to being used by Satan for evil purposes. Yet, God's plan and purposes are worked out even in the worst possible events.¹

Questions: What are your defenses against Satan's attacks? How do you resist sinful desires?

The Bible says: *Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? (Matthew 16:24-26).*

¹ Judas Iscariot story paraphrased from a side story in the Life Application Bible for Students, Tyndale Publishers