



Week 5 - Betrayal

Judas's betrayal of Jesus plays out over three scenes in the book of Matthew. First, Judas seeks out the chief priests to see what he could get for turning Jesus over to them. Second, while having an intimate religious meal with Judas and the rest of his disciples, Jesus predicts someone will betray him to the authorities. Finally, Judas returns the money to the priests and dies by suicide. This week, we explore these tragic events and reflect on the nature of guilt, remorse, and forgiveness.



Begin by praying for God's to be present with your group and to be revealed through your discussion.

Then one of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What will you give me if I turn Jesus over to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver. From that time on he was looking for an opportunity to turn him in.

[Matthew 26:14-16]

The disciples did just as Jesus instructed them. They prepared the Passover.

That evening he took his place at the table with the twelve disciples. As they were eating he said, "I assure you that one of you will betray me."

Deeply saddened, each one said to him, "I'm not the one, am I, Lord?"

He replied, "The one who will betray me is the one who dips his hand with me into this bowl. The Human One goes to his death just as it is written about him. But how terrible it is for that person who betrays the Human One! It would have been better for him if he had never been born."

Now Judas, who would betray him, replied, "It's not me, is it, Rabbi?"

Jesus answered, "You said it."

[Matthew 26:19-25]

When Judas, who betrayed Jesus, saw that Jesus was condemned to die, he felt deep regret. He returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, and said, "I did wrong because I betrayed an innocent man."

But they said, "What is that to us? That's your problem." Judas threw the silver pieces into the temple and left. Then he went and hanged himself.

The chief priests picked up the silver pieces and said, "According to the Law it's not right to put this money in the treasury. Since it was used to pay for someone's life, it's unclean." So they decided to use it to buy the potter's field where strangers could be buried. That's why that field is called "Field of Blood" to this very day. This fulfilled the words of Jeremiah the prophet: And I took the thirty pieces of silver, the price for the one whose price had been set by some of the

Israelites, and I gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me.

[Matthew 27:3-10]

The People

- What may Jesus' disciples been thinking when Jesus predicted the betrayal? Why didn't they stop Judas?
- What do you imagine motivated Judas to approach the chief priests? What internal conflicts might Judas have faced in his decision?
- Judas appears to experience regret and despair as he realizes the consequences of his actions. What do you think Judas expected to happen after he turned Jesus over?
- How did the chief priests respond to Judas and his money? What does that say about their faith and their leadership?

Jesus

- Could Jesus have stopped Judas? If so, why didn't he?
- What would Jesus have said to Judas if he could have seen him after the betrayal? Why?

Us

- Judas betrayed Jesus, his teacher and friend, for thirty silver pieces and perhaps other unknown motives. When have you seen someone betray another? What incentives did they have for doing so? What would it take for you to betray someone?
- How does Judas' betrayal compare with Peter's denial? Have you seen more betrayals or denials at work, amongst your family, or in other places outside of church? What about in church?
- Judas dies by suicide before he talks to Jesus. When are we tempted to end our story (by suicide or otherwise) instead of allowing God to write the ending? What motivates us to make this decision?
- Judas' feelings of guilt drive him to despair. How can we utilize guilt to move us to repentance without allowing it to drive us to despair?
- The chief priests are negligent in their spiritual leadership of Judas in provoking his betrayal and in their refusal to help him afterward. How can we avoid such gross mistakes in our own relationships?

Close by praying for each person to allow God to lead them rather than the temptations we face.