

Twelve Ordinary Men - Judas Iscariot

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, this evening, with the Lord's help, if we could turn to the Gospel of Luke, Luke's Gospel, chapter 6. If you have the Pew Bible, it's page 1039, Luke chapter 6.

I've been using these verses over the past number of months as our list of learners. There are four lists in the New Testament, and we've been using Luke chapter 6.

So Luke 6 and verse 13. Luke 6 and verse 13, where it reads there, And when day came, Jesus called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named Apostles, Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew, his brother, and James and John, and Philip and Bartholomew, and Matthew and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon, who was called the Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

And Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. This evening, we're concluding our study on the disciples of Jesus.

And as we've discovered over the past number of months, these disciples, they were just twelve ordinary men. Twelve ordinary men who had been called, commissioned, and commanded to serve their extraordinary God.

[1 : 35] They weren't rich or religious. They weren't the best or the brightest, the smartest or the sharpest, the clearest or even the cleverest. They were just twelve ordinary men.

Men with faults and flaws and failings and foibles like all of us. And among them, as we've seen, among them were deniers, deserters, doubters, and one defector.

But that's what has made this study so real and so relevant for us, because we can be learners by learning from the experience and example of these learners. We can be disciplined by these disciples.

Because as you know, a disciple, as we were saying to the children this morning, a disciple is a learner. That's what the word disciple means. It means learner. But this evening, we're learning from the experience and the example of the twelfth disciple in this list of learners.

This list of twelve ordinary men. We're learning from the experience and example of Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

[2 : 45] And of course, this disciple, he comes with an advance warning notice, because he's a disciple whom we're encouraged to learn from. We're to learn from his experience, but not follow his example.

We're to learn from his example. In fact, his very name has gone down in history as the disciple whom everyone should want to distance themselves from, or even detach themselves from.

Because he was the defector disciple. He was the traitor and turncoat. He was the one who betrayed the Son of God for thirty pieces of silver.

He is Judas, we're told, who became a traitor. And so I want us to conclude our study this evening by thinking about this man, Judas. Judas Iscariot.

And I want us to think about him under two headings. Because he was a man who had a deceptive devotion. He had a deceptive devotion and a demonic defection.

[3 : 55] He had a deceptive devotion, which ultimately led to a demonic defection. So there are two headings this evening. Boys and girls, are you taking note?

A deceptive devotion and a demonic defection. So first of all, a deceptive devotion. A deceptive devotion. Now I've mentioned to you before the brilliant book, and I'll keep mentioning it to you, a brilliant book by Colin Smith.

It's called Heaven How I Got Here. Heaven How I Got Here. Some of you have probably read it. If you've never read it, I'd encourage you to read it. It tells the story of the thief on the cross from his own personal perspective.

Where the thief on the cross, he's telling his testimony in the book of how he was saved at the eleventh hour of his life and is now a saint in heaven.

Hence the title, Heaven How I Got Here. But Colin Smith, he's written a sequel. He's written another book. This is the sequel to the story. But when you come to this book, the mood and the message of the second book is very different to the first.

[5 : 05] Because the sequel, it's very solemn. It's a very sobering book, because the book is called Heaven So Near, So Far. Heaven So Near, So Far.

And I'd encourage you to read it. Read this book. Read the first part. Read the second part, because they're both an easy read. I love easy read books. So read these books. If you read the first book, you'll know that it was written from the perspective of the thief on the cross as a saint in heaven.

But the sequel, this book, Heaven So Near, So Far, it's written from the perspective of Judas Iscariot as an unsaved sinner in hell.

It's written from the perspective of Judas in hell. That's why it's a very solemn and very sobering book, Heaven So Near, So Far. And just to give you a taster of this book, I want to read you some of the introductory words of the book, where Judas Iscariot, he's speaking.

It's his personal testimony. This is him speaking as an unsaved sinner in hell. And what he says is, I came as close to heaven as a person can be without getting in.

[6 : 22] For three years, I followed Jesus Christ and devoted myself to ministry. I was in the same boat when Jesus calmed the storm. I served the bread and fish when he fed the 5,000.

As an apostle, I went to preach. I was sent to preach the gospel. I cast out demons and I called people to repentance. But today, despite all that I did as a follower of Jesus, I am languishing in hell.

Down here, we are familiar with the story of the thief on the cross to whom Jesus said, Today you will be with me in paradise. He was on the brink of hell, but he ended up in heaven.

My story is different. I was at the gates of heaven, but I ended up in hell. I was the one who betrayed Jesus Christ.

You know, they're solemn. They're sobering words. But they ought to highlight to us. They ought to bring home to us what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. Because you remember that Jesus, he preached the Sermon on the Mount, and towards the end of his sermon, he said, He said, Therefore, says Jesus, whoever hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on a rock.

[8 : 11] But for Judas Iscariot, he was like the foolish man. The foolish man whom we've all heard of, who built his house upon the sand. And Jesus says, Everyone who hears my words and does not do them, doesn't do anything with what he hears, he is like the foolish man who built his house upon the sand.

Because when the rain came, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against the house, the house fell, says Jesus. And great was the fall of it.

Great was the fall of it. Judas Iscariot, he became a traitor. He missed the memo that all the other disciples claimed and clung to.

Because even though these disciples whom we've studied over the past number of months, even though they were doubters, even though they were deniers, even though some of them were deserters, these disciples, despite their failures and their flaws and all their foibles, they continued to confess with a hymn writer, Edward Mote.

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand.

[9 : 32] All other ground is sinking sand. And yet for Judas, he was on sinking sand. He was so near and yet so far.

He was so near and yet so far. Now, you remember last time we were looking at the other Judas, the one who's just mentioned before him. He's Judas, the son of James.

And as we said, Judas was a popular name in ancient Israel. It was closely related to the tribal name Judah. Both Judas and Judah, they mean Jehovah leads.

But even though Judas was a popular name, it very quickly, after the death of Jesus, it very quickly became an unpopular name. In fact, the name Judas became so tainted and so tarnished in the early church that one of Jesus' brothers, who was also called Judas, he changed his name.

He changed his name to Jude. He's the Jew that's mentioned towards the end of the New Testament in the letter of Jude. The same was probably true of the other Judas, Judas, the son of James.

[10:42] He was given all these nicknames to divert attention away from his first name, his proper name, because his proper name was Judas, the son of James. But also people called him Thaddeus and Labias.

He was known as the big-hearted man, the man who loved Jesus and loved people. And that was evidenced by his Christian character and his conduct and his conversation.

But then you come to this Judas. And in comparison to Judas, the son of James, who loved Jesus and loved people, Judas Iscariot, he didn't love Jesus and love people as much as he loved money. Judas Iscariot didn't love Jesus and love people as much as he loved money. And that was even after Jesus had preached the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus had preached, you remember, in the Sermon on the Mount, he had preached about the danger of money and the deception of money, where Jesus said to the crowds who were listening, he said, no one can serve two masters.

[11:49] Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. And it's from that that Paul went on to say in the New Testament to Timothy, he said, the love of money is the root of all evil, from which some have strayed from the faith.

Some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, he says, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. And undoubtedly, Paul was describing Judas.

Judas was someone who had erred and strayed from the faith in greediness and pierced himself through with many sorrows. That was Judas.

Judas was the appointed treasurer of the twelve. He was the man with the money back. He was the one who pulled all the purse strings. And yet, as Jesus often explained and emphasized to his disciples, the love of money, that is the root of all evil.

And Judas was told this. Judas knew this. Judas heard this. Judas had it proclaimed to him time and time again. And we know this because Judas was there when the rich young man came to Jesus.

[13:08] You remember the rich young man who came to Jesus asking the question, what must I do to inherit eternal life? And despite all the protests that the rich young man made, saying to Jesus that he had kept all the commandments from his youth, what did Jesus say?

Sell all that you have. Give to the poor. And you will have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me. But as you know, the rich young man, he went away, we're told.

He went away sorrowful. And he went away sorrowful because he was unwilling to part with all his possessions. The love of money had become deep-rooted in his heart.

And it's at that point, you remember that Jesus, he turns to his disciples and he says to them, do you not realize? Do you not realize that it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God?

And the disciples says, well, who on earth can be saved? And Jesus says, well, with men, these things are impossible. But with God, all things are possible.

[14:17] But the amazing thing is, not all rich men were unwilling to part with their possessions. Because Judas was also there that day in Jericho.

He was there the day in Jericho when little Zacchaeus was watching and witnessing and waiting for Jesus to pass by his sycamore tree. And Zacchaeus, as you know, he was the chief tax collector. He had made his fortune by siphoning the pockets of all the poor people in Israel. He had this love for money. That had been the root of his evil occupation for many years.

But when Zacchaeus met Jesus, Zacchaeus loved Jesus more than money. Zacchaeus loved Jesus more than money.

And you know the story. Jesus passed by the sycamore. He looked up. He said, Zacchaeus, hurry, come down. I must stay at your house today. And Zacchaeus said to Jesus, Lord, half of my goods I give to the poor.

[15:22] If I've defrauded anyone, I will restore it fourfold. That was a great day in Jericho. That was a great day when Zacchaeus realized that the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

But sadly, that day in Jericho didn't have any impact. Didn't have any influence upon this man, Judas. Because the love of money was the root of all evil.

And not long after, they were all in another house. They were in a house in Bethany. They were at the house of Simon the leper. And at the house of Simon the leper, this unnamed and unknown woman, she comes in with this alabaster box of precious ointment worth about a year's wages. And she breaks the box. And she pours the ointment over Jesus in this display of devotion to Jesus. But all the disciples are there and they're completely displeased.

The disciples are totally displeased. That's what's happening. And no doubt their indignant behavior was all instigated by Judas.

[16:35] He was behind it. So much so that some of the disciples, they're asking, why all this waste? Why waste the alabaster box? Could have been sold for a large sum of money and given to the poor.

But Jesus knew their heart. He knew that Judas was behind them. He knew that Judas was instigating and influencing their behavior. And Jesus, he calms and cools the whole situation. And he says, why trouble the woman? She hasn't done anything wrong. She has done a beautiful thing to me. You will always have the poor with you, said Jesus. But you will not always have me. And in pouring ointment on my body, says Jesus, she has prepared me for my burial. Something you're not thinking about. Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed, in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.

And that's true. Every time someone preaches or reads about that woman with the alabaster box, you love what she's done.

[17:39] But the opposite can be said of Judas. That whenever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, his deceptive devotion of money will always be told in memory of him.

Two thousand years later, we're still talking about his deceptive devotion to money. And that's what Judas got in the end.

That's how he sold his soul to the devil. The love of money was at the root of his evil plan to betray Jesus. But in the end, all Judas got was 30 pieces of silver.

The price of a slave. It's not much. It's not much at all. Judas thought that Jesus was worth much, much more to the religious leaders than that.

Judas thought that he would get a big payout from the religious leaders for handing over Jesus Christ, the one who claimed to be the king of the Jews, the one who claimed to be the son of God.

[18:46] Judas thought that the religious leaders would give him much, much more. But the religious leaders didn't love money more than Jesus. The religious leaders loved religion more than Jesus.

And the Romans, they loved power more than Jesus. And you know, that's the thing, my friend. Whether we love money or religion or power or work or family or self more than Jesus, it is a deceptive devotion that will lead to destruction.

Whether we love money or religion or power or work or family or self more than Jesus, it is a deceptive devotion that will lead to destruction.

Jesus commands that he must be first. He must be Lord. If he is not Lord of all, then he is not Lord at all.

And that was Judas' problem. Jesus was not Lord. He had this deceptive devotion to money. A deceptive devotion that led to a demonic defection.

[20:06] A deceptive devotion that led to a demonic defection. That's what we see secondly. A demonic defection. So a deceptive devotion, and then secondly, a demonic defection.

Do you know in his commentary on the twelve disciples, it's been a great commentary to read through, John MacArthur, he writes this lengthy concluding chapter about Judas Iscariot.

And he introduces the chapter by emphasizing that Judas' name appears last in every biblical list of the apostles. And every list of all these learners, it always ends with Judas Iscariot.

Who became a traitor. Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. Imagine being known throughout history as Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

And John MacArthur writes, he says, Judas Iscariot is the most colossal failure in all human history. He committed the most horrible, heinous act of any individual ever.

[21:18] He betrayed the perfect, sinless, holy Son of God for a handful of money. His dark story is a poignant example of the depths to which the human heart is capable of sinking.

Now, some will argue that Judas Iscariot, without him, we would never have salvation. And that, in a sense, is true. Some will even argue that he was the scapegoat because it was prophesied that he would betray Jesus.

Jesus prayed in John 17. He prayed about his disciples and he said, Not one of them has been lost except the son of perdition or the son of destruction, that the scripture might be fulfilled.

And the scripture Jesus was referring to was the psalm we were singing in Psalm 41. Yea, even mine own familiar friend, on whom I did rely, who ate my bread, even he his heel against me, lifted high.

But even though it was sovereignly prophesied that Judas would betray Jesus, that doesn't take away from his human responsibility, the human responsibility of Judas' actions.

[22 : 34] Because Judas made the determined decision to betray Jesus. Judas was fully responsible, fully reprehensible for his sins, just as you and I are.

And sadly and solemnly, Judas' deceptive devotion to money, that led to his demonic deception and demonic defection as a disciple of Jesus.

And it really was a demonic defection because both Luke, the gospel writer, and John, the gospel writer, they both state clearly, Satan entered Judas.

Satan entered Judas. But here's the thing, Satan didn't force his way into the heart of Judas.

Neither did he force Judas to betray Jesus.

No, Satan tempted Judas. Just like Satan tempted Jesus. Just like Satan tempts you and I.

[23 : 41] Satan tempted Judas. He sowed seeds of deception. He sowed seeds of disloyalty. And Judas willingly accepted and acted upon it.

What's worse was that even though Judas was plotting and planning to betray Jesus, that's what we read there in John 13. As Judas sat there among all the disciples, with Jesus there, he was plotting and planning how to betray Jesus.

And yet, what does Jesus do? He lays aside his outer garments. He takes a towel. He takes a basin. He kneels down in front of Judas and washes his feet.

Jesus washed the feet of Jesus. Judas, Jesus washed the feet of Judas. And you know, when Peter even protested, he said, Jesus promised Peter, he said, You are clean.

Peter didn't want to have Jesus wash his feet. He said, No, no, Lord, not me. But Jesus said, You are clean, but not all of you. One of you will betray me.

[24 : 50] And as we read, that immediately caused the disciples distress. It caused them to wonder, Who's going to do it? Who's going to betray Jesus? And they all begin asking, Lord, is it I?

Is it I? Is it me? Will I do it? Is it going to be me that's going to betray you, Lord? But in order to fulfill those prophetic words of Psalm 41, Jesus says to John, It is he to whom I will give this marshal of bread when I have dipped it.

So Jesus, we're told, he gives the marshal of bread to Judas. And he says to Judas, What you are going to do, do quickly.

And what's remarkable is that no one there that night, John would have heard what Jesus said, But no one else there listening or watching on Would have suspected or even speculated That what Judas was going to do And that Judas was going to betray Jesus.

He was just one of them. He was so like them. He behaved just like them. He spoke just like them. He was just an ordinary disciple like they were. And as the treasurer, He was one of the most trusted and trustworthy members of the twelve.

[26 : 08] And yet, Judas' deceptive devotion to money, That's what led to his demonic defection As a disciple of Jesus. And what's sad about the whole thing, It was all signed and sealed With a kiss.

All signed and sealed with a kiss. That display of love. That display of affection. And yet, Judas did it all with a kiss.

As you know, Psalm 2, we'll sing it in a moment. Psalm 2 concludes with the command, Kiss ye the Son, Lest in his ire ye perish from the way.

If once his wrath begin to burn, Blessed all that on him stay. Kiss ye the Son. The Bible exhorts us and encourages us To kiss the Son of God.

To come in humble submission, Confessing that Jesus is Lord. But when Judas kissed the Son, It wasn't in submission Or surrender to him.

[27 : 15] No, no. He was handing Jesus over To be crucified. And so much so, This act of affection, This display of devotion By kissing the Son, By kissing Jesus, Even Jesus asked Judas,

Would you betray the Son of Man With a kiss?

Would you betray the Son of Man With a kiss? My friend, Judas had a deceptive devotion To money That led to his demonic defection As a disciple of Jesus.

And you know, the message of Judas Really is to all of us, Make sure Jesus is Lord. Take heed lest you fall.

Seek first the kingdom of God And his righteousness. And you know, we know the life of Judas. We're told that later he was full of remorse After Jesus had been taken away And arrested and brought to trial.

Judas was full of remorse That he returns the blood money, The thirty pieces of silver, He returns it to the religious leaders, He throws it down at them. There's remorse, but no repentance.

[28 : 34] There was certainly contrition, But Judas knew. He knew he was condemned. He knew he was condemned. And he knew he was condemned Because Jesus had given all of the disciples That word of woe.

He had said to the disciples, Woe to that man By whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been better for him If he had never been born.

That's what Jesus said. And Judas heard it. Woe to that man For whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been better for him If he had never been born.

Solemn words. Sobering words from Jesus. Jesus. But you know, In his must-read book, Heaven's So Near, This one I mentioned earlier, Heaven's So Near, So Far, Colin Smith, He brings the narrative To a conclusion, The narrative of Judas' life To a conclusion With these words.

I don't want to spoil The whole book for you, But I'll read what he says Towards the end. This is Judas speaking As an unsaved sinner In hell, Talking about his experience.

[29 : 52] What I had done Could not be undone. My sin was irreversible And restitution Was impossible.

With the weight of my own folly Pressing down on me, I made my way To a piece of property That I bought Some time before With money Taken from the common portion Trusted to me By Jesus And the disciples.

It was a small field On a high ridge Bordered by a cliff That dropped down To an open expanse below And at the edge Of the cliff There was a tree.

Having fixed a rope To a branch of that tree I looked up at the sun And realized From its position That it must have been About midday. Then to my complete Astonishment Everything was plunged Into darkness.

It was the sixth hour Of the day. I had never seen Anything like this before. Feeling certain That this must be The judgment of God I jumped from the ledge From which upon I was standing.

[30 : 58] I fell into darkness He says And I feel That I have been falling Ever since. I fell into darkness And I feel That I have been falling Ever since.

My friend There's a lot We can learn From the experience Of Judas So that we don't Follow his example. Because for Judas A deceptive devotion Led to a demonic Defection.

A deceptive devotion Led to a demonic Defection. But as we conclude Our study Of these twelve Ordinary men And our study Of Judas Iscariot Who became A traitor I want to give The last word To my good friend J.C.

Ryle He wrote About Judas He said On all the Coasts of Britain There is not Such a beacon As to warn Sailors of danger As Judas Iscariot Is to warn Christians He shows us What length A man may go In religious Profession And yet Turn out A rotten Hypocrite At the last And prove Never To have been Converted Privileges Without grace Save nobody And will only Make hell Deeper Then he says Let us pray Daily That our own Christianity May be Genuine Sincere Real And true Our faith May be feeble Our hope Dim Our knowledge Small Our failures

Frequent And our faults Many But let us Always Be genuine Sincere Real And true Let us be able To say With our first Disciple Who was poor Weak And erring Ryle says Let us Be able to say With Peter Lord Thou knowest All things Thou knowest That I love Thee Thou Knowest All things Thou knowest That I love Thee And you know My Christian Friend You might feel Like an absolute Failure You might feel That your faith Is small And so weak But there is One thing You can say And it is What you have Said right At the beginning Of our service I love The Lord Because my Voice and Prayers Heeded

