

# Judas Iscariot: Turning Away

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, I wonder, how might we, how might you, summarise all of those passages from Matthew?

! There's a lot in there, isn't there? Thank you, Wendy, thank you, Imi, for reading that so clearly today, giving us that opportunity to hear and notice.

And I'm curious, what is it that we're noticing as we come to this? Was there anything that you were drawn to that kind of stood out for you?

Well, our theme today is turning away. So, we're going to unpack this through this story.

We see the huge betrayal that Jesus experienced when Judas turned away from him. So, we'll unpack it and then we'll explore a little bit.

[ 1 : 01 ] What does this mean for us? What might it mean personally in our own discipleship journeys, in our relationship with God? So, first of all, we see Judas agree to betray Jesus.

And I don't know if any of you are into traitors, watching traitors. I didn't watch the first two series and then it turns out when you've got a 17-year-old son, actually, you need to find things that you can watch together.

And so, we watched the last series, I think it was the last series of traitors. And it was intriguing. And obviously, the word traitor comes up today for us and this theme.

But it's a lot heavier and a lot weightier when it's not just a BBC drama. When we're thinking and hearing about the betrayal of Jesus, even though it was written in history.

So, as we come to this today, let's just acknowledge how we may have connected with this before. But how God might want to use this story today to stir in our hearts the noticing that he is wanting us to do today.

[ 2 : 26 ] And the response that he is going to take us through this morning. So, I was straight away drawn to wondering, what are the complex motives behind Judas' betrayal?

Let's remember, he's been one of Jesus' closest friends. He's literally been doing life with Jesus, with the other disciples. He's been witnessing extraordinary things.

Personally, he had experience of those. So, what on earth happened? I wonder, was it greed? He saw an opportunity for financial reward.

Was it a lack of faith? Disillusionment with what he saw playing out around him. Different, perhaps, to what he expected or assumed it would look like.

Perhaps the power, kind of that desire for power, outweighed his love for Jesus in that moment.

And he saw the opportunity to be a significant player in the world, in the growing tensions that the power authorities were fueling.

[ 3 : 43 ] So, we're curious. What's going on for Judas here? And then we move to the Last Supper, as we now call it.

So, verses 20 to 30. And here is rich symbolism. It's the Passover meal. A time of communal remembrance, coming together and remembering God's faithfulness to the Jewish people.

A time of unity and the foreshadowing of Jesus as the Lamb of God, the ultimate sacrifice. And we see here Jesus speak out a poignant prediction of this betrayal.

In this sacred moment, the confusion in the room is tangible. And even Judas, asking what seems to be like the oddest question.

I noticed, Alex, you went, hmm. In the message version, it says, bearing in mind Judas knows what he's already done. He's already been to the authorities and said, what will you give me to do this?

[ 5 : 02 ] Judas then says, it isn't me, is it, Rabbi? In front of everyone else. So, straight away, again, I'm noticing these themes coming up of what's going on internally and what's playing out in front of everyone else.

I wonder if any of us can relate. I wonder if any of us are beginning to notice things that God wants to draw our attention to this morning.

There is an incredible tension here between the holiness of this meal and the shadow of what's to come. So, let's go a bit further into the Garden of Gethsemane.

And Jesus is arrested. The darkness, the tension, the clash of emotions in this moment are vivid. And the symbolism of a kiss, a Judas kiss, a gesture of such intimacy, turned into one of ultimate betrayal.

So, as we just hold this space this morning, and for some of us it's a very familiar space, and it will feel a very safe space, naturally.

[ 6 : 29 ] For others, we may be here for the first time, or we may not be feeling quite so grounded and connected. But I just want to encourage us as we reflect this morning.

God is here. His spirit is here. And we're here to do his work. He's invited us into this place. So, we're going to pause. And we're going to just think in the quiet.

Maybe draw to mind and consider perhaps the heartache that we might have experienced of a betrayal by someone really close to us.

This would have been really confusing and hurtful for the disciples here. And even though Jesus had predicted it would happen, I do still wonder what emotions he was experiencing.

He's human and all God. Incredible. Maybe we can recall that time when we've experienced a betrayal.

[ 7 : 37 ] Maybe we didn't name it as that. Maybe we would have just kind of noticed a real deception of another person or a situation.

That feeling of really being let down by someone that we thought we could completely trust. The deep pain felt.

Or perhaps what might be coming to mind for us is a time when we ourselves have behaved in a way that has caused this pain to others.

Someone who trusted us. Deep pain caused. This is really uncomfortable and challenging, I think. And hard to acknowledge that there are times when we are likely to cause this pain unintentionally. We are human. We are broken people.

[ 8 : 49 ] Flawed. And we cannot possibly get relationships right all of the time. But the thing for me that is just so striking and hallelujah that it is is what I was thinking is Jesus' response.

Despite the chaos, he seems so composed. He even calls Judas friend. Friend. Why this charade? He seems to be calling Judas gently out on his behaviour, on his actions, his choices. Jesus is not reacting in a big, emotionally charged way.

There seems to be peace, even acceptance, but we know that he has already wrestled with his father in the garden just moments before with huge emotion, with questions.

But here it would seem to me his connection with God's presence, his deep knowledge of the truth of who God is keeps him grounded and present and with enough strength to face what he has got to face.

[ 10 : 21 ] It's incredible. So here comes another question. I wonder what you or I might recall of our own reactions and responses to the times of betrayal in our lives or of being betrayed.

I imagine and I don't know and I don't assume but I imagine that all of us have had those experiences punctuate our life and there's more to come.

let's just ask God to through his spirit revealed to us just to our internal selves how these experiences have shaped us.

Is there anything he's wanting us to notice today and just bring before him in prayer? we will have time at the end to pray with one another or pray with the prayer team or to have that conversation with God ourselves maybe in this space maybe beyond it but let's not miss the noticing he's wanting us to do.

And finally a new day dawns Jesus is condemned the course of history is set and we witness Judas' overwhelming guilt and despair.

[ 12 : 10 ] We see the weight that human weight of him turning away from God and the crushing burden of remorse felt even more sharply following the cruel rejection of his offer to return the money to the high priests.

And yet in this darkest of moments we're invited to notice what I feel is like the most extraordinary detail the fate of the 30 silver coins.

the irony of the chief priest's use of this betrayal money to buy the potter's field holds a deep significance not only because it's actually used ultimately for something good that would help others it becomes a burial ground for the homeless but it also fulfills a prophecy Jeremiah predicted that this exact thing would happen and so suddenly we are connected firmly in this moment in time to the grand narrative of God's overarching story and it reminds us how God can turn even the worst of human actions into part of his bigger plan for good when we look at this prophecy and its fulfillment we see it fitting into

God's larger plan for redemption using the money to buy the potter's field shows that even human mistakes clumsy choices bad choices can be woven into God's story of salvation this story makes us think about betrayal but it invites us to think about repentance God's mercy and reminds us that there is always hope and the chance of a fresh start God is with us fully present there with his unending grace his forgiveness and the possibility of redemption even in our darkest moments love and all we need do is turn back turn back to him he is there the bible is full of this message full I was overwhelmed with the number of verses I could have brought to you at this moment but I pray that you hear in these something that connects with your soul in 1 John it says if we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness psalm 103 says as far as the east is from the west so far has he removed his transgressions from us Romans 3 I find a lot of comfort here for all have sinned all fall short of the glory of God and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ

[16:17] Jesus and Micah 7 who is a God like you who pardons sin forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance you do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy you will again have compassion on us you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea and I say amen to that God hurling oh I love that word hurling our iniquities all the stuff that we intentionally and unintentionally just get wrong that causes that gap between us and God he constantly takes it and by his grace we are forgiven and we have relationship with him he is with us for all eternity and we're in this bit in the middle but he is here he is here for us to turn back to when I ask you that question to bring to mind perhaps a time when you have felt betrayed deceived by someone or you perhaps have brought to mind when that has been your action

I know that I can do this I've done this in preparing today I can think of both of those situations I can place myself back there perhaps for some of us it's remembering a time when that has been our experience in our relationship with God honest enough to say to God when I think back to that time God God I felt betrayed by you and now I'm reminded this morning of who you are the truth of who you are you never betray us you never let us down we are never alone we may feel it everything around us may suggest that that is truth but perhaps what he's reminding us this morning is that we are deceived if we believe that the truth is that he is with us his plans for us are good and they play out in many different ways often not how we expect so

I want to leave you us include myself in this with one question what story are you telling yourself what story are you telling yourself that's going to require a bit of a look inside a bit of curiosity perhaps with God I wonder does it align with the truth of God's message to us in his word is the central message in the story we tell ourselves one of hope of renewal encouraging us to always be seeking forgiveness and to extend it to others and we know how hard that can be or how complex that can be and if that's something you're wrestling with please come and have a conversation or find someone you can have a conversation with because forgiveness doesn't always look like or mean perhaps what we assume it does mean are we aligned with that redemption that is always within reach just going to give time going to have a couple of minutes and then

I'm going to just draw that time julian to a close by reading a poem that will hopefully just draw together some of the themes from this morning and invite people beyond this space to not just rush away from what God is doing thank you let's just take a couple of moments with the music quietly and now just bring ourselves before God everything we bring to this place finds a place here every case that we carry can be consigned here every load we are lifting can be left every secret we are slaves to can be spoken here and every terror that torments us can be told there is room here for anguish for the agony of abandonment there is ground here for grieving for the weeping wounds of loss in this circle of safety at this fireside of faith there is space for story and song there is room for revelation and renewal here is hope and healing here is forgiveness and freedom here is connection and correction and coming to our senses at this source whose depths are never ending this river that will never run dry at this table whose banquet of abundance knows no bounds no

wrong is too wrong to be righted here no tragedy too twisted to be turned for everything we bring to this place finds a place here and every load we are lifting can be left up