TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Bobby Rader /Opening Prayer by: Ken Coleman

Morning Assembly Song Leader: Danny Balch

#611 Heavenly Sunlight
#555 Seek Ye First

Scripture Reading by: Joseph Girard
#509 I Will Sing the Wondrous Story
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#469 Faith is the Victory
Sermon: "What Does This Mean?"
Acts 2:1-13

#904 Have You Been to Jesus?
#753 Farther Along

Closing Prayer by: Wayne Noonkester

Tonight is our 5th Sunday evening Prayer Service

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

January 30, 2022

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

The Tragedy of Judas

Our sermon last Sunday morning prompted several people to discuss Judas afterward. They all boiled down to one thing: why did he do what he did? That question has fascinated people for the two thousand years. Judas Iscariot is probably the most notorious figure in human history. Every time he is mentioned in Scripture, we also find the notice of him being a traitor. He committed the most heinous crime imaginable, betraying the spotless Son of God for a handful of silver.

One of our purposes in studying Acts is to make the story our own. Part of that is recognizing that characters like Peter, John, Paul and Barnabas were not superheroes. They were regular people, like you and me. That same thing applies to Judas. We shouldn't put the others on pedestals, and we shouldn't just caricature him as a super-villain. Judas was not a monster, but a man. That sounds cliché, but it is essential to remember; we are prone to look at those who go vastly wrong as being entirely different from us. "I thank you, Lord, that I am not as other men are." We are just made of better stuff, aren't we? It is hard to realize our kinship with the man who betrayed Jesus. But he was like us.

Not only was Judas thoroughly human, he was not always a traitor. As Luke lists the 12 in **Lk 6:16,** he notes, *Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.* He was not born a traitor. Nor was he one during his early days of fellowship with Jesus. Some might argue he was a devil from the beginning, but Scripture doesn't actually say that. *Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil* **(Jn 6:70).** The meaning of that clause is, "One of you is devilish." This is well into Jesus' ministry, about a year before his death. At that time, Judas was facing in the wrong direction. But that is not to say that Judas was wholly bad. This criticism was no sharper than what Jesus levelled against Peter. Peter was the one who made the great confession, *You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.* But then, when Jesus proceeded to unfold what that meant—that he would have to go to Jerusalem, suffer, and die—Peter warned him against it. *That will never happen to you, Lord!* You remember what Jesus said in rebuke? *Get behind me, Satan!* **(Matt 16:13-23)** That is as cutting as a remark gets—but Peter was not totally evil. And Judas wasn't beyond hope anymore than Peter was. He became a traitor, but he wasn't one from the start.

If he was not always a traitor, that means he was at one point a loyal friend. Like the rest, Judas was a disciple of Jesus, a follower of his before he was chosen as an apostle. Some have suggested he became one from mixed motives, that he had some selfish ambition at work. Well he was not unique there. I think especially of James and John, asking for positions of honor and making the other apostles jealous in the process.

But I believe Judas was a friend not only because he chose Jesus, but because Jesus chose him. Jesus did not have to; there were others, I'm sure, who were quite worthy that he could have chosen. But Jesus selected him like the others because he had potential. Yes, what he did was in accordance with prophecy; Jesus would be betrayed as Scripture predicted. Here is the mystery of free will and God's foreknowledge, that theologians and philosophers have tried to explain for as long as they have asked those questions about Judas. Judas still chose to do what he did.

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Joe Edd Stifflemire is at home after having surgery last week.

Susan McCain has walking pneumonia.

Lydia Leal, Joe Leal's niece, is on a ventilator and in a coma. She is on a waiting list for Methodist Hospital.

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Gwen Pettit, Harold & Geri Cryer, Steve Ward, Frank & Tina Garcia, Caitlin Smith, Ka'Leisha Jones, Oscar Cantu, Gary Nielsen, Virginia Cole

Shut Ins
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Myrtle Sheffield, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique , Rod Kyle in the South Pacific

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Minister meeting Monday, Jan. 31st at 5:30 p.m.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Tuesday, Feb. 1st at 8:00 a.m.

We will have a meal on Wednesday, Feb. 2nd at 5:30 p.m. in the family life center.

Primetimers will be having a Valentine party on Tuesday, Feb. 8th at 6:00 p.m. It will be potluck. A sign up sheet is on the bulletin board.

New Movers Program

We are starting a new movers program. We will have a list of people that have moved into the area. If you are interested in helping with this, see Bryant Perkins.

Elders	Deacons	Minister
Ken Coleman	Daniel Balch	Bryant Perkins
Bobby Rader	Danny Balch	
Don Taylor		
Robert Ward		

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"
is the weekly bulletin of the Liberty Church of Christ 3201 North Main, Liberty Texas 77575
Office Phone Number (936) 336-2213; Fax (936) 334-8280;
Minister's (Bryant Perkins) Cell Phone Number (903)407-5737
Website: libertycofc.org Facebook page: Liberty Church of Christ

continued from previous page

So we come back to the question of why. At some point, there came a time when Judas turned from Jesus. Here we move into the realm of speculation. Judas was the only disciple who was not a Galilean—Iscariot means "man of Kerioth," a town in southern Judea. Perhaps that offered soil in which jealousy might grow. It was also clear that all the disciples didn't enjoy Jesus' confidence to the same degree; there were some he was taking into an inner circle of friends. That included impetuous Simon and those self-promoting hotheads, James and John. Maybe Judas thought himself more worthy and resented that.

In my opinion, the best explanation is rooted in things not turning out as he had hoped. When he began to follow Jesus, he was sure he would set up an earthly kingdom—an expectation about the Messiah that he shared along with the other disciples and many of his countrymen. Here was a man who would set his people free! They would put their foot on the throat of the Romans; they would conquer as they had been conquered.

But here he met disappointment. Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the time ripe for a decisive blow. The people were ready to make him king! But Jesus instead wept. Perhaps, thought Judas, he is not to be a conqueror after all. And so, disappointed in his own advancement and the prospects of a powerful Jewish state, he decided to get out of all this what little he could. He started to steal a little from the common purse. Of course he did not call it stealing—maybe he told himself he would replace it someday, or justified it as part of his legitimate wages. It was a trifle compared to what he could have earned had he not given up everything for this wild goose chase.

While Judas was soothing his conscience by soft lies, and deceiving his fellow-disciples, he realized that there was one he was not deceiving. Jesus knew him for what he was. He found himself uncomfortable and heartbroken in Jesus' presence, the one whose fellowship had once been his comfort and joy. And he put the blame for that, not on himself, but on Jesus—he hadn't been what he was supposed to be! So he came to hate his one-time friend. A hatred that was so intense, he conspired with Jesus' enemies. *What will you give me, and I will deliver him to you?* The price was 30 pieces of silver—Judas had hoped for more—but they held all the cards. But greed was not his primary motivation. Had that been the case, he would not have kissed Jesus. That was more than just pointing him out. There was spite in that action. Jealous, disappointed, disillusioned, had come to hate the man he once loved.

Judas expected to go his way after the betrayal of Jesus. But he cannot do it. A fatal fascination draws him to the trial. He hears the man he has betrayed sentenced to death, and a terrible reaction sets in. "*I have sinned by betraying innocent blood!" "What is that to us? See to it yourself."* **(Matt 27:4-5)**

Can you imagine the suffering of this desperate man? The worst hour of his life is upon him. Judas has needed help before, but never before like now. Where people turn in that hour says a great deal about them. Some try to alter their reality with substances and escape it. Some try to soothe their pain with power or possessions. Judas, having no answer, took his own life.

Whatever his motivation might have been, that is the great tragedy of Judas: he still could have found forgiveness. That is what we need to remember above all speculative questions. All of us face an hour of need in our lives. The only source for help when our life is in shambles is to turn to Jesus Christ.

Bryant Perkins