

Holy Wednesday
St. Luke 22:1—23:43
March 27th, 2024
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Judas, Betrayest Thou the Son of Man?

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Sermon Text:

“While He yet spake, behold, a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them; and he drew near unto Jesus to kiss Him. But Jesus said unto him, ‘Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?’”

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

My dear friends, Holy Wednesday is all about the betrayal of Judas Iscariot. Traditionally, the Church has established Wednesdays and Fridays as days of fasting. Fridays fast is obviously because it commemorates Good Friday, the suffering and death of our Lord + Jesus on the tree of the holy cross. Wednesdays have become days of fasting because it is on this day in Holy Week where Judas Iscariot betrays the Lord + Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane with a kiss in the Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke. Wednesdays and Fridays are days of mourning in the Church. The betrayal of Judas actually did occur on a Wednesday. It was this day that he went to the chief priests and sought money in exchange to deliver the Lord + Jesus away from the crowds.

These days of fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays is seen in the Ember Weeks. Originally the Ember Days were only Wednesdays and Fridays. Saturday was later added as a commemoration of our Lord’s Sabbath rest on Holy Saturday. We fast on Ember Saturdays in remembrance of our Lord’s burial in the grave. Therefore, today is a day of fasting. Today, we hear about our Lord’s betrayal by one of His close disciples; one of the twelve whom He had chosen to preach the good news of His coming to save and redeem His people.

Judas Iscariot betrays our Lord + Jesus with a kiss. He pretends to be a friend when he is actually an enemy. Judas comes as a wolf in sheep’s clothing. He comes in the cover of night, for evil loves to do its work when we are alone and in the dark. But our Lord sees right through the veil of Judas’ deception. He sees that Judas has come to betray Him. But our Lord knows that such a betrayal must take place. He must be turned over by one of His trusted friends. For this is how mankind was led into sin by one of the animals of the Garden of Eden deceiving Adam and Eve into believing that he had their best interests at heart.

The tale of Judas Iscariot is a tragic tale. Like Adam and Eve were deceived, Judas is also deceived. He is deceived by greed and the pursuit of earthly riches. He had spent three years with the

Lord + Jesus hearing all about the treasures of Heaven. But he only sought the riches and glories of this life. His end serves as a warning for us poor sinners. For the pull of this world is strong. We live in this world even as we long and hope for the world to come. And as we live in this world, we have earthly concerns that must be met. We are often dragged away from thoughts of our eternal comfort in Heaven by the cares and concerns of this life. These concerns seem more important to us than realities which seem very far off and distant.

Such it was for Judas Iscariot. He exchanged the eternal and everlasting treasures of Heaven for earthly money and possessions. We have already heard this week on Holy Monday that Judas would embezzle the monies from the moneybox that was for the poor. He just happened to be in charge of it. Perhaps he should have been given another role. He cared not for the poor. He cared not for other people. He only cared about fulfilling his own greed and lust. This led to his eternal destruction in Hell as the son of perdition.

The Evangelist St. Luke does not record the end of Judas Iscariot. We heard that on Sunday from the Passion History of the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew. Judas realizing too late that his betrayal would lead to the sentence of death for the Lord + Jesus goes back to the chief priests and tries to give the thirty pieces of silver back. Perhaps he thought they would change their minds and release the Lord + Jesus if he gave back the money. But they were not going to do that they had the Lord + Jesus exactly where they wanted Him. Bound in chains and sentenced to death and on His way to the governor Pontius Pilate to be sent to be crucified—to be hung as a curse on the tree of the cross. Judas threw the money in the temple and went and hanged himself. Thereby sealing his fate in eternal destruction.

Therefore, my dear friends, Judas Iscariot stands as a warning to us poor sinners. His fate can just as likely be ours if we cling to earthly things and not to heavenly things. But make note: In the Passion Histories that we hear this Holy Week there is a connection between the two disciples of our Lord who are specifically mentioned as betraying and denying Him. For the narrative of St. Peter and his denial three times before the cock crows is also mentioned in the Passion histories. In fact, in St. Matthew's Gospel the two come right after one another. And in the others the betrayal of Judas and the denial of St. Peter are only separated by the trial of the Lord + Jesus. It is as if the Holy Ghost wants us to make this connection between Judas and St. Peter.

In these two disciples of our Lord was get the two responses that we as human beings can have towards our own sinfulness. Judas despairs and loses all hope; he rejects faith in the Lord + Jesus. He rejects being saved by the help and assistance of the Lord + Jesus. He cannot save himself, so he despairs to his eternal destruction. It would have been better if the son of perdition had never been born, if a millstone had been hung about his neck and he be cast into the sea. Instead, he hung a robe around his neck and hung himself upon a tree in despair. He did not realize that there was forgiveness even for his sins.

St. Peter also sins greatly. He denied our Lord + Jesus three times. Swearing vehemently that he did not know the man + Jesus of Nazareth. When he had remembered the words of the Lord + Jesus that he would do this, he went out and wept bitterly. But St. Peter did not despair, he still held hope in the Lord's rescue. He did not lose his faith. He still clung in faith to the mercy of the Lord God. He clung in faith to the mercy of his Lord and Savior, + Jesus, the Christ. He, like Judas Iscariot, had witnessed that mercy throughout the entire three years that he spent with the Lord + Jesus. He had been witness to the mercy and compassion that our Lord showed upon the sick, and demon-possessed, the blind, the lame, the deaf, and the poor. St. Peter beheld the mercy that our Lord + Jesus had for the poor, miserable sinners who came to Him for forgiveness. St. Peter clung to that mercy and hoped that he would also receive such mercy from the Lord + Jesus.

Judas Iscariot had forgotten the mercy of the Lord. Greed and earthly cares consumed him too much for him to remember the heavenly and spiritual treasures that our Lord and Savior possesses. Therefore, Judas serves as a reminder to us that when we turn our focus away from our heavenly treasures and become consumed with the things of this life, we are walking a dangerous road. For we can easily fall into the ditch of despair forgetting our Lord's mercy toward us. Our Lord is with us even in what seems to us to be the greatest of trials. He will never leave us nor forsake us. He has not forgotten His mercy and compassion towards us.

We may struggle with the cares and responsibilities of this life; we may struggle with pain and misery in this life, but our Lord and Savior never leaves us. It is Satan's desire that we be sifted like wheat just like Judas Iscariot. Our Lord tells St. Peter that Satan desired to sift him like wheat, but the Lord prayed for him that he would be strengthened in faith in the time of his trouble. Judas was not there for these words of the Lord; he had already run away to collect his thirty pieces of silver. Satan desires to sift us like wheat when we are in the midst of trial and temptation. But our Lord + Jesus would have us remember His mercy and compassion.

My dear friends, we have the image of our Lord's compassion before our eyes whenever we look upon the crucifix. There on the cross our Lord + Jesus is hung for the atonement of the sins of the whole world. There on the cross He shows His great love, mercy, and compassion. For He suffers and dies to win forgiveness of sins for us poor, miserable sinners. On the cross He suffers and dies to defeat the power of the devil and the whole horde of Hell. On the cross He dies and is buried to defeat death once and for all. He now gives to us the gifts and treasures that He won by His death and burial. He won for us forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation. And He gives us those gifts whenever we come to this holy house and receive these gifts in the means of grace.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us continue to come to this sanctuary and hear the good news that we have a loving and merciful and compassionate Lord and Savior, Who has delivered us from the bonds and power of Satan. He welcomes us into His eternal heavenly abode, so that we may eternally give thanks and praise for His mercies with all the saints and angels of Heaven forever and ever. Thanks be to the Lord + Jesus. Amen. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!