

{INVITATIONS}



DENY.

Denying the Temptation to Betray Jesus

Matthew 21:1-11; 26:14-16; 47-56

GETTING STARTED

What comes to mind when you think of *betrayal*? [Jerry Springer-like talk shows? A movie or a song? Kids turning their backs on one another? A personal life experience? Other???]

READ and REFLECT

Read Matthew 21: 1-11; 26:14-16, 47-56

On Palm Sunday, we remember when Jesus, our *conquering king*, riding into Jerusalem with the praise and honor of the people surrounding him. It would have seemed like the pinnacle of his ministry and mission. Then, only a few days later, everything changes. Praise is replaced by betrayal. We see Jesus riding not just into Jerusalem, but all the way to cross at the hands of the very people who celebrated him.

Who was Judas?

- One of the 12 Disciples and the only one who was not from Galilee.
- Judas was one of two disciples of Jesus who were Zealots. The Zealots were an extreme party dedicated to overthrowing Rome, by violence if necessary. (The other was Simon the Zealot—Luke 6:15)
- He was the keeper of the money purse for Jesus' ministry (and often helped himself personally to those funds. Judas would also join in protesting how Jesus used resources and profit (i.e. Mat 26:6-13)
- Betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver to the religious leaders.
- Killed himself out of guilt for betraying Jesus (Mat 27:3-7)

What is your impression of Judas?

In the sermon, three possible motivations were given for Judas following Jesus:

- Perks—There were benefits to following Jesus, including financial perks for Judas.
- Power—As a Zealot intent on overthrowing Rome, if Jesus was the Messiah, this was about to happen...the new kingdom (for Israel) had come.
- Piety—Following Jesus offered a new, deeper, more “spiritual” way of life.

Which of these do you think were the biggest drivers for Judas? Do you see other motivations in the Gospel accounts of why Judas would have been a disciple?

Palm Sunday...Hosanna! Four days later...Betrayal! (Maundy Thursday).

- How did things shift so fast from a high to low moment in the story of Jesus (and Judas)? How do you explain it?

ENGAGE and DISCUSS

What benefits have YOU encountered in your journey with Jesus?

Have you encountered times of frustration in your journey with Jesus? How did those frustrations manifest themselves?

Can you relate at all to Judas? While he is reviled as a traitor...the betrayer...do you ever see a reflection of yourself in his story? How?

As we journey down the final section of the Lenten road to the cross, stay close to these concluding points:

- Whatever *treason* you may have committed against God, another person, or even your own self, Jesus offers you a fresh start today through his forgiveness and grace.
- Commit your life to pursuing better blessings than Judas was seeking. Pursue:
 - Perks of life with God and bringing others to know him
 - Power of the Kingdom displayed through sacrificial love
 - Piety of a life fully surrendered to God in faith and obedience.

NEXT STEPS

- Reflect on your journey with God over Lent. Where have you traveled with him? What has been revealed to you? How have you been challenged? What has changed (or is seeking to be changed) in your life?
- Check out the stories being posted each day in the Christ Church Lenten Devotional found at www.cc-ob.org .