

SIGNIFICANT DEAL

Sermon for the 6th mid-week Lenten Service, 2021

Luke 22:1-6

Grace and peace to you all from our risen Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 22:1-6: ¹ **The Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called “the Passover,” was approaching.** ² **The Chief Priests and the scribes were searching for a way to put Him to death. For they were afraid of the people.**

³ **Then Satan entered Judas, who was called “Iscariot,” and who was numbered among the Twelve.** ⁴ **Judas went to the Chief Priests and the captains and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus to them.** ⁵ **They were glad and agreed to give him money.** ⁶ **He consented and kept looking for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Our text today gives the sad and sombre account of Judas Iscariot making a deal. A significant deal. It was a deal to betray Jesus. But Judas’s significant deal was *far more significant than he could ever imagine*.

Our text takes place on Wednesday of Holy Week. By now, the chief priests and scribes wanted in the worst way to arrest Jesus and kill Him. Jesus was a threat to the power and prestige of these religious authorities. He was a threat to their control of the people. He had made them publicly look bad on several occasions. They tried to trap Him in a discussion on more than one occasion, but Jesus bested them again and again by asking them questions they could not or would not answer.

In the mind of the chief priests and scribes, Jesus was *dangerous*. In their mind, He was dangerous in that He did not seem to be concerned about doing what they considered to be work on the Sabbath Day. He associated and even ate with all the wrong people: tax collectors and other public sinners. In their estimation, He was not looking and acting the way the Messiah should look and act.

In their mind, Jesus had become *far too popular with the people*. They had witnessed what happened on Palm Sunday when Jesus entered Jerusalem accompanied by crowds yelling, “*Blessed is He who is coming in the name of the Lord!*” and “*the King of Israel!*” (John 12:13). So great was the outpouring of support for Jesus that the Pharisees watching it concluded, “*Look! The world has gone after Him*” (John 12:19).

The only thing that had caused the chief priests and scribes to hold off from arresting and killing Jesus was the popularity He had with the crowds. They feared a violent backlash from the crowds if they tried to take Jesus away while He was out in public. They needed help with their evil scheme - a way to get Jesus quietly and discreetly.

So they rejoiced when Judas came to them and gave them exactly what they wanted and needed. Luke writes, “³ **Then Satan entered Judas, who was called “Iscariot,” and who was numbered among the Twelve.** ⁴ **Judas went to the Chief Priests and the captains and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus to them.**” It would actually take place in about twenty-four hours. On the very next evening, Maundy Thursday, Judas would leave the upper room and go to the chief priests. He would lead the temple guard to Jesus as Jesus and the disciples were in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, away from the crowds of people. Then, in the ultimate act of betrayal, Judas would walk up to Jesus and identify Him to the temple guard with a kiss.

The fact is, this was not the first time that Judas had betrayed Jesus - or the other disciples, for that matter. In John chapter 12, when Jesus was eating at the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, Mary had anointed the feet of Jesus with expensive ointment. Judas objected that this was a waste of the expensive ointment. He argued that the oil could have been sold and the money given to the poor. But John tells us that Judas was not concerned about the poor. He was the treasurer for the disciples and used to steal from the treasury. He

wanted more money in the treasury so that he could have more money at his disposal.¹ He had already made a significant deal with his own conscience to justify his continued betrayal of Jesus and the other disciples.

While Judas's name has become synonymous with betrayal, Judas is far from the only one who has betrayed Jesus. In fact, we can all identify with Judas. We just have a different price. It isn't thirty pieces of silver, but it may be a momentary pleasure we feel when we see that image on the computer screen. It may be the self-importance we feel when we're the centre of attention as we gossip about a friend. It may be the lack of sorrow and empathy and maybe even secret feelings of joy that we feel as someone else falters, and we feel superior. Daily we betray Jesus, not with a kiss, but with our thoughts, words, and deeds that are self-centred and self-serving; and this from people who believe in and confess Jesus. We've each made significant deals with our consciences just to let a little slide. Judas had his price, and so do all of us.

Although he didn't know it, the betrayal by Judas and the events that would follow would be used by God to bring about what Judas could never imagine. It would not be thirty pieces of silver, but rather the holy precious blood and the innocent suffering and death of Jesus Christ that would be the payment for all sin, for all people, for all time.

Christ would not betray us. He would not betray the will of His Father. He would voluntarily shed His blood and offer His life as payment in full for our sin. And just as He predicted on more than one occasion, He would rise again on the third day.

No, Jesus will never, ever betray us. He promises to be with us always even to the end of the age. He promises never to leave or forsake us. Even today, He is interceding for us, speaking on our behalf in the presence of the Father. And just as He has promised, He will return on the Last Day and will raise us and all believers and grant to us and all believers never-ending life in His presence.

The significant deal that Judas made with the religious leaders of the day set into motion the events that God would use to change everything between God and man. Satan, Judas, and the religious leaders would use this deal with an evil intent. God would use it in accordance with His love and compassion for us and all people. It was all in accord with His plan, all in accord with His timetable, all in accord with His will. It all gets set into motion with this significant deal. Amen.

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

¹ John 12:1-7