

Encounters with Christ

Part 3: Peter and Judas

1. They both betrayed Jesus.

- *Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:29-31, 66-72; Luke 22:54-62;
John 18:15-27; Matthew 26:14-16; Mark 14:44-46; Luke 22;
John 13:21-27, 18:1-3; Luke 6:12*

2. They both regretted and repented.

- *Matthew 26:75; 27:1-10*

3. They both had encounters with the resurrected Christ.

- *Matthew 27:5; Acts 1:18; John 21:15-19*

4. One went from fear to faith to filling, the other went from fear to failure.

- *Acts 2:42; Matthew 26:50*

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West Valley Church
5/8/2022
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Does anyone here know of anyone personally – in your family or among your friends or *anyone* today – whose name is Judas? Anyone here name their baby Judas? No? Well I'm not surprised. In fact, during the last year in the United States, 23 babies were named Judas, which was 0.0006% of the baby boys born in the USA.² Twenty-three, and last year was the *highest* number of "Judases" born ever in the US. Compare that to the name Peter, which last year had nearly 2000 (and that's not to mention other versions, like "Pedro" or "Pete." The highest year for the name Peter was in 1957, when there were almost 12,000 boys born named Peter.

Here we are, over 2,000 years later, and people still don't name their child Judas. And for good reason. What is amazing to me though, and what many of us don't realize, is that Peter and Judas had nearly identical journeys of faith.

Today we continue in the third of our six-part series looking at the encounters that the disciples had with Jesus from after the resurrection to the day of Pentecost, identifying what their faith journey was like, and in the process, we'll see that they struggled with some of the same faith issues that we do, so we can learn from them. You'll see that over the course of those 50 days, the disciples' journeys took them from fear, to faith, to filling with the Holy Spirit.

So today we will learn a great deal from two of Jesus' disciples and the encounters they had with Jesus on their faith journey during those days between Easter Sunday and Pentecost Sunday. Those two disciples are Peter and Judas.

You might think you know their story, but I'll bet you are going to be surprised. I'm going to preach in a little bit different way today: normally we look at one passage of Scripture and unpack it, and we have several other Scripture references that support what we are talking about or give it context. Today, if you will trust me, I am going to give the narrative story, and I will refer to Scripture passages as I do, but I won't actually be reading a lot of them. You will have the references in your outline on your app, or you can see and download the outline and the sermon manuscript from the "sermons" page on our website and you'll have the references there, okay?

Alright – we will start with the fact that...

¹ Primary resources are William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, Rev. and updated, vol. 1, The New Daily Study Bible (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 2001), Craig Groeschel, "Doubters Anonymous," <http://www.preachingtoday.com/sermons/sermons/2010/july/doubtersanonymous.html?paging=off>, Joseph Dongell, *John: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Indianapolis, IN: Welsleyan Publishing House, 1997), and *Faithlife Study Bible*, Lexham Press.

² <https://www.everything-birthday.com/name/m/Judas>

1. They both *betrayed* Jesus.

Both of them from the time of Jesus' arrest were extremely afraid; they were both fear-filled followers. You might say to me, "Wait a minute, Pastor Mike – Peter didn't betray Jesus – he denied Jesus." And in response, let me give you a highly theological term: "Tomaytoe, Tomahto." So let's start with Peter. As many of you know, on the last evening that Jesus had with his disciples, he celebrated the Passover with them and instituted what we call the Lord's Supper. And remember that Peter emphatically stated that he would never deny Jesus, but Jesus told Peter he actually would do that very thing not once, not twice, but THREE times in the same night, and then they went out to the Mount of Olives to pray, and then Jesus was arrested. And of course that's exactly what Peter did (Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:29-31, 66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-27). We've learned this before, but the number three means that something is certain, without question, thorough. If Peter had said it once, that would've hurt Jesus, but at least he could be excused for that. Twice? Well, Peter was under a lot of stress. But three times meant that it was a sure and certain thing: Peter was irrefutably denying that he ever knew or met Jesus – the one he swore he would die for. That's a very serious declaration of denial. Sounds like a betrayal to me.

And then of course there's Judas. We all know that Judas conspired with the religious leaders to take them to Jesus so that they could arrest him. Judas bartered with them and finally agreed to betray Jesus for a price of thirty pieces of silver. That would be somewhere around \$197.40 today. Obviously, it wasn't for the money! We can talk a lot about what Judas' motives were. He may have been angry and embarrassed at Jesus for calling Judas' out when he was skimming money from their offerings. Judas may have done it because he was disillusioned with Jesus and just wanted him arrested. He may have done it because Jesus was moving too slow and so he tried to force Jesus' into acting more quickly to set up an earthly kingdom. We don't really know for sure, and we don't have time to go into all of that. But we do know it wasn't very much money!

And of course, Judas took the religious leaders and their temple guards and led them to Jesus, with the instructions that the person Judas greeted with a kiss would be Jesus – that would be the one they'd want to arrest. There's no question that he betrayed Jesus. (Matthew 26:14-16; Mark 14:44-46; Luke 22; John 13:21-27, 18:1-3)

Think about the two acts themselves. Don't think about the results, just the actions. Which is worse? After spending three years every day with someone, to be betrayed by someone or to have your closest friend insist that he or she doesn't even know who you are and in fact *never* even met you? And then for Judas to undermine Jesus and lead the guards to him...I am sure that if you were Jesus, they would both be a kick in the gut. You'd be heartbroken. They're both horrible things. Listen to the dictionary definition of the word "denial": *Denial*: refusal to recognize or acknowledge; a disowning or disavowal.³ (*Repeat*)

³ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/denial>

Now listen to the dictionary definition of the word “betrayal”: *Betrayal*: the act of disappointing a person’s trust, hopes, or expectations... the act of exposing or delivering someone to an enemy through treachery or disloyalty...⁴ (*Repeat*)

They both sound bad to me! Honestly, there’s really only a slightly nuanced difference between the two actions. The results of the two are much different, for sure, but both of their actions were equally hurtful, equally devastating to their relationship with Jesus.

Remember that these two were followers of Jesus, members of the Twelve – Jesus’ hand-picked disciples. Jesus had prayed and fasted all night asking God for wisdom for who to pick to be his Twelve that would become the spiritual fulfillment of the twelve tribes of Israel. (Luke 6:12) And so far, they are both in the same boat, have both done this equally horrible thing to Jesus. Have I made my point?

Okay, here’s something else these two had in common: they both realized what a horrible thing they had done, and so...

2. They both ***regretted*** and ***repented***

...what they had done. We all have regrets, don’t we? These guys sure did.

Again, you probably remember the story about Peter (Matthew 26:75) – how, after the third time he denied even knowing Christ and the rooster crowed, Peter realized what he had done. We’re told in the Scripture that at that point Peter remembered what Jesus had told him – that “before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.” And then Scripture said that he went outside and wept bitterly. Of course Peter regretted what he had done, and no doubt he prayed a thousand times, “God, I am so sorry.” Can you imagine the regret and remorse he was feeling about that? Not even twelve hours earlier he confidently and firmly stated that he would die for Jesus, and he now sealed his fate by stating THREE TIMES that he never knew Jesus. There’s no question that Peter regretted and repented of his betrayal of Jesus’ friendship.

And there was Judas. In fact, Judas’ regret and repentance is even more clear than Peter’s. Peter’s story of regret and repentance is in Matthew 26, Judas’ story is in the very next chapter. Thanks to Judas’ betrayal of Jesus, Jesus was arrested and put on mock trial throughout that Thursday night. That next morning, Judas realized that Jesus was condemned to die, and the Scriptures tell us that he was “filled with remorse” and that he tried to return the thirty pieces of silver to the priests and elders. He even said, “I have sinned,” and “I have betrayed innocent blood.” But the religious leaders said, “Too bad for you. That’s your problem, not ours.” So Judas threw the money into the Temple – an act of repentance – and then he left. (Matthew 27:1-10)

Both men had the same reaction – both of them deeply regretted their choices and actions, and both repented from it.

⁴ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/betrayal>

Now, you might think the story stops there for Judas, because he then went right out to hang himself. But don't be so certain about that, because I think it's very safe to say that...

3. They both had *encounters* with the *resurrected* Christ.

There are many references of Jesus appearing to the disciples and as many as 500 people – over those forty days between Easter and when Jesus ascended into heaven. All the Apostles had multiple conversations and even ate meals with Jesus, where he would teach them all the ways that the Old Testament foretold and declared that Jesus would die on a cross for the sins of the world and rise from the dead. So all the disciples had many opportunities to grow in their understanding, to make right their mistakes, to put aside their fear, and to renew their faith in Jesus.

What you may not realize is that Judas may very well have been one of those who had these encounters with the resurrected Christ. Let me explain.

Most of us believe that right after Judas threw the thirty pieces of silver into the temple, that he went right out and hung himself. After all, verse five says, "So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself." (Matthew 27:5). There's no question that Judas hanged himself, but there is a question of *when* he did it. That Scripture reference doesn't necessarily mean he did it right away.

Remember that verse three says that Judas did this *after* Jesus was condemned. But Jesus was not condemned until verse 26 when Pilate released Him to be crucified, later that next day. Given that sequence, it's not possible for the timeline of Judas' death to be sequentially in line with the passage in Matthew since it says very clearly that it was after Jesus was condemned that Judas even came to the high priests to return the 30 pieces of silver. So that passage in Matthew is not intended to establish the time of Judas' death, but really just states that Judas hanged himself at some point (like when someone would insert a fact into a conversation that had happened at some other time from the on-going conversation).

Just because Matthew wrote it that way, it doesn't mean that he was writing in chronological sequence. For instance, remember the story of the wise men visiting the baby Jesus in Matthew 2? We assume that they showed up in the barn to the newborn Jesus, since it is written that way in sequence. But actually, they arrived some two years later, as all scholars agree. Do you see my point? Matthew had a way of writing that made sure you something DID happen, but he wasn't so focused on the exact time of those things like you and I might be today.

But there's more. Remember two weeks ago we looked at the story from Luke 24 of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and their encounter with Jesus? Then Luke tells us that those two went back and found the others to tell them. Luke says that they got back to Jerusalem on that Easter night and found "The Eleven." Right? And we think that means the twelve, minus Judas.

But hold on. Remember that last week we looked at the story from John 20 of Thomas, when Jesus first appeared to the disciples on that first Easter night, *and Thomas wasn't there*. Clearly these are the same event – both happen that Easter evening, behind closed doors. Luke called them the eleven. So if Judas wasn't there, but then also *Thomas wasn't there* at first, why are they called “the eleven”? Wouldn't they be called “the ten”? Do you follow me? And then John tells us in verse 24 that Thomas is one of the Twelve. This isn't difficult speculation here. In fact, it isn't until later in Acts chapter one that the disciples draw straws to replace Judas, right? Peter leads that process, explaining that they need to replace Judas so that there will still be twelve. And in Acts 1:18 Peter says this about Judas, “With the payment (Judas) received for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open, and all his intestines spilled out.”

Ewww. Pretty gruesome, for sure. But did you catch that – Judas bought a field with the money. So there's some discrepancy, because Matthew told us Judas threw the money into the Temple. Well, it's possible that the passage means that Judas bought it for the *same amount* of money. Either way, if Judas bought the land, how is it possible that within a few hours of betraying Jesus, sometime in the night before anyone even opened for business, Judas found a field available for sale for that same amount of money, purchased it, and then hung himself? That transaction had to have taken some time.

So, let me summarize: sometime *the next day* after Judas betrayed Jesus, he felt remorse and tried to repent. He was apparently present when the resurrected Jesus appeared to the disciples that Easter evening. At some point in time, he purchased the field and hung himself. And we don't know anything else until at least 40 days after Easter that the disciples are in the upper room and they pray and draw straws to replace Judas.

Do you see what I'm getting at? It is very, very, likely that Judas had an encounter with the Resurrected Jesus, and was able to at least hear some of the resurrected Jesus' teaching. That makes his suicide even more tragic, doesn't it?

Of course, we know about all of Peter's encounters with the resurrected Jesus as part of the group that Jesus appeared to many times. But there's one encounter in particular that Peter had with Jesus that clearly restored him, and that's from John 21:15-19, when the guys went back to fishing, and Jesus appears to them, has breakfast with them, and then three times asks Peter, “Peter, do you love me?” And three times Peter says, “Yes Lord, you know I do.” Jesus did that to cover each time that Peter denied Christ, and therefore fully restoring Peter. If Jesus was willing to do that for Peter, don't you think he would have been willing to do that for Judas, too? But Judas didn't give Jesus that opportunity.

You see, it is at this point with these two disciples of Jesus that their stories diverge, because...

4. One went from *fear* to *faith* to *filling*, (while) the other went from *fear* to *failure*.

We all know that Peter was filled with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, along with the other disciples, and that he became one of the key leaders of the church (Acts 2:42), and we still name our kids after him! But what went wrong with Judas? He had the same opportunities as Peter, right up to the end. So what happened?⁵

Just to review, Judas had been called by Jesus as one of the 12. He witnessed the miracles that Jesus performed. He had heard the teachings that Jesus spoke for three years and even some teaching *after* the resurrection. So in every outward appearance Judas should have been sold on the fact that Jesus was in fact the Messiah. So what did Judas not see?

The same things you and I don't see when we don't take our relationship to Christ seriously. Judas didn't see Jesus' love. He didn't see his friendship – even in the garden in Matthew 26:50 when Judas showed up with the guards to arrest Jesus, Jesus said, "What have you come for, *friend*?". The kiss was a salutation of friendship and Judas used this mockingly!

Do you think that Jesus ever looks at you when you come to him in church or in prayer and says, "Why have you come, friend? What is your motive for coming to me?"

Judas didn't see Jesus as he should have: The one true Son of God, the Messiah, the Deliverer, the redeemer, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, the only one who can forgive us of our sins and give us new life.

Judas missed it all!

And if we are missing the real Jesus, it's very easy to let our fear lead us to failure. You must truly believe in Jesus, put your faith in Jesus.

Scripture is clear that playing a role as a disciple isn't the same as being a disciple.

Look again at when Judas repented...who did he seek forgiveness from? Judas was seeking forgiveness from the wrong person – He went to the priests, when he should've gone to Jesus. But the priests didn't care about him, they said, "Your guilt doesn't concern us, you deal with it!"

Listen: people will let you down, money will let you down, feelings will let you down. Only Jesus has the power to forgive you and RESTORE YOU!

Here's my conclusion: It is my honest belief that if Judas had gone to Jesus and asked for forgiveness, Jesus would have granted it to him in a heartbeat. Think about it – all those times with the resurrected Jesus teaching about forgiveness and cleansing of sin that was now available to Judas, but instead Judas in his fear only heaped more guilt and remorse on himself. Instead, Judas in his fear and self-pity hung himself and sealed his fate for eternity.

⁵ Much of this section is from a sermon by Joey Williams entitled "Sell Out," https://sermons.faithlife.com/sermons/568217-sell-out?utm_source=logos&utm_medium=guidesection&utm_content=searchresult&utm_campaign=promo-faithlifesermons

Two men on the same journey. They both messed up nearly equally as bad. They both encountered the resurrected Jesus. They both had the opportunity to do great, world changing good for the Kingdom of God. One did. The other one, well, we won't even name our kids after him.

You don't have to have that same fate. You can turn to Jesus now and repent of your sins, put your trust and your eternity in His hands and He will forgive you. He loves you. Don't be afraid of him. Don't let your fear drive you to failure instead of faith. There's nothing you have done that can't be forgiven. The choice is yours. You can be filled with the very Spirit of God and change your world.

Prayer

Benediction:

Romans 8:38-39 and 15:13...

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(So therefore, since we have no reason to fear:)

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.