Disclaimer: *This transcription is provided for informational purposes, reference, and convenience. Please note that it may contain errors, omissions, or spelling mistakes due to the nature of live audio transcriptions. While we strive for accuracy, this document should not be considered a fully authoritative record of the sermon. For clarification, we recommend referring to the original source. Thank you for your understanding and patience.*

This morning we're going to finish up our study of the Apostles, the choosing of the twelve; this is the eighth part of that. We're using the text in Luke 6, where we have a list of those that Jesus chose.

At the end of verse 15, we read,

"James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot; Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor."

These will be the men that we will look at here this morning. And as we continue to examine these last four Apostles that Jesus chose, we're going to witness the contrast between men who truly loved Christ, embraced Christ, and endeavored to serve Him with all of their life. And we're going to see the contrast between that and another man that was a pretender - a traitor - which is really a picture that God ordained to demonstrate to the church the very danger of self-deception, those who are merely Christian in name only.

Well, we begin with the three men who gave up everything to follow Jesus. They would serve Him in obscurity and love and faith, and they would ultimately die an ignominious and torturous death for having invaded Satan's kingdom of darkness.

We begin with James the son of Alphaeus. Now, we know very little about him because the Bible says virtually nothing about him. Nothing in Scripture can be found except his name in the list of Apostles. And we know nothing of his father Alphaeus. He could be the same Alphaeus as Matthew's father as we read about in Mark chapter 2 and verse 14, making him the brother of Matthew, but we can't say that for certain. We do know that his mother's name was Mary. We read about that in Matthew 27 verse 56; and she was a devoted follower of Christ, an eyewitness of the crucifixion, and she was also one who assisted in the preparing of the body of Jesus for burial. And according to Mark 15 verse 40, he is also called" James the Less." Less is "*mikro"* in the original language which means little, so his name was essentially Little James.

And "little" in this context can mean small in stature. Perhaps he was a small man, or maybe it denotes a man who is young in age, perhaps a way of distinguishing him from James the son of Zebedee or whatever. Or it could be a reference to his position within the group of the Apostles, maybe a man of less influence, certainly of less prominence in contrast to some of the others. And certainly, he was not one of the more prominent Apostles. He wasn't part of the Lord's inner circle, which is no indictment against the Lord. You can only be intimate and heavily involved in just a few men, and Jesus did that primarily with three - Peter, James, and John. Positionally they were all equal, but even as we are in the body of Christ, there can be kind of a functional difference in people; and there was that within the

Apostles. You remember Peter was essentially the leader, and Peter, James, and John were part of that inner circle, and others seem to be, shall we say, of lesser rank.

So here is James the son of Alphaeus, or Little James, a man of lesser size, lesser influence, we're not sure, but he's an unsung hero of the faith, is he not? Wouldn't it be great to meet him someday? A man that served faithfully in obscurity, a footnote on the page of human history, and yet a valiant warrior whose legacy will be remembered in heaven for eternity. And as I think about this, I like to compare these types of things, and even like the saints we read about, for example, in Hebrews 11, with the enormous popularity the modern church growth movement has towards its celebrities. The modern church today has a penchant for bigger and better, for grandiosity, for notoriety. And Christians have gone the way of the world, frankly, in exalting their celebrities, especially in Christian music. I used to be heavily involved in that when I was in counseling and on the board of a record label as a theologian.

Can you imagine Jesus hosting the Dove Awards? I mean, when you think of it that way, you can see the contrast, you know, praising musicians who have achieved star status so that their record label can boost profits, and helping different ones receive praise, especially those that perhaps love to be worshiped by the masses. And, you know, again, contrast that with the unsung hero like James the Less, or I think of the Apostle Paul. Think of him in 2 Corinthians 4, who spoke of the glorious treasure of the gospel. It was contained in what? Earthen vessels. Why? So that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves. And as you think about it, when Jesus was here, there were no Clay Pot Awards, right? People just served Christ as they have down through redemptive history. Beloved, only the proud crave rewards from men.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 10, beginning in verse 17,

"But he who boasts, let him boast in the Lord.

"For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends."

Again, remember all servants are going to be rewarded. Christ sees all things. And as we read in Colossians 3:24, "…knowing that from the Lord, you will receive the reward of the inheritance. For you serve the Lord Christ." And so James, the son of Alpheus, was a man that served in that way.

And then secondly, we read about Simon the Zealot. Apparently, he was a member of that secret Jewish sect that existed in that day, known as the Zealots. It was essentially a political sect that hated the Roman occupation. They were known for their violence. They were basically Jewish terrorists is what they were. They were like other Jews awaiting the appearance of the Messiah to return it, to return the kingdom to Solomonic glory.

And they thought that they probably needed to soften up the enemy until Jesus would come or till the Messiah would come. They of course were highly influential in the Jewish revolt against Rome in AD 66 through, I believe it was 73. And they were a part of those who ultimately fled to the fortress of Masada. Many of you have been there, an amazing place. And they held the Romans at bay for three years until they finally were able to build a siege ramp and break through. And of course, you'll remember they committed suicide rather

than surrender. But many of them were really secret assassins, and they were called Sicarri - Sicarri means “dagger men.” And they were known for concealing these curved daggers inside of their robes. And they would slip up to Roman soldiers and slip that blade into the rib cage and cut, literally sever their heart.
And so the Zealots were feared by the Romans, hated by them. And it's also interesting, they had a reputation of being able to suffer any kind of torture, endure any amount of pain, even to the point of being impervious to the torture of their own families. And so they would do these acts of terror, and then they would flee into Galilee and hide.

Well, Simon probably at first followed Christ for the wrong reason. He's thinking, okay, here's the Messiah. “I want to follow this guy, and we're going to do some damage to the Romans.” But I'm sure the Lord softened his heart. And I find it fascinating that God chose a terrorist to be his servant, a man filled with hatred and rage and violence. But over time, all of that was replaced with a heart of even love for his enemies, because he had a love for the gospel, a love for Christ.

And I also find it intriguing that Simon the Zealot's thrown in with Matthew. I mean, think about that. I mean, Matthew was a publican. He was a Jew, but he worked as a Roman tax collector, and they were considered a traitor and liars and thieves. And they were barred from the synagogue, considered to be unclean. You couldn't touch them. They were like swine and dogs that you couldn't touch and forbidden to give testimony in Jewish court and so forth. And so, this is just the kind of man Simon the Zealot would love to meet in a dark alley, you know, about three o'clock in the morning. And yet, the Lord obviously changes his heart, and by God's grace, they serve side by side as spiritual brethren, loving one another, serving one another, both committed to a common goal, and that is exalting Christ and proclaiming the gospel.

Now, obviously, Simon the Zealot learned to love, and he obviously set aside his foolish pursuit of politics and devoted his life to serving Christ. He served according to various traditions in Persia and Armenia. Some said that he served even in the Middle East and Africa. Some even said that he went as far as Britain. We don't know for sure. Likewise, we're not sure about his death. Some traditions say he was crucified. Others say he was sawn in two, but he probably met a martyr's death.

Well, that moves us to the third apostle that loved Christ, and that is Judas the son of James. Now, it's interesting, Judas the son of James had a couple of other names as well. John 14 provides the only source of information in the New Testament where we can learn about him. It speaks of him as “Judas (not Iscariot)” and he had three names. Like, for example, in Matthew 10 in verse 3, he's called “Thaddeus,” and Thaddeus actually means “breast child,” and some less reliable Greek manuscripts gave him the name Lebbeus. It's from a Hebrew root word meaning “heart child.”

Well, both names indicate that he was probably the youngest child in his family. It may also allude to the idea that he was kind of a simple, innocent, perhaps a childlike man in his personality. Soft-spoken, gentle, warm-hearted sort of a fellow. He would have been, therefore, the opposite of the Sons of Thunder, but we can't be dogmatic about any of that.

But Judas was the name given to him at birth, and Judas actually means “Jehovah leads.” And don't you wonder how he would have fit in with those thunderous, rough fishermen, as well as a former tax collector and a terrorist. I mean, it's a mixed bag, right? What a microcosm of the body of Christ, where in the body of Christ we see a kaleidoscope of personalities, a mixed bag of preferences, yet a common calling of love and purpose, joint heirs with Jesus.

But in John 14, we can learn a bit about Judas, the son of James. The context there, you remember, is Jesus is describing the events in the upper room, and he speaks in verse 21 and following. He says,

“’He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.”

And then we read this,

“Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, ‘Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?’”

And so here we see just this tender, humble question coming from his heart. Here is a man that is struck with the reality that Jesus, who is God, sent by the Father, would love them so intimately, and he was fully aware of his own sin and the sin of the other men around him. I mean, he knew about all the bickering, about who is going to be first in the kingdom. He knew all of that was going on, all of the pride, the prejudices, the jealousies, the brashness, the cowardice, the weak faith, and yet he is thinking in his mind, “Yet, Lord, you still love us, and you are willing to reveal yourself to us even more.” It's inconceivable to him, as it is to us. We're so undeserving. And so here is a man who understood the depths of his own depravity and his own wretchedness, and he could see the love of Christ and that was so undeserved.

So again, back to the text here in John 14, verse 22,

“Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, ‘Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?’

“And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make our abode with him.

“’He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.’”

In other words, he's saying,” Judas, trust me. I will love and disclose myself to all whom the Father has given me, and all those who truly love me will keep my word.” And by the way, that's always the mark of a true Christian, is it not? Loving obedience is what validates the genuineness of our faith. “I know you don't fully understand, Judas; and the rest of you guy, I know you don't fully understand all of this, but you will.”

He knows that the Holy Spirit is going to come at Pentecost and dwell within them and make these things real and understandable. So he's saying, “Trust Me. There is nothing unfair about my redemptive purposes. All who love Me will be saved, and those who don't won't.”

You know, there's a lesson here for all of us, is there not? We have to place our faith solely in the word of God and faithfully live it out. And for most all of us, it will be lived out in obscurity, but that will happen for all who love the brethren.

Well, what happened to him? It's well documented that Judas, the son of James, spread the gospel to the regions of what is now Turkey, even into Edessa, which was a royal city of Mesopotamia. And there are numerous accounts telling us that he healed King Abgar of Edessa. We also know from those accounts that he was clubbed to death for his boldness in proclaiming and protecting the truth of the gospel.

In fact, the traditional apostolic symbol of Judas in that part of the world, even to this day, is a club. Whenever I think about how the apostles died and how hated they were for following Christ and proclaiming the gospel, I just look around at the world in which we live. And beloved, if it weren't for the Constitution and the laws that we have, the wicked in our country - in our leadership today - would exterminate us.

Well, this leads us finally to Judas Iscariot, the text says, who became a “traitor.” How would you like to have that after your name? Judas Iscariot, of course, is the quintessential hypocrite, a man with unprecedented opportunity, a man that spent time with the incarnate Christ. He sat at the feet of Christ himself, and yet he squandered it all. He refused to humble his heart in genuine contrition, and he followed Jesus for all the wrong reasons, like so many people do even to this day. And that is what is pictured in this whole scenario of Judas Iscariot. It's fitting that God chose him knowing full well his treacherous heart, because you see, this is a very vivid illustration of the power and the process of religious hypocrisy; a warning to us all of the deceitfulness of the human heart.

You know, the church has dealt with this plague of hypocrisy, people who profess Christ but do not possess him. Jesus describes them as, quote, “branches.” Remember in John 15, they attach themselves to the true vine in a superficial way. They claim to follow Christ, and they do so through external conformity, but they never bear any fruit. They think of themselves as true Christians, but because they don't bear any fruit, they are eventually cut off from the vine. You remember that parable?

And so this, as we look at Judas Iscariot, it's really important, very timely given the kind of the cozy, comfy Christianity of our day. Charles Spurgeon said this, “The minister may cease to preach this doctrine in the days of persecution when the faggots are blazing and when the rack is in full operation. Few men will be hypocrites. These are the keen detectors of impostures. Suffering and pain and death for Christ's sake are not to be endured by mere pretenders. But in this silken age, when to be religious is to be respectable. When to follow Christ is to be honored, and when godliness itself has become gain, it is doubly necessary that the minister should cry aloud and lift up his voice like a trumpet against this sin,” quote, “the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy.” End quote.

And certainly, that leaven of hypocrisy leavens the whole lump of the church even today. And so, as we examine the life of Judas Iscariot, let's examine our own life as well.

Well, Judas Iscariot, his name reveals the region from which he came. You see, the term “Is” in Hebrew is man, and Kerioth is a little town in southern Judea, so Iscariot means “man of Kerioth.” So he was not from Galilee like the others, but he was just an ordinary man with no outstanding credentials. And as we examine his life, we can surmise very clearly that he followed Jesus purely from an earthly, not a heavenly standpoint; for earthly gain, not heavenly gain.

And as a Jew, he would have anticipated the Messiah coming and establishing the kingdom. He hated the Roman occupation, and he saw Jesus doing all of these miracles, and obviously he's thinking, “Oh my, this is the Messiah. I've got an inside track. I'm gonna cash in on this deal.” And like all hypocrites, he saw some benefit in following Jesus other than the salvation of their sin. We know nothing of his family or his social background.

We do know, according to John 15:16, that Jesus chose him, not for salvation, but for betrayal. None of this caught Jesus by surprise, as you will see. The treachery that was ordained before the foundation of the world, it was clearly prophesied in the Old Testament. For example, in Psalm 55, beginning in verse 12, the psalmist foretells the betrayal, the eventual betrayal of the Messiah by Judas. There we read,

“For it is not an enemy who reproaches me, then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me, then I could hide from him.

“But it was you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance;

“We took sweet counsel together and walked to the house of God in the throng.”

Jesus described this further in John 13, verse 18, and there he quoted a messianic prophecy found in Psalm 41:9 that speaks of a friend's betrayal. There we read,

“Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.”

And in Matthew 27, verses 9 and 10, Matthew refers to Zechariah chapter 11, verses 12 through 13, a prophecy that will go into great detail concerning the Lord's betrayal. And I find it fascinating, bear in mind this was written 500 years before it happened. There Zechariah, in the context, he's symbolically asking the covenant people the value, the worth of their Messiah, a picture of the price that eventually was paid to Judas. So there we read,

“They weighed out for my wages 30 pieces of silver.

“And the LORD said to me, ‘Throw it to the potter, that princely price they set on me.’ So I took the 30 pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD for the potter.”

Indeed, this is what happened. Judas betrayed Jesus and then he returned the money, you will recall, to the chief priests and they threw it down. But since it was blood money - that is

money illegitimately paid and then returned; to falsely convict a man of a crime that sentenced him to death - in their own perverted, calloused minds and hearts, deceived by every imaginable form of hypocrisy, the priests could not bring themselves to return the money to the temple treasury – unbelievable – from which it came.

So they purchased the potter's field, even as Zechariah prophesied. By the way, that was a defiled place where they buried travelers, where they buried the indigent, where they buried the ungodly. And later it was the very field where Judas hanged himself. That's why it was later known as the "field of blood."

And once again, think about this: the predetermined purposes of God orchestrated all of these things. All of this was decreed by God. Beloved, may I remind you afresh that there is nothing random in God's universe. There is not a single rogue molecule in his creation. And even with regard to Judas, Jesus said in Luke 22:22,

"'Truly the Son of Man goes at as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!'"

Isn't it fascinating to realize that Jesus knew all about Judas's wickedness, his wicked heart, yet he chose him? John 6, beginning in verse 70,

"'Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?'

"Now he meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him."

Even the wicked machinations of a hypocrite are preordained by a sovereign God. None of this catches him by surprise. Jesus came to live that perfect life that we could not live, perfectly obeying the law, and then to die and be raised from the dead. And Judas, though fully responsible for his choices, was determined to play into God's sovereign plan of redemption.

But when you look at the texts of Scripture, you will see that not one time did Jesus say an unkind word to Judas. The Good Shepherd never one time offered him anything but love and forgiveness and mercy and grace. Jesus knew his heart. Jesus knew he was skimming money from the treasury. He knew about his selfish ambition to cash in on the kingdom, and he knew precisely the diabolical nature of this apostate. He knew Satan's plans for him.

And yet, even with all of that, he maintained an attitude of perfect love for his enemy. You know, Jesus has never given anyone a reason to hate him, and yet he continues to be the most hated person in history.

Well, the text reveals much about Judas. I want you to think with me about this. I'm going to mention a few things and kind of ramble through some of this. First of all, the text helps us see the characteristics, the marks, shall we say, of a master hypocrite. And no doubt he had convinced himself of his own righteousness. After all, he was a Jew. He was a son of the covenant, and Jesus had chosen him. Only those who are seasoned in their own self-righteousness make good hypocrites. Never did the others suspect that he was skimming

money. They didn't know any of that. Nobody suspected him as a traitor. And as we will see, even after he left the upper room to strike his deal with the Sanhedrin to betray Jesus in the garden, no one knew except Jesus.

And as I said earlier, in that day of heightened messianic expectations, Judas saw his chance to, as I say, cash in - to get in on the inside track, to gain a political appointment - you might say. And obviously, Jesus was the Messiah. He could see that from the miracles. But as we examine from the text, we can see Judas's patience beginning to wear thin.

Now think about this: for three years now, Judas has been with Jesus. And all he sees from Jesus is humility, and love, and compassion, and servitude. And in his mind, he's obviously thinking, "Okay, when are we going to attack the Romans? When are we going to get the show on the road here? Enough humility. Enough turning the other cheek. Let's see some heads roll." Right? "Because I want to get my reward. But all I hear are parables about forgiveness, and the danger of greed, and the love of money, and the sin of hypocrisy, and pride, and eating his flesh and drinking his blood. I mean, come on. Let's do something to the Romans here; I'm tired of all this."

So by the time Jesus and the Twelve head to Jerusalem for the last time, you might say Judas has lost his sense of humor. He's just getting fed up with this. And his spiritual masquerade is about to be over. He's frustrated with Jesus. By the way, I've learned over the years in dealing with so many people like this, hypocrites cannot stand it when their agenda is ignored, or in any way thwarted. Because all of their life, they're absorbed with their own needs, not God and his glory.

So let's think about how some of this played out. It's really interesting. In John 12, the context there, remember Jesus has just raised Lazarus from the dead, and the twelve are having a meal in the home of Simon the leper, along with Lazarus, and Mary, and Martha. And in John 12, beginning in verse 3, we read that

"Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

"But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said,

'Why was this perfume not sold for 300 denarii, and given to poor people?'"

So you can see he's at his wit's end here. I mean, a denarii, that's one day's wage; and three denarii would basically be almost a year's salary. That's a lot of money that Judas could have pilfered, right? And of course, he hides his true motives. So he offers, you know, a self-serving rationale, one that even sounds noble, kind of keeps up this godly image. In fact, Matthew 26, verse 8, tells us that all the rest of the apostles agreed with him, like, my, this is such a waste. And it was only sometime later that, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John comments on what Judas was really up to.

In verse 6 of John 12,

"Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.

"Therefore Jesus said, 'Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial.

"'For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.'"

Well, that was certainly not the answer Judas was looking for. And this was probably the straw that broke the camel's back, because immediately after that incident, Matthew tells us in Matthew 26, beginning in verse 14, what happens. He says,

"Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests

"and said, 'What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?' And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver.

"So from that time, he sought opportunity to betray Him."

Now folks, think about this - and this is how it works in the heart and in the mind of a hypocrite - his unrestrained and unsatisfied lusts have been energizing his hypocrisy. That's what caused him to attach himself to Jesus. But now, those same unrestrained and unsatisfied lusts are inflamed with resentment, motivating him to do the unthinkable.

And now we witness the wrath of divine abandonment. When God gives a person over to a worthless mind; and here his wicked heart that could have been pardoned is instead hardened. He must now take, shall we say, the wine cup of divine fury from the hand of the one whom he would betray and drink all of it. And he, like all the wicked of God, that all those that hate God, according to Jeremiah 25 verse 15, quote, "will drink and stagger and go mad." And that's exactly what happens with him.

What a horror. I mean, he's been given over completely to the consequences of his own wickedness. And we see this clearly in the account of what happened in the upper room later at the night of Jesus' arrest.

And it's amazing, again, how the cloak of hypocrisy can be worn with such ease. Judas has already, the context here, Judas now has already gone, and he's gotten his 30 pieces of silver, and he joins his unwitting friends in the upper room. No one suspects anything, but Jesus knows precisely what's going on. And yet, by the way, despite all of this, what does Jesus do according to John 13? Washes his feet. You remember how Peter protested that? John 13 verse 8 and following,

"But Jesus said, 'If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.'

"And Simon Peter said to Him, 'Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.'

"And Jesus said to him, 'He who has bathed…' by the way, the term is a symbol of justification in our salvation, a one-time cleansing – "…he who has bathed needs only to

wash his feet.'" There he's speaking not of justification, but of sanctification, a process of moral cleansing and the need for an ongoing purification of the heart that accumulates due to the filth of the world and so forth.

"He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean..' in other words, you're clean. You've been justified,

"'…but not all of you.' For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason, he said, 'Not all of you are clean.'"

Folks, another mark of a hypocrite is the astounding callousness of the human heart. I mean, Judas knew the incarnate God was washing his feet, which was an act of inconceivable humility. And yet knowing he was about to betray him, Judas just sits there and allows that to happen, almost as if he expects it.

Contrast that with Peter, who was so overwhelmed by it, by his own unworthiness. He didn't want Jesus to do that. Well, not so the hypocrite. Beloved, never underestimate the power of the flesh to join forces with the devil and to do so unwittingly; for therein lies a force that is so diabolically wicked as to justify the betrayal of God himself. I've seen this before many times. A hypocrite can justify every thought, every action. As Paul said in 1 Timothy 4:2, "their conscience has been seared as with a branding iron." Nothing can reach them.

Well, Jesus gets even more specific about his betrayal, back to John 13, beginning in verse 18. He says,

"'I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, "He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me."

"'From now on, I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He.'"

And what happens next is such a beautiful picture of Jesus' heart and the enormous emotional turmoil that is eating at him knowing that Satan himself has entered Judas.

In verse 21, he goes on to say,

"When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit…"

I've thought about this. There is nothing more toxic to fellowship than a hypocrite. It is utterly heart-wrenching. And I'll tell you what makes it even harder is when you may be the only one that knows what's really going on and other people buy the facade. That's when it really hurts.

"When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit and testified and said, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.'

“And the disciples began looking at one another at a loss to know of which one He was speaking.

“There was reclining on Jesus' bosom, one of His disciples whom Jesus loved.

“So Simon Peter gestured to him and said to him, ‘Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking.’

“He, leaning back thus on Jesus' bosom, said to him, ‘Lord, who is it?’

“Jesus then answered, ‘That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.’ So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.

“After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore, Jesus said to him, ‘What you do, do quickly.’”

I find it interesting that Jesus made sure that the first incident of the Lord's Supper was not polluted by such a wicked hypocrite.

So he excuses Judas. Satan has entered him and fully possessing him. But notice he says,

“Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to Judas.

“For some were supposing, because Judas hid the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, ‘Buy the things we have need of for the feast’; or else, that he should give something to the poor.

“So after receiving the morsel, he went out immediately; and it was night.”

So Judas keeps the act up all the way to the end. He's been planning it for days. But since he was such a coward, according to Luke 22 and verse 6, he was waiting for the right opportunity to betray Jesus, it says, “in the absence of the multitude.”

Well, you remember the rest of the story, knowing where Jesus would go to pray with the others in the Garden of Gethsemane, according to John 18 verse 3, we read that then

“Judas, having received a detachment of troops and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons.”

We know, according to verse 12 of that text, that he has a Roman cohort with him. There's 600 men. According to John 18 verse 4, we read that Jesus now went out to greet them.

“Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, ‘Whom do you seek?’

“They answered him, ‘Jesus the Nazarene.’ He said to them, ‘I am He.’ And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them.

“When therefore He said to them, ‘I am He,’ they drew back and fell to the ground.”

…and repented in sackcloth and ashes. It doesn't say that, does it? “I am He,” in the original language, “*ego eimi*” a term that he used repeatedly as the declaration of his deity. It's fascinating, he referred to himself in what would be called the present continuous tense. This seems odd, but the reason he does this is because he has always and will always exist. And so this is a declaration of his deity, the title of his deity, indicating his self-existence. There's never been a time when he didn't exist.

You will remember Moses asked, “What shall I tell the people when they ask, what is your name?” And in Exodus chapter 3 and verse 14, God said to Moses, “I AM who I am.” Oh, what a glorious manifestation of both the power and mercy of God. And what a foretaste of his next appearance when he comes again in glory. As Isaiah the prophet tells us in Isaiah 11 verse 4, and he will “strike the earth with a rod of His mouth and with the breath of His lips, He will slay the wicked.”

But beloved, think about this: despite this miraculous display of omnipotence, they continued to arrest the son of God. It reminds me of the Sodomites that kept pursuing the men - the angels - despite the judgment that they had received.

Judas has to be the most colossal failure in the history of the world. Now he's fully under the power of Satan and he steps forward to betray Jesus with a kiss.

And we read in Matthew 26, verse 49,

“And immediately he went to Jesus and said, ‘Hail Rabbi!’ and kissed Him.”

Unbelievable. Luke 22:48,

“Jesus said to him, ‘Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?’”

In other words, “How can this be?” Dear friends, please hear me. There is a time in the life of a hypocrite where God draws the line and when that line is crossed, he judicially seals them in the hardness of their heart for eternity. When a man's self-worship fills the cup of divine forbearance to the brim, it's going to overflow, shall we say, into the wrath of divine abandonment.

We see this all through Scripture. Romans 1:28, “God will give them over to a depraved mind to do those things which are not proper.” In other words, he will give them over to their sin to the point where their reasoning faculties will be destroyed. And they will continue on pursuing their sin until their sin destroys them.

Well, this is precisely what happened to Judas. You will remember after the betrayal he found himself incarcerated in the torments of a hell on earth, a hell he had foolishly chosen. And in utter folly now, and in agony, he's now experiencing the wrath of divine abandonment. Matthew 27, verse 3 and following says,

“Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders

"saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.'"

By the way, some say, well, Judas got saved. No, no, no, no, no, not at all. Remorseful, unfortunately, is translated "repented" in the King James Version, which has produced a lot of confusion. The King James translation repented is misleading rendering because it gives people the idea that he repented of his sins and he got saved. But the Greek term remorseful or repentant in Matthew 27 and verse 3 is "*metamelomai*" which merely connotes regret or remorse or sorrow, not a genuine repentance prompted by God in the heart of the redeemed. And here Matthew intended to convey that it was just regret.

If he wanted to talk about a genuine repentance - a genuine repentance prompted by God, a sincere brokenness of heart over sin - he would have used another term "metanoeo," and that's not the term that is used here. "Metanoeo" is a term that means or speaks of a deep spiritual penitence that would cause God to see the truth and save them, confession of sin and so forth. But the point is simply this, Judas did not experience genuine contrition - "metanoeo." He didn't experience that but rather mere remorse – "metemeloemi," verse 3 of Matthew 27. And this was just prompted by his own excruciating guilt, two different kinds of sorrows. By the way, the watershed passage on repentance is found in 2 Corinthians 7 verses 9 through 11.

So it's interesting too, Judas would have been terrified to truly repent and thereby admit that he had been a false witness against Jesus. He would have been terrified to do that because that would have been, according to Deuteronomy 19, that would have been a sin punishable by the penalty imposed upon the one that had been falsely convicted, namely crucifixion. So had he admitted that, "Oh my, I falsely accused him," he would have been crucified.

And yet the horrors of what he had done drove him to murder himself. Matthew 27, verse 5, it says that "he went out and hanged himself." And in Acts 1:18 through 19 adds even more graphic details. Evidently the limb or the rope or both broke. And it says "and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out." What a tragic ending. And this is the last word we read about him in scripture.

My friends, Judas Iscariot is now suffering the torment of an eternal hell. He is now in the solitary darkness of hell where he is going to continue to blaspheme God throughout eternity and do so in torment. And you must remember that hell is not remedial justice. It is retributive justice. Sinners don't go to hell and stop sinning. Some will be weeping, others gnashing their teeth in rage, but none of them will have any desire to repent even if they could. That's why Jesus describes this as, quote, "eternal hell" in Mark 3:29. And oh, I pray that you will not be numbered among them. Oh, the terrifying consequences of selfishness and pride that fuels hypocrisy. Oh, the horror of being abandoned by God. And what's amazing is it will come upon a hypocrite without them realizing it.

And I close with this thought: you remember in Judges 16, you have that story of the tragic demise of Samson at the hands of Delilah. Samson's pride and lust and folly ultimately destroyed him. And in Judges 16:20, we read,

“Delilah said, ‘The Philistines are upon you, Samson.’ And he awoke from his sleep and said,’ I will go out as at other times and shake myself free.’”

But then you have this statement,

“But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him.”

That's what happens with a hypocrite. That is what has happened with our country. People don't know that the Lord has departed from us. We are experiencing the wrath of divine abandonment.

And I close with God's warning in Proverbs 1, beginning in verse 24. And here wisdom is personified and offers this sobering warning to those who refuse to hear.

“’Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention;

“’And you neglected all my counsel and did not want my reproof;

“’I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes,

“’When your dread comes like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you.

“’Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me,

“’Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the LORD.

“’They would not accept my counsel. They spurned all my reproof.

“’So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way and be satiated with their own desire.’”

Oh dear friend, examine your heart. And I know some will say, “Oh, but I would never betray my Lord.” And yet some of you live as if he doesn't even exist. The only time you cry out to him is when you need something. What a dangerous, dangerous place to be. May we all pray with the psalmist in Psalm 139,

“Search me, O God, and know my heart.

“Try me and know my anxious thoughts,

“and see if there be any hurtful way in me,

“and lead me in the everlasting way.”

May that be the cry of our heart even this day. Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for the clarity of your word, the conviction of your word. I pray that it will penetrate even the most recalcitrant heart among those who hear it this day. And thank you that you are long-suffering, that you love us with an everlasting love despite what you know about us and our own wretchedness. We rejoice in your grace. We celebrate your grace.

May we all have a passion to share these great truths with others that they too might be saved by that very grace. We thank you. We give you praise in Jesus' name. Amen.