

Why the Judas Paradigm Is Alive and Well in America

He had a kind boss, but for some inexplicable reason, that wasn't enough.

He had seen amazing things at the hands of his master, and thousands of people were touched by his goodness. Yet, as in many cases, the saying was definitely true: "No good deed goes unpunished." And when betrayal comes with a price tag ...

Well, where do we sign up?

He waited for the opportune time to spring his trap—a time when all was quiet, the adoring crowds were gone, and he was relatively alone, except for maybe a few of his closest friends. His accusers were seconds away in hiding, just waiting for a sign.

A kiss. Yes! Such a sign of affection would be unmistakable for the wolves hiding in the shadows.

By now, if you know anything about the life of Jesus, you have probably figured out that I am talking about His betrayal at the hands of Judas Iscariot. With his singular act of betrayal, Judas entered the ranks of the most despised individuals in Biblical history, joining names like Cain, Goliath, Jezebel, Absalom, and others. Yet his betrayal of the Son of God moved him straight to the head of the class. Judas had betrayed God for 30 pieces of silver, and although remorse soon set in, and he tried to undo the damage he had done, some things cannot be undone.

In a matter of days, Jesus was tried, convicted, killed and resurrected from the grave.

Judas, on the other hand ...

(For the whole story, read Matthew 26–27:9.)

So how does one go from a position of favor to embracing a curse? How does one go from a place of honor to dying by suicide, and being buried in an unmarked grave? While I'm sure the other eleven disciples were somewhat surprised by Judas's betrayal, none of this caught Jesus by surprise. After all, this historic betrayal had been foretold hundreds of years before:

"Yes, my own close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me" (Ps. 41:9).

And was again alluded to in Zechariah:

"Then I said to them, 'If this is good in your eyes, then give my wages to me, but if not, then keep it.' They weighed my wages at thirty pieces of silver. Then the Lord said to me, 'Throw it to the potter, the splendid price by which I was valued by them.' So I took the thirty silver pieces and threw them to the house of the Lord to the potter" (Zech. 11:12-13).

What drove Judas to betray the Creator of the universe to a self-serving and self-righteous bunch? What path did Judas take that led him to the hanging tree? What are the symptoms of the *Judas Paradigm*?

- **Judas had no faith.** In John 6, Jesus puts before His disciples some pretty tough language about what it takes to follow Him. He recognized that there were many of His disciples who did not really believe, and their desertion bore out this fact (v. 64-66). In the face of unpopular and controversial teaching, they bailed out. Even when given the choice to leave, and hearing Peter declare, *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have believed and come to know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (v. 68-69), Judas still masqueraded as a follower, and gave the illusion of devotion and trust.

- **Judas had no respect for the sacred.** When Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with a costly perfume (John 12), Judas objected. *“Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?”* (v. 5). The next verse reveals that Judas had no care or concern for the poor, but that he was a thief, and as the one tasked with the care of the money box, he regularly stole from the money that was given to Jesus and His disciples for their needs and the care of the poor.
- **Judas had no loyalty to the truth.** Because of the deceit of his heart, Judas was ripe to be used by the devil. John 13 bears out the fact that the rest of the disciples were clueless to his deceit (v. 28-29). In verse 2, we learn that the devil had *“put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot”* to betray Jesus. At that point, he was considering his betrayal. But when *consideration* turned to *commitment*, Satan entered into him (v. 27). At that point, he was totally under the control of the demonic. In spite of the fact that Jesus had, in an act of abject humility, just washed Judas’s feet (as well as the other disciples), Judas maintained his destructive path that ultimately took him to the grave.

In our world today, we are seeing the *Judas Paradigm* alive and at work in our homes, our churches and our government.

As statistics bear out, we are seeing a decline in the organized church in America today. Children are abandoning the faith of their parents for convenience, comfort and a feel-good gospel that requires no sacrifice, no commitment and no tough choices. The goal is relevance and inclusion, at the expense of truth and holiness. We have so blurred the lines between the sacred and the secular that the message of the blood of Jesus has been lost in pop-psychology and moral relativism. We have forgotten the words of Jesus that fly in the face of this 21st century mindset:

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." (Matt. 16:24).

When we lose our faith, it's open season on what is sacred. We are seeing that at work in America today. Our founding documents (the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Constitution*) were written by men of faith that held the teachings of the Bible as guiding principles in their authorship of these documents. You cannot disregard one without catastrophic results to the others.

When we removed the Bible from a place of prominence and respect in our society, it was only a matter of time before our nation's founding documents followed suit. The assault on our freedoms that we are seeing now, with utter disregard for the Constitution, is unprecedented. With the fate of the Supreme Court in the balance, America stands on the edge of a precipice. This year's election will determine whether we move away from the edge, or plunge headlong into an abyss of lawlessness and godlessness.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish: but happy is he who keeps the teaching" (Prov. 29:18).

It's easy to be loyal when people agree with you. But when society stands in opposition to the Word of God, we are forced to make a choice; we are forced to choose between the acceptance of the world or the approval of God. But make no mistake about it—if we choose the acceptance of the world, it puts us at odds with a Holy God. James 4:4 is pretty clear on the subject:

"You adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

Yet we are seeing an astounding number of "Christian" churches

and pastors who are ignoring this dire warning, and condoning what God condemns. We are seeing politicians who—because of personalities—have abandoned their principles, promising to support a candidate who represents everything that is wrong with our political system, and who promises to continue us down a path of secularism, hedonism and liberalism.

The *Judas Paradigm* (spirit) allows loyalty to the truth to take a back seat to our own comfort, feelings and agenda. If we don't like criticism, we cower to conformity. If we don't like the messenger, we reject the message. If the road gets tough, we retire to the median and resign ourselves to being another casualty to a society bent on running over the righteous and off the cliff.

“For the eyes of the Lord move about on all the earth, to strengthen the heart that is completely toward Him” (2 Chron. 16:9a).

God is still looking.

He is looking for those who have faith, however small.

He is looking for those who recognize and respect the sacred.

He is looking for people of honor, who are loyal to Him.

He is looking for those who will stand when the crowd sits, be loud when the crowd is silent, and be faithful when the crowd is faithless.

He is looking for those who will gaze defiantly into the face of the *Judas Paradigm*, and refuse the 30 pieces of silver.

He is looking for you! {eoa}

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completed several building projects, but more importantly, the church has exploded into new realms of renewal and spiritual awakening. Today, the church has evolved into Abba's House, a place where all are welcomed by the Father's embrace.

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