

John 12:1-8
October 4, 2009; Communion Sunday

Hampton Baptist
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“JUDAS”

I have a confession to make. I am not the person that people think that I am. Allow me to introduce myself; my name is Judas Iscariot, one of the followers of Jesus, one of his twelve disciples. We have been a pretty radical group for about three years now. We do everything together. We travel together, eat together, and sometimes get in trouble together. But even with spending so much time with each other, you'd be surprised at how well we have gotten along. We're quite a diverse group. There's a reformed tax collector and a reformed zealot in this bunch. At one time, before they were disciples, one of these guys would collect money from people to give to the government that the other one was trying to overthrow. Initially, there was a bit of tension between these two, but it subsided when they realized that they were now working for the same cause. All the disciples were from Galilee, except me. I'm from Kerioth, a town in southern Judah.

In a sense, I was an outsider from the beginning, not being from Galilee. But the guys accepted me pretty well; they even chose me to act as treasurer for the group. Some may think that is a lot of responsibility, and I guess, in a sense, it is, although we never have much money. We are always giving away the money that we have.

I have grown *tired* of always giving away the money. Why can't we keep some for ourselves? After all, the world is not getting any better, and the Romans will continue to dominate our lives.

So I started taking a little bit here and there. Not tremendous amounts, but then again, we never *had* tremendous amounts. I knew if I took small portions that no one would miss it; certainly no one would suspect that one of Jesus' disciples would steal from their own treasury. I just wanted to take care of myself; we are always taking care of everyone else. With the way that this world is going, who *knows* what might happen. Jesus is always saying, "Take no thought for tomorrow," but I want to be prepared for the worst.

I had hoped that he would be the type of Messiah that I had dreamed about as a boy. I would listen to the old men in the Temple talk about their hopes for a new Israel. They would explain their interpretations of the prophecies concerning the Messiah, and they could make it come alive! Their interpretations included a person with a lot of charisma; a person that many would follow; a person that would appeal to the grass-roots. This leader would defy the establishment. When Jesus asked *me* to follow *him*, I had dreams of living out what the old men in the Temple had hoped to see. *I* was going to help usher in the new world order. *I* would be a general in the movement to overthrow the Romans, and *Israel* would become the greatest nation in the world, just like when David, one of our ancestors, was king. This would give meaning to my life; I could have fame and stardom. And after I died, people would remember me. But as I immersed myself into this Kingdom of God movement, I found that Jesus was much different than I had expected. His thinking was incompatible from what I heard from my elders as to what Messiah was supposed to be. What he did and what he said did not make sense to me all the time. I appreciated how he could heal people, and the love that he shared with everyone was remarkable. But these actions were far different from the kind of behavior needed to be a *political* Messiah.

Even though I have remained a disciple in the *public's* eye, I secretly disagreed with a lot that

was happening. As treasurer, I knew that I could save some money from our kitty for myself; this would take care of me when I decided that I wanted to leave the group. Then one day, I realized that Jesus knew my heart.

We were in Bethany at the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. These were some of Jesus' best friends. Not too long ago, Lazarus had died, yet Jesus miraculously raised him from the dead, which was truly incredible to witness. But later, we went to their house for supper; Martha served us, and then Mary brought in this expensive perfume. I don't know where she got it, because it probably cost as much as an entire year's wages for a laborer. That was a lot of money. That money could go a long way in financing my retirement from the group. I thought she was going to give it to Jesus so he could sell it. Instead, Mary anointed his feet with the costly perfume and dried them with her hair. I couldn't believe what I was seeing! If I had only said something when she first entered the room, I possibly could have gotten some money for that perfume.

The fragrance of the perfume was so strong that its aroma filled the entire room. The more I smelled it, the madder I was at myself for not speaking before the perfume was *wasted* on Jesus' stinking feet. So I said, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" I thought if this scenario arose again, I would get my hands on the money.

Jesus responded, "Let her alone; let her keep it for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor with you, but I won't always be around."

I was shocked! He embarrassed me in front of my peers, just because he wanted the perfume on his feet. A little extravagance for *him* was seemingly ok. But it seemed that he preached a different sermon to *us*.

It was then that I decided I would leave the group. Jesus is not the kind of person that I thought he was. He has no plans of making Israel a great nation again; sometimes, I think he is just nuts.

I still needed money to hold me over. If I left the group, I would certainly be seen as an outcast for a while, and my credibility would be shot! I had to have some money to live on, something to keep me going. With my credibility out the window, I would have to find a way to elevate myself in the eyes of the community . . . or, find a way to degrade Jesus. If people realized that Jesus was not concerned about politics at all, and that creating a new kingdom to take over the Romans was the farthest thing on his mind, then maybe I would be able to save *my* reputation. I began to think of people who had money *and* power. Instantly, I thought of the chief priests, scribes, Pharisees, and the Sanhedrin. These were the people that Jesus had damaged the most; these were also the people who wanted Jesus discredited the most. And also, these people did have money and power.

I secretly went to the chief priests and said, "What will you give me if I can deliver Jesus to you?" They were surprised to see me, because they knew that I was one of his followers. They were even more surprised at my *question*. They said they would give me thirty shekels of silver, the equivalent to four months wages for a laborer. That was almost half of what I could have gotten for selling the perfume. This kind of money could hold me over for a while. We shook hands, and the deal was done.

I am supposed to lead some of the chief priests' henchmen to Jesus late tonight. Jesus has arranged for us to have the Passover meal together tonight in an upper room of a building close by. After that meal, I am to go to the chief priests and lead them to Jesus.

This plan is coming together. Later this evening, everyone else will know who I *really* am. (After Hymn of Preparation for Communion, begin Communion with statement recognizing Jesus' knowledge of Judas' intent and action, and then Jesus still washed Judas' feet and served him.)