

1. The Background: Deliverance - Passover

- a. *Exodus* - Freedom from Slavery - Divine Rescue through the floodwaters of death, etc.
 - i. Many people would be packed into Jerusalem for this celebration, thus the leaderships fear of the crowds is real
 - ii. Jesus is about to relate all that these festivals recalled and promised (slavery, rescue, sacrifice, etc.) to Himself as He brings the New Covenant
- b. At the same time, concurrent with this great and historical moment, another storyline is progressing **which, though appearing to be bad news, will actually move Jesus' Passover coup along.**
 - i. Thus, we have a mixture of competing storylines, some working good (Upper Room Discourse) and encouragement, some **working evil (Judas' betrayal)**, but which are all progressing towards the greatest moment in human history: the betrayal, crucifixion, and resurrection of the Son of God that He might rescue and release from slavery to sin and its accursed death all who are united to Him by faith by the divine hand and purpose of God for the glory of His Son.

2. The Spineless Schemers: Chief priests and scribes

- a. They were **seeking how** to put him to death
 - i. There is planning involved here, purpose, intent
 - ii. This was not a whim or a fit, but of searing hatred, burning anger, long-standing desire to destroy Jesus
- b. They were planning and plotting because they **feared** the people
 - i. This was not justice, but manipulative vengeance
 - ii. **Their fear of the people, and of Jesus' popularity, and the accountability** that should appropriately come with such a severe decision gave them pause
 - iii. They sought cloaked actions rather than transparent purposes, a sure sign of deception and wrongdoing
 - iv. They feared Man rather than God
 1. If they truly believed that Jesus was a threat to the people as a heretic or as a social danger, they should have acted publicly and with legal definition
 2. Since they were planning and plotting on how to avoid such legal reasoning because of fear of the people, it shows that did not truly see this action as godly, no matter how they cloaked it in religious jargon or spin, but rather as a grasp for power and the elimination of a threat to their own significance
- c. they **rejoiced when Judas gave them a “solution”**
 - i. This is an interesting word, **much stronger than “relieved” which actually shows their perverse joy** at a plan which would deliver Jesus into their cowardly plan to destroy him
 1. This is villainy, pure and simple, that their evil, sinful, hateful plan to destroy the holy, righteous, divine Son of God because he called them to give account brought them great joy
 2. Unlike the prophetic announcement to the shepherds that the arrival of Jesus would **bring “good news of great joy” because Jesus was born to save His people from their sins**, these men rejoiced at His destruction rather than His arrival
 - ii. To *rejoice* at sin, that which demeans, de-images, destroys the Christ is evidence of a supremely hardened heart

- d. they **agreed** to pay Judas
 - i. **“stood together” with Judas**
 1. Judas the betrayer to sell
 2. These chief priests and leaders of the people the schemers to buy
 3. They stood together to make a transaction of the greatest evil in history, the unjust bartering of the most worthy life for silver
 - ii. **“to sell the righteous for silver” (Amos 2:6)**
 1. An express reason for the judgment of God
 2. To sell out righteousness, and those who stand for righteousness, for the sake of power is evil and deserving of the wrath of God
 3. To sell out the Righteous One, the morally perfect, infinitely good, however, is utterly evil, and the most despicable act in the history of the Universe, a sin on such a cosmic scale as to usurp the sin of Adam in its heinousness
- e. Evil does exist – the heart of man when left unrestrained by the Holy Spirit will bend its every desire and every effort to the destruction of Beauty and the Ultimate Good of God

3. The Heinous Hater: Satan

- a. **entered** into Judas
 - i. In the light of our passage from last week, we can be assured that Judas was not some **innocent bystander whom Satan overpowered, but was rather “following the prince of the power of the air” and thus this “entering” was consistent with Judas’ own desires**
 - ii. **We also see this from the fact that money swayed him and his “conferring” was in regards to price for Jesus’ head (see John 13:29 regarding Judas’ greed, “one of you is a devil” John 6:70)**
 - iii. **“Entering” is an empowerment to accomplish something in-line with both the desire of the enterer and the desire of the enteree**
- b. Why does Satan move so powerfully here to kill Jesus when he had previously worked so hard to get Jesus to avoid death by tempting him to take the easier, less painful, route to glory?
 - i. Luke 4 – Satan tempted Jesus to avoid the cross and gain His kingship and His glory by selling out to him, by revealing His great power over angels, by putting God to the test, etc.
 - ii. He wanted Jesus to not trust the plan of the Father, which involved the cross and death and suffering
 - iii. Yet, now Satan seems to be working for the death and suffering of Jesus. What changed?
- c. Satan loves to kill and cause suffering
 - i. He seems to see an opportunity, knowing that Jesus is not going to fail to carry out His **Father’s will, to destroy Judas**
 - ii. He also may be seeking the added pain to Jesus of betrayal of a close friend, the emotional duress unlike hunger or physical pain
 1. It is emotional pain that drives people to do dark things more than physical pain
 2. In this manner, Satan may be pouring sand into an open wounds of Jesus simply **because he loves to “steal, kill, and destroy”**
- d. This also shows that Satan is surely the enemy of Jesus and of His people – there is no good in him
 - i. Thus, he is the undercurrent under every evil, for the unrestrained human heart follows this prince of the power of the air **for opposition to God’s glory and Man’s good**
 - ii. And such were we all before the Holy Spirit of God blew in at His own will and raised our dead evil-loving hearts to life through regeneration to repentance and faith in JC

4. The Treacherous Traitor: Judas (with Satan)

a. **went away**

- i. Judas snuck away, detaching himself from the community of Jesus, according to his own desires and his own wisdom
 1. He ceased to entrust himself to Jesus or the 11 other disciples that he might be transformed or honed or encouraged towards righteousness
 2. Rather, he sought his own desires, cravings, and entrusted his direction to his own wisdom and what seemed right and good to him
- ii. **The poison of all moral failure can be traced back to a similar “going away” from the accountability and lack of humble vulnerability in our lives as well**
 1. When we get away, entrusting our direction and decisions to our own wisdom and according to our own desires, we set ourselves up for moral failure
 2. **“Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.”**
(Proverbs 12:1)

b. **conferred** with chief priests and scribes how he might betray Jesus

- i. How he might deliver Jesus over to them for money
- ii. **This “conference” was a *negotiation*** – he negotiated a price in exchange for a place and a peck on the cheek as a sign
 1. Luke (and other gospel writers) point out that Judas was named Iscariot
 2. Most likely this is a **compound form of “Ish-Kerioth”, which means “Man of Kerioth**
 - a. Kerioth was a town of Moab and the context of the judgments against it and against Israel in Amos 2:1-6 (more about their judgments than ancestry)
 - b. **“Those who sell the righteous for silver”**

c. Judas **promised and sought out**

- i. He chose and dedicated himself to the task
- ii. **Again, this is not a brief moral failure, like Peter’s denial, but a well-planned and well-executed scheme**
 1. This was desired and pursued
 2. There is a qualitative difference between falling into a sin, being deceived, and *pursuing* sin
 - a. In fact, this is the qualitative difference in regards to church discipline: Is sin being pursued, or has somebody been ensnared but wants to get out?
 - b. Am I fighting against sin, or am I indulging and pursuing sin as acceptable and good?
 - c. Judas was pursuing the betrayal of Jesus because he was loving and pursuing wealth as more joy-giving than Jesus.
- iii. As one of the 12
 1. **one of those who knew Jesus the best, yet didn’t love Him**
 - a. With all the sermons regarding love of money vs. love of God and their inconsistency and incompatibility, Judas loved money more than Christ Jesus
 - b. Yet, unlike the Jewish leadership, who believed that they were doing good (thinking Jesus a heretic and danger to Israel), Judas clearly believed that his betrayal was wrong, but he loved his money more
 - i. This is evidenced by the fact that his guilt drove him to suicide.
 2. clearly one can be close in proximity to Jesus and not taste regeneration or love for him (see Hebrews 6)

d. Heaven and Hell were about to be shaken – the hunt was on to kill the Son of God

5. The Concealed King: The Sovereign God

- a. God, though it appears very dire, is *meticulously* sovereign
 - i. In the same way that God “hardened Pharaoh’s heart” (Ex 4:21; 7:3; 14:4) in order to show His superior power to deliver His people, so He also *permitted* Satan to enter Judas
 - ii. This was for the purpose of God’s superior deliverance of His people through the hard-hearted actions of Judas and the Jewish religious leadership
- b. Every sinful choice, no matter how evil or stunningly bad, is working for His good purposes
 - i. Pro 16:33; 21:1; Josh 11:20; Ezra 1:1; 6:22; Job 1:1-12; Rom 8:28-30; 9:15-21;
 - ii. Mark 10:33-34 showed that Jesus knew exactly how he would be killed, and he knew that it was the Father’s plan
 1. “delivered over” – by Judas
 2. “mock him, spit on him, flog him, and kill him. Three days later he will rise”

“...we know that God foresaw, and did not prevent, and therefore included in his plan that his Son would be rejected, hated, abandoned, betrayed, denied, condemned, spit upon, flogged, mocked, pierced, and killed. All these are explicitly in God’s mind before they happen as things that he plans will happen to Jesus. These things did not just happen. They were foretold in God’s word. God knew they would happen and could have planned to stop them, but didn’t. So they happened according to his sovereign will.

And all of them were evil. They were sin. It is sin to reject, hate, abandon, betray, deny, condemn, spit upon, flog, mock, pierce, and kill the morally perfect, infinitely worthy, divine Son of God. And yet the Bible is explicit and clear that God himself planned these things.” (John Piper)

Why is this “preamble” to the Last Supper and Jesus’ institution of the New Covenant placed here in the story? Because Luke wants us to understand something very important for the courage and hope of the believer in the midst of great evil, sin, and suffering: God is sovereign over even the most heinous of sins to accomplish the glory of His Son and the salvation of His people. In the midst of the feasts that recalled God’s salvation and the blood on the doorposts, knowing that it was His blood to be spilt, Jesus *knew* Judas’ heart, his plans, his betraying purposes in asking the questions that he did at that supper table, *and He loved* Judas. He grieved Judas’ hardened heart, and yet glorified His Father because He planned it. God’s hand intended it. In fact, the early church recognized this meticulous sovereignty of God as recorded Acts 4:27-28, “for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.” (emphasis added)

The divine Word of God proclaims to us that even the greatest calamity, and there is no greater calamity than the betrayal, flogging, humiliation, and execution of the glorious and eternal Son of God, comes from God. God says to Isaiah, “I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things” (45:7). Later, to Isaiah, we are told that “it was the will of the LORD to crush Him, to put Him to grief, that He might see His offspring...” (53:10a). It was the LORD’s will to bring the calamity of Jesus through the betrayal of a closest friend because this great sorrow brought about an eternal weight of glory in our redemption.

You see, God *uses* Satan, sin, and suffering. Satan, and his hateful desires towards God, becomes a tool which God uses to accomplish His great good, the glory of His Son. This does not mean that Satan does good, or that what evils are done are good in themselves, in their qualitative nature, but only that God works these evils together for

good. They are the black threads which make golden threads shine in the tapestry of His story. Satan, and Judas, are responsible for their desires and his actions, but Satan **doesn't run amok apart from the authoritative** permission of God, and yet God is good to allow sin and suffering to have its day so that His glory is magnified in its splendor. So, when Satan presents Himself to God in the book of Job, he points out that Job does well because God has been so gracious to him, and **the LORD gives Satan the permission to sift him with suffering!** Satan had to get God's permission! And God gives it (with limits) because Job gains more good and God more glory through it. In the same way, Jesus gains glory through His suffering, and you and I share with Him in his sufferings as a privilege. Our sufferings are privilege because they are His! In this same way, Jesus tells of the same requesting of Satan **regarding Peter, when He informs Peter that "Satan has requested to sift you like wheat."** Satan wanted to toss Peter up in the air of suffering and of threat of pain and death and see what fell to the ground. And Jesus prayed that the sifting would bring him back around to strengthen his brothers. Thus, Satan, while desiring destruction, only accomplished the will of Christ in winnowing a more humbly bold Peter. And here, even in the destruction and suicide of Judas the betrayer, who did as he desired in his greed and love of self, only accomplished the will of God in delivering over Jesus to the authorities that by this betrayal and sinful unjust execution of the holy and perfect and divine Son of God the way to merciful justification for sinners might be opened to the glory of God.

So, dear Christian, should Satan appear to win the day, the betrayer's kiss linger cold against your cheek and sting your soul in tearful darkness, **do not lose hope. God's will is not thwarted, nor even altered.** He never needs a Plan B. He will produce through the most horrific tragedy and most heinous calamity the perfection of His good and most glorious will, and if He has promised to work all these things together for your good, He will do so. Not even a Satan-possessed betrayer who had for three years sat long at Jesus' feet, sang heartily the hymns of the faith, cast out demons with his paired brother, and preached the kingdom of God together with the 12, could in the moment of his true color shining through alter or obscure or stain the perfect plan of God for His glory and our good. And if that greatest of betrayals and most terrible of wrongs was worked for good, so also will the betrayals and hatreds towards you and the terrible wrongs and sufferings unjustly persecuting you bring about the eternal weight of glory **in the day of the Lord's return.**

It is no accident that you have received in this life what you have received. It was not outside of the inalterable plan of God, and when our eyes are upon His great glory and our hearts set upon His beauty, then this sovereign power of the greatest good bolsters our hearts for joy in the midst of sorrow, for love in the midst of hatred, so that we, like Jesus, can dip the morsels of our joys in the same cup as those who hate us and lie to us and seek our demise, **because we know that God's perfect will** is bringing about the greatest good even when our shortened sight and fallible minds cannot see it nor comprehend it. One look at His greatness and our souls will rest.

We see the Cross: the greatest injustice perpetrated by sinful man making sinful choices in violent longings and lusting, accomplished the most glorious God-honoring goodness in all Creation *according to the hand and plan of God.* **God's love and God's wrath expressly proclaimed and accomplished at the same moment, in the same event** which Man and Satan intended for evil. **If the Cross were accidental, it wouldn't be glorious, nor would it be salvific.** But it is purposeful, it is intended, it was prophesied and the Son of God was sent to be slain from before the foundations of the Universe were ever laid. God does it. God plans it. God wills it, for His great glory and for the joy of His redeemed. Behold the great majesty of the Uncreated God and be held in awe at His sovereign plan **to rescue sinners from Satan's grasp and sin's destruction by entering our suffering, swallowing it whole, drinking the dregs of our evil to the core that He might raise our dead hearts to life justly.** This is the sovereign love of God which endures and bears up evil in all its remarkable sins to glorify the Son of God in whom you find your greatest joy and most glorious good.