

## **THE PLOT TO BETRAY JESUS**

Luke 22: 1-6

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This is our fourth message in our series of messages called “7 Days and Counting.” During Lent, we are taking each of the Sundays to address the events in the life of Jesus that occurred during Holy Week. Holy Week is the most important, most significant week in the life of Jesus as it pertains to you and me.

It is during Holy Week that Jesus does what he needs to do for our salvation. During this week, Jesus suffers, is humiliated and is put to death in order to provide for forgiveness for our sins. Jesus was perfect. Jesus never sinned so his punishment and death paid the penalty for our sins. The work of Jesus provides for our forgiveness and our eternal life. The resurrection of Jesus demonstrates God’s power over death, the forces of darkness and evil and Satan.

On the first Sunday of Lent we discussed Palm Sunday and Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It was a parade, a huge celebration. Many people thought he would be acknowledged as the King of the Jews and the Messiah.

On the second Sunday of Lent we reviewed Jesus entering the Temple court, turning over the tables and driving out the money changers. Jesus said, “My house will be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers.”

Last Sunday I spoke of Jesus’ authority being questioned and Jesus telling the parable of the tenants. A man plants a vineyard, rents it to some farmers, sends one servant, then another and then a third to collect some of the harvest. Each beaten and rejected. So he sends his son and the son is killed. The tenants conspire, thinking that if they kill the son the owner will no longer make any claim to the vineyard.

What will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.

He will take the message of God's son to others who will receive it. We are among the others who receive the message, the gift of Jesus.

If you've been keeping up with the messages during lent, it quickly becomes apparent that they want to be rid of Jesus. After Jesus disrupted the Temple, we read in Luke 47-48.

Every day he was teaching at the Temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words. Lk. 19:47b-48

After Jesus spoke the parable of the Tenants, Luke makes a similar observation in Chapter 20.

The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people. Lk. 20:19

In Matthew's Gospel, before Jesus is anointed by a woman in Simon's house, Matthew writes,

Then the chief priests and elders of the people gathered in the courtyard of Caiaphas the high priest. They were plotting to arrest Jesus by cunning tricks and to kill him. But they agreed that it shouldn't happen during the feast so there wouldn't be an uproar among the people. Mt. 26:3-5

First, they want to be rid of Jesus. Second, they are afraid of the people. More and more people are following Jesus. Heavens, they just received him into Jerusalem like he was a king, a local hero, perhaps the Messiah. If they upset the people there could be a reaction, from the crowd, perhaps a riot. A riot would bring Roman soldiers to Jerusalem and accusations that the Jewish leaders can't control their people.

But there's more. It's Passover. Jews are flocking to Jerusalem. It's an annual pilgrimage for some. Historians estimate that at this time in history, hundreds of

thousands of pilgrims came to Jerusalem for the event. That's a lot of additional people to control.

**Verse 3:** Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the twelve.

Isn't this fascinating. The temple leaders are wracking their brains about how to get rid of Jesus and Satan suddenly gets involved in Judas' soul.

**Verse 4:** Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus.

They don't need to look any further. Judas comes to them. One of Jesus' closest followers, a disciple no less, comes to them and he offers to be part of a plan to end Jesus' ministry.

**Verse 5:** They were delighted and agreed to give him money.

Elsewhere in Matthew's gospel, it says it was 30 pieces of silver. A piece of silver was equal to 4 denarii. A denarii was equal to one day's wage. If we assume \$15/hr., and 8 hrs. per day and 120 days of work, that's about \$15.00. A little less in today's money to betray Jesus. Hmmm. Of course, they were delighted. Their problem has been solved. This issue that has kept them awake at night, tossing and turning in their beds, has been addressed. They have a plan.

**Verse 6:** He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.

It would happen in the Garden of Gethsemane, after the Passover meal, in private away from the crowds. A perfect plan for the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law.

Now that we've reviewed the plot to betray Jesus, what else can we learn from this message? I'd like us to focus on 3 things actually.

**1. The activity of Satan.** As we read through these events of Holy Week going from triumphal entry to upsetting the tables in the temple to telling the parable of the tenants and we move toward the chief priests wanting to take action, Satan suddenly appears in our story. Satan enters Judas.

Satan is the devil, the evil one. Do you ever think about Satan and if you do, what do you think about him? Do you believe Satan is real? Or are you too sophisticated to believe such a thing? Or are you unsure?

Satan is a fallen angel. He was one of the highest order of angelic beings, anointed to cover God's throne. God created Satan, but not as an evil being; he became evil when by his own free will he forfeited his privileged position before God. You can read about that in Ezekiel 28. Satan tried to make himself equal with God, hoping to usurp God's position. But instead, because of his pride and selfish ambition, God cast him out of heaven.

Satan is real and active. Satan continuously seeks to disrupt the work of God, the ministry of Jesus and the work of the church. Satan will do whatever Satan can do to create separation between God and the people of his creation. Satan will work to interfere in the church, to create separation and division in the body of Christ.

When we as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ and people of Ingomar Church argue with one another and disrespect each other, then I believe Satan rejoices. The parables of the lost sheep, coin and son lead us to believe that there is a party in heaven when someone repents and turns to God. I believe that when division exists within the church, like we saw on display at General Conference among the delegates in St. Louis, Satan has a party.

So as the chief priests look for a plan, Satan steps forward and does what he can to destroy the ministry of Jesus.

**2. The activity of God.** God's plan for our salvation. The humiliation, persecution, death and resurrection of God's one and only son was and is God's plan for our salvation, our forgiveness and our eternal life. When Joseph was told that Mary was going to give birth to God's son, that she had conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit, he was also told what to name the baby. "You are to give him the name of Jesus because he will save his people from their sins." Mt. 1:21, ...how was Jesus going to do that? By the exact way that it happened. He would live a perfect sinless life, he would suffer and die as punishment for our sins 'cause he didn't have any of his own. And he would be raised from death to life. God has been in this thing all along. It's his plan.

Let's back up. God leads Abram, later called Abraham to leave his Father, set out, and create a people who would believe in the only one God, a people who would be devoted to God, a people who would exist so that all the world would be blessed through them. The main part of that blessing would come through the life and work of one of their children's children's children's children's children, Jesus, son of Joseph and Mary. God was in it all along, from the very beginning of time. It was God's plan for the salvation of humanity.

If you're like me, it's hard to read the accounts and listen to the stories about the fear and hate and conniving and the betrayal and the denials. But God is incredible. God is able to work through and even use this hate and deception and betrayal to achieve his purpose and redeem all of humanity providing for our salvation.

Do you remember that verse we often hear from Romans 8:25?

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love God, who have been called according to his purpose. Rom. 8:28

As we consider man's role let's look at the activity of humanity, mankind, man, creation.

**3. Behaviors that betray Jesus.** I believe Satan was working in more places than in the heart of Jesus. As we reflect on the events of Holy Week, we can identify and learn from some of the behaviors that betrayed Jesus.

a. Greed – Judas completed his betrayal for 30 pieces of silver. But the chief priests, teachers of the law and temple officials were also greedy for wanting to hold onto their wealth and power and influence. These people did not want what was best for the people. They wanted what was best for themselves.

b. Superior thinking – Those who possessed the power, those who worked to destroy Jesus believed that their perceptions and opinions were superior to those of the others. They thought no one knew as much as they did or how severe a threat Jesus was to their world.

3. Fear and dislike of others – Their fear of Jesus and their dislike of him and all he stood for was an essential factor in their desire to be rid of him.

4. Listening to the wrong voices – I mentioned this last week. It's hard for me to believe that somewhere along the way these temple leaders and chief priests believed in God, loved God and listened for God. I wonder if they ever listened for God or tried to listen to God. Instead, they listened to each and agreed with one another – and their fear of Jesus and desire to destroy Jesus increased all the more. Were they reading the prophets? Were they seeking God's wisdom as they read, God's guidance as they acted? Could they not see their corruption? Did they not hear the voices of the people?\

5. What I want and what I don't. – The chief priests and elders and teachers of the law were convinced they knew what was best for the people of God. They were comfortable and powerful and that's what they wanted and preferred. What they wanted was status quo. What they didn't want was anything different, no matter how much better it could be, no matter who else it might benefit.

We might want to think about these behaviors to see if any of them exist in us. Are any of them active in preventing us from being the person God wants us to be, the person God has in mind. Are any of these behaviors preventing us from experiencing God's best for us? God's greatest blessing?

And any of these behaviors preventing us from being the church God wants us to be?