

Voices: Don't miss Jesus like Judas did

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We've all had our moments with people who represented themselves one way, only to turn out to be something totally different. I'm no stranger to a Judas, either.

Judas was Jesus' disciple responsible for keeping the group's money. Something about him made the disciples comfortable trusting his skill set; they believed he was capable.

Somewhere along the way, his desire to serve became clouded in a willingness to steal. Despite being someone who saw Jesus' miracles and commitment to serving God, Judas got lost and allowed himself to be used as an agent of evil.

The time he was upset about Mary using perfume on Jesus' feet is an example (John 12:1-6). He covered his disapproval with false concern for the poor. In reality, he was desirous for money. As much as we criticize Judas, we must evaluate that spirit within ourselves.

Judas saw Lazarus raised from the dead (John 11:9), yet even though he witnessed miracles, he still sought short-term gratification instead of seeing salvation right in his presence.

Many of us have witnessed the goodness of God, only to question it or the one who delivered it, because it did not meet our expectations. How often are we faced with God's miracles, only to rationalize them as being something else?

During the Passover celebration, Judas prepared to turn Jesus over to the

Pharisees. He not only ate with Jesus, he also had his feet washed by our Lord.

It's interesting that Jesus knew Judas would betray him, and he still allowed Judas to be a part of the group. There is a lesson for all of us in this.

We must know there will be those who start the journey with us with good intentions but who allow themselves to be compromised, because their focus is no longer on the Savior but the satisfaction of whatever they seek.

How Judas turned away from Jesus

The Bible recounts that Satan entered Judas on several occasions. How is it possible that one can be close to Christ and fall for the temptation presented by Satan?

Judas “watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present” (Matthew 26:16).

Judas had been walking with the Light of the World, and yet, when he removed himself from the light, he was in the darkness making deadly decisions. He did not want others to see what he was doing.

When we remove ourselves from the work of our Savior and entertain the darkness, we also have the tendency to move away from the community that will hold us accountable.

“For You are my lamp, O Lord; and the Lord illumines my darkness” (2 Samuel 22:29).

When Judas handed Jesus over, Jesus protected those who followed him. He told those arresting him to leave his followers alone.

“This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken would come true: ‘I

have not lost anyone [God has] given me' (John 18:9).

When we remain close to God, we can be assured Jesus will not lose us. We must choose to walk with him and keep our eyes fixated on him. The trouble occurs when we pay attention to the circumstances around us.

When Peter left the side of Jesus and focused on what was around him, he became fearful and, for a moment, forgot about the miracles and statements of Jesus (John 18:15-17). Fear can force us to forget the goodness of God.

Jesus' response to Judas

If we are not careful, it is easy to see Judas solely as the betrayer and not a part of God's ultimate plan for salvation. It's also easy to miss that we have the impression we are walking with Christ, yet fail to realize how we allow ourselves to be instruments of the devil.

When we take our eyes off Jesus and focus on material things—such as money—we can jeopardize the lives of those around us and impact our destiny.

Jesus' response to the upcoming betrayal was not one of condemnation. He could have told Judas off, revealed his plot or even stopped him. Instead, Jesus prayed for his disciples—including Judas—and followed God to the end.

There will be those we encounter who might try to distract and disrupt us from the path we are to take. It isn't our job to fight back. It's our job to seek God's will.

Judas realized his fault far too late. The people he sought to impress and the temporary satisfaction of the 30 pieces of silver were not enough.

“He was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders.

“‘I have sinned,’ he said, ‘for I have betrayed innocent blood.’

“‘What is that to us?’ they replied. ‘That’s your responsibility.’

“So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself” (Matthew 27:3-5).

Jesus gave his life; Judas lost his.

The kiss of betrayal doesn’t happen immediately. Judas allowed his resentment and greed to go unchecked. Instead of recognizing his need for the Savior right there, Judas was easily sedated by momentary musings of wealth. The real wealth was in his presence, and he missed it.

What we don’t bring into submission to the Holy Spirit—jealousy, envy, gossip, greed, selfish ambition and more—can lead us down a path of destruction, causing us to miss the true relationship available to each of us with Jesus.

As we celebrate the resurrection of our Savior, I hope we don’t miss him.

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