

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**First Sunday in Lent, February 26, 2012**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 141, 151:1-2, 149, 324, 46.

Lessons: Psalm 41, 1 Timothy 6:6-12a, Matthew 26:1-16.

Sermon Text: Luke 22:1-6

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltritt

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

You heard this warning in our Epistle lesson: *“People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”* 1 Timothy 6:9-10.

Greed prompted Judas to object that the perfume which had been used on Jesus’ head and feet in our Gospel lesson should have been sold, because if the money had been entrusted to him to distribute to the poor, he could have helped himself to some of it. John tells us: *“Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ‘Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.’ He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. ‘Leave her alone,’ Jesus replied. ‘It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.’”* John 12:3-8

Greed was certainly at least one of Judas’ motives for going to the chief priests. Had he become disappointed or disenchanted with Jesus? Had he realized that Jesus was not what he expected? Many Jews trusted or believed that Jesus was the one who should deliver Israel from the power of the Romans – that he was a messiah who should reestablish the vast kingdom of David, and lead his disciples on to glory and prestige in an earthly kingdom. For a time, this might have seemed to some what Jesus’ mission would be. But Jesus had not accepted the kind of praise that many of the Jews, perhaps even Judas, had expected from him as a messianic King.

Jesus had been speaking of his coming suffering and death and that is not the Kingdom that many Jews – perhaps even Judas – were expecting. Today we hear again that

**JUDAS ISCARIOT AGREES TO BETRAY JESUS FOR MONEY**

- 1. Greed filled his heart.**
- 2. Satan entered into him.**
- 3. Thirty pieces of silver was his price.**

John records that *“the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, he should report it so that they might arrest him.”* John 11:57 The enemies of Jesus wanted to get rid of him. But they had to do it in such a way that they would not lose the support of the people. They were afraid of the people if they would try to capture Jesus because Jesus was very popular with the people. After all, he had been performing miracles such as healing them of their diseases and raising people from the dead. He had been miraculously feeding them by the thousands as well as preaching to them as one who had authority.

Two days before the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread the Sanhedrin held an informal meeting in the palace of Caiaphas the high priest. They talked about what to do about Jesus and when to do it. Now that wasn't the first time they had talked about getting rid of Jesus. By now they were convinced that killing Jesus was the only solution but they didn't want to do it **"during the feast"** – the Passover. They were concerned there would be a riot. According to historians the population of Jerusalem at least doubled in size during the Passover celebration. There would be many people coming from Galilee, and some of them were possibly followers of Jesus, and so the priests recognized that to kill Jesus at that time would be dangerous for them. In addition, the Romans always had extra troops on the alert during the Passover.

So although they decided not to kill Jesus during the feast they forgot about God and His plans – which was not unusual for them. 1 Corinthians 5:7 tells us: **"Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed."** Because Christ is our Passover lamb, his sacrifice for our sins would be accomplished at the Passover, even though the chief priests and teachers of the law had decided otherwise. We shouldn't be surprised to realize that God is really controlling things, and men have very little control in this world. That men have no control – or at least a lot less than they think – is made clear again when what men call 'a natural disaster' takes place, be it an earthquake, hurricane, tornado, tsunami or whatever.

According to John's gospel, it was primarily Judas who raised objections to Mary's anointing Jesus because the proceeds could not be given to the poor. This was a good-sounding excuse, but really, his heart was filled with greed because he, as what we would call the treasurer of the group, would not be able to lay his hands on at least part of what would have amounted to a year's wages. It was shortly after this that he contacted the high priests and agreed to betray Jesus. Interestingly enough, the amount he agreed to betray Jesus for was the equivalent of half-a year's wages. He thought this was even better for him, for surely someone would notice if he had embezzled half a year's wages, half of what the ointment could have been sold for.

We read the chilling words **"then Satan entered into Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve."** What a horrifying picture that is! Satan entered into him. He invited Satan into his life; he didn't fight against Satan, but allowed him to come right in. How easy it is to let Satan enter into one's life. Our sinful flesh wants to be entertained by Satan. That's one way he seeks to come even into our lives. Our Old Adam wants to taste of the pleasures Satan offers. That's one way he seeks to come even into our lives. Our Old Man wants to hear stories, and jokes, and music that is not edifying or God-pleasing. That's one way he seeks to come even into our lives. Our sinful flesh wants to go to places where Satan holds court, and is glorified by the world around us. That's one way he seeks to come even into our lives. Judas was one of the 12 men closest to Jesus. He knew what was going on with Jesus and his greed got the best of him. He knew where Jesus would likely go and what kinds of things Jesus would likely do. And Satan entered into Judas and took control of his life. He also knew that the chief priests and teachers of the Law were trying to get rid of Jesus, and he saw an opportunity to make some money.

In our Gospel lesson you heard that Matthew records that 30 pieces of silver was the amount Judas bargained for. Judas seems to be satisfied with this amount. It was, after all, the equivalent of six months wages. But that's pretty cheap for a life, don't you think? But this of course fulfills Scripture.

Satan entered his heart and prompted him to go to the priests. Greed is one thing that opens the door for Satan to enter hearts. Judas did what he wanted to do. He volunteered to betray Jesus. Jesus had resisted the temptations of the devil in the wilderness. But now Satan saw an opportune time to try again to overcome Jesus. He makes use of Judas to further his diabolical purpose.

So you see that it was greed and personal opportunity to become wealthy in the things of this world that helped lead Judas to betray Jesus Christ. He could only see things of this world. This of course had been foretold in the Old Testament, as we read in Psalm 41:9: **"Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me."** John reports the fulfillment of that prophecy: **"I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.'"** John 13:18

The exact amount of the price of Jesus' life is named in Zechariah 11:12-13. **"I told them, 'If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it.' So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said to me, 'Throw it to the potter'--the handsome price at which they priced me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and**

***threw them into the house of the LORD to the potter.***" In that Zechariah passage, you see the entire picture of Judas' betrayal and its earthly results: how he eventually realized that he had betrayed an innocent man, tried to give the money back, and the priests realized they couldn't keep the money, but bought 'the potter's field' as a burial place for the poor.

Mark adds that the chief priests ***"were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over."*** Mark 14:10-11

Judas was not the last of the traitors. Many others would betray and have betrayed Jesus through the ages and thus no longer walked with him. Let us pray never to be of their number!

Judas tried to do what he did privately, secretly. But it has been recorded for all mankind to learn about, to learn from, and to be warned against. For how easy isn't it to betray Jesus? How often aren't there temptations of Satan for us to betray Jesus even cheaper than 30 silver coins? Perhaps prestige, or "friends", or honor among sinful men? In the person of Judas Iscariot the devil attacks Jesus.

We are told that Satan entered into Judas at least one more time. On the evening in which Jesus was betrayed, the evening of the day we call Maundy Thursday, before he instituted the sacrament of his holy body and blood, Jesus was celebrating the Passover. While they were actually eating this most sacred meal, Jesus drops the bombshell. He tells them: one of you will betray me – one who is eating with me. Mark records "they were saddened" and each examined himself asking 'surely not I?' Jesus says ***"It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me."*** Mark 14:20 This was foretold just as Jesus said, as it was written about him. Matthew 26:24 This is the way it had to be. God had sent his only-begotten son to be betrayed, to suffer, and to die at the hands of sinful men. That one of the 12 closest to Jesus should be the sinful man who should betray him really should not surprise us if we look at our own hearts. Even if each of us were to protest like Peter that we would never fall away from Jesus Christ, we still have that sinful potential, that sinful will, heart, and mind that is totally sinful and corrupt.

Jesus says ***"The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."*** St. Matthew repeats the same words: ***"It would be better for him if he had not been born."*** Matthew 26:24 Then Matthew writes that Judas, trying to appear the innocent one asks ***"Surely not I, Rabbi?"*** Jesus answered, ***"Yes, it is you."*** Matthew 26: 25 ***"The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus."*** John 13:2 You know the result. Jesus was betrayed. Later Judas was sorry he betrayed an innocent man, but did not have faith that Jesus could forgive his sins, so he went out and committed suicide, assuring himself of eternal damnation.

What a terribly sad piece of history. But that was the way it must be. God used even Satan to fulfill his purposes. And that purpose of Jesus' betrayal, his sufferings and death was to give eternal salvation to all who repent and believe this.

Yes, it took a betrayal. But Scripture assures us, for example in 1 Corinthians 15:54-58 ***"Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."*** Amen.