

Part 76: The Betrayal of Evil

Tyler Velin | Luke 22:1-12

January 7, 2024

Here we are, our first Sunday of a new year. And while some of us are planners with detailed agendas of what we'd like to do this year, and some of us forgot to even eat breakfast today—none of us know what this New Year will hold.

But just like Queen Elsa, we are always beckoned to venture out, “into the unknown.”

Will we get that promotion? Will we be able to afford that house? Will our kids be safe? Will my sickness end? In fact it often seems the more significant the issue, the less control we actually have over it. This is true even for Christians—we are not fortune tellers. Conversion to Jesus doesn't eliminate moments of uncertainty and doubt.

But the Bible holds up a different way to think about these issues. It's less concerned about knowing the unknowns, and more concerned about who you will follow in life's unknowns. We don't know everything—but through the gospel we are called to follow the one who does.

As we return to our study through the book of Luke, today we are beginning the end. Our text today starts the clock on the final 24 hours of Jesus' life.

Jesus has been preparing his disciples for this reality, but at this point they still can't wrap their minds around the idea that Jesus would die—he must be speaking metaphorically. Alternatively, the religious officials would give anything for Jesus to die—however they are struggling to find a way to put him to death. No one seems to know anything—except Jesus who was willingly going to offer himself up to death.

In the face of uncertainty and competing desires, our text today shows those who scheme against Jesus, leaning into the comfort and counsel of man, and the followers of Jesus who lean into the counsel and promise of their master.

Our life is full of these moments and our hope today is that we would find Jesus, his word and his work, sufficient to make sense of our own realities. At the end of our text today, there's only one group who found what they were looking for, and my prayer is that we might find that same certainty in our own lives as well.

Our main point this morning is this: **In an evil and uncertain world Jesus is our only certainty.** We are going to see this in three ways in our text this morning. First we are going to examine **The Backdrop of the Passover**, then we will see **The Betrayal of Evil** and then we will see **The Provision of the Jesus.**

First, let's examine **The Backdrop of the Passover**. Luke paints the scene for us in **Luke 22:1-2**, "Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover. And the chief priests, and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people."

Luke paints what the art world calls the "Mise-en-scène." That's French (and fancy) for "what is placed on the stage." When we watch movies or go to a play we often focus on the dialogue and the characters, but a good filmmaker also realizes that the setting, the frame of the shot, and the background is just as important to the telling of the story.

One screenwriter describes the mise-en-scène this way: "It fills in narrative details that dialogue alone cannot. It's all the artistic and creative ways to express a story beyond dialogue. Without it, film and television would be two-dimensional"

A great filmmaker gets to use lights and cameras as their tools, but the sovereign God of the universe gets to use history itself as the tool. And in his providence this scene is framed with the tapestry of the Passover Feast.

Much like Christmas and New Year's bleed together, so did the Jewish feasts of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened bread. Both of these feasts were tied to the miraculous deliverance God worked to save his people out of slavery in Egypt and to bring them into the Promised Land.

The Passover itself was the crown jewel of the Jewish calendar and we find its origin story in Exodus 12. God sent nine plagues on the people of Egypt but Pharaoh refused to let them go. This was part of God's plan to bring about the 10th and final plague. If God's people were to be delivered, blood had to be shed.

God was going to strike every firstborn male in the land to death—none would be spared not the lowest Israelite slave, nor any even in Pharaoh's house. But God made a way of escape, he provided a provision of a substitute death. If anyone were to take a firstborn lamb without blemish, sacrifice it and paint the head of their door in its blood—they would be spared.

Sure enough, God was faithful. All the Israelites covered by the blood of the Passover lamb were spared, Pharaoh released God's people and they were delivered. God then instituted the Passover as a perpetual feast where the Jews would remind their children of God's great mercy and deliverance to save through his perfect sacrifice.

So, it's no irony then that God so orchestrated the murderous heart of these officials to reach its culmination in the Passover feast. It is the crowning incitement of how far Israel had fallen. When Israel didn't know what to do in Egypt, it cried out to God to deliver them from their oppressors. When the religious officials didn't know what to do at this Passover, they took counsel with themselves and looked to their Roman oppressors to deliver them from God in the flesh. Yet God was in control.

Psalm 2:1-6, prophetically puts it this way, "Why do the nations rage and the people's plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed saying, 'Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.' He who sits in heavens laugh; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath and terrify them in his fury, saying, 'As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.'"

Evil men plotted, but even their plot reveals the laugh of the Lord. There would be blood on this Passover, but far from breaking the bonds of God's king, it would establish his kingdom forever.

But even these schemers had a problem. Though these men were the power brokers of the day—they feared the people.

These men thought they were the bosses, but even they were ruled by their fear. It's only by submitting ourselves to the rule of Jesus that we can ever find relief from this. **Proverbs 14:27** reminds us, "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death." Only the fear of Jesus truly delivers us from fear.

Here's why we have to remember this. Because these men thought things were getting out of hand, they really were frustrated, hardened in sin, and fearful. We have to remember in these times that it's only submitting ourselves to Jesus that can deliver us—and we have to remember that because Satan is eager to provide another alternative. Satan is very hospitable to our felt needs.

Don't you see that? These men want Jesus dead, they are losing control, they fear the crowds, they need an intimate and private way to trap Jesus and here comes Judas. **Luke 22:3-6**, "The Satan entered into Judas, called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd."

If you've ever watched Aladdin, you know that the role of a genie is to give you exactly what you wish for. But this story goes to show why we need a God and not a genie. What we wish for, is generally not good for anyone. God knows what we need, and he gives it to us in Jesus. Satan knows what we want, and he uses that to betray everything we hope in. "You want Jesus apart from a crowd," says Satan to the Jews, "I've got just the thing you need, have you met my friend, Judas."

This is our second point this morning: **The Betrayal of Evil.**

Relief! On a silver platter. They couldn't get Jesus alone. They didn't know his plans. But here, here is one of the twelve. Here's the guy who can help them feel safe again.

It might be one thing for us to have a text like this in January and set our New Year's Resolutions accordingly: Don't be like Judas.

Such a statement is on one hand noble and good, and on the other hand easily misunderstood. We should learn from this passage of scripture, but we should also be wise to the unique realities of this scripture as well.

In other words, we should read this passage and understand two truths: there is only one Judas Iscariot and yet any one of us could be a Judas Iscariot.

Regarding the uniqueness of Judas, from a theological and a historical perspective there is only one Judas.

Jesus himself says, **(Luke 22:22)** "The Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" Only one man betrayed Jesus over to the officials, and that man was Judas Iscariot. His role was unique and exclusive. David says this in **(Psalm 55:12-13)**, "For it is not an enemy who taunts me—then I could bear it; it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me—then I could hide from him. But it is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend." Just as King David was betrayed by a close friend, so too is the greater David handed over by one of his own.

There was one historic figure who would betray Jesus. But this unique role is also relevant when it comes to Satan's return to Luke's narrative. Having failed to destroy Jesus in the desert, Satan returns to Luke's gospel by way of Judas. One commentator said, "In the temptation Satan entices; in the passion he threatens."

Luke says that Satan "entered" Judas. John's gospel indicates that Satan's influence was ongoing in Judas' heart. And here we are reminded that though Satan is powerful—he is not sovereign. Though he entered Judas, Judas was already acting according to his own desires.

John tells us in chapter 12, that Judas was already stealing from the disciples for his own gain. And even though Satan's activity is present throughout John's gospel, so is Judas' eagerness to do all this.

Judas is not an unwilling partner here. Notice how Luke affirms Satan's actions, but also Judas' action and affections as a willing co-conspirator: "he went, he conferred, he agreed, he consent, he sought."

Satan worked what he wanted by making sure that Judas did what he wanted. In Judas the charges of insurrection and guilt are finalized both for those in spiritual and in human rebellion against Jesus. Satan was involved in a unique way because he is the chief opponent of Jesus and wanted to make sure nothing was left to chance.

This could raise a lot of questions for us, and it actually did with the disciples as well. As we will see next week, when Jesus told his disciples he was going to be betrayed, they all asked, "Is it me!?" So it's wise for us to humbly ask the same questions. But our answers must be careful because of the uniqueness of what is going on.

If the question is, "Can Satan enter me and influence me as directly as he did Judas?" The answer is certainly no, on two levels. First, Jesus has already historically been betrayed. But second, if you are a believer, Satan has no ruling dominion or right over you. We are instead filled with the Holy Spirit. Paul says this in **Colossians 1:13**, "He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son." We are under the exclusive domain of Jesus.

But rule and dominion are different than influence. So if the question is, "Can Satan still influence me and tempt me to evil?" The answer there is certainly yes. Judas reminds us we have an internal and an external battle. Paul clarifies this in **Ephesians 6:12**, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."

So none of us will betray Jesus in the same way Judas did. But all of us are liable to be betrayed, like Judas was betrayed, by the temptation of evil and therefore in lesser ways to betray our momentary trust in the person and work of Jesus.

Peter tells us (**1 Peter 5:8b**), "Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour." As one of my friends said, "We don't live in a spiritual Switzerland." Nothing is neutral.

On the cross, Satan bit off more than he can chew—his cooperation with Judas secured his own demise. But until he is finally put away—he's going to try and take a bite out of all of us.

So we should be mindful of the ways in which Satan seeks to prey on our affections and to call us away from Jesus and into what James calls “wisdom from below.”

Consider how this temptation was potentially already at work in Judas who was so clearly focused on greedy gain.

Perhaps he followed Jesus hoping that if he were one of his lieutenants that he’d get a nice cut of the wealth and power. But as Jesus started talking more about his death, and the powerful seem to be less interested in Jesus than the poor, and as Jesus neglected the Roman places of influence—maybe Satan worked to say, “If you want your cut, you better get something out of Jesus while you can.”

You’ll notice in verse five Judas’ was comforted by his greedy gain, and the officials were comforted in their emotional gladness. Everyone’s anxiety was momentarily eased. But they were deceived. And the cross and resurrection exposed the falsity of their evil hopes.

Sin makes us fools. It always betrays us. I’ve heard it said sin promises like a God, but pays like a devil. Apart from God’s grace any of us could be Judas.

So what do we do? Well, right before Peter warns us about the Devil prowling around like a roaring lion he says this in **1 Peter 5:7**, “Cast your anxieties on God because he cares for you.”

Judas sought counsel with men to satisfy the desires of his heart, when all the while he could have taken his discomfort and dis-ease to Jesus.

When we don’t know what to do, when we feel lost in sin, we must always run to Jesus. So let us go to Jesus and say, “Jesus, my heart is frustrated and confused. I’m stealing, I’m envious, I’m lustful, I’m hateful—can you help me.” And like a skilled surgeon he will cut out the disease, and like shepherd he will care for the wounded sheep.

Sin will always betray you. But Jesus never will. He is faithful to deal with it precisely because he is the true Passover lamb. He was built to take your sin.

This is our third point this morning: **The Provision of the Jesus.**

Notice the similarities and dissimilarities in this text: **Luke 22:7-13**, “Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John saying, ‘Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it.’ They said to him, ‘Where will you have us prepare it?’ He said to them, ‘Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters and tell the master of the house, ‘The teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there.’ And they went and found it just as he had told them, and the prepared the Passover.”

While in the opening verses people are preparing for the Passover by preparing to kill Jesus, in these latter verses Jesus’ disciples are preparing for the Passover by trusting Jesus unaware still of the greater Passover unfolding before them.

Judas took counsel with men as the unknowns began to mount. But see how profound a difference a simple question to the right person can make. "Where?" they said as they failed to understand. And what did they find? Everything was just as Jesus said.

God was in control of history to such detail that his meticulous providence lead his faithful disciples to a room fully furnished for the Passover Feast while simultaneously working through the evil intentions of Judas to secure the greater provision of the final Passover Lamb.

There are so many things we can look to in order to make sense of our world. We can look to our emotions and follow them. We can look to our bank accounts and fund them. We can look to our internet influencers and listen to them. But there is only one person to whom we can go where we find certain hope.

In Jesus, everything is furnished. For the disciples, he would die. Uncertainty would remain. For us, we might feel lost and confused at times, we might need to cry out for guidance, but he will never betray us.

Paul quotes Isaiah in **Romans 10:11** saying, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame."

So I ask you, who are you following? To whom do you look when things seem bleak? What we can glean from this text is that we can trust in the word of Jesus because we have seen the work of Jesus.

Peter and John had to take Jesus at his word. It was typically a woman's job to carry a water jar. It would seem unlikely that a man would be doing it, especially on a day like this. Moreover, the thought that someone would have an open an unoccupied room available, furnished, and ready for the Passover on a night where thousands of Jews were flooding the rental market in Jerusalem was scant.

But they listened to his word, and found everything just as he had told them.

There is no safer place for you to put your emotions and your unknowns than in the hands of God's word. The weight of this life is crushing, let Jesus carry that burden for you. Remember Jesus himself is distressed. Earlier in Luke 12:50 that great was his distress in light of the cross. But unlike us, Jesus only makes wise decisions even in the heat of difficult emotions.

One military commander famously said, "No plan ever survived first contact with the enemy." How true is that for us! We have the best plans this New Year, but we don't know what's going to smack us in the face. But Jesus took the world's worst blows and made it, and he has given us in the midst of all our fears his word to rely on when we can't rely on anything else.

And we know we can trust in the word of Jesus, because we of all people have seen the work of Jesus.

Peter, John, Judas, everyone else only had the promise. But we have the fulfillment. We know the end of the story. We know Jesus really did die for our sins, he really did bear the punishment of them, he really did rise again, walk among us, ascend to heaven and he really is coming back.

This Passover provision reminds us that even when it seems evil has stolen the narrative, God is still in control.

When Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery they thought they got rid of his influence, little did they know that they would soon meet him as one of the most powerful men of Egypt who would save God's people. Joseph said to them, "What you meant for evil against me, God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive."

In the book of Esther the evil Haman plotted the total genocide of the Jews and built a gallows on which he was going to hang Mordecai the Jew he hated the most. But after his plot was revealed, King Ahasuerus declared the eradication of all Israel's enemies and he hung Haman on the gallows he build for Mordecai.

What seems to be evil, is shown to be a tool for good in the hand of a good God. This could not be any more true in the cross. All of us are preparing for the final Passover: either by our rebellion which demands our death, or by our reliance upon him wherein he furnishes us with salvation. He is faithful. Trust in him.

Gregory of Nazianzus says it this ways; **"He is sold, and cheap was the price--thirty pieces of silver; yet he buys back the world at the mighty cost of his own blood. A sheep, he is led to the slaughter--yet he shepherds Israel and now the whole world as well."**

This lamb, is our shepherd. Let us follow him.

Psalms 2 opens with the nations raging against the Lord's anointed, and condemns those who stand against it. But notice how we are called to respond in light of this: **Psalm 2:12**, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him."

Let us kiss the Son this morning by taking him at his word, and by finding our salvation in his work.