

JESUS: THE SERVANT AT WORK

VOLUME THREE

STUDY NINE

Portrait of a Traitor

Mark 14:10–21

How could he? A better question is, “Why would he ever betray the Master?” The One who had done nothing but good, not only for others but for him, one of the chosen Twelve.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

JUDAS ISCARIOT.

Say the name. You can still taste the bitter betrayal these many centuries later, can't you? Jesus handpicked him to be one of the Twelve. He was one of Jesus' trusted disciples. He followed in the footsteps of the remarkable Servant of God wherever He went. He shared life with the other disciples and knew the secret places where the Master would bring them to rest and pray. He heard Jesus' teachings about God's kingdom, witnessed His miracles, which amazed many people, and gave Him the kiss of friendship probably more than once. Even so, Judas betrayed his Lord.

It's hard for us to imagine such treachery. And yet . . . betrayal is not uncommon. Have you been its victim? If so, the wound from a backstabbing probably still hasn't healed.

For you, Judas isn't just a man from the distant past. Your “Judas” has a face that still haunts you. If there's any comfort, however, it's in knowing that Jesus understands. He, too, bears the scars of betrayal.

In our previous *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we knelt beside Mary at the feet of the Savior as she anointed Jesus with precious perfume. In Mary, we saw a portrait of pure devotion. In the passage for this study, however, hangs a much darker portrait. The contrast between Mary's tender love and Judas' vile betrayal could not be more extreme. And yet, in God's plan, both portraits hang side by side as memorials to the grace Jesus extends to us all, day after day.



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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

*He leads the humble in doing right,
teaching them his way. (Psalm 25:9)*

Let your heart take the posture of humility as you ask the Lord to lead you in doing right. Tell Him that you want Him to teach you His way so that you can walk in it.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The Pharisees had been determined to eliminate Jesus since early in His ministry, when He healed a man on the Sabbath. “At once the Pharisees went away and met with the supporters of Herod to plot how to kill Jesus” (Mark 3:6). After Jesus cleansed the temple, other religious leaders joined the plot. “And the chief priests and the scribes heard this, and they began seeking how to put Him to death; for they were afraid of Him” (11:18 NASB). The Pharisees, Herodians, priests, and scribes—they were all in on it now.

In Jesus’ parable of the wicked farmers, He accuses the religious leaders of being enemies of God. Their true nature exposed, the humiliated religious leaders “wanted to arrest Jesus. . . . But they were afraid of the crowd” (12:12). Arresting Him in public risked causing an uproar. They had to catch Him alone and vulnerable, but how? When? They needed someone on the inside.



Observation: Judas Plans to Betray Jesus

Read [Mark 14:10–21](#) as if you were witnessing the events firsthand. Carefully observe the text, paying attention to the context.¹ The passage begins with the word *then*, connecting this scene with Mary’s extravagant expression of love. What key contrasts was Mark highlighting?

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Analysis of the Secret Betrayer—Mark 14:10–11

Mark 14:10–11 reveals something about Judas that none of the other disciples knew. What do you observe about Judas' conspiracy with Jesus' enemies? How does this information color the events that follow?

Judas doesn't have the plan thought through. He's beginning to think about how this might happen. Where would be the best place? —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Preparation for the Passover Meal—Mark 14:12–16

Not knowing Jesus' plans for Passover, the disciples asked Him, "Where do you want us to go to prepare the Passover meal for you?" (Mark 14:12). What instructions did Jesus give in Mark 14:13–16? Why do you think Jesus kept His plans secret and involved only two disciples—Peter and John (Luke 22:8)?

Please observe that Jesus has prearranged everything, just as He did for His triumphal entry. Women carried the water on their shoulder or on their head. If you saw a man carrying water, that was unusual. Jesus has it all arranged. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Discussion at the Last Supper—Mark 14:17–21

Observe Mark's brevity in Mark 14:17–21. Enter the scene. Stay there and imagine Jesus reclining at the table with the Twelve. Jesus knew Judas' evil intentions, but He didn't accuse him directly. Why do you think Jesus made the statement in 14:18? What do you observe in their response and Jesus' answer in 14:19–21?

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What details did John add in the parallel passage, [John 13:21–30](#)?



Interpretation: God's Plan, Judas' Betrayal

Why did Judas betray Jesus? His reasons remain among the many mysteries in Scripture.

Perhaps he did it for the money. According to John's account, Judas said that Mary's extravagant offering "should have been sold and the money given to the poor" (John 12:5). And then John added, "Not that [Judas] cared for the poor—he was a thief, and since he was in charge of the disciples' money, he often stole some for himself" (12:6). But it seems that more than greed motivated Judas.

Perhaps Judas was ambitious and wanted to make a name for himself. Perhaps he was disillusioned and angry when Jesus refused to set up a political kingdom. Whatever the motive for his betrayal, the result was the same. In some dark moment, Judas welcomed evil into his heart, and Satan walked through the open door.

After Mary has poured out this wonderful offering of worship, Judas then realized Jesus was not going anywhere but to a cross. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Jesus knew Judas would betray Him, but Jesus didn't expose him in front of the others. Why not? How do you interpret Jesus' restraint?

Jesus said that His betrayer was "one of you twelve . . . eating from this bowl with me" (Mark 14:20)—a description that could have been any of them. But John added that Jesus dipped the morsel and "gave it to Judas" (John 13:26). What is the significance of Jesus' giving the morsel to Judas?

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What is interesting is that the host of the table would take the morsel and give it to the guest of honor. That's Judas. It was Jesus' last appeal of love. It was an extension of grace. "Judas, you still can follow Me. You still can repent. Here is the morsel. Here is My last gesture of love to you." —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

On the surface, it appears that Jesus was a victim of conspiracy, betrayal, and even Satan's evil plan. However, Jesus was no victim. He was in full control of the circumstances, guiding them according to His plan. What clues in the text point to the reality that Jesus was allowing the events to unfold?



Correlation: God's Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

God is sovereign—the supreme and ultimate ruler of the universe. Compare our passage in Mark 14 with [Genesis 45:1–8](#), where Joseph was talking to his brothers, who had sold him into slavery in Egypt. How do both stories reveal God's sovereignty and human responsibility?

When I talk about a prearranged plan, I'm not saying that Judas didn't have any say in it. He chose to. He cooperated with it. It was part of the plan.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

How do passages such as [Jeremiah 17:9–10](#) and [Mark 7:21–23](#) serve as warnings? What attitudes should we adopt when it comes to sin? What posture should we take every day to receive the grace that God extends to us ([Proverbs 4:23](#); [1 Corinthians 10:1–14](#); [Galatians 6:7–8](#); and [James 4:6–7](#))?

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Application: Receive the Grace That God Extends to You

It might be difficult to think of ourselves as a “Judas.” However, application offers us an opportunity to welcome the Holy Spirit’s work in all areas of our souls. Three lessons linger from the story.

First, *Christ has a prearranged plan for each of our lives that deepens our relationship with Him and involves our participation.* What comes to mind as you look back on past difficult times and God’s sure provision? Why not take some time to thank God for His prearranged plan?

The reason for a prearranged plan is to deepen your relationship with the Savior. As you get older, you will learn not to fight the Father’s will. I also noticed in the prearranged plan that they participated in it—so we’re not like robots. God has us involved, but it’s all for a purpose known only to Him.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Second, *Christ continues to express His love and extend His grace even to the worst among us.* Think of how you would have acted toward Judas, knowing his motives and plan. How has the Lord extended His grace to you in the past? How is He extending His grace to you now?

How gracious He has been to some of you, though you are still engaged in evil activity, selfishness, impure motives, unfaithfulness, and acts that reveal a lack of devotion. Anyone else would write you off the scene. No, you cannot do anything so wicked that it will turn His love off. Isn’t that remarkable?

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Third, *anyone is free to reject His offer and retreat into darkness*. Open your heart to God's light and invite Him to enter into and control every aspect of your life—your motives, your relationships, your finances, your love for Him.

Let the Spirit of God search your soul. Be painfully honest. This is a great moment for you to say, “Lord God, I’m going to run no longer. I’m Yours.”
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



A FINAL PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I recall the many times You’ve extended Your grace to me out of love. Thank You for Your Word. Help me to be totally devoted to You. I want to live to glorify Your name. I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](https://insight.org/how-does-pastor-chuck-swindoll-study-the-bible/)" at insight.org.

For the 2027 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2011, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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