

# If a Kiss Could Kill (Part 1): A Word to Betrayers

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## Introduction

### The Text

<sup>47</sup> While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him,<sup>48</sup> but Jesus said to him, “Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?”<sup>49</sup> And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?”<sup>50</sup> And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear.<sup>51</sup> But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him.<sup>52</sup> Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs?<sup>53</sup> When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.” (Luke 22:47–53)

### Taking Stock of Our Hearts

- A. I think it’s a good and wise thing as followers of Jesus to regularly take stock of where our heart is in relation to God. What can start sometime with pure intent and devotion gets twisted up along the way.
  - 1. We may still look like we’re doing alright on the outside—like we’re healthy and mature and growing, but on the inside, in the heart, there’s a something else lurking in the shadows, there’s this drift from the gospel and grace and Jesus as our first love.
- B. One of the best ways, it seems to me, to uncover the heart and get at what’s going on in there, is to ask questions, and genuinely reflect.
  - 1. So even as we get going here, I just wanted to offer up a few questions for you to consider. You might take them home later and journal through them, pray through them. Ask God to illumine and give you insight and help you grow. Let me just rattle off a few for you now:
    - a. How are you doing—how are you really doing—with God?
    - b. Have been feeling close or feeling distant?
    - c. When God looks through the appearance of things and into your heart, what does He see?
    - d. Are there ways you’ve wandered from Him and the gospel?
    - e. Are there idols and alternate motives?
    - f. What have you been craving or desiring lately? What are you longing for? What are you working for?
    - g. What have you been anxious or worked up about? What are you afraid of?
    - h. Where’s God in all of this?
  - 2. And I should add a few more at the end here:

- a. Do you even want to know what’s going on in your heart? Are you even open to the idea?
- b. Do you want light to shine in or are you in hiding and somewhat happy that way?
- c. Does this scare you? Are you afraid of what you’ll find?
- d. Would you rather stay in the dark, because it feels easier or even more enjoyable?

## Why Open This Way?

A. Now, you may be wondering, why am I opening this way? Where am I getting this from the text before us here in Luke? Well, I’m simply reflecting upon this kiss of Judas.

1. It’s a most scandalous and soul-searching thing when you really stop to think about it.

B. Here, what should be an act of notable intimacy and affection, becomes an act of rebellion and betrayal.

1. As one commentator puts it: Judas uses “a gesture of love as a cloak of treachery” (PNTC).

- a. It’s why I’m titling this message: “If a Kiss Could Kill.” Because that’s what’s happening here. Judas is essentially killing Jesus with a kiss—on the outside, yes, but certainly, and most importantly, in His heart. He’s done with Jesus, that’s what this kiss means. It’s not a kiss of greeting. It’s a kiss of goodbye.

C. Now, you should know, it was not uncommon for Jewish men to greet one another with a kiss—if they were in the same family or close friends and things.

1. And Paul later encourages this sort of thing in the church—exhorting them in many of his epistles to “greet one another with a holy kiss” (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26).

- a. Now, listen, I’m all about obeying God and His Word, but I’ve always struggled with this one. I’m not exactly sure how this would look here today, but thankfully because of COVID, I think God would be alright with me not making this one of my application points. Greet one another with a holy air-hug or a sanctified elbow bump or something. I can work with that.

- i. But you get the idea. This was the way you greet family or the closest of friends. And yet here Judas is using it to mark out Jesus as the One whom the soldiers should seize and drag off.

D. Judas’ whole life, we could say, is one drawn out and dramatic rebuke of empty religion.

1. We see in him that one can be as physically and externally close to Jesus as possible—so close you could kiss Him—and yet still be, in heart, truly as far away from Him as Satan himself. Indeed, Judas, in many ways, is as the devil draped in a disciple’s robe.

- a. He was kissing Jesus with his lips but slapping Him in his heart.

- E. And the point of this whole sermon is to ask: Is any of this sort of thing going on with us? Is it lurking in the shadows of our hearts? Are we drifting towards it in any way? Have we wandered into the dead-end of empty religion? And if so what do we do about it?
1. So I've got three things for us: (1) We Are Not As Far from Judas As We Like to Think; (2) We Are a Lot Closer to Judas Than We Care to Admit; and (3) So What Do We Do?
    - a. And I know you're wondering, what's the deal with those first two points, they sound the same. And I suppose they are. I'm just wanting to make the same point really but from two different angles. The first comes at it negatively, the second positively. And I want to do this because we're so prone to try to slip out from the grip of these truths, to shake the conviction that we and Judas have anything in common at all. I'm not going to let us out. I'm going to come at us from both sides. And once I've got us effectively trapped in there, with that third point then, I'm going to show us the way out.

## (1) We Are Not As Far from Judas As We Like to Think

### A Category of His Own?

- A. When we read of the treachery and the betrayal of Judas, we are prone to put him in another category altogether, like he's a special kind of evil. The other disciples, you know they were sinful and all that, but they weren't Judas.
1. You know, in more modern history, it's like Hitler. You say that name and a shiver runs through your soul, right? No one thinks they're that bad. No one thinks they're even capable of such a thing. He's in a category of his own.
    - a. And Judas is kind of like that. We like to think that we are far off from the likes of him.
- B. Have you ever noticed, no one ever names their boy Judas. Have you ever met a Judas? I haven't.
1. We'll go with Peter and James and John and things like these, Oh sure Peter denied the Lord but that boy came back stronger, he's like a great underdog story. Oh sure James and John wanted to use Jesus to get power at His right and left hand and wanted to call down fire on His enemies and things, but that's understandable, right? They're just a little ambitious. They came out okay. We like those names.
  2. But Judas? Nah, no. Makes us shudder.
    - a. And I get that. I wasn't going to name my son Judas either. Surprisingly, that one wasn't on the list when Megs and I were to trying to narrow things down. But you look at it and you think: "Judas? Not my boy! He's going to be nothing like that!"
      - i. But I suppose what I'm trying to say here is, again, we're all not as far from Judas as we like to think.

## “Is It Me?”

- A. I’m not going to spend too much time on this first point because some of this is a little review from a little while back. But let me at least say this. You remember, do you not, that when Jesus first discloses around the table of the last supper that one of His closest disciples, one of the twelve, is going to betray Him, none of the disciples know who it is. They all start asking: “Is it me?” “Is it me?” “It couldn’t be me?”
1. But the point here is that they didn’t immediately go: “Ah, I know. It’s Judas. Of course. The dude has horns growing out of his head. He’s always wearing those goofy hats trying to cover it, but we all see it. I wondered why he was trying to eat his Passover supper with a pitch fork, it’s all coming together now.”
  2. No, that’s not what they say. They have no idea. And even when Jesus says “It’s the guy to whom I give this morsel of bread” and he gives it to Judas and tells him [“What you are going to do, do quickly” \(John 13:27\)](#), they still don’t get it. John tells us: [“<sup>28</sup> Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him.<sup>29</sup> Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor” \(vv. 28-29\)](#).
    - a. He still looked on the outside like an upstanding guy, like he was all in on team Jesus.
- B. And you know the implication of all this it seems to me is to say: Just because we’re looking pretty good on the outside, just because we’ve got it together and we look spiritual and things, just because other Christians congratulate us and look up to us or whatever, it doesn’t mean we’re immune to this. That was Judas. He doesn’t fit the stereotypical evil. He looks like a good boy. Like one of the best.
1. He was chosen as one of the twelve. As Peter says of him in [Acts 1:17](#): [“\[H\]e was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.”](#)
  2. The dude was here. He saw and experienced it all. He had ministry. It’s not like when Jesus sends out the twelve and they all come back, only Judas had no converts and did no miracles and cast out no demons (cf. [Luke 9:1-6](#)). No, they were all successful and came back excited. He was a part of that.
  3. He was there around that table, getting his feet washed, perhaps even partaking of the bread and wine that stood for the body and blood of our Lord and the New Covenant.
    - a. He looked good on the outside. And yet there was some real wickedness taking root in his heart.
- C. So we can’t be so quick to excuse ourselves. This happens to churchgoing folks. This happens to goody-two-shoe folks. This happens to people who know a lot about Jesus and a lot about the Bible and things.
1. We too can kiss Him with our lips while slapping Him in our hearts.

## Fire Hid in the Embers

- A. You know I've always appreciated this quote from Thomas Watson. I'm sure I've read it to you many times now. But it never gets old to me. When I first came across it, it just cut me to the core.
1. "The sins of the ungodly are looking-glasses in which we may see our own hearts. Do we see a heinous, impious wretch [that's old-school talk for 'a really bad sinner']? Behold a picture of our own hearts! Such would we be—if God left us! What is in wicked men's practice—is in our nature. Sin in the wicked—is like fire which flames and blazes forth. Sin in the godly—is like fire hid in the embers. Christian, though you do not break forth into a flame of scandalous sin—yet you have no cause to boast, for there is as much sin in the embers of your nature! You have the root of all sin in you, and would bear as hellish fruit as any ungodly wretch—if God did not either curb you by His power, or change you by His grace!"
    - a. I've always been so moved by that image of the embers. Whenever you look across the line at someone over there and say: "Yuck! That sin is all up in flames." Hear Watson pushing back: "Ah, but the very same embers lay smoldering in your heart. Therefore, beware . . . and be humble!"
  2. And in the context he references [Titus 3:3](#), and I wanted to read [vv. 3-5](#) to you here now: "[3 For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. 4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy . . .](#)"
- B. We like to imagine ourselves as different because we're better. But that is not the Bible's teaching. The Bible says if there is any difference between Judas and myself it is all of mercy and none of me.
1. So we're humbled and chastened when we see such a thing in Judas. We're not looking at some portrait of a unique and distant depravity, we're looking into a mirror, a "looking-glass" as Watson says. We see ourselves here, our own propensities and proclivities.
    - a. When we watch Judas kissing our Savior in [Luke 22](#), we don't look down our nose and wag our finger as if we're made of different stuff. No! We beg God search our hearts and show us where the remnants of such evil still abide in us and lead us out of it into the way everlasting . . . by grace!

## (2) We Are a Lot Closer to Judas Than We Care to Admit

- A. Now that's just one side of it. We need to first realize we're not fundamentally unlike him.
1. But now let me press in a bit more and show you how, in fact, we are often very much like him—more like him than we care to admit. Let's talk about the ways the spirit of Judas finds its way into our own hearts.

## The What and the Why

- A. To get at this, we need to ask the question not “What?” but “Why?” We need to get beneath the surface of our actions (What we’re doing) to the motivations (Why we’re doing it).
1. Because you see Judas always had the What in good order, even while the Why underneath it was all off.
- B. One of the more explicit times we see this is what goes down with Mary, the brother of Lazarus, in [John 12](#). Do you remember this?
1. It’s a few days out from the Last Supper, and Jesus knows His end is near. And He’s in Bethany, there with Lazarus whom He’d just raised up from the dead the chapter before.
  2. Martha and Mary are there too, and Mary is just overwhelmed with all that Jesus has done for her and her family—so much so that we’re told she takes [“a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. \[And\] The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume”](#) (v. 3).
    - a. It was not uncommon to provide something for the feet of your guests in these days. You got sandals on, dusty roads, things could get funky. But the way that Mary goes about it here is wonderfully extravagant, over the top.
      - i. You see, she doesn’t just use ordinary common oil here. No. She takes an alabaster jar filled with perfumed oil worth a years’ wages (think about the average salary here in Silicon Valley and then attach that figure to this perfume). And then she breaks that jar and just pours its contents all out on His head and feet and uses her hair as a cloth.
        - (1) For those who understand the gospel, for those who get grace, this is one of the purest expressions of worship and adoration in all the Bible.
        - (2) But for those who don’t, this is a “waste” (cf. [Mark 14:4](#)). They don’t see the point. They don’t get it.
  3. So John tells us Judas, in particular objects: [“<sup>4</sup> But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples \(he who was about to betray him\), said, <sup>5</sup> ‘Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?’”](#)
    - a. Now pause. There’s the What. And it seems good on the surface right? “Hey, why waste this. I’d want to give it to the poor.” He has a point. There’s \$100,000 being mopped up on the floor there. We got hungry people out on the streets. I’m just concerned for them. Right? Wrong.
  4. We see the What and it seems good enough. But John goes on to give us the Why, what’s in the heart, v. 6: [“He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.”](#)

- a. “I care about the poor” (on the outside) . . . “I care about ME!” (on the inside). The What . . . and the Why.
  
- 5. And Jesus knows all about it, so He responds this way in Matthew’s telling of it: “<sup>10</sup> Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me.<sup>11</sup> For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me.<sup>12</sup> In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial.<sup>13</sup> Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.” (Matt. 26:10–13).
  
- C. Here we have the difference between empty religion and that which is true and transformed by the gospel.
  - 1. Mary was moved by grace. Amazed at the beauty of Jesus, His power, His care, all of it. Because He had given so much to her, she happily gave of herself to Him.
  - 2. Judas, on the other hand, was willing to walk with Jesus, serve Jesus, do stuff for the poor and all of this, but not because He truly loved Jesus or others or had been so moved by grace and the beauty of the Lord. No!
    - a. He did it because he wanted stuff. In particular, he had a thing for money. And when it becomes clear that following Jesus isn’t going to prove profitable, he moves on.
  
- D. I’d never noticed this before. But in Matthew and Mark’s telling of this story with Mary, it’s immediately following this that Judas is said to go off and strike a deal with the chief priests.
  - 1. So right after in [Matt. 26:14-16](#) we read this: “<sup>14</sup> Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests<sup>15</sup> and said, “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” And they paid him thirty pieces of silver.<sup>16</sup> And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.”
    - a. Judas’ heart is set not on Jesus but on money, and once it becomes clear Jesus isn’t going to be his way into wealth, after hearing Jesus talk about His burial and things, Judas sees the writing on the wall, Jesus isn’t going to be King, at least not the kind of King he wants, there’s no money in this for me, so he goes at it another way.
      - i. You see God isn’t His God, money is. And he’ll sacrifice everything else to get it. That’s where I’ll find life and joy and peace and identity and satisfaction and things. Money. Not Jesus. “If Jesus will get me money, well fine I’ll play the game. But He’s a means to an end. But if Jesus gets in the way of that end, well then I’ll kill Him with a kiss.”
  
- E. Here’s the point we mustn’t miss in all of this: Judas followed and served Jesus for the very same reason he betrayed Him: namely, love of money!

## Searching Our Own Hearts

- A. And I think this is where we start to search our own hearts.
1. We look beneath the What to the Why. And it gets a little dark sometimes. It gets a little like Judas. It might not be money that's your thing. But we all have got something. Our Why gets a little jacked up sometimes.
- B. At this point let's pause and add some more questions to the those we began with at the beginning, getting at the Why:
1. Why do you do what you do? If you're a Christian, why? Why are you following Jesus? Why do come to church? Why do you read your Bible? Why do you pray? Why do you serve? Why do you evangelize? Why do you try to obey His Word? Why are you doing this?
- C. You see what we learn from Judas here is that there are two very different hearts that can sit underneath the same external activities.
1. Empty religion treats Jesus as a means to an end. As a genie or something. I come to Him, sure. But why? To get something else.
- D. We had a family movie night last week and we watched that live action Aladdin movie Disney put out. (Props to Will Smith, no one can come close to Robin Williams as the genie, and I wouldn't think it wise for anyone to even try, but he did pretty good job.)
1. But I didn't really remember the whole emotional/relational side to the genie. Do you remember, what he's used to is everyone treats him like their slave. They don't care about him. They just want him to do stuff for them.
  2. He's in chains and they could set him free if they'd use just one wish to do it, but no one ever does . . . until Aladdin. He sees the genie as a person as a friend as someone not just to serve and do your bidding, but someone to know and love.
- E. And, honestly, we come to Jesus like this sometimes. We'll read our Bibles or pray or go to church to get something, not more of Him, but something else that we think will get us happiness. For Judas it was money, what might it be for you?
1. Maybe Jesus can get me that spouse.
  2. Maybe Jesus can break open my career path.
  3. Maybe Jesus can heal my body or whatever.
  4. Maybe if I follow Him and look real good I'll get people's praise and be loved and accepted. That's what I want, not Jesus' affection, but man's.
- F. You know this is the sort of thing Satan brings out when he's talking to God about Job, do you remember this?
1. God says Look at Job isn't he great—there's no one like him who fears Me and turns away from evil.



2. And Satan says: “<sup>9</sup> Does Job fear God for no reason? <sup>10</sup> Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. <sup>11</sup> But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face” (Job 1:9–11).

a. In other words: “Of course He’s going to fear, and obey, and serve You. You give him stuff. But if you take away the stuff, he’ll be done with you. You’re just a genie, man. If you stop granting his wishes, he’ll toss you out with yesterday’s trash.”

G. So I wonder, is there any of that in you? Is there any of that in me? Are we kissing Jesus with our lips but slapping Him in our hearts? We want something else? He’s just a means to an end? We’ll trade Him if it comes down to it?

1. If so, what do we do? . . .

### (3) So What Do We Do?

A. I’ve got two steps for us here as we begin to wrap things up: (1) Discern the End; and (2) Discover the Beauty.

#### Step #1: Discern the End

A. By this I simply mean that we need to follow Judas’ story. We need to see where this kind of idolatry and empty religion goes.

1. You know I thought of that text in [Ps. 73](#) where the psalmist is saying: “I was seeing how the arrogant and the rich were all living it up without God and my feet almost stumbled, I was almost drawn into it, but here’s what kept me from falling . . . ‘I discerned their end’” ([v. 17](#)).”

a. I saw where this sort of godless idolatry takes you, where the train gets off, and it isn’t good.

B. So trace it out with Judas. What happens? Does he find satisfaction? Does he find life? Do the thirty pieces of silver fill his cup and bring him joy?

1. No. That’s the tragic irony in all of this. You trade Jesus to get stuff, you think it’s life and it ends in death, you think it’s a stairway to heaven and it’s a trapdoor to hell. Your idols never deliver, never make good on what they promise, they always take from you in the end. There’s a hook in the silver, and it’s got Judas by the heart. You’re on the devil’s reel. Even while you claim to be free.

C. So he comes back into the chief priests and the elders. “I don’t want it. It didn’t work.” (Anyone who’s ever traded Jesus for sin, has felt this. “What was I thinking?!”)

1. But it’s too late. “[And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself](#)” (Matt. 27:5). Life . . . death.

- D. And it's crazy. The chief priests and the elders they pick up that money off the floor and they try to figure what to do with it.
  - 1. "Well we can't put it back into the temple treasury, that would be unlawful." As if they care about the law. These guys are just like Judas. Cleaned up on the outside, nasty on the inside.
  - 2. But they buy a field with it, it becomes known as the "Field of Blood" (Acts 1:19). And I never knew this before, but tradition locates that field in the Hinnom Valley, otherwise known as Gehenna. Which, if you know your Bibles, you know Jesus' uses that place as a metaphor for hell, because they were always burning trash and things there.
    - a. And Peter says in Acts 1:18: That's Judas' inheritance. That's what he "acquired with the reward of his wickedness." That's what the thirty pieces of silver got him.

## Step #2: Discover the Beauty

- A. So we discern the end. But then we also need to discover the beauty. And here's where the real heart change happens. Here's the key to true religion. By this I'm referring, of course, to discerning the beauty of Jesus—who He is, what He does, how He loves.
  - 1. This is what set Mary apart from Judas. She saw Him, truly saw Him, she experienced His grace and let it in. It overwhelmed her and recast her Why. It wasn't about what people thought anymore, She wasn't giving there to get something back, she was giving extravagantly because Jesus had already given so abundantly to her. She had discovered His love and was just loving Him in return.
- B. So I'll just end here by showing you more of our Savior's love even in our text back in Luke. I want you to see how beautiful He is. Look at how He treats Judas . . .
- C. Luke goes out of his way to make sure we really feel the sting of this by emphasizing this wasn't just your average guy betraying Him here, this was "the man called Judas, one of the twelve" (Luke 22:47).
  - 1. Why emphasize that? We already knew that. He said it already back up in v. 3 of this same chapter. Why repeat it here?
    - a. To make sure we feel the sting of it. Judas doesn't use a gesture of love to betray Jesus (a kiss), Judas is in loving relationship with Him, he's in the inner circles, he's one of the twelve.
- D. Don't you see, this detail highlights at one and same time the depth of Judas' betrayal and the height of Christ's love, the darkness of Judas' heart and the noonday brightness of Christ's.
  - 1. Because how does Jesus respond?
    - a. Does He reach out and slap him on the face, get away from me scum, "How could you?" Isn't that what we would want to do?

b. But Jesus doesn't do that. Instead He lets Judas draw near, He can feel the warmth His betrayer's breath on his skin, he can look into his eyes, he lets Judas kiss him and then in Matthew's account, did you realize, we're told he still calls him "Friend." [Matt. 26:50: "Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came to do." Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him."](#)

i. This is a love like no other love. And that's what I want you to see.

E. In that garden, Jesus lets them put Him in chains but not because He's a genie, but because He's a Savior, and He loves us just that much. He's not in chains because He has to serve us, He's in chains because He wants to serve us. Because He loves us.

1. And that's beautiful—heart-melting, heart-changing beautiful.

F. Listen, if Jesus would show such kindness even to Judas, even to the end, you've got to know He's ready to welcome and forgive and love on you.

1. It doesn't matter where your heart's been lately. Maybe you've been a Christian for a while and you've drifted off in recent days.

2. Maybe you're not a Christian and you've been chasing everything but Jesus and you just feel empty.

a. Wherever you are, if you'd come to Him today, He'd welcome you, He'd call you friend.