

The final battle has begun.

Jesus in his corner – the one who casts out demons and forgives sins,
who makes the blind to see and the dead to live –

And in the other corner, the devil – Satan, that ancient adversary of God
and humanity – represented by Judas.

Satan did the opposite of an exorcism with Judas – casting into his heart
the demonic will to hand Jesus over to those who wanted him dead.

It is easy to despise Judas. To hold him in contempt.

To say “Thank God I am not like him! I would never hand the Lord over
to his enemies.”

We always want to be on the side of the good guys – the heroes in the
white hats – the righteous.

But the truth is, I see myself in Judas. I see the ways Satan persuades me
to betray my Lord for something that seems better, more desirable,
easier.

I am Judas whenever I hand over prayer time to the TV.

I am Judas whenever I hand my Lord over to faithless fear –

- Fear of what he (and others) might say about me and my life
- Fear of being found not good enough for his love
- Fear of the demons of “what if” and “if only”
- Fear of not having enough so that I keep for myself what
belongs to God

- Fear that buries me in work, or books, or birds, or food or other diversions from Jesus.

I am Judas whenever I give in to that devilish voice that whispers in my ear – “You don’t need to be holy. . . you know you want what I have.”

I am Judas when I waste my time on worthless things,

- things that don’t really matter,
- stupid stuff and distractions from what God has created me for.

I am Judas every time I hand Jesus over to the enemies so that I can have things my way and be my own master and god.

Maybe you can relate to some of these betrayals – or maybe others come to mind for you.

These are certainly not exhaustive, even for me!

And it’s not even that these things are bad in and of themselves – most of them aren’t.

- **but when they take the place that Jesus wants to have in my life,**
- **when they overpower my spirit as God’s child**
- **and lead me to make decisions that are contrary to what I know God has asked of me –**

then they are a problem.

It is painful, but important to take an honest look and recognize Judas in ourselves and to confess this truth before God, receive forgiveness, and start over.

Yes – God’s grace extends to the Judas in each of us.

For it is also important to remember this about Judas:

- He also shared in the Last Supper that became the first Holy Communion with Jesus.
- Jesus broke bread with him and gave him the cup of salvation for the forgiveness of his sins.
- Jesus washed his feet and gave him the new commandment along with the others.

Jesus did not cut off Judas.

Satan cut off Judas by overpowering his will to love Jesus
and his ability to receive what Jesus gives.

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But thankfully, the Gospel of John does not end at chapter 13.

Satan may win this round, but he does not win the final round.

So too in our lives, Satan may from time to time get the better of us, but by our faith in Jesus, Satan is the loser and we emerge victorious.

How is this possible?

Jesus, who provides himself in a meal to give us strength to do God's will in our life,

Who gets down from his throne,

takes off his regal garments,

and becomes as a slave to his disciples, washing their feet as a gesture of love and acceptance.

Jesus who allows himself to be handed over to his enemies

– who takes the loss –

takes it all the way to death.

Why? Not for himself, that's for sure – but for us.

For all creation. To do the will of God on earth as it is in heaven.

To demonstrate the heavenly love of God on earth.

And because Jesus is God in the flesh,

his death is Satan's knockout

– and his resurrection is God's final triumph over all his enemies.

This triumph of God's love is the final word on us.

This triumph of God's love over Satan's betrayal of our souls:

Over hatred and contempt

Over fear and envy

Over greed and pride

Over lust and anger

Over laziness and gluttony

Picks us up off the mat of our fears and failures and gives us a whole new beginning.

Jesus loves each person – not because we deserve it, or have earned it by our good deeds

Jesus loves each of us

– not because of anything we do or any particular skill or talent we have or how much wealth we have amassed.

Jesus loves each of us simply because we are – in all our humanness.
Simply because he delights in us as persons created in the image of God.

We are so precious to Jesus that he spends himself utterly and completely to redeem us from Satan's hold on us.

We belong in Jesus – he has embraced us in love so deep we cannot reach the end of it.

And in this loving embrace he says to us – *in the same way as I have loved you, you also should love one another.*

This sacrificial love of Jesus gives us new vision
– now, instead of seeing Judas when we look in the mirror,
we see the compassionate face of our Lord reflected back to us.

Instead of seeing Judas in the faces of others,
we see the loving face of Jesus looking at us.

With this new vision, we stoop to wash one another's feet
– serving Jesus in one another
– giving and receiving his merciful love.

We break bread with one another – receiving Jesus himself from the hands of brothers and sisters in Christ.

And finally, we take that love beyond these walls and serve our neighbors, seeing in their faces the face of Christ.

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, Jesus says, if you have love for one another.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen