

The story of Judas is amazing to me—because when you think about it, it is surprising he was a disciple

Judas is the one who betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver

Why did Jesus let someone who would betray him for money be one of his trusted 12 disciples?

We first find Judas as one of the 12 disciples that Jesus chose...

*Now during those days [Jesus] went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, and James, and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Simon, who was called the Zealot, and Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. Luke 6:12-16 NRSV*

It says here that Judas Iscariot became a traitor

But remember, that the Gospel accounts are written after the fact

So they knew what Judas would do

But Jesus “chose” Judas after a night in prayer to God

Surely God could have told Jesus that Judas was a bad choice

Matthew 10 tells us that Judas was among the 12 disciples when Jesus sent them out

Jesus gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease

They were to proclaim the good news, cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons

But we are told by John that Jesus knew Judas would betray him

*Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him... Jesus [said], "Did I not choose you, the twelve? Yet one of you is a devil." He was speaking of Judas son of Simon Iscariot, for he, though one of the twelve, was going to betray him. John 6:64, 70-71 NRSV*

Why did Jesus choose Judas as one of the disciples?

Why didn't Jesus kick him out when he learned the truth about Judas?

Judas was even the treasurer and held the money—a trusted position—Did Jesus trust him?

Read John 13:21-30

Why doesn't Jesus do something?

When Jesus told Judas to go... he didn't also say that he could no longer be a disciple

Was it a necessary setup in Jesus' inevitable journey to the cross?

That one never made sense to me

The Jewish Pharisees and Chief Priests didn't need Judas to capture Jesus

It's true they wanted him alone, without the crowds around him

More than once, Scripture says Jesus “slipped away” because it wasn't his time

But the Jewish leaders are not dependent on Judas in order to find Jesus and arrest him

When they do come to arrest Jesus, he readily admits that he is there

They don't need Judas' kiss

Besides they know who Jesus is

Does Jesus care that one of his disciples will betray him for 30 pieces of silver?

Or is it that Jesus is giving Judas full opportunity to change?

Even up to the very end—does Jesus hold off on judgment in the hopes that he will stay true?

Let's look at the Parable of the Weeds (or Wheat and Tares) recorded in Matthew 13:24-30

The assumption of everyone is that the weeds should be pulled and not allowed to grow

Yet it is surprising that Jesus says to let them grow up together

The separation will happen at harvest—then and only then will they be separated

Jesus says to let the good and the bad coexist together, without judgment

We are so ready to remove those whom we judge are not worthy—but Jesus says no

The judgment is God's to do—not ours

It seems as if Jesus lived out this parable in real life by allowing Judas to stay with them

There is always hope that he will choose not to betray Jesus

Any judgment of Judas took place at the end of Judas' life—at his death

Jesus has just washed the disciples' feet—including Judas

Jesus loved Judas to the end

But he released him to go and do that which he had chosen to do

Release... that's what I hear in Jesus' words to Judas...

"Do quickly what you are going to do"

The other disciples didn't catch it—they thought he was going to buy something they needed

Or because he was following the Passover custom of giving to the poor

Judas just left

Judgment about Judas is up to God

Then Jesus tells them a new way to live as his disciples—LOVE

*"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:34-35 NRSV*

Greek word for new—*kainen*—implies freshness, or the opposite of "outworn"

rather than simply "recent" or "different."

New covenant—new command—Love one another as I have loved you.

Love Judas like I do

Love the people I love—even the prostitutes and tax collectors

Let love be how you are known