

What about Judas?

 **Tragic fall (vv.15-20)**

 **Resurrection replacement (vv.21-26)**

In the name of Jesus, the sinner's dearest Friend, dearly redeemed:

Believe it or not, some of our members have been in conversations about this at work. People really wonder **What about Judas?** Did he commit suicide? Did he go to hell? That's a hard question for Christians these days. Their pastors and professors keep telling them there is no hell. Some details in this story we don't really know. Exactly how Judas managed to make such a mess of his own death. Just how the vote was taken by the apostles. Modern translations, the new NIV2011 in particular, muddy the waters about who did what. Luke is the only writer in the New Testament inspired by the Holy Spirit to use the expression, ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, literally, "men, brothers" – not once or twice, but fourteen times in Acts. This is especially significant. In his Gospel account mostly for Gentile Greeks, Dr. Luke stresses Christ's love and the loyal support of women. In Acts too Luke writes about Dorcas and Lydia and other women who helped spread the Gospel. The Holy Spirit obviously wants us to appreciate God's love for women. But He's not giving in to modern political correctness that wants no distinctions in God's roles for men and women. For our good and His glory God wants us all to bloom where we are planted.

Let's listen in today as if we could hear one of the characters explaining what happened. In some cases, we'll take our best guess. But the focus on Christ is never in question. See if you can figure out who this is as we find the Holy Spirit's answers to the question: **What about Judas?**

 **Tragic fall (vv.15-20)**

You don't know me, but I was there the whole time. How exciting to be a disciple of Jesus Christ! For forty days everyone kept talking about who saw Jesus after He rose from the dead. I did! I was with them all along, coming and going with Jesus from the time He was baptized by John until His ascension into heaven. You never heard about me because the spotlight was always on Jesus – and sometimes on other disciples who did dumb things. I totally felt sorry for Peter when he denied Jesus. I ran away too. I felt terrible, shocked, to hear about Judas' **Tragic fall**.

That's what brought us together on one of the most important days of my life. It was during the ten days between Jesus' Ascension on the Thursday forty days after Easter, and Pentecost, which you celebrate next Sunday, marking the fiftieth day and the birth of the New Testament Church. We stayed in Jerusalem as Jesus commanded. Whenever we got together, there were about 120 of us believers, including *"the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers."* (1:14)

Then *"Peter stood up among the brothers...and said, "Men, brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus – he was one of our number and shared in this ministry."*

We were all very clear on this. Judas was not locked into doing something bad. Don't blame God. God could tell all of us sinners, "Have it your way." All would **fall** to self-chosen death and eternal destruction. Many times Jesus called Judas to repentance. Everyone knew as treasurer he embezzled money donated by the women from Galilee in devoted support for Jesus. We heard how Jesus kept trying to reach Judas at the last Passover in the upper room. Remember the Garden of Gethsemane? *"Jesus asked him, 'Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?'"* (Luke 22:48 NIV84) Finally, Jesus let him go his own way saying, *"'Friend, do what you came for.' Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him."* (Matthew 26:50 NIV84) Knowing all this didn't make it easier for the rest of us.

You have an expression in English. When a military plane crashes, you say the pilot “bought it.” So you could say Judas “bought it” twice. The thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave, he tried to return. But our Jewish religious leaders called it unclean “blood money.” So they used Judas’ bribe to buy the same field where Judas “bought it” the other way, with his own blood. **“Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this.”** When Judas tried to hang himself, his **fall** was so violent that his body broke open and his intestines fell out. Such a tragedy never had to be! He could have been like Peter or later like Paul. Both men were forgiven by Jesus. All of us who are sorry for our sins, but also trust Jesus’ forgiveness know the joy of true repentance. Sorrow first, yes, but then joy in forgiveness full and free.

God saw it all coming. This should have warned Judas too. But these Psalms helped us realize what we had to do: **“May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,” and, “May another take his place of leadership.”** (1:20, quoting Psalm 69:25; 109:8 NIV84)



Resurrection replacement (vv.21-26)

After Judas’ **Tragic fall** we now needed his **Resurrection replacement**. That’s where I come in. I didn’t realize what was happening at first. Hearing the qualifications of the man who would round out the Twelve Apostles, I maybe started to turn a little red. Peter said, **“Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.”**

It had been my privilege to be an ear and eye witness of everything Jesus did and said during His three years of ministry on this earth. Three years! How quickly they came and went. No one ever did so many miracles as Jesus. Years later John wrote in his account of the Gospel that if all Jesus’ miracles were written down, the world would not have enough room for all the books that would have to be written. When Jesus’ showed us our sins, it hurt. It cut us to the heart to think we were like that prodigal son who wasted his father’s inheritance. But we knew Jesus was describing our Father in heaven when the boy came home to his father’s warm embrace. The Gospel sounds so sweet on the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever I can do to tell everyone now, I’m glad. Just show me the way, O Lord!

Sure enough, I was on the short list. This election would affect the rest of my life and maybe my death as a martyr-witness to Jesus as God’s Son our Savior. There were no speeches. No one wanted a popularity contest or a preaching trial for the decision. Instead **“they prayed, ‘Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.’”**

Maybe it sounds strange to you, but they put the decision in God’s hands. The Eleven apostles all wrote one of our two names on a piece of broken pottery and dropped it into a clay jar. Peter shook it up and tipped it just far enough that one name fell out. You know it was the name, **“Matthias”** who **“was added to the eleven apostles.”** Years later stories came back that he preached the gospel and suffered a martyr’s death in Ethiopia. God gave the **Resurrection replacement** for Judas.

By now you’ve figured out that I’m the other guy, the disciple named Joseph Barsabbas. My friends call me, “Justus.” You would say, “Justin.” But you still don’t know me. And that’s okay. All of us disciples of Jesus have plenty of work to do. **“I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.”** (Psalm 84:10 NIV84) I’m just so glad that Jesus died for me! In fact, He died for you too. **“He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”** (2 Corinthians 5:15 NIV84) Whatever He wants me to do, I’ll do gladly whether out in front or in a corner. You see, I’m not like Judas. I never want God to say to me, “Have it your way.” That’s what I say to God in the prayer Jesus taught us: “Have it your way, dear Father in heaven. Thy will be done.” On that day in Jerusalem God’s will was done. God chose Matthias instead of me, but only for the apostleship. He chose me too to be saved. When you get to heaven, we’ll praise God together. That’s the only way I want to tell you the rest of the story. Amen.