

# Jesus' Control, Judas' Warning

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[ 0 : 00 ] You may be seated. Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's word to you today.

A special welcome if you are new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we've become convinced there's no one so good, they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in his word.

We're returning now to our series in the Gospel of Mark, and you'll remember that the Gospels tell the story of Jesus and his life and his death and his resurrection.

And when we left off in Mark a few weeks ago, we were in Mark chapter 14, we got hit from both sides in the passage that we looked at. You'll remember we were looking at this passage where Jesus was anointed at Bethany, but before and after he was anointed, we sort of had this bookend, there's a plot that's going on to take his life.

[ 1 : 12 ] And at the same time, he's being anointed for his burial. So there's an anointing for burial, and there's a betrayer that's at work. We've already seen that Judas is getting to work to hand Jesus over.

That's where we left off. And so it's with that in mind that we then proceed to this next section. That's what sets the stage for us. And we're just going to see a couple of simple reminders in this passage of things that the Bible tells us over and over again, which is Jesus' control and Judas' warning, which is a way of saying we're going to talk about the beauty of Jesus, and then we're going to talk about the danger of sin.

We're going to talk about the beauty of Jesus. We're going to talk about the danger of sin. And so without any delay, then I invite you to turn with me to this passage.

You can turn with me in your Bible. You can turn in your worship guide. You can turn on your phone, no matter where you turn. Remember that this is God's Word, and God tells us that His Word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold, and it's sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb.

And so that's why we read now Mark 14, starting at verse 12. And on the first day of unleavened bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?

[ 2 : 37 ] And He sent two of His disciples and said to them, Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him.

And wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, the teacher says, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples? Verse 15.

And He will show you a large upper room furnished and ready. There prepare for us. And the disciples set out and went to the city, and found it just as He had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

Verse 17. And when it was evening, He came with the twelve. And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, Truly I say to you, one of you will betray Me, one who is eating with Me. They began to be sorrowful and say to Him one after another, Is it I? He said to them, It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with Me.

[ 3 : 41 ] For the Son of Man goes as it is written of Him. But woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's Word. Our Father in Heaven, we thank You for the riches and the treasure that You have given us.

In Your Word, we thank You for the pictures and stories You present to us of Jesus over and over again. And we ask that You would help us this morning, that You do that again, that You would put a spotlight on Jesus and His love, His care, His control.

You'd help us to see Him more clearly than when we came in to worship this morning. So we ask that You'd encourage us. And we also ask that You'd challenge us with the example and the warning of Judas.

Most of all, You'd remind us of Your grace and how You provide for us and our needs in the Gospel. We thank You that we can come with boldness to ask You for these things because we're not afraid of whether we've earned them or deserve them.

[ 4 : 53 ] We know quite simply that we haven't. But instead, we simply ask them in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. You'll remember that we are now in the midst of the week leading up to Jesus' death and His resurrection.

And Jesus has come, as many of the Jews have come, for the celebration of the Passover. And so there are thousands, tens of thousands of more people in Jerusalem than there would normally be. This city is packed, like you might expect, for an incredibly large conference or sporting event because people have gathered from all over the Jewish world to celebrate this festival together. And that's what we see in verse 12. On the first day of unleavened bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb. It's important then for us to be reminded of what exactly it is that they're celebrating when we talk about the Passover.

If you're familiar with the story of God's people in the Old Testament, you'll remember in Exodus chapter 12, they need to leave Egypt where they've been kept as slaves. And God has performed a variety of miracles on judgments on the people of Egypt.

[ 6 : 03 ] And the last one he performs is to kill the firstborn of every family in Egypt because they will not let his people go. But he sets up a practice for God's people, for the Jewish people, to protect their own firstborns.

What they're supposed to do, what God instructs them to do is to have this meal where they have a lamb that's sacrificed. And they take the blood of this lamb and they paint it on the doorframes of their house.

And so as the spirit of the Lord goes through Egypt, it passes through Egypt, taking the lives of the firstborn of the Egyptian families, but it passes over God's people, the ones who have marked their doors with the blood of the lamb.

And so that's quite simply why it's called Passover. It's when God passed over his people. And he gives this to them as something they celebrate every year as a remembrance of his faithfulness and goodness.

and deliverance, that they are covered by the blood of the lamb. That helps us to understand the incredible symbolism of what's occurring here because Jesus is going to be the final and ultimate lamb whose blood is shed.

[ 7 : 16 ] We don't celebrate Passover anymore as Christians because we are covered by Jesus' blood. He's the ultimate Passover sacrifice. We'll talk about that even more next week, but that helps us understand how powerful this is that Jesus is going to celebrate Passover with his disciples.

They're going to slaughter this lamb as he is going forward to be the final lamb. He's gonna provide an even greater blood, an even greater covering, that not just the people of God in Egypt, but we are passed over by God's judgment because of Jesus' blood.

With all that in mind, this text doesn't just remind us of that. It raises some questions. Verse 12, again, there's this great feast that's at hand.

And what's important to know is that you can't just celebrate Passover anywhere. It has to be celebrated within the walls of Jerusalem. You may remember I've told you over and over that Jesus and his disciples are commuting in from Bethany.

That's where he's staying during this time. And so he's constantly traveling from the east towards the west into Jerusalem. Jesus has a commute every day, in other words, during this week.

[ 8 : 29 ] But now it's come time for something that cannot be celebrated at Bethany. And you can imagine it just would be true today if there was a major conference or sporting event, something where lots of people are gathering into another city, accommodations are gonna get snapped up

just like that.

The best Airbnbs in Jerusalem are not gonna be available for Jesus and his disciples forever. It is important for them to have made preparations in advance. And so we can understand this question that the disciples have in verse 12, where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?

It's a little late, by the way, to be making plans. You don't book a room the day of the conference. You book it months in advance. We have a conference that happens for pastors and elders in our denomination, and there's like a flurry when the rooms open up.

And if you don't book it the day they open up, at this point, you don't get a room. And so there's all this drama, right, of trying to stay on top of when they're let out. It's surprising in a sense that Jesus' disciples don't know what the plan is.

How is it that they can't be aware of it until this point? It is too late for them to make new arrangements to be in Jerusalem. There are tens of thousands of out-of-towners here.

[ 9 : 47 ] And so it's good news that we find out that Jesus has, in fact, made a plan. But why has Jesus not told them about his plan?

Why has he kept this a secret from them? And why, when they ask him, does he continue to keep it a secret? Watch this with me.

He doesn't tell them the answer. So verse 12, they ask. Verse 13, he has this whole code set up. So he sends out two of his disciples. He doesn't send them all. He says, you're gonna go prepare, but I'm not gonna tell you where you're going to end up.

You have to go and identify this man who's carrying a jar of water, and he's gonna meet you. Now, this might seem like a strange sign, but you have to understand that in the ancient times, a man would not have carried a jar of water.

He would have carried a skin of water. Women carried the pots or the jars. Men carried the skins. Why that is, don't ask me. But one person's explained it this way.

[ 10 : 45 ] It would be like Jesus said, go and find the man who has the pink purse. That's the man you're supposed to meet. And so this isn't as confusing as we might think, but Jesus has set up this kind of coded system.

So they're gonna meet the man. He's got the pink purse, but he's not gonna tell them where they're going. He's going to lead them to the spot, right? And then they're going to get to the house.

Verse 14, and wherever he enters, then say to the master of the house, the teacher says, where is my guest room? In other words, Jesus has not forgotten about arrangements for the Passover.

Jesus has actually arranged a very complicated strategy far in advance. He set up a messenger with a special signal. This messenger is gonna take them to the safe house where he's gonna celebrate Passover.

They're not gonna know what's going on until they get there. And then Jesus himself is gonna make sure none of the other disciples know what's going on until they get there. Verse 16, the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he has told them.

[ 11 : 46 ] And they prepared the Passover. Why all the secrecy? Well, remember what I reminded you of the beginning.

There's two things from the previous passage, and I'm gonna add a third. Chapter 14, verse one, we found out the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him.

Jesus has people who are out for his life. And we learned that they were cautious about doing it with the crowds. They kind of need to do it secretly, but that problem's solved by Judas. Judas is going to help them out.

Verses 10 and 11, the chief priests and Judas have this gathering and there's money that's offered. And so we're told, and he sought an opportunity to betray him. So Jesus has people who are out for his life.

He has someone who's an insider, who's going to give up the goods. On top of that, we learn in the gospel of John, chapter 11, the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know so that they might arrest him.

[ 12 : 47 ] The point is this. Jesus is a master of operational security. Okay?

Jesus knows that this plan could be easily sabotaged. He knows that Judas is seeking for an opportunity to betray him. And so none of the other disciples can even know where the meeting is

happening.

It is not an exaggeration, an overstatement to say, Jesus has set up a safe house so he can celebrate Passover without being killed. That's why all these steps have been taken.

Somehow, without consulting any of the disciples, Jesus has set all this up. Jesus is going to allow himself to be arrested, right?

We know that if you're familiar with the story, but his time has not yet come. Why? Jesus needs to instruct his disciples.

[ 13 : 53 ] Jesus has more than he needs to share with those who love him and follow him. Jesus still needs to establish their celebration of the Lord's Supper.

He still has his time of prayer that he's going to invite them into that we'll see in a few weeks. In other words, Jesus is in control of everything at this very point of his arrest for the sake of those he loves.

He's arranging detail after detail. He is meticulous and careful in every step so that he can care for them.

I'm going to call your attention to this quote on page seven, which says, a God who is in control when the foundations of his own earthly existence are crumbling is a God who can be trusted to sustain us when it appears our life is tumbling in.

Remember I told you at the beginning, we're going to do two things. We're going to look at the beauty of Jesus and we're going to be warned about the dangers of sin. And so just pause with me for a minute and let's look, meditate on the beauty of Jesus.

[ 15 : 15 ] Jesus is in the most painful week of his life. And in the midst of that painful week, his thoughts are not with himself, but with his disciples who follow him.

Jesus in the midst of this painful week controls every detail. He's planned out every detail in advance so that he can be with them.

Jesus continues to arrange the world so that his people are cared for. What he is most concerned about is making sure his disciples receive the shepherding they need.

He's concerned that they receive the care that they need. Brothers and sisters, the same is true for us. God arranges and controls the tiniest details of this world for the sake of his people.

That is his heart and his concern. Jesus cares for you at great cost, arranging all things.

[ 16 : 36 ] Jesus arranges all things when you're diagnosed with cancer. Jesus arranges all things when your child is ill.

Jesus arranges all things when the culture and the world around you appear to become more evil every day. And when you PCS and move from one station to another, Jesus arranges all things.

Jesus arranges all things. So just look with me at Jesus. His plans are never foiled.

He already has it all figured out. That's true here as he's on his way to his death and he's caring for his disciples. And it's true for you this week and last week and next month and next year for the rest of your life.

That is the glory and the beauty of Jesus. Remember the famous words of Gandalf to Frodo when he said, a wizard is never late nor is he early. He arrives precisely when he means to.

[ 17 : 53 ] Brothers and sisters, the same is true of our God as he works in our lives. That is the beauty and glory of Jesus Christ.

We don't just see Jesus' control here though. We also have a sobering warning from Judas. Notice what happens at this meal. Jesus is eating.

He's here with the twelve and he drops this truth bomb on them. Verse 18, Truly I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.

Did you notice how the disciples responded to that? They didn't respond with indignation. In fact, we see in verse 19, they began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, is it I?

The disciples grieve at the very thought that they might hurt Jesus. Just to think about such a thing, just to imagine such a thing is enough to make them sad.

[ 19 : 10 ] There's a sweetness, there's an innocence to the disciples' posture here that I don't want you to miss. They don't say I would never do that.

Peter is going to say that later. But they don't say that here. They don't say I would never do that.

No, they say, I hope it's not me. I hope I'm not the one who betrays our beautiful Lord.

And so we have this example from the disciples of what a tender heart, a godly heart looks like.

someone who's close to God and moved by his things is sorrowful even at the thought of betraying

Jesus.

Christian, is that your heart? Are you sad even at the thought of hurting our Father God? are you sorrowful even at the thought of damaging the community that you love through your words? Are you sorrowful even at the thought that you might be at risk of giving in to materialism rather than generosity?

[ 20 : 39 ] Are you sorrowful even to think about wallowing around in sexual sin? Do those things grieve you?

Because they grieve the disciples here. Yes, the disciples are mistaken at many points and they love Jesus.

And so even the thought of hurting him in this way makes them sorrowful. I'm going to call your attention to page eight of your worship guide where there's this beautiful quote from the Puritan Richard Sibbes who I've been quoting for a while now.

He says, true humility quakes at the threats as the very frowns of a father will distress a dutiful child. Carnal people, he means fleshly people, people who don't walk in the Holy Spirit, are like men that hearing thunderclaps afar off are never a whit moved.

But when it is present over their heads, then they tremble. So hypocrites care not for judgments that are afar off. In other words, hypocrites don't care about sin until they have to face its consequences.

[ 21 : 54 ] God's people hate sin even when they see the clouds on the distance. That's what is true of the disciples. Does that describe you?

do you have a tender heart? A heart that is moved even at the thought of sin.

We certainly want to have tender hearts, especially because Judas provides us with a very sobering warning. He gives us an example of what a hard heart looks like, and he shows us how we get there.

Judas is already in the midst of finding time to betray Jesus. Remember, verse 11, he sought an opportunity to betray him. And then Jesus just says it outright.

Truly I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me. Eleven disciples have a tender heart. Sad at even the thought of betraying Jesus.

[ 23 : 04 ] One disciple is not. Which reminds us of this, it is possible to physically be close to Jesus and spiritually be far, far away.

It is possible to be deeply embedded in the church and in a spiritual community and to be far away from Christ.

Christ. It is possible to come week after week and join with God's people and to have a hardened heart. Jesus reminds us of this not just once but twice.

Verse 17, he says that this person who's going to betray him, eating with him. Truly I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.

Even worse than that, verse 20, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. The gospel of John indicates that Judas was not just at the table with Jesus, he was sitting next to Jesus.

[ 24 : 11 ] He was as close as one could get and yet far away. And then Jesus outlines for us the most painful truth of all in verse 21.

Woe to that man by whom the son of man is betrayed. It would have been better for that man if he had not been born. And Jesus is making the point that being separated from God is worse than if you never existed.

Being separated from God fully, finally, eternally is worse of fate than never having existed.

That is how bad it is. it is better not to have been born than to reject Jesus Christ.

And yet as one of his twelve, that is exactly what Judas does. It is not hard for us either to figure out how Judas got there because Judas is someone who refused to struggle with his own sin.

[ 25 : 28 ] If you've been here before, when I serve the Lord's Supper, I say, hey, this table is not for you if you're refusing to repent of sin. And then I follow that by saying, but if you're struggling with sin, this table is for you.

Which is to say that we know that the Christian life is not one in which we are finally free from the presence of sin in our lives, but it is one in which we're fighting against the presence of sin.

And if we are not fighting against it, then the battle is in a sense already over. In John chapter 12, we're told that Judas had been stealing from the money bags.

This was not just a split decision where Judas woke up one day and decided, you know what, I'm going to betray Christ. No, day after day, week after week, Judas had chosen to no longer struggle

with sin.

Judas had chosen not to take it seriously, not to repent. And so beware. Beware of where you will end up if you refuse to fight the sin in your life.

[ 26 : 35 ] Jesus tells us and Judas shows us that it leads to death. That is what happens when we play with sin rather than fighting with it.

It is better that we had not been born. Jesus' words here are deep and painful and sobering. And so the call for us is to examine our hearts.

Are you struggling with sin? Are you fighting against it? We just prayed the Lord's Prayer a little bit ago. It said, we forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

are you refusing to struggle with sin by refusing to forgive those in your life? Are you refusing to share your addiction with anyone so that you don't have to walk in the light?

Are you letting money and comfort convince your heart that you really, at the end of the day, don't need Jesus because you're powerful enough and secure enough?

[ 27 : 50 ] Are there hard truths and small failures that you know about but you just aren't going to face? Maybe hard truths and big failures.

Judah shows us where that path leads. That it's a slow hardening of a heart until that heart becomes stone.

There's different ways to think about what happens when we rub up against something over and over again. Sometimes people think of sin as sort of like a blister.

You know what happens when you get a blister? You're hiking. Maybe you have bad shoes or bad socks and your foot rubs on that same place over and over again. What happens? It becomes painful.

You can feel it. It creates distress in you so that you want to deal with it. You want to address it as quickly as possible. Maybe you have some kind of mole skin that you're going to put on it to protect that portion of your foot.

[ 28 : 48 ] Maybe you spend extra money on socks so it doesn't happen to begin with. It's tempting at times for people to think that's what sin is like. I'm going to sin and it's going to be more and more painful and I'm just going to be forced to deal with it.

In fact, what the Bible tells us about sin is very different than that. It is not like a blister. It's actually a little bit more like this. If you play a stringed instrument, if you play a violin or a viola or a guitar and you play it over and over, you know what happens to your fingers over time.

You're going to develop calluses, right? Your fingers get thicker and thicker, the skin does, so that you can handle pressing onto the string. In a sense, your fingers become desensitized to the string. We might even say your fingers become hardened. That's actually what sin is like. Sin is not like a blister. Sin is like the calluses on your finger from playing an instrument.

The more and more you come into contact with it, the less and less seriously you take it, the more and more you refuse to struggle with it, the less you're able to feel it.

[ 29 : 58 ] The more hardened your heart becomes, the easier it is to sin. That's what happened to Judas here.

Judas played the guitar of sin long enough that his heart became completely hard. It was not a blister. Judas' heart was a callous.

Don't let your heart become calloused by sin. Don't go back and touch it over and over again thinking it won't have any consequences.

Thankfully, though, there's a greater hope for us than that. There's a sobering principle here that points us to a great truth. Sobering principle, I've told you, verse 21, it's better that you wouldn't be born than be separated from God.

And yet, what is it that Jesus is about to do? Jesus is about to be separated from his heavenly father on the cross. Jesus is choosing something that is worse than never having existed.

[ 31 : 11 ] That's how bad, that's how painful, that's how serious Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was. He chose, in a sense, Judas' fate for a time so that he could save you.

Jesus chose Judas' fate for a time. He was separated from the father. In fact, not only is he separated from the father, he's carefully arranging everything towards that end.

He will be arrested when he is ready. Brothers and sisters, that is how much our Lord Jesus loves us.

In fact, that's how much he loves you. That's how much pain he was willing to endure. How could we not have tender hearts?

How could we not be sorrowful even at the thought of sin when we see the clear picture of our Lord and of his love for us?

[ 32 : 21 ] It is not hard at that point, but easy. I have told you before as we have worked through the gospel of Mark that there is an observation that has been made that as you go through the gospel, the third category of people disappear.

At the beginning there are three categories. You have got people who are on team Jesus, people who are against Jesus, and people who are just in the crowd. They are looking on. As we go through the gospels, that middle category recedes into the background.

There are those who are for Jesus and those who are against him. And what the gospel writer is saying is that as you see this story of Jesus, as you walk along this road, ultimately you are in one of those two camps.

You have to choose are you going to be for him or against him? Are you going to embrace the Savior or will you reject him? Either you follow the path of the disciples, the path of a tender heart, or you follow the path of Judas, the path of a heart of stone?

Brothers and sisters, which one will it be? Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you so much that you sent your son to choose something that was so painful that it was worse than never having existed, to be separated from you.

[ 33 : 47 ] We thank you that he did it for our sake, controlling and arranging everything at every point and every moment to care for us, your people. We ask that you would show us that in great clarity and beauty, that we would see Jesus and his love and his glory and his sacrifice, and it would melt our hearts, that we would have not hearts of stone, but hearts of flesh, not hearts that are hard, but hearts that are tender.

We ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen.