



Judas and the Boundaries of Forgiveness

Session 5: Judas as Object of Hope

Super Wednesday Bible Study: 10/10/18

1. Brain Starter

The Prodigal Son by Edward Riojas (in connection with Luke 15:17-24). See also Luke 15:1-7 (lost sheep) and Luke 15:8-10 (lost coin)

2. Where We Have Been...

- **Week 1: Judas as Object of Curiosity**

- Judas “was the perfect foundation on which to build a character and a story: here was a man who, on the one hand, needed no introduction but, on the other, definitely needed a conclusion... [T]here were many possibilities for what that conclusion could be, and with each new conclusion, a new meaning and purpose for Judas’s story was crafted.” *Paffenroth, p. 15*

- **Week 2: Judas as Object of Horror**

- Judas is portrayed as the prime **example** of what happens to sinners. As such, he is a **warning** to the sinful and **motivation** for others to be moral and faithful. *Paffenroth, p. 32*

- **Week 3: Judas as Object of Hatred**

- “The villainous and usually anti-Semitic depictions of Judas...are perhaps most interesting for the interplay they show between culture and story. On the one hand, the author of the Gospel of John created his story partly in response to cultural influence of his time, as he wrestled with the painful rejection of Jesus by Jews, and the subsequent persecution of Christians by Jews. But his story then greatly shaped a Christian culture that became the dominant culture of Europe and the Americas, and everywhere it spread, it brought along John’s violently anti-Semitic message.” *Paffenroth, pp. 32-33*

- **Week 4: Judas as Object of Sympathy**

- “Judas...is portrayed as a man of intense passion, at once loyal and decisive but also impetuous, enraged, and embittered. His desires and drives - whether for a woman, for Jesus, for his people’s freedom, for knowledge, or for justice - are powerful and all-consuming. They drive him to greatness, but when they are not satisfied, they destroy him.” *Paffenroth, p. 110*

3. Matthew as Markan Gap Filler

- Is it possible that Matthew had special sympathy for Judas?
- Matthew draws 80% of his passion narrative from Mark. What he adds tells us much!

Jesus's Words	Fulfillment
On being handed over (Mark 14:18-20)	Jesus's arrest (Mark 14:43:50)
On the one handing him over (Mark 14:21)	
On Peter's denial (Mark 14:27-31)	Peter's denial (Mark 14:66-72)

See *Matthew 27:3-10*, with special emphasis on verse 4.

- Matthew uses the Greek word μεταμέλομαι, which can be translated as repent, regret, or change one's mind. He only uses it in three verses: 21:29, 21:32, and 27:3.
- Elsewhere, the word "repent" in English usually shows up in Matthew's Gospel as μετανοέω, which also has a range of meanings that includes changing one's mind. It is used in three verses too: 3:2, 4:17, and 11:20.
- We cannot know Judas's mind. Matthew seems more focused on the sins of the chief priests than Judas
- "In light of Judas's admission, 'I have sinned' (v. 4), I do not see how one could take his repentance here as anything other than a complete acknowledgment and repudiation of his sinfulness. He admits his sin publicly, casts away all gains he has made by it, breaks his connection with his collaborators, and punishes himself." *Paffenroth, p. 115*

4. How the Prodigal might have been rewritten...

- But when the prodigal son came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" So he set off and went to his father. While he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. But the son could not imagine that the father could ever or should ever forgive him, and so while the father looked on from a distance, the son tied a rope to a tree and hung himself.

5. Can Judas be forgiven? Can you?

"I do not wish to contradict anyone who, as a Christian, cannot be happy without denying the universality of hope to us so that he can be certain of his full hell...But, in return, I would like to request that one be permitted to hope that God's redemptive work for his creation might succeed. Certainty cannot be attained, but hope can be justified. That is probably the reason why the Church, which has sanctified so many men, has never said anything about the damnation of any individual. Not even about that of Judas." Hans Urs von Balthasar

6. Next Week: October 17

God's Family: Biblical Basis and Congregational Reality