

Empathy for the Wicked – Judas

Matthew Vander Els · 2019-05-20 · foundedintruth.com

MAIN VERSES

[Genesis 1](#) · [Genesis 3](#) · [Judges 19](#) · [Judges 20](#) · [Judges 21](#) · [Matthew 10:1](#) · [Matthew 22:1-14](#) · [Matthew 26](#) ·
[Mark 14](#) · [Luke 14](#)

Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love. A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God. Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family. So welcome home.

I know that I may be enjoying this sermon series more than you guys. I hope it's been edifying. And I know it's been a bit unorthodox to run longer types of series. So instead of calling this a sermon series, I'd like to just call it a theme, a sermon theme, because we're following a theme. Because every message is quite different in application and pursuit.

Understanding the Bible's Theme

And if you're unfamiliar with the sermon theme that we've kind of been traveling on the past couple months, and if you know I've been out the past few weeks, we've dared to explore the darker moments of the Bible. Dared. The biblical narrative. You see, we at Founded in Truth, we believe that the Bible is a single unified story about God's mission to progress and evolve humanity, to bring about change. His scope of justice, mercy, grace, and love in this world, also known as His kingdom. And when we read the story of the Bible, when we dare to open those beginning pages, we notice that the story doesn't start in [Genesis 3](#) with a snake and a fall of humanity. No, where does the Bible start? In [Genesis 1](#) with creation in the beginning. This is how God's creation came to be birthed into existence. This is the story of God's creation and creating a space where he dwells with mankind.

We see the story of the stewards of that creation then failing in their vocation, constantly choosing to divine good and evil for themselves apart from God. And as we continue reading through the story in the chapters of Genesis and Exodus and Leviticus, we see mankind running

farther and farther and farther away from the ideal relationship that God had in the beginning where he engulfed creation with himself. And we begin to wonder when they go into the Canaanite conquest, when we read the book of Judges. Anyone ever read the book of Judges before? Like seriously read the book of Judges? And we get to those points in the book of Judges and we're like, we just turn that page. We see a people that's going into the inheritance that God gave them, but somehow, even though they're following the journey that God called them to follow, they're losing sight of what his character is. And they continue to walk further and farther and farther away until finally you get to [Judges 19, 20, 21](#), the Levite and the FedEx driver that goes out, and you're just like, what has happened to this? Will this people ever be redeemed? Will mankind ever be redeemed?

God's Story of Redemption Through Jesus

But we continue reading the story of the Bible, and we come to a part of the story where a no-name rabbi from Nazareth is introduced to us. One of his students named John wrote a book speaking of all the great things that he did, how God had birthed the promises through this person named Yeshua or Jesus. And how does John start his book with a new telling of God's creation being birthed into existence? And he starts his book out in the beginning, Jesus. The story of the Bible starts with creation and then a garden is introduced. But it doesn't end with a garden. According to Revelation, we aren't going back to a garden. We're advancing to a city. And what's a city? A city is a garden that happens to be cultivated. It's happened to be a garden that's been tended to and advanced and lifted up. God's plan given to you through the Bible is that you would be a participant in that cultivation, an ambassador of his kingdom, to show forth his testimony, to live out the testimony of the love of the rabbi, Yeshua manifest, that you would be his hands and feet. That's the mission, at least. It's a very simple mission, but it's a lifelong commitment and calling.

Ambassadors of the Kingdom

Far too often we view the Bible as a story about God rescuing us from earth and taking us away to a faraway heaven. And the reality is, the Bible is a story about God reconciling that faraway heaven here on earth, thy kingdom come. As such, sometimes we're sent out and we go out and we talk about God's love through the story of the cross and the resurrection, but we're not called to talk about God's love through the story of the cross and the resurrection as much as we are to show the world God's love through the story of the cross and the resurrection. The gospel message is that God's kingdom, his reign, would engulf creation. This goes forth from

the love that we've committed to sharing. That's what makes us ambassadors. We're called to go and fill the earth.

Learning from Those Who Fell

So when we take the journey through the Bible, the story of the Bible, when we come across villains, when we come across those deemed the wicked, we tend to maybe make a judgment and write them off, right? I mean, who really wants to spend a lot of time meditating on people like Haman? Who really wants to spend a lot of time meditating on Israel's first king, Saul? Who really wants to spend a lot of time focusing on Jezebel? Well, they were written about for a reason. And I would dare say that it wasn't just so we could kind of damn them because of their reputation. I would dare assert that their stories are intentionally given to us so that we can hope to learn why they became who they are, so that we ourselves would not find our own identity falling short in the same ways that they did. When we read their stories, it's not to find sympathy, but to grasp a level of empathy, to perhaps have the humility to find ourselves in their stories.

The Story of Judas

And so this week, I say all that to kind of build up this week's message. I want to explore one of the most hated people in the Bible, Judas. Many people hate Haman. Many people hated Nebuchadnezzar. Many people have hate for Cain. Jezebel, pretty awful. But none of them betrayed Jesus like Judas did. That's his reputation, right? I want to tell his story in a way that may be familiar to some of us—a story about a man who followed God, was religious, fit into that crowd, but in the end was empty in a very literal way.

So I'm going to draw mainly from the account of [Matthew 26](#) and Mark chapter 14. And as with previous messages, I'm going to retell a story. And I would ask you to allow yourself to use your imagination to enter into it. And I love this exercise, but I'd like to ask everyone to close their eyes. And I'd like to ask everyone to take a deep breath in. And as you take a deep breath in, I would like for you to imagine that you're traveling back in time. That we're slipping through the 1900s, through the 1800s, through the 1500s, through the 800s, 500s. And I want you to picture yourself now standing on a dirt road leading towards a small town outside of Jerusalem. Take a breath and open your eyes.

A First-Century Journey

And here you find yourself in the first century. A group of men walking on a dirt road. Son of man, that enigmatic character referenced in the book of Daniel. That vision that Daniel had with the beasts oppressing and killing God's people. A vision in which God elevates a new king that establishes a new kingdom called the Son of Man. A vision where this king is given all power and authority to destroy the beast. The master, Yeshua, has called himself the Son of Man. He will destroy the beast.

The Son of Man and the Beast

Who is the beast? He thought to himself, it must be Rome. It must be Rome. After these past few years, walking every day, learning the deep wisdom about God's kingdom, the coming promises of peace, the coming promises of harmony, justice, mercy, and forgiveness to Israel, Judas had almost forgotten his upbringing, his past, full of trauma and hardship, the violence. Judas, named after the revolutionary leader who fought the Greeks over a century and a half earlier, the Maccabee. But when you witness a small basket of fish and bread somehow feed thousands or a deformed leg straighten at the words of a rabbi, how a blind man opens his eyelids and sees men for the first time, how does this not make you forget the past and only look to the future?

Following Signs of the Kingdom

This teacher, this man from Nazareth, this Jesus was literally bringing forth the promises from the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah. This was the Messiah birthing the kingdom of God on earth. He taught us to pray. He taught us how to cast out demons. Judas himself never thought he would see the day when he would pray over the sick and watch God heal them through prayer, but he has. The Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified, the words echoed in his mind. Another parable, perhaps, he thinks. Another mystery this Yeshua speaks in. He is the Son of Man that will be exalted up. He will be inaugurated as king, but you can't be enthroned with a crown on your head if you're hanging on a cross, Judas thought to himself. That's just silly.

A Kingdom Without Rome

No, we won't let him be crucified. They may try to kill us, but the beast must be destroyed. Yeshua has taught us what the world can look like when God fully reigns through humanity. He's trained us, but there's one last enemy that needs to be rooted out. There's one last enemy that needs to be destroyed, wiped from the earth, the beast of Rome, where previous rebels had failed. This Yeshua will win and we twelve disciples will rule as princes in this new Israel. It's

right up ahead, the words broke the silence. This way to Simon's house. Yeshua spoke with a smile. The men were weary from walking. It's been a long journey heading towards Jerusalem. The men were anxious to get inside and rest and eat. One by one they entered into the home. The broth was warm, the wine was sweet, and the fellowship was good.

Judas at Rest Before the Coming Darkness

Judas relaxes with the others as the evening settles in. The silhouettes flickered on the walls behind them, all at peace with everything in brotherhood. It was only a few days before Passover, this festival of freedom, the day that commemorates God destroying Egypt through his strength and power, freeing the Israelites from the brutish regime of Pharaoh. And guess where Yeshua was leading them? Right in the middle of Jerusalem. Something big was about to happen. Freedom is going to come in a big way, he thinks to himself. Maybe Yeshua will call down power from heaven, like the plagues of Egypt. Maybe Yeshua will call down mighty angels to kill and fight the Romans. I mean, have we not seen the power that he commands? His mind entertains a possible violent face-off. All of this forgiveness, healing, rededication, pursuit of justice has prepared the people for the final battle against Satan's army—Rome. There will be thousands of followers in the city of Jerusalem, no match for the Roman army. But who knows how God will show his strength? Who knows how God is going to make his grand entrance and strike down the wickedness of this earth?

Memories Disrupted by a Familiar Scent

Just then a familiar smell enters Judas's nostrils, causing an abrupt flashback. Memories he had not even thought about since meeting Yeshua, since being called a disciple—since being called a minister of God's kingdom. The scent of intense nard, spikenard. The scent of death. At once he blinks and he finds himself staring down at his mother, killed by the Romans during a protest. He was just a young teenager. His mother caught in a conflict while in the marketplace that morning. Now in the evening, he looks down at her funeral. The smell of nard. He blinks, staring into the open lifeless eyes of his best friend Aaron. Stabbed while being robbed in the street, the Roman guards pass by, not caring as he holds his friend. Blinking again, flying through every memory, every funeral, every burial of everyone that was ever part of his life and has now passed on. Death, nard, the smell—this is the smell that launched his life into crime. This is the smell that launched his life into thievery. This is the smell that made him a street thug for a time, stealing just to survive a life he had forgotten about the past few years. This smell is so overwhelming. He blinks once more, finding himself still smiling from a joke

Matthew had told a few moments earlier, sitting on the floor at Simon's house. Candles flickering, but it's silent. He looks up. Everyone is staring at the woman who was standing behind their master, behind Yeshua.

He leans forward trying to make sense of what is happening. This woman is sobbing, holding two pieces of translucent glass, standing over their master. The focus changes down to Yeshua's face, a tear running down his cheek, followed by oil streaming down his forehead and off of his nose and dripping from his ears. She had anointed him. Was this a stunt to anoint him as king before he rides into Jerusalem and leads the revolt against the Romans? Why was it spikenard? Why was it nard? The overwhelming musky oil. It's usually preserved only for funerals to mask the stench of decaying flesh, to numb the smell of death itself. Why was this being used?

Then he notices the size of the bottle she had broken. Must have cost a year's worth of citizens' wages. This is not something you just break and use. This is something you buy to display in your mantle. This is a status symbol. This says I am wealthy or I am a good citizen or I'm even prepared for death itself. But not here. Here she's broken it. Judah still upset, bothered by the visions of death he had experienced in his own life, thinks to himself: Who does she think she is to do this? Does she think herself more humble than us? The 12 who left everything, who sold everything, who became homeless to follow him? She thinks that she's more humble than us by breaking a piece of glass, this status symbol that sets her above the rest? No. If she were truly humble, she would have sold this a long time ago and given the money to the poor like all of us had committed to doing.

The Woman's Act and the Disciples' Questions

Just then John speaks up as if Judas was speaking through him. Woman, why have you wasted all of this oil dripping down under the dirt floor? You could have helped so many instead, but you spent it on our behalf?

Covering his agitation with humility, Yeshua looks up, oil still dripping. My brothers. Why are you devaluing what this woman has done? Don't you see she's done something beautiful and appropriate for me here? Have you not been listening even with all of your time with me? Do you not know what is about to happen to me? And she, she anoints me with oil. The poor you will have long after me, but be with me now in this moment. When the kingdom of God is truly birthed through the power of the heavens, she will be remembered for breaking this vial of oil over me.

Master, Peter inquires, has this woman anointed you as king in God's kingdom, the son of man, that you might rule and take your throne in Jerusalem in just a few days?

Disciples looking at each other, confused. Yeshua smiles and nods slightly. She has anointed me for my burial.

Another riddle. What? Burial. Judah still irritated at the occurrence, still feeling the pain of loss that he was so reminded of. Another mysterious saying, he thought to himself. His anger was more raw since the flashbacks, since the things he had pushed away, he had pushed down. He doesn't have to deal with them anymore. It had been a while since he had remembered the faces—how he learned to use a knife that first time, how to steal, how to survive in a world that is full of darkness.

The Night of Brotherhood and Doubt

The evening concludes with the twelve resting in the den of Simon's house, the smell of spikenard still in the air. Yeshua is asleep next to John and Peter, Andrew snoring in the corner, surrounded by brotherhood formed out of years of traveling and healing and conflict and teaching, a brotherhood Judas had lost touch with in a moment's instant. Staring at the ceiling, shadowy illuminated by the moonlight alone, the past few years just seemed like a dream. How could we have forgotten about the hardships we have faced before we started following this Yeshua? How could he have forgotten about the trauma in his own family and friends? The screams of his friends, the screams from his family, the screams of the people at the hands of Rome, the screams of so many who trusted in God, the screams that are now forgotten. How could he have forgotten about the screams?

Confused by his own thoughts, the kingdom of God is coming. It has to be. It has to be. And this Yeshua is a real king, anointed on a dirt floor in a house in Bethany. Maybe when God's kingdom is manifest, the screams of those lost will be answered. He encourages himself. They will be comforted. They will be restored. They will have peace. They will be given life again, an eternal type of life thanks to himself. And those, those who caused the screams, the trauma, the death, the brokenness, they will pay. They will be judged. They will have justice.

Judas begins to grit his teeth, his thoughts becoming louder and louder and louder in his head. Will this Jesus bring this about? That question causing him to trip within his own mind and fall as if he fell into a black hole where reality became more distant and farther and farther and farther away by the second, getting deeper and deeper and deeper. What is our mission here? Are these really my brothers or have I been joking this whole time? Farther and farther, deeper

and deeper away. Deeper and deeper and farther away from the brotherhood he had formed. Deeper and deeper and farther away from the comfort that Yeshua had given him. Deeper and deeper and farther away from the intimacy of the Father's presence.

The Scent That Changes Everything

He takes a deep breath and the scent of death engulfed his lungs, but this time it wasn't the spikenard. It was something else. It was something alive. He felt it enter through his breath into his heart, and he accepted it and he allowed it. We will see, he whispers out loud.

As the sun rose, Peter looked over at Philip. Where's Judas?

Oh, I don't know. I never saw him leave.

Hey John! John, wake up. You were too young to be sleeping. John, have you seen Judas?

John leaning up, wiping his eyes, kind of confused. What are you guys talking about?

Then Judas enters the room. Sorry guys. I went for a morning walk.

Walking past his brothers he walks past Yeshua. Their eyes meet, giving a nod and a smile, and Yeshua looks down near Judas' waist, only to hear the slight clinking of coins.

A Man Divided Against Himself

We don't know what Judas' background was. We don't. We don't know what his past truly held. He could have been a zealot, an assassin, a knife man, a scyriot. He could have just been from a city to the south that rhymed with the title he was given. We don't know. What we do know is he had areas in his life that he did not fully hand over to God. John specifically speaks of this. We know what happens in the story. Depending on the gospel account that you read, he goes and he makes a deal with the Sanhedrin or the priestly leaders to betray Yeshua, to force an encounter that would lead to the arrest of Jesus. Now, what was his motive? Was Judas just hungry for money? After all of these long years of traveling and committing himself to the fellowship of Yeshua, he finally has his payoff. Maybe Judas was hoping to fuel the violent revolt against the Romans that would be ignited by Yeshua's arrest. Who knows? Who knows? We do know that his betrayal was not looked at as something to be praised according to the Bible and how the biblical authors write about him. But here's the thing that gets me about Judas, the man who was so close to Yeshua yet turned his back to him.

Judas Before the Betrayal

Here's the thing that should get all of us about Judas: despite how he felt that evening, despite how he showed regret and attempted to give back the money and ended his own life, despite the story that we all know about Judas, we need to remember who he was viewed as before that. He was viewed as one of the 12 closest people to the Messiah. [Matthew 10:1](#) says that Yeshua gave authority to the disciples to cast out demons and unclean spirits. Not only that, he gave power to heal the sick and all manner of diseases. So Judas was given the authority to tell demons to go away, for people to be restored, and to command disease to flee from one's body. Judas, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus.

Judas wasn't this odd man out in the crowd. I tried to find some good images of Judas online. And of course, they're always biased. I always get this image of a guy dressed in black with this evil look on his face. But no, Judas fit in. Judas looked like a follower of Christ that was forever loyal to the mission of bringing about the kingdom of God on earth. When he went to synagogue, Judas fit in. When they preached in the temple, Judas fit in. When they prayed together, Judas fit in.

Let me put it this way. When they went to church, Judas fit in. When they sang worship songs together, Judas fit in. When they attended their small groups once a week, Judas fit in. When they went to the men and women's retreat at the church, Judas fit in. When they all prayed over the kids under the chuppah each week, Judas held one of the corners. He fit in. Judas looked like he belonged there, but in the end, Judas wasn't there. Judas was not a devoted follower of the message of Yeshua.

The King's Wedding Parable

So we see in [Matthew 22:1-14](#), Yeshua tells a story. And you may be familiar with this story. It's a story about a king throwing a wedding party for his son. It's one of his parables. You guys familiar with it? Okay, and it's kind of a big deal. So I want you to imagine, I want you to imagine Yeshua sitting there and he's like, "Listen, I want to tell you a story about a king and he's gonna throw a party and it's gonna be a wedding for his son." Is this like a little event? This is the event of the century. There's no bigger treasure in this story that the king has except for his son. And so the wedding, the wedding is all expenses paid. All you can eat chicken legs. There's an open bar, finest wine, everything. You don't want to miss it.

And so I want you to imagine the king getting his closest advisors together and he's delegating tasks. He's like, "Listen, I need you to go out and I need you to send out invitations to my

closest friends, the people who are most loyal to me, the ones who have been with me since the beginning, my inner circle, okay? I want you to send out invitations to all of those people, the people that the king knows, the people who fit in at the party. They would fit in at the wedding. Russell, I want you there, gonna be there. You gonna be there and you gonna be there. Even Jonathan, you can invite. Come on, right? The close-knit..."

But immediately the story takes a drastic turn. The Friends of the King get the invitation and they tear it up and then they kill the messengers. The story says that they paid no attention to the messengers that came. "I have an invitation."

"What is it?"

"It's to the king's bar for his son. Limousines, first class flights, all you get, the wine, it's going to be great."

And it says that they went back to their businesses, selling apples and bananas in the marketplace, and they hopped back on their tractor to plow the field on their farm. They just didn't care. And the others, the others wouldn't let the messengers leave. They mistreated them. They abused them. They mocked them. And then they killed them. So the king became angry, so angry that he sent his army to kill them and burn their city to the ground.

Wow, that escalated quickly.

The Story of Israel's Rejection

And if you're familiar with the story throughout the Old Testament, you're familiar with what Yeshua is saying. He's telling us about the story of Israel. The story of Israel's exile. You see, in Israel's history, God invited them to experience the celebration of his kingdom on earth, to be a part of that. He wanted them to come in, but instead they tore up the invitations, they killed the prophets, and so God sent the Babylonian armies, what he calls his armies, to take them captive and burn Jerusalem to the ground, sent them into exile.

Now Yeshua's starting this story out like this to prepare you for what's coming next because he continues the story about a coming event. The king sent his servants out again. But this time, the king told them to invite the whole world to his wedding. It's in verse 8.

"Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those who are invited are not worthy. Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' And those servants went out to the roads and gathered all who they found, both the good and the bad, so that the wedding hall was filled with guests."

God's throwing a wedding and he wants the whole world to come.

God's Open Invitation

Something we need to realize about Yeshua's story about God and his wedding is God sends an invite out with no expectations or initial qualifiers. Whoever you can find, they have a seat at the table.

"Sir, surely you mean only like the good people on the streets."

"Nah, get the bad ones too. Just everybody, come on."

This is the type of message that got Yeshua killed. God's invitation is open to the world in a very persistent manner. We always tend to see, and many times we teach, that God is attempting, and he's doing everything he can to keep people out of his presence. He locks the doors, and only those who are truly pious and repentant, or they have the secret code, or they have the right opinions about certain things in the Bible, only they get in, and that's if they can show the strength to scale the walls, to hop over, and he'll let them come. But when we read the Bible, the opposite is true. God is not a bouncer at the kingdom gates being like, "no, no." He wants the world at his table, and the cross is the undeniable evidence that he will go to any length to make that happen.

In a parallel parable, Luke tells a similar story in Luke chapter 14. And in that story, Yeshua says that the king goes out and tells them to gather the poor and the crippled and the outcasts. The ones that you wouldn't normally think would be sitting at the king's table. Why does the king want to do this? So that my house will be full. The king doesn't want to be alone. The king wants his home full of people that he can celebrate with.

Israel's Failed Mission

God's kingdom calling for his nation, his people, his followers, his citizens is to call together the CEOs that are productive and well esteemed in society and the soccer moms and the outcasts, all intermingled at his table. This was the calling given to Israel. They were supposed to attend the wedding, yes, but they were also supposed to extend the invitation. They were supposed to fill the earth. They were supposed to be a light to all nations. Israel acted like that was their mission. They truly did. They acted like that was their pursuit and their worship of God, but they actually had no interest in putting the effort into it.

That's what [Isaiah 1](#) is all about. If you want a humbling chapter to read when you get home, Isaiah chapter 1. God's calling out Israel and what he calls out. He says, "Hey, you're offering kosher sacrifices and you're keeping Sabbath and it's great and you're singing praises together and it's great and you're burning incense and it's making me want to vomit because I don't recognize you as my people. I recognize you more as Egypt, Egypt than my own people."

Israel failed to extend the invitation. They failed to show up—people concerned more about their own pursuits and entertained by their own sin than about actually doing what his mission was for them. [Isaiah 1](#) ends with God telling them they have blood on their hands. Instead of giving life, they've killed. And yet they show up at the temple, they show up at the church every week, and they praise and they lift their hands, and they act like everything's okay, but they have this underlying sin and pursuit in their life that he sees.

"You're not worshiping me," is what he tells them. "You're acting like it, which is making me sick."

The Unexpected Guest List

The guest book at the wedding has a lot of signatures that we wouldn't expect. To be honest, it has a lot of signatures that we probably wouldn't even want to see there. Look at how Yeshua ran his ministry. Did Jesus often hang out in the elite sectors of the cities or sections of the synagogue? At the fine restaurants where the religious leaders gathered? The nicer parts of the city where the wealthy donors resided? Because we gotta make sure we heal their sons first, right? Or did he rub elbows with tax collectors, the people that betrayed their own kin to make a profit? Outcasts, the poor, the crippled.

How about Luke's version of Yeshua's anointing? So we read Matthew's mixed with Mark's. So Luke says that it was a sinful woman that came and anointed. And it says that the Pharisees were disgusted at her very presence. So he walked into their home and they didn't even give any water for his feet and so she sobbed on his feet and washed his feet with her hair.

The Invitation Despite Your Behavior

How about standing on the side of the line with an adulterous woman while the religious elite, the righteous ones, stand ready to bring judgment? Where was he? How about surrounding himself with disciples that were otherwise considered just a ragamuffin group with no credibility? Jesus was partying with the wrong crowd in the first century. Why? Because God wanted them at the wedding. Go out and give the invitation to both the good and the bad. God's

invitation to be with him is not sent out because of our behavior. It's sent out despite our behavior. The foundation of the gospel message is this: God loves you and he wants you to be near to him. So God weeds out the people you'd expect to come and instead goes ahead and invites everybody in. All are asked to come in. Will you come? Will you come?

Does this mean that the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the religious elite are all barred from the love of Yeshua while murderers and drunkards and unforgivers and adulterers are all allowed to come in? Well, by no means. No. Yeshua continues the story in verse 11. But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw that there was a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, "Friend, what do you call him? Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?" And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, bind him hand and foot and cast him into outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The Man Without a Wedding Garment

It's fascinating because the ones who are kicked out—the ones who are not near God—are in the place of gnashing of teeth and outer darkness. Yeshua gives us an image of someone attempting to crash the wedding here. And he's crashing the wedding by bringing his sin and rebellion against the kingdom. Matt, why would you say rebellion? What would make you say that? Would the man refuse to wear the wedding garments at the king's wedding? He didn't wear the appropriate attire.

I want you to imagine getting an invite. So let's do an invitation to the president's wedding. President Obama has daughters. So you get an invite to former President Obama's wedding for one of his daughters, right? Okay, can you do that? You get an invite in the mail. Nah, a limousine pulls up and rings the doorbell and hands it to you. Okay, now I don't care who you are. That is a prestigious invitation. It's kind of a big deal. Would you go?

Like a Presidential Invitation

All expenses paid, first class flight for all wedding guests, the best hotels in New York City, limo rides wherever you want to go, restaurants that currently have a year-long wait list. Bam, you're in. The tab's on him. Okay. You're his guest for this celebration while you're in town. You would go, and it would be like a wow thing to go to. Now imagine accepting the invitation, and you're going, and you walk into the banquet hall wearing cargo shorts, flip-flops, and a t-shirt that says, Make America Great Again. I don't care what your political background is, that would be

inappropriate. That would be inappropriate. Because you are a presidential guest at a prestigious event, not a political event. You were invited to be a guest of the former president of the United States. And instead of accepting the invitation, your intention was solely to go in order to make a showing of some sort of rebellion. You would be kicked out of the event, would you not? You would.

A Royal Occasion Calls for Reverence

So I hate to compare the two, but that's kind of along the same lines as the story of the king inviting people in. And this man walks in, and he did not follow protocol on purpose. When God calls you to experience what true joy and celebration feels like in his presence, it isn't just a casual event. It isn't just you begrudgingly accepting. It's not casual at all. It's a royal occasion. You would take it seriously. You would acquire the appropriate attire. You would follow protocol, and you would be honored to be there.

Notice what the king calls this man when he enters, and he sees that he's disregarding the apparel for the occasion. What's he call him? Not trespasser, not rebel, not you sinner. Friend, how'd you get in without the proper attire?

Friend—A Surprising Gentleness

The crasher doesn't say, oh, I thought this was appropriate. Oh, I didn't get the memo. Oh, I'm so sorry. Oh, will you please forgive me? Let me go. No, he's silent. He's speechless, stupefied. He doesn't act like someone who is repentant. No, he acts like someone who got caught. Friend, what are you doing? He acts like someone who doesn't take the wedding ceremony seriously. So he gets booted. He's not able to experience the full sense of joy and peace in the presence of God's celebration with the rest of the world.

Sin Must Be Checked at the Door

God wants the world at the wedding of his son. But the destructive power of sin has to be checked at the door. Because that's what caused this whole issue to begin with, right? And if we will not allow God to cast the sin out from us, we must be cast out with our sin. You can't bring it with you. You can't just hide it. You can't just forget about it. You can't just snuff it down. Yeshua constantly fellowshiped with sinners and traitors and outcasts. He did. But he also continually called them to repentance.

The Lawless and the Legalists

The lawless need God's mercy just as much as the legalists. So here we have the religious who don't want to come into the party, and we have pagans and sinners who want to bring their sin into the party. God wants you there. God wants you at the party. But your old clothing of sin and blunders and selfishness and rebellion, they must be checked at the door. Repentance produces mercy, and mercy washes our dirty clothes as white through the blood of the Lamb.

Free Wedding Garments

God gives out free wedding garments, in other words. You simply have to ask and accept. So we're invited in, but we must allow God to outfit us for the event. Okay, Matt, what does that have to do with Judas?

Judas fit in. Judas was able to get away with crashing the party. He prayed the right way. He ate kosher the right way. He kept the Sabbath the right way. He fit in on all appearances. He appeared to help the poor the right way. He prayed for healing the right way. He cast out demons the right way. He appeared like a follower of Yeshua the right way. But deep down, he never checked his sin at the door.

Secret Sin and Judas

John says that Judas would frequently steal from the money bag. Secret sin. Judas kept his sin and tried to crash the banquet of Jesus. How do we have empathy for Judas? How do we have empathy for this man? Well, that can be explored with one simple question. What sin have you decided to try to sneak into the wedding?

After all these years of following Yeshua, doing all the right things, saying all the right things, presenting yourself in just the right way, what sin have you tried to sneak through the door? What sin have you refused to deal with? What sin do you cover up in your mind? It's not that bad. It's not that bad. What sin?

Empathy for the Judas in Us

Welcome to empathizing with Judas. Because sin allowed Judas to let his defenses down. Sin allowed Judas to give in. Sin allowed Satan to enter into his heart. And Judas wasn't prepared to even reject it. Sin isn't allowed at the party because Satan isn't allowed at the party. All the

people you wouldn't expect get the invitation to the wedding and have a seat at the table. And all the people you would expect to be there refused.

God's kingdom breaks the mold. It forces itself onto the world and exposes the hearts of man. Some of the most religious, God-loving mentors I know sang praises every week, prayed with me, taught the word to me in boldness. I know many who have turned their backs on God. The religious leaders have turned their backs on the kingdom.

The Kingdom Breaks All Molds

And some of the most unlikely people I've come across—friends I have—are those who wouldn't fit the scope of what a Jesus follower looks like. Guess what? They're the ones who have a passion burning within them, not to just look a certain way, but actually to do certain things in their life for the sake of pouring out God's love in the world. I know more people who come from that background, willing to sacrifice everything just to show others what that love looks like, and not just sit in a pew and wear a tie.

Why does this seem to be a pattern? Why do we see people coming from such harsh backgrounds, moving forward and becoming pastors—today's thugs become tomorrow's pastors? Why is this a thing? Well, because they understand the value of the invitation. They understand.

From Persecutor to Pastor

I'm sure the disciples, the closest friends of Jesus, were shocked when Judas betrayed Yeshua. Years of spending night and day together, fighting the forces of darkness in the world and showing the light of God, showing the essence of the banquet. Judas was a part of the Jesus tribe. He was central to that Christian community. And I'm also sure that the early church was pretty shocked when they heard about a man named Paul who was now preaching the gospel, rising up with the boldness and the burning fire within his own heart to tell the world about what forgiveness looks like.

Just one encounter with a savior. The man who used to hunt down Christians to have them killed, the man who tore families apart, the man who caused tribulation for the saints—now a passionate church planter who wrote most of the New Testament that is in your Bible.

Don't Be Mistaken About Where We Are

Those who sit in the pew next to you, don't be mistaken, haven't arrived. How do I know this? Because I know that we're all on a common journey towards the same destination. We're all still on the journey, running the race. And I also know that every God-hating, pagan-celebrating, anti-God-shouting, hateful person that we feel is just too far away from God's grace, every one of them has a seat at the table.

Every one of them has the potential to pull that chair out and sit down. Their seat already has a name tag on it. It's just waiting for them to come and sit down. We're called to cling to Yeshua and hold everything else in our lives very loosely. Our wants, our passions, our opinions, our judgments. We run to Him. That's our journey and that's our destination.

Running Into the Arms of the Savior

So I don't know where you're at today. And worship team, you guys can come up. I don't know where you're at on your journey—running into the arms of the Savior. But I would encourage you to keep running no matter where you're at today. Don't stop. Don't become stagnant. Cast off whatever is slowing you down or preventing you from walking forward. Judas got stopped. And please stand as we conclude services. We conclude services here the same way that we enter into worship and praise. And maybe that's you today. I don't know.

Let It Go

Maybe you find yourself trying to silence a life or a past today, or a sin in your life, just so you can fit in to the people around you. But you find yourself too afraid to extinguish it completely. You find yourself too comfortable with the thing that is weighing you down, and you struggle to run in the mercy of God. Guys, you can make a declaration today and let it go. You can say, "God, I don't want it to hold me down any longer. God, I want you to be my goal. I want to commit all of me to you." And maybe you've never done that before. Maybe you've never fully committed to God's consuming mercy.

A Prayer Team Available

As we sing here, as we worship together about that very thing, I want to let you know that we have a prayer team available off to the sides. And these are people that won't go ahead of you on behalf. Before God, they will walk beside you as you walk before God. They will support you, they will petition with you, and they will pray for you. And I encourage you to take advantage of that today.

Avinu Malkeinu, our Father, our King. Father, we thank you for this time together. We ask that you would continue to show us the things in our life that are getting in the way of you, so that we can run as fast as possible into the arms of mercy. We thank you, Father, in the name of Yeshua, we pray. Amen.

Shalom. I'm Matthew Vanderels, and I hope you enjoyed this message. Founded in Truth exists to build a community that bears the image of God and lives the redeemed life only Yeshua gives. If this message impacted you or if this ministry has been a blessing to you, we would love to hear from you. Send us a message through our contact form on our website and let us know how God has used this ministry to edify your faith and relationship with Him. Don't forget to subscribe by clicking here. And if you'd like to donate to this ministry and be a part of what God is doing through it, you can donate through our website at www.foundingitruth.com or by clicking here. We thank you for your continued support and we look forward to next time. Shalom.

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