

Unmasking Counterfeits

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[0 : 00] John chapter 13, beginning in verse 18.

If you would please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's word together.! I'm not speaking of all of you.! I know whom I have chosen, but the scripture will be fulfilled.

He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me. I am telling you this now before it takes place, that when it does take place, you may believe that I am he. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.

After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit and testified. Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.

The disciples looked at one another uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side. So Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking.

[1 : 15] So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.

So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, What you are going to do, do quickly.

Now, no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that because Judas had the money bag, Jesus was telling him, Buy what we need for the feast, or that he should give something to the poor.

So after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out, and it was night. I got out a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? Now, both history and Scripture are full of examples of men and women who betrayed their country, their family, their friends. But the most notorious traitor of all time was Judas Iscariot. Very little, though, is known about Judas' background.

[2 : 38] The Bible does not reveal when Judas first met Jesus, or when he was called to follow Jesus as one of the twelve disciples.

But at some point, Judas left his full-time occupation, whatever it was, to become a full-time follower of Jesus. But it's clear that Judas never truly trusted in Jesus as the Son of God and as the Savior of his soul.

So we ask ourselves the question, Why, then, would Judas follow Jesus for so long before finally deciding to betray him?

Well, I think we're safe to assume that Judas, like many of his fellow Jews, hoped that Jesus would be a political Messiah, that Jesus would lead some kind of a revolt against the Romans and restore Israel's political sovereignty.

Judas was also motivated to follow Christ by greed. He thought he stood to profit from this close relationship that he had with Jesus.

[4 : 01] If Jesus was going to, as he hoped, restore the kingdom of Israel, he thought that he would receive some kind of important position in his newly established government that would come with prestige and power and prosperity.

We know that Judas was motivated by greed because he was the treasurer of the disciples and he would help himself. He would steal from the offering that they had collected and used to help them on their journey with Jesus.

But as time went on, Judas became increasingly disappointed with Jesus. On multiple occasions, Jesus, as we've seen in our study of John, refused the people's attempts to make him king.

He wouldn't have a crown without a cross. He would not be the kind of king that the people wanted him to be. And so, as it became increasingly clear to Judas that Jesus would not be the kind of Messiah that he wanted, his disappointment transformed into simmering discontent, which led him to pursue Christ's enemies for one final payoff.

Matthew 26 verses 14 through 16 record that event. Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, What will you give me if I deliver him over to you? [5 : 47] And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment, he sought an opportunity to betray him. But Judas' traitorous plans would not remain hidden for long.

If you recall, Jesus has just recently given his last invitation to the crowds, to the Jews, pleading with them one final time that they would believe in him before he was taken to Pilate and sentenced and crucified.

And then in John chapter 13 verses 1 through 17, where we were last, we saw how Jesus turns his attention now totally to his disciples.

And he pours out his heart to them. And he prepares them for what's about to happen, his arrest and his crucifixion, but then ultimately his resurrection.

But before he does that, before he teaches them these things over the next four chapters, he displays before them all what it means to truly follow him by humbly getting down on his hands and his knees to wash their feet, including Judas, his betrayer.

[7 : 15] And then he ends there by saying to his disciples, If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. Now in verses 18 through 30, Jesus turns his attention to his betrayer.

And through this passage, we learn the main idea for this morning's message, that counterfeit disciples may infiltrate the church, but the Lord knows who are truly his.

And you know, it's amazing how God works.

We've been in the Gospel of John for years, and it just so happens that today we are at this passage as we've witnessed Elsa's baptism and her revelation to us that though we thought she was saved, she wasn't.

And our rejoicing in the fact that now she has genuinely been saved. And we praise God for that. And I'll tell you what else. I was, on Wednesday, I went down to be with the youth, and Eric preached a message to our teens that dealt with this exact same thing.

[8 : 39] Talking about an axe, Simon the sorcerer who was baptized but was a false convert. And then later the Ethiopian eunuch who was baptized because he truly believed.

And so listen when I tell you this, God has a message for our church, for you. These are not coincidences. God has something for us to hear, for you to understand.

And so in this passage, Jesus presents us with three facts about counterfeit disciples. And the first fact that we realize about counterfeit disciples in this passage is that counterfeit disciples are a reality.

They are a reality. Look again at verses 18 through 19. Jesus says, I'm not speaking of all of you. I know whom I have chosen, but the Scripture will be fulfilled.

He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me. I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place, you may believe that I am he. Jesus was going to be betrayed by Judas.

[9 : 47] But before that could happen, he wanted to ensure that the other 11 disciples knew that when it did take place, it would not catch Jesus off guard.

Why was that important for Jesus to communicate to the other 11 disciples? Well, he didn't want their faith in him to be shaken when this thing happened.

If Jesus hadn't told them ahead of time what Judas would soon do, they may have jumped to the conclusion that Jesus was fooled by Judas just as they had been fooled by Judas.

And then that Jesus wasn't truly as all-knowing as he seemed to be. However, we know that on multiple occasions before this time, Jesus referred to the fact that he knew all along who his betrayer would be.

For example, in John 6, 70, after Peter confessed that Jesus was the Son of God, it says there that Jesus answered them, did I not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?

[10 : 57] Jesus also wanted the disciples to know that Judas' betrayal wouldn't take him by surprise because he says, it must happen for Scripture to be fulfilled.

And there Jesus cites Psalm 41, 9. Psalm written by David who, inspired by the Spirit, writes, he who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.

And that Psalm, David is lamenting the betrayal of a close friend, a trusted companion, someone he had invited into his house to share a meal with him at his dinner table, a symbol of intimate fellowship.

And there David's experience foreshadowed a greater betrayal, that being the betrayal of our Lord. But know that this is not the only Old Testament passage that speaks of and prophecies of this betrayal. Zechariah chapter 11, verses 12 through 13, which was written about 500 years before Christ's crucifixion, not only predicted that Judas would betray Jesus, but predicted the exact amount that he would betray our Lord for and what that money would be used for in the end.

[12:29] Let's look at that passage. Then I said to them, if it seems good to you, give me my wages, but if not, keep them. And they weighed out as my wages 30 pieces of silver.

Then the Lord said to me, throw it to the potter, the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the 30 pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord to the potter.

So you see, long before Judas was born, his treachery was foreseen and designed into God's eternal plan.

But Judas' role in this divine plan to betray Jesus does not mean that he was some kind of robot programmed to betray Jesus against his own will.

Judas freely chose to do what he did and he's fully accountable for his actions. But here again, we see the tension between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility or human choice.

[13:38] And Jesus, listen, he maintains that tension in Luke chapter 22, verse 22. For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to the man by whom he is betrayed.

There it is. They're both right there, clear to see. Judas had every opportunity to turn from his sin. In fact, much of Jesus' teaching addressed the issues that he most struggled with. But he was unmoved.

He refused to repent. And Jesus always knew the reality that wherever he went with his disciples, there was a traitor in his midst.

In Matthew 13, 24 through 30, Jesus taught a parable about wheat and tares. The wheat symbolized those who hear the gospel and are saved.

[14:45] But the enemy comes at night and he plants tares among the wheat. Tares are weeds that are almost indistinguishable from wheat.

And so there, Jesus made his true disciples aware of the fact that Satan is always at work to infiltrate the church, mingling his children with gods.

In some case, making it nearly impossible for them to be distinguished from what is true. But God knows. And eventually, they are revealed.

And often, they are revealed when they abandon the church and they turn their back on Christ.

Later on, John wrote to the church after Jesus' crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

And he wrote to them about this very thing that some leaders in their churches were deconverting. They were shocked by this.

[15:49] the church was. This upset the church. And so John writes to them in 1 John 2, 19, and this is what he says, of those deconverters, of those false teachers, of those counterfeit disciples.

They went out from us, but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.

But they went out that it might become plain, that it might become clear that they all are not of us. They deconverted.

That's the word people use today. But what we know from Scripture and what we've seen already is that no true convert can ever deconvert.

When God saves you, truly, He keeps you eternally. Read Romans chapter 8. Read verse 30. That those whom He predestined, He called.

[16:51] And then those whom He called, He justified. And those whom He justified, He glorified. Nobody gets lost in that chain of salvation.

No one falls through. Those who are predestined make it all the way to glorification. Why? Because God is the one ensuring that they are kept by Him forever.

forever. And at the end of verse 19, in the original Greek there, if you look at your Bible, it ends with He, but there's no He in that verse.

It should read, I am telling you this now before it takes place, that when it does take place, you may believe that I am. I am.

Jesus, once again, using the divine name of God, applying it to Himself. And then in verse 20, He adds, truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.

[17:53] So at first glance, when we look at these things, when we look at that statement, it doesn't seem to fit in with what Jesus has been talking about. But Jesus doesn't waste His words.

He is making an important point here that you and I cannot miss. The eleven disciples might have been tempted to think that having a traitor in their midst whom they were not able to detect would destroy their credibility as a group.

This was a scandal. This betrayal would follow them around wherever they went. People might think of them as, oh, you're that group. You're that group that Judas was a part of, weren't you?

And so Jesus reassures them, listen, guys, I am God. I know what's going on.

I know about this betrayal. And this betrayal will in no way nullify nor tarnish the mission that I have for you. You will be sent out as my representatives into this world and your message will be received.

[19:05] counterfeit disciples are a reality still today. Again, on a regular basis it seems like we hear testimonies and we read tweets if you're on Twitter of men and women.

And these are well-known Christians. These are people who claim to know Christ, claim to be saved. They've written songs that we've sung in our churches.

They've written books that have helped us. They've preached sermons that impacted our lives. And now all of a sudden they're saying I am sincerely doubting the faith that I professed to have.

As a matter of fact, many of them say I totally doubt it. I don't believe it. And they leave the church. And it's shocking. Isn't it?

It's shocking. And it's upsetting. And it can even shake our faith. This person didn't believe.

[20:20] But it shouldn't shake our faith. faith. Because we have God's Word and we have His reminders that counterfeit disciples are a reality.

And so what should we do about this reality? It's a reality. What should we do about it? Put together a counterfeit disciple committee that goes around and interrogates every member of our church and puts them in a dark room and under a hot light and asks them if they can how much Scripture they've got memorized or, you know, lists for us all the good things you've done this week?

We won't do that. But there are some things that we have to keep in mind. First of all, there is a danger in your becoming so attached to a man or woman who claims to follow Christ that when that man or that woman deconverts, you have been so devoted to them that truthfully you are more a disciple of theirs than you are of Jesus.

If that person who you are devoted to deconverts, then they were never truly of us and they have gone from us and that's shocking and it hurts sometimes but we continue on with the Lord.

Also, the reality of counterfeit disciples in our midst should remind us of the importance of our sharing the gospel all the time. All the time. We can't come to church and think that everybody in my Sunday school class is saved, everybody in my community group is saved, everybody in the sanctuary is saved because we see that counterfeit disciples are a reality and so what should we do?

[22:23] Preach the gospel all the time in the hopes that they will be unmasked and genuinely saved because the second fact we see about counterfeit disciples here is that counterfeit disciples are deceptive.

Counterfeit disciples are a reality and counterfeit disciples are deceptive. So again, having disclosed the reality that one of the disciples would betray him and having given reassurance that despite that treachery, the mission of the eleven genuine disciples to serve as his true representatives would continue to go on in verse 21 it says, after these things Jesus was troubled in his spirit and he testified, truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.

You see, Jesus knew that Judas would betray him but it wasn't something that he just kind of shrugged off. Well, I knew this was going to happen. He was troubled by it.

This troubled him. Why was he troubled? Well, several things I think at least several things must have been troubling him at this moment. First of all, the fact that he loved Judas and that Judas repeatedly rejected him.

Jesus was troubled by the fact that Satan's presence was coming into that place and would soon take possession of Judas. Jesus was troubled by the fate that awaited Judas in hell and the knowledge that his betrayal would soon lead him to the cross with its sin-bearing separation from his father.

[24 : 09] And the news that one of them would betray their Lord likewise troubled the disciples. In verse 22 it says, the disciples looked at one another uncertain of whom he spoke.

See, these men have had a lot of life shared together in a short amount of time. Jesus had announced to them that he would soon die.

They've had a lot placed on them. Jesus has told them I'm going to die soon. And if that wasn't troubling enough, now Jesus drops another bombshell announcement on them. One of you is going to betray me.

Someone in that room who for the past three years they had worked and served side by side with would do the unthinkable thing and betray their Lord.

But which one was it? Mark in his gospel records that after Jesus made this announcement the disciples began asking Jesus one after another, is it I?

[25 : 18] Is it I? Is it I? Matthew records in his gospel that even Judas asked, is it I, Rabbi? even when he was cornered, he refused to reveal his true colors.

And Judas was so deceptive, he was so good at masking his true intentions that none of the other disciples thought to accuse him. None of them, none of them in three years of being with Judas had ever suspected that Judas was anything other than the real deal.

none of them as far as we know ever questioned his loyalty to the Lord. When Jesus said one of you will betray me, none of them stood up and said aha!

It's Judas! I knew it! I had my finger on it! I wanted to say something but I didn't think it was my place! Lord, I've been watching him!

I knew it was him! None of them, none of them suspected that it was Judas. Instead, as Luke shares in his gospel, the disciples were so deceived by Judas that he records in chapter 22 verse 23 that they began to question one another.

[26 : 40] They began to be suspicious of each other. That's how deceptive counterfeit disciples can be. And then finally Jesus says in verse 23 through 25, or there it says, one of his disciples whom Jesus loved was reclining at table at Jesus' side.

So Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So that disciple leaning against Jesus said to him, Lord, who is it? You see, again, Judas had the disciples totally fooled.

He was so good at wearing his mask. What about us today? today? today? today?

Is there anything that we have as the church that the Lord has given to us to detect counterfeit disciples besides a counterfeit disciple task force?

Yes, we have. We have his word and we have the indwelling of his spirit who gives us discernment. We have Matthew 7, 15 through 20 as a warning from our Lord that this is a reality and they are deceptive.

[27 : 55] Beware of false prophets, he says, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will, see, you will recognize them. You can detect them by their fruits.

Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? So every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.

Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. You see, the faith that says but does not do is really unbelief.

If we notice that a person's confession is fruitless, if we see that they are not practicing what they preach, if we observe that their life is inconsistent with their confession that Jesus Christ is their Lord and Savior, then the best thing to do for us is first, like John, to go to Jesus in prayer and to His Word for His instruction, which He tells us that should this be the case, we must confront that brother or sister with the truth that they aren't being what they claim to be.

And we do so out of a motivation of love for them. We want them to be restored to Christ.

[29 : 36] and we also want to ask the hard questions in the hopes that if they're not truly saved, they will be. And a true believer in that moment will be convicted of their sin, but a counterfeit disciple will persist in unbelief like Judas.

Which brings us to the third fact that we're presented with about counterfeit disciples, which is that counterfeit disciples will be exposed.

They are reality, they are deceptive, but they will be exposed. Beginning of verse 26, Jesus answered, it is he whom I give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.

So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. So in this context, the morsel that Jesus handed to Judas was a piece of unleavened bread, which was dipped into a mixture of herbs and vinegar and water and salt and crushed dates and figs and raisins.

In this culture, when the head of the table broke off a piece of bread, a morsel, and dipped it in this mixture and handed it to one of his guests, that was seen as a great sign of honor.

[31 : 00] And so that's what Jesus is doing here. Knowing that Judas is his betrayer, he still chooses to honor him.

Jesus is showing kindness to Judas right up into the bitter end, extending one last offer of peace. However, Judas' heart remained hardened.

And one more time, he spurned Christ's final gesture of love to him. And just as he had for the past three years, he rejected the love of our Lord.

And at that moment, the day of salvation for Judas ended and hell arrived. In verse 27, then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him.

Divine mercy gave way to divine judgment, and Judas was in essence handed over to Satan.

Having rejected Jesus for the last time, Jesus dismissed him quickly.

[32 : 17] In verse 27, Jesus said to him, what you are about to do, do quickly. Once again, our Lord showing that he is in complete and total control of every detail of his death, just as he said in John chapter 10, verses 17 through 18.

For this reason, our Lord says, the Father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own accord.

I have authority left quickly before his plot could collapse.

But again, as evidence to how good of a counterfeit he was, the other disciples still could not come to grips with the fact that one of them would betray Jesus.

In verses 28 through 30, now no one, no one at the table knew why he had said this to him. Some thought because Jesus had the money bag Jesus was telling him to go get what they need for the feast or that he should give something to the poor.

[33 : 24] So after receiving the morsel of bread he immediately went out and it was night. When John mentions that it was night yes that's an allusion to the time of day it was but truly to the condition of Judas heart.

Judas was now completely masked! in darkness and was Satan's pawn. the next time he'll see Jesus is when he leads a group to arrest him betraying him with a kiss.

And so listen and I say this with love and compassion what does this tell us about counterfeit disciples?

Well that they're a reality that they're deceptive that they will be exposed because you can make a profession of faith in the church. You can walk down an aisle you can recite a prayer you can get baptized you can have immaculate church attendance you can tithe regularly you can volunteer you can pile up a heap of good works you can be put on all different kinds of committees and teams and promoted to all kinds of positions of leadership within the church church but like Judas you can still be completely and totally lost you can have everyone else fooled but you'll never fool Jesus and so I ask you has the Lord revealed the true condition of your soul this morning has his word aided by his spirit unmask you you know maybe like

Judas you see Jesus as someone to gain something from in calling yourself a disciple of his even though you're not really maybe maybe for a teenager it's to get your parents off your back maybe for a husband or a wife it's to get your spouse to quit bugging you and nagging you about whether or not you're saved and so you said I'll just go and do it so they leave me alone or you know what maybe the church provides you with something to do you don't have enough money to join the country club so the church is free I'll become a part of that club and church is like your hobby or maybe you think that good works are necessary for you to be saved or maybe you're doing them to justify your sins thinking that they're evening the scales you know I can act like a hellion on Friday but I'll be at church on Sunday and it's all good between me and

[36 : 21] God it's okay maybe you think because you were born to Christian parents and you were raised in a Christian church and again you were baptized or you raised a hand with every head bowed and every eye closed indicating that you had recited a prayer and you believe and you're trusting in those things to save you that again somehow they've made you right with the big man upstairs I want to warn you that if you are not trusting!

for your salvation and if you don't know him as Lord and Savior I must warn you that a day is soon coming for you when the reality of every person's spiritual condition will be fully exposed before our Lord Jesus spoke about that day in Matthew 7 21 through 23 when he separates those on his right those on his left he says not everyone who says to me Lord Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven but the one who does the will of my father who is in heaven on that day and this breaks my heart many it's not some it's not a little bit it's not a few it's many many on that day!

will say to me! Lord Lord did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name and then Jesus says I will declare to them I never knew you depart from me you workers of lawlessness if you've been exposed like Judas today Jesus extends his offer of salvation to you take it will you take it will you repent of your sins or like Judas will you harden your heart and refuse!

him yet again if Jesus has unmasked you today turn to him turn to him and he will take your sin and he will clothe you in his righteousness counterfeit disciples may infiltrate the church and they can fool God's people but the Lord knows who is truly his do you know that you are truly his for questions of application for us to discuss tonight in our community groups if you're not a part of the community groups and you want to be just come tonight and find me and we'll get you plugged in if you're not a part of the community group I encourage you to do these questions anyways on your own time you and the

Lord sometime today or this week first of all read Matthew 13 24 through 30 and 36 through 43 this is the parable of the wheat and the tares what does this parable and its explanation tell us about the reality of counterfeit disciples in the midst of the church question number two read 1 John 2 19 how are genuine disciples distinguished from counterfeit disciples in this text distinguished from counterfeit disciples in this text question three in what ways has the Lord prepared and equipped his church to expose counterfeit disciples in what ways has the Lord prepared and equipped his church to expose counterfeit disciples and then finally in following Jesus example with Judas how should we treat counterfeit disciples when they are revealed how should we treat counterfeit disciples when they are revealed what instruction does the

[40 : 35] Bible give us before I pray I just want to tell you one more time if you've been exposed if you have questions if you have doubts if you're uncertain or you just know that you're not the real deal but you've heard the gospel and you understand that the Lord is calling you today to believe in him you can come forward and come talk to me now you can talk to me later whenever it is please come and share that with me or if you have questions okay let's pray Lord this is a troubling passage for many different reasons God it's troubling because we realize the reality that there are counterfeits in our midst we don't even realize it Lord I pray that like you we would not seek one another out and being suspicious but plead in this church when we share the gospel for people to be saved because we just don't know who is truly yours but again

God you have given us things to help us to indicate when someone's profession of faith is not in line with the way they live their lives and Lord when that's the case give us the courage to go to that brother or that sister motivated by love and grace to confront them in the hopes that they'll be restored to you or be truly saved God I pray for the counterfeit disciples who hear this message and have heard it that you and your grace would unmask them that you would lead them to you that they'd experience the joy in knowing Christ as their God as their Lord as their Savior Lord I pray that you would lead them to you in Jesus name Amen!