

The Horror of Failure, the Beauty of Grace - Acts 1:12-26
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

Living as fallen people in a fallen world is often extremely difficult. It means that often our sin leads to deep failure with the outcome being a wake of brokenness compounded by deep guilt and shame. This sort of failure can happen in a single moment, such as one night overindulging in alcohol leading to a tragic accident. Or failure can be a steady path over a long period of time, like a dripping faucet that eventually corrodes the sink. Either way, the weight of failure and the lives affected from our mess is significant.

Our journey through Acts tells us the story of the most known failure in the Scriptures as the story deals with the fall of Judas and his replacement in the Apostolic band of brothers. Judas was one of the 12 disciples, chosen by Jesus to follow. Therefore he is among the men who left everything and invested three years of his life in the ministry of Jesus. He was present at all the miracles and included in the teaching. Yet, from the beginning Jesus knew the ultimate destiny and outcome of Judas's participation in His ministry. The story gives us hints at the condition of Judas's heart, as we are told that he was given the responsibility to carry the money bag for Jesus' ministry, functioning as the disciples treasurer. Yet, John's Gospel tells us he was pilfering from the ministry, keeping money intended for the poor for himself. Judas also has a moment of criticism when a woman pours out a vial of perfume that is incredibly valuable on the feet of Jesus. Judas wonders why the funds were not thrown into the money bag, but then again, we know what he was doing with the money. While we do not know all of the motivational structure of Judas's heart, we do know that he became disillusioned with Jesus as the Messiah and chose to sell him out to the religious leaders who were seeking to kill Jesus. For a price of 30 pieces of silver Judas took the Sanhedrin's tough guys to Jesus and betrayed his rabbi with a kiss on the cheek. Yet, on that very night, knowing full well that the events were already in motion and that Judas has the coins in his bag, Jesus included Judas in the Passover meal where the first Lord's Supper was celebrated and Jesus washed Judas's feet. Read that again, Jesus washed his betrayer's feet, fully knowing what was in his heart and where the story was going.

The story of Judas comes to a tragic end, told here in Acts and in Matthew. By combining these two stories we can come to an understanding of what happened. Maybe he was mad at Jesus for not being the type of Messianic King he wanted. Or maybe he thought that this betrayal would force Jesus' hand and that he would use the opportunity to finally take a sword and start the campaign to defeat Rome. Whatever the case, when Judas realized where the story was going, that it would end with Jesus being horribly crucified the guilt was insurmountable. He returned to the men who paid him off, confessed his sin and threw the money back at them. At this moment he becomes a reminder that feeling sorry for our sin and confessing it is often not the same thing as repentance. The grace of Jesus had been offered (in the foot washing and last supper) and the remedy for his guilt was right before his eyes. Rather than running to Jesus and realizing the cross was the payment for his debt, Judas dealt with the guilt himself, taking his own life. Matthew tells us he hanged himself, with Luke here in Acts adding gory details, probably about the way his dead and swollen body burst open when the rope rotted or limb broke. No love lost here for the betrayer. Yet, Jesus loved him immensely and redemption was available.

This left a hole in the band of apostles with the need for a replacement. In front of a room with 120 people the remaining 11 set forth the criterion and then cast lots to determine that Matthias is the 12th disciple. Yet, just by looking at the list of people in the room we can see something. While Judas' failure was significant, the truth is that in some ways it was no

different from the failures, sins, and rejection of Jesus from anyone else in the room. Luke had already told us about demon possessed women delivered by Jesus who are now in the room. Jesus' brothers flat rejected his ministry, that is until the resurrection. All 11 remaining Apostles fled Jesus in his hour of need, failing even to show up on the day of His crucifixion. And Peter, oh Peter, the one who flat denied knowing Jesus, even cursing his friend to a teenage girl. Their sin and guilt was equally deserving of Jesus' rejection and a horrible end. The difference in Judas and every other person in the room is not the guilt and failure, the difference is where they went with their sin. They found in Jesus, His death and resurrection the remedy for guilt and sin. They discovered that the cross was sufficient to remove the stain of sin and the weight of guilt. The cross and resurrection became the place of grace where the worst failures were spun to become the greatest victories. So Matthias is not a hero, he is nothing more than one more sinner, saved by grace whom God used for the glory of Christ's kingdom.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
I Samuel 2	1 Samuel 3	1 Samuel 4	1 Samuel 5	1 Samuel 6	1 Samuel 7	1 Samuel 8

Reading from this past week: Acts 1:12-26

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Acts 2:1-4

Family Worship

Song - Grace Alone

<https://youtu.be/OOk7HguyvnyU>

Gospel Project

Unit: Back to the Land

Story: God encouraged Joshua

Big Picture Question: What is the Bible?

Answer: The Bible is God's Word that tells us what is true about God and ourselves.

Scripture: Joshua 1

New City Catechism

Question #10: What does God require in the fourth and fifth commandments?

Answer: Fourth, that on the Sabbath day we spend time in worship of God. Fifth, that we love and honor our father and our mother.

Verse: Leviticus 19:3

Scripture

Acts 1:12-26

- Do you find reading the story of Judas difficult? Why?
- Mike said that the difference between Judas and the rest of the people in the room was not so much the significance of their failure but the remedy they sought. What did he mean by that, and how does this help us with our guilt?
- Why is the cross of Jesus the only true remedy for our sin and guilt?

Prayer

*Give thanks for God's mercy that covers all of our sin and guilt.

*Pray for our Administrator, Carla Moore.