

Judas

Jesus called me to join Him in His work. He's the Messiah, the One who would restore the kingdom of Israel. We were a rough crew. Most of us were uneducated fishermen. I was the one who kept track of the money for the group, not that it was a hard job. We really didn't have much to manage. But I was sure things would change in time, when Jesus took His rightful place as king.

I didn't understand what was taking so long. And the Jewish leaders were getting more and more upset with Jesus and His teachings. They criticized everything we did. And Jesus just took it. He never seemed upset or flustered by what they said. He would answer their questions with a question, and they'd give up. That was actually pretty amazing to watch.

As time went on my frustration grew. The anger and frustration turned into bitterness. That bitterness opened a door for the enemy. When the priests came to me with their plan to arrest Jesus, I just knew this would be the catalyst to push Jesus to finally do what He was supposed to do! Surely the confrontation with the soldiers would cause Him to stand up and take His authority and rightful place bringing Israel back as a kingdom.

We made the plan. I would greet Jesus with a kiss so they would know it was Him. They paid me 30 pieces of silver. As I held that money, finally, some money, in my hands, I felt nothing but cold darkness, a dull emptiness creeping into my soul.

Later, we observed the Passover meal, and watching the group with Jesus there only made my anger grow more, and the darkness I felt seemed to grow with each passing hour. But I had to stick with the plan. When Jesus said for me to go and do what I must do quickly, for a moment I thought maybe He knew the plan and this was the way He intended to step up and take over. But I think I knew better in my heart. I knew something terrible was about to happen. I felt only dread, but with a compulsion to see the plan through.

That evening, I did what I said. I showed them who Jesus was, and the soldiers arrested Him. An eerie calmness surrounded Jesus, a resolve stronger than I'd seen in Him. Was it because He would soon be King? No, it was something else. It was a resolve that knew something terrible was going to happen, and He was letting it. And I had a part in making that terrible thing happen.

(The intensity of what is being said should grow more as Judas relives the pain of that time)

I was suddenly engulfed in a darkness I'd never felt before, consumed with hopelessness, like falling into a pit filled with tar. I knew Jesus wasn't going to bring Israel back. All I knew was that I didn't understand what He thought He was doing. I only understood that I had nothing. When Jesus called me to follow Him, I was part of something, part of the most important thing: God's plan for our nation. But now, I was part of nothing. It was gone, totally unraveled, and I helped pull the string that made it unravel.

I began to weep uncontrollably. I ran away from the city. Away from the followers. I was no longer one of them. I was a failure in every way. I saw a glimpse of truth, a clarity, a realization. Jesus was truly the Messiah. He was building a kingdom, just not one I understood and not one I could force to happen.

Do you see? I walked with Him. I talked with Him, ate with Him. I heard every teaching, every promise. And I betrayed Him. I threw everything away for 30 pieces of silver and my own stubborn anger.

I chose to walk away from His love and forgiveness. I didn't lose hope, I spit on it and cast it aside.

There are no depths deeper than where I found myself. I could see no other way. I couldn't go on knowing what I had done. It would have been better if I'd never been born! Surely you agree with me on that! (here, the anger should be at a fevered pitch)

(Suddenly calmer, almost deadpan) In that moment, I had only one choice, as far as I could see. I threw the silver in the potter's field, and I ended my life by hanging myself.

Now, I see more clearly as we all do on this side of death. I now know that even I, with the betrayal, the anger, the righteous indignation with which I rationalized my hateful actions, I know now that even I could have been forgiven. He paid for it all on the cross. He knew the plan. He was not surprised by what I did. Just like He offered Peter forgiveness and a future, He could have done the same for me. If only I could have accepted Jesus for who He really is.