



## SoulShare

Saturday, April 21, 2018, 9:00—10:30 am Breakfast & Discussion:  
**Judas**

I have to tell you what is in my heart. I only hope you can believe me. Can't anyone believe me? I DID NOT INTEND FOR IT TO TURN OUT THIS WAY. Oh, I guess I don't really know what I wanted or what hidden motivation was behind it all. But I swear to you that this is not what I thought would happen.

Since I was a boy, I have always been a patriot. I played David and the Philistines with my brothers. My hero was my namesake, Judas the Maccabee, who freed our people from the foreign oppressors. He was strong. He was brave. He was clever.

As a man, I found some who shared my zeal for the nation. We often met together and planned. The Romans were powerful and cruel. We would have to beat them by superior intelligence and guile, constantly on the alert for an opportunity, exploiting every chance occurrence.

Not all my comrades agreed with me. Some felt we should wait for God to fight for us. I argued that the Lord uses brave men, willing to risk their all in the fight against Gentile oppressors.

When I first heard about Jesus, there was talk that he might be the Messiah. This was obviously of interest to me and to the cause. I was intrigued enough to join his inner group. Some of his teachings were confusing, but he clearly had the mark of a prophet in his power to perform miracles.

Could this be the one prophesied, who would restore the throne to David and throw off the foreign yoke? It became increasingly clear to me that he was indeed the one. Why, with his miraculous powers he could feed an army with a few loaves. He could heal the sick and raise the dead. No force under his command could be defeated.

Yet although he showed occasional sparks of awareness of his magnificent destiny, and even began to challenge the corrupt and hypocritical Jewish leaders, for the most part, he spent his time with the misfits of society. In a most self-abasing manner, he associated with the lower classes, the losers and those paralyzed with introspection.

When I tried to talk to him of strategy, he told me I did not understand him or his kingdom. Yet he clearly did not understand the way to build a successful movement. He belonged in the company of men of power and vision. His present course was building the wrong sort of reputation. But my efforts got me nowhere. I was an advisor without influence.

Yet I hoped. One of his remarkable powers was the ability to apparently read our thoughts. Surely he knew my goals and understood my strategy. And I had been chosen to be in his inner circle. I even man-

aged the meager treasury. I would wait.

Then when he said that we were going to Jerusalem, it seemed that we were getting somewhere. No one with any awareness of the world could doubt that a showdown was near. He must be planning a confrontation, perhaps a series of flashy miracles at feast time, to turn the mobs into an army and begin the revolution.

Yet there were also glimpses of his recurrent depression and talk of death. It seemed that I had a gifted but mentally unbalanced messiah on my hands. Victory was always very close but defeat hounded us constantly.

Finally, it became clear that Jesus would need some help. I was convinced that only if forced to fight would he actually reach his potential. I schemed the proper scenario. I cooked up a believable betrayal including money. I led the temple guard to a secluded spot where he could begin the fight with a smaller audience before taking that victory to the whole city.

He astounded me by not only refusing to fight, but by actually humiliating Simon Peter for trying to defend him. Perhaps, I thought, he is going to wait for a more opportune moment, letting his enemies be overcome with false confidence.

Yet I waited through one lost opportunity after another. I could not believe what I was seeing. It was a bad dream. The hope of Israel, humiliated and finally sentenced to a Roman cross. He was clearly not ready. I had miscalculated. Our one hope and I had destroyed it.

Right up to the last moment I hoped beyond hope that he would unleash his mighty power and begin the battle that would certainly have been victorious. Yet the very last moment passed and the opportunity was gone.

My life is also over. There is no hope for me. Yesterday my hope died with my best plans, and there is no tomorrow.

Remember that this is an historical drama and the first task is to decide if it is accurate to the Scriptures.

*Do we tend to think of Judas as completely different from ourselves, for instance, as totally evil?*

*What are some clues that his motivations may have been more complex than that?*

*Why was he immediately sorry when Jesus was condemned? Why did he give the money back?*

*Is it possible he thought that by giving back the money he could get Jesus released?*

*Why did he commit suicide?*

*Is it possible that being dedicated to a cause made it possible for him to miss Jesus' message despite three years of teaching and close fellowship?*

*Matthew 10:8 Jesus sent out the twelve, including Judas to "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons." How could he have missed the point?*

*How does stereotyping Judas keep us from learning from his life?*

*How might we be deflected from God's plan by focusing on our own goals?*

*What is the solution to preventing that?*

*Scripture does not tell us everything we might want to know about Judas, but his story is recorded for our benefit. Many lives are recorded, whether as good examples, bad examples or mixed examples.*

*What is the significance of John 13:27 "As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him."*

*What is the relationship between Satan and sin?*

*Might it have been possible for Judas to repent?*

*What is the lie that Satan used to keep him from doing that?*

*Is there any sin that God cannot forgive?*

*If Judas were a zealot, what would he be expecting from a Messiah?*

*What were the Pharisees expecting from the Messiah?*

*What are "some people" expecting from Jesus that makes them miss the point?*

*What are WE expecting that might make us miss the point?*

*Is it possible to "grow the church" with a totally secular view of the process and goal?*