

God's name is holy whether you treat it as such or whether you drag it through the mud. God's kingdom comes whether you act as a saint or as the spawn of Satan. God's will is done whether you're following His will or doing everything in your power to prevent it. You can't stop God's plan. The simple question is whether you want to be a preparer or a betrayer.

We have reached the end of our sermon series, All the Company of Heaven. Each week we take two apostles and look at how they followed Jesus then follow in their footsteps. We have reached our last two apostles: Peter and Judas. These two individuals are perhaps the most well-known of the twelve apostles.

Of course, this evening has a break in the pattern. Judas serves as a negative example. Don't be like Judas. We don't have a stained-glass window dedicated to Judas. The twelfth window is dedicated to Matthias, the apostle who replaced Judas after the Ascension. Matthias was a preacher of God's Word and we believe he was martyred by being beheaded by an axe.

But tonight, we're talking about Peter and Judas: Preparer and Betrayer. 3. As Peter prepared the Passover deliberately, so Judas betrayed Jesus. **“Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?””** Luke's Gospel, we learn that Jesus asked Peter and John specifically to prepare the Passover.

The Bible doesn't give us step by step on how Peter and John prepared the Passover meal, but from what we know of customs of the day and of the Old Testament, Jesus wasn't simply asking Peter and John to go to Kwik Trip to buy a bottle of wine and a loaf of bread. This took a lot of work!

The Greek word for Passover can just as easily refer to the Passover lamb as it can the whole Passover meal. When Jesus was asking Peter and John to prepare the Passover, He was really asking them to prepare the Passover lamb. At twilight the people of Jerusalem all slaughtered their Passover lambs, the lamb without blemish, and Peter and John did likewise.

Peter and John willingly and gladly prepared the Passover lamb and all the other trappings: the bitter herbs, the unleavened bread, the wine, and everything else. They gladly worked to make holy God's name, to let His kingdom come, and His will be done. God wants us willingly and gladly to follow Him just like Peter and John prepared the Passover.

However, Judas willingly and gladly betrayed Jesus. **“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?” And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.”** It wasn't as though the chief priests sought Judas out. He solicited them and asked them to name their price.

And so it is that we have this scene at the Last Supper where Jesus predicts that one of the disciples will betray Him. **“And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, ‘Is it I, Lord?’”** In all of this, Jesus was calling each disciple to examine himself. Ultimately, Jesus wanted Judas to repent. That was not what happened.

Judas serves as a warning to us to avoid the deceitfulness of sin. Judas doesn't get a window because Scripture itself testifies that the end of his unrepentant betrayal and consequent suicide was perdition or damnation.

Yet on Maundy Thursday, more was going on than meets the eye. In a certain sense we could say that Peter was the betrayer and Judas the preparer. God's will is done whether you're following His will or doing everything in your power to prevent it. You can't stop God's plan. The simple question is whether you want to be a preparer or a betrayer. 2. As Peter betrayed Jesus unknowingly, so Judas prepared the Passover.

The warning signs were all there. Shortly after the Last Supper **“Jesus said to [Peter], ‘Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.’ Peter said to him, ‘Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!’ And all the disciples said the same.”** Yet we know how the rest of the story goes.

Peter's stained-glass window shows a rooster which symbolizes His betrayal, but the upside down cross ultimately reminds us that Peter, unlike Judas, came back from the betrayal. Peter was faithful even unto death, being crucified upside down because he thought himself unworthy to be crucified right side up like his Lord and Savior.

Three times Peter denied Jesus, but after Jesus' resurrection, Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love me?” Three times Peter had the chance to reaffirm his love for Him.

I don't want to say as though somehow Peter lost his agency and accidentally denied his Savior three times. But it was only after the rooster crowed that he realized what he did and wept bitterly.

How often it is that we as Christians don't set out on a given day to deny and to betray our savior, but by the end of the day, we've realized what we've done and repent, even perhaps with tears of our denials and betrayals of our Lord?

Judas, even though he didn't know it, was also preparing the Passover. He wasn't preparing the Passover in the sense that he was working alongside Peter and John to make a meal. He was unwittingly preparing the true Passover lamb.

As Judas sought out the chief priests to make thirty pieces of silver, as Judas left the table that night to summon a mob with swords and clubs, as Judas greeted Jesus with a kiss and called him Rabbi, Judas was leading the Passover lamb to the slaughter. He was sharpening his knife that would slay the Lamb of God.

Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God; He is your Passover. Because Jesus was led to the slaughter and carried the sins of the whole world, the angel of death has passed over you. You need not fear death. You need not fear sin. You need not fear the devil.

Jesus said, “**The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.**”” Judas fit into the story of salvation in spite of his actions, not because. God was able to use his betrayal for the good of humanity.

Jesus wants you willfully and joyfully to prepare the Passover meal. He doesn't want you unknowingly and accidentally preparing the Lamb of God for slaughter. Like Peter, Jesus can restore you when in weakness and fear you betray or deny Him, but you've already made your bed if you persist in stubborn, unrepentant sin which betrays your Savior like Judas.

But 1. Even if you betray Jesus in weakness, Jesus was still prepared for you. We need to take a step back to realize what is happening on this most sacred of days: Jesus invites His disciples to a meal that's something more than just food.

It's a meal in which we partake of the Passover lamb prepared for us. It's a meal where we join the disciples of Jesus and all the company of heaven. It's the sustenance that gives us nourishment for the difficult days and weeks we face in this life. There's room for betrayers and sinners at the table because that's all who Jesus has to draw from.

It's fitting that our sermon series ends with the Lord's Supper because now that we've examined the stories and the lives of the twelve apostles, we go up to join them for a meal. We worship with the stained glass windows of the apostles all around us as a constant reminder that the membrane between earth and heaven is thin, especially in this sacred act of feasting upon Christ our Passover lamb who was both betrayed and prepared for me and for you.

And it is in this meal that the Lamb of God feeds us to turn us from a life of betrayal to a life of preparation. To turn us from a life of serving ourselves to serving others even as Jesus serves us through serving Himself in the body and blood of the wafer and wine of communion.

AS JESUS KNOWINGLY SERVED, HE INVITES US TO SERVE LIKEWISE. This meal feeds us and fills us to go out into the world and to be the hands and feet of Jesus wherever He takes us. When we serve others through our good works, we realize that we too are serving Christ. Having been so encouraged by the example of the twelve apostles, we come forward to receive Christ's gifts which strengthen us to serve as the apostles did as well.