

Two Paths

Welcome

Intro: Have you ever heard of a Trojan Horse? **(Picture)** During the Trojan War (which may be part fiction part non-fiction), the Greeks were unable to breach the walls of Troy, to break through their defenses after trying for 10-years. So, they constructed a massive wooden horse and left it outside the gates of the city, pretending it was a peace offering and pretended to sail away. The Trojans, believing the war was over and that the horse was a symbol of victory, brought it inside their city walls. However, hidden inside the horse were elite Greek soldiers. That night, they emerged and opened the gates for the returning Greek army, who then defeated the city of Troy. Things are not always as they seem.

Read: Luke 22:1-6, 20-23, 31—34, 47-62, Matthew 27:3-5

Things are not always as they seem. Peter and Judas basically looked the same. They were both disciples, they both sat under the teaching of Jesus, they both held an important role, and they both made mistakes. However, Peter went on to become one of the most influential Christian leaders in history and died with honor. Judas is only remembered as a traitor who killed himself in disgrace. They looked the same but remember, things are not always as they seem.

What was different about these men? What can we learn today from their stories? This morning, I want us all to be honest with ourselves. Which path are we on? What can we learn from these men?

1. Peter fell but Judas rebelled.

Explain: Peter fell, “in the heat of the moment”. Judas’ betrayal was pre-meditated.

Illustrate: 1st degree verses 2nd degree murder. One is a crime of passion, where a person gets caught up in the moment. They never intended to kill anyone. The other is a premeditated, calculated, intentional, act of violence. There is a big difference.

Illustrate: Chris vs. Pastor J

Argue: **1 John 3:1-10**, John says, we cannot claim to be the children of God and practice sin. Are we going to be with Jesus, or be with the Devil.

James 1:15b, “when sin is allowed to grow...”

Apply: “Satan entered Judas”, how does this happen? When we invite him in.

What do we do? Community, Transparency, Jesus, Purpose, Counseling.

2. Peter was protecting himself but Judas was promoting himself.

Explain: Peter’s motive was self-preservation; he was in grave danger. Judas was motivated by selfish ambition. Judas is hedging his bet. By making a deal with the religious leaders he is guaranteed 30 pieces of silver, about four months wages. Many scholars believe Judas was trying to force Jesus to do what all the Jews thought He should do. He is frustrated because

Jesus is not meeting his expectations. He believes Jesus has lost his way. Jesus needs to rise up against Rome and free the Jews. If that happens, he will get to keep his 30 pieces of silver and rule and reign with king Jesus. If they kill Jesus, then Jesus is not the Messiah and he gets to walk away with some money. It was a great plan. What could go wrong?

Illustrate: Chris (trying to numb the pain) **Pastor J** (conscience severed, taking advantage)

Argue: **Philippians 2:3-4, 1 Peter 5:5-6**

Apply: The way up, is down.

3. Peter lost his community but Judas left his community.

Explain: Peter was temporarily separated from Jesus and his community. The disciples were in the garden praying when Judas showed up with armed guards. The other disciples fled and Jesus was taken away. Peter was alone, confused, and trying to stay close, hoping Jesus would give him some indication about what he was supposed to do. **When you are alone, you are vulnerable.**

Judas also found himself alone but it is because He chose to step away from his community. Judas did not agree with the direction Jesus was headed. Pride filled his heart and opened a door for Satan. Judas leaves Jesus and his community, makes a deal with the enemy and betrays Jesus with a kiss. Judas would have never made that mistake if he would have been vulnerable and honest about his questions and concerns and simply asked Jesus for help. It would have given Jesus and the community an opportunity to listen, to encourage, to rally around Judas and keep him on the right path. Instead, he is all alone.

Illustrate: **Pastor M**, heartbroken and alone. Marriage began to suffer, started drinking, was at a gathering with a group of pastors and did something dumb and lost his ministry. You were made for connection, if you are isolated, you are likely to do something dumb.

- There may be people around but no one really knows us or what we are going through.
- We may be successful but our success has actually isolated us.
- We may have grown up alone. We learned to survive or succeed but not how to connect.

When we feel alone, it hurts and we all look for something to numb the pain. Some medicate with food, success, hobby, sex, alcohol, social media...Some of us chose things that are destructive and some chose options that actually reward us but at the end of the day, if we lose our connection with God and each other eventually we do something dumb and make a mess of our life. Telling a person, who feels alone, to stop misbehaving is a waste of your breath. The only thing that has the power to heal our hearts and change our behavior is love experienced in relationship with God and each other.

Illustrate: Rat Park

Argue: **John 14:15**

Apply: Community Groups, small group kick-off!

4. Peter humbled himself, repented, and was redeemed. Judas did not and was destroyed.

Explain: As we follow Christ, there will be times when we are caught up in the moment, when fear or isolation gets the best of us and we sin against each other and against God. This is unavoidable. However, we must be honest with ourselves. Some of us are on the wrong path, we are isolated, living with secrets and about to blow things up. I am not trying to shame you or make you feel guilty. I am pleading with you to turn to Jesus.

Illustration: Peter and Judas, only real difference is Peter humbled himself and repented.

Argue: 1 Peter 1:13-23, 2:1-3, 1 Peter 5:5-6

Apply: Peter helped start the early church which became a place for people who had lost their way. A place where we could experience the mercy, love and compassion of Jesus in our brokenness. A place where people were transformed by the presence of Jesus. Do we really want revival in our church, our city, or our world. Revival begins in us. **7 days of Prayer!**

Moment of reflection: Which path are you on? Will you humble yourself?

Invitation