

Easter 7 5/16/21
Acts 1:12-26 B

FOR IT IS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF PSALMS, MAY HIS CAMP BECOME DESOLATE, AND LET THERE BE NO ONE TO DWELL IN IT'; AND 'LET ANOTHER TAKE HIS OFFICE.' SO ONE OF THE MEN WHO HAVE ACCOMPANIED US DURING ALL THE TIME THAT THE LORD JESUS WENT IN AND OUT AMONG US...ONE OF THESE MEN MUST BECOME WITH US A WITNESS TO HIS RESURRECTION...AND THEY CAST LOTS FOR THEM, AND THE LOT FELL ON MATTHIAS, AND HE WAS NUMBERED WITH THE ELEVEN APOSTLES.

Come, follow Me, the Savior said, so Judas followed Jesus. In fact, He followed Jesus quite closely. He was numbered among the twelve apostles, which means He not only followed Jesus; he lived with Him, he traveled with Him. He had a front row seat to the miracles and teaching of Jesus. He was privileged to hear things Jesus told no one else except the twelve. At one point, Jesus even sent Judas out with the other apostles to teach, to heal, to cast out demons.

Come, follow me, the Savior said, so Matthias followed Jesus. He followed Him from the time of the baptism by John in the Jordan River. When Jesus ascended into heaven, there was Matthias, standing with the apostles, looking up into the sky. He was numbered with the twelve and he went out and proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus for the salvation of the world.

Come, follow Me, the Savior said, so you follow Jesus. For many, you started following Him as an infant, when He called you in and through the waters of Holy Baptism, which means you followed Jesus from cradle to elementary school to junior high and high school and military service, college; you followed Jesus into the work world, and family life, and maybe now even into retirement. Even though you were not numbered among the

twelve, you are in your way, in your own station and calling in life, proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus for the salvation of souls.

There you have it. You have Judas, Matthias, and you – faithful followers of Jesus. Our Gospel lesson this Sunday is part of what is called the High Priestly prayer of Jesus. Jesus is our High Priest and He prays for you! He knows all-too-well what it is to live as a stranger in this world; so, He prays. Specifically, He prays that you, as His follower, would be kept in His name; kept from the evil one; and sanctified in the truth of God's Word.

Matthias followed Jesus. He went out as a witness to the resurrection of Jesus. He was kept in the name of Jesus; kept from the evil one and his lies; he was sanctified in the truth of God's Word and we know that because He was martyred for the faith. He died confessing Jesus and the hope that he had in Jesus.

Judas, well, you know about him; and he is different story, isn't he? He starts out great – he's following Jesus; he's one of the twelve, in fact, he even has the high honor of being their treasurer. But then, he's not one with Jesus and one with the other followers of Jesus. He's not kept in the name of Jesus. He is not kept from the evil one. He is not sanctified in the truth of God's Word. No, quite the contrary, he's going the way of sin, death, and hell. That's what happens when you believe the lies of the evil one; that's what happens when you no longer believe the truth and promises of God's Word.

He started hanging out with the chief priests, the elders, and the teachers of the law. They were the religious establishment of Israel. Shouldn't they believe that Jesus was the Christ, the long-promised Savior? The answer is yes. But, they didn't. What they should do and

what they actually did in their thoughts, words, and deeds were two totally different things.

The Savior came in the flesh; He came to His own born of Mary. But, they laughed; they mocked; they rejected Him. Finally, they decided that Jesus had to die so that they could have their power and position. The Law said, "You shall not murder," but they did not keep themselves from the evil one; they were not sanctified in God's Word of truth. Jesus had to die. And, Judas was the quick and easy way to see that happen.

So, Judas became one of them. He feared people – what they would think of him. He didn't care about being popular with God; He wanted to be popular with people, sinful people. He wanted to be one with them. So, for 30 pieces of silver – earthly wealth – he betrayed Jesus.

What's your story? You have been baptized into Jesus and follow the Savior. Yet, you also have that Old Adam. One with Jesus, you are hated, mocked, ridiculed, rejected by the world. And, you don't like that. You want to be one with this fallen age. In fact, you find yourself loving the things of this world more than Jesus. You have fallen for the lies of the devil. You struggle to believe the truth and promises of God's Word.

You know what that's struggle like. The Law says, "Honor your father and your mother," but there you are on the interstate highway, and everyone vehicle is passing you because you are driving the speed limit. So, what do you do? You keep up with the Jones's.

The Law says, "You shall not murder," but you've, you've been angry -- awfully angry -- kept a record of wrongs, and you've allowed the sun to go down on your anger again and again and again.

The Law says, "You shall not commit adultery," but you think you would be so happy if only that woman on the website would be your wife.

The Law says, “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor,” but you do. You say mean, vicious things about your neighbor, all because it makes you feel good about yourself.

The Law says, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house,” but you want it. And besides, your neighbor is a scoundrel, and you deserve it more – much more.

And we could go on and on. The point is: when you want to be one with the world and with sinners, you will act exactly like that. You will act exact like they do. Just look at the life and death of Judas Iscariot.

And, Jesus prays, for you: “Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which you have given Me, that they may be one, even as we are one” (v. 11b). God works good in all things. In fact, He even used the plan of the religious leaders and Judas for His good.

Just as they wanted, Jesus did go to that cross, where He bled and died for you. And it is His bloody death upon that cross that forgives you all your sins. His resurrection that 3rd day is proof of your forgiveness. He rises to call you by name. Your Good Shepherd says of you, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (Jn 10:27). “I have guarded them,” Jesus says, as He saves you from the lies of Satan and his raging wolves (v. 12). And, you are sanctified in the truth of God’s Word, guided by His Commandments to live a holy life glory to God and that serves your neighbor and trusting and finding comfort and joy in its promises.

Come follow me, the Savior said, so you do follow Him, today in the darkness of the valley of death, to the green pastures and still waters of heaven.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.