

# Minster Bethel Congregational Church (MBCC)

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11/04/2021 -- Disciples in Question

## Judas



Next week is our zoom

"Church & Chat"

A short church reflection with a hymn, reading, (children's activity), prayer, "thought for the week" and then a time to chat. If you need help to join please ask any deacon

Join us next week at 10 am:

Topic: Church and Chat

Time: This is a recurring meeting

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/75124173520?pwd=QVB4WUx6QXg3Y3hQc1NQYkxINmozZz09>

Meeting ID: 751 2417 3520

Passcode: Bethel2021

All lockdown services can be found at: [www.mbccs.co.uk](http://www.mbccs.co.uk)

Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me.  
Psalm 41:9

**Good morning and welcome to this week's thoughts.**

Our first hymn for today is: "In Christ Alone."

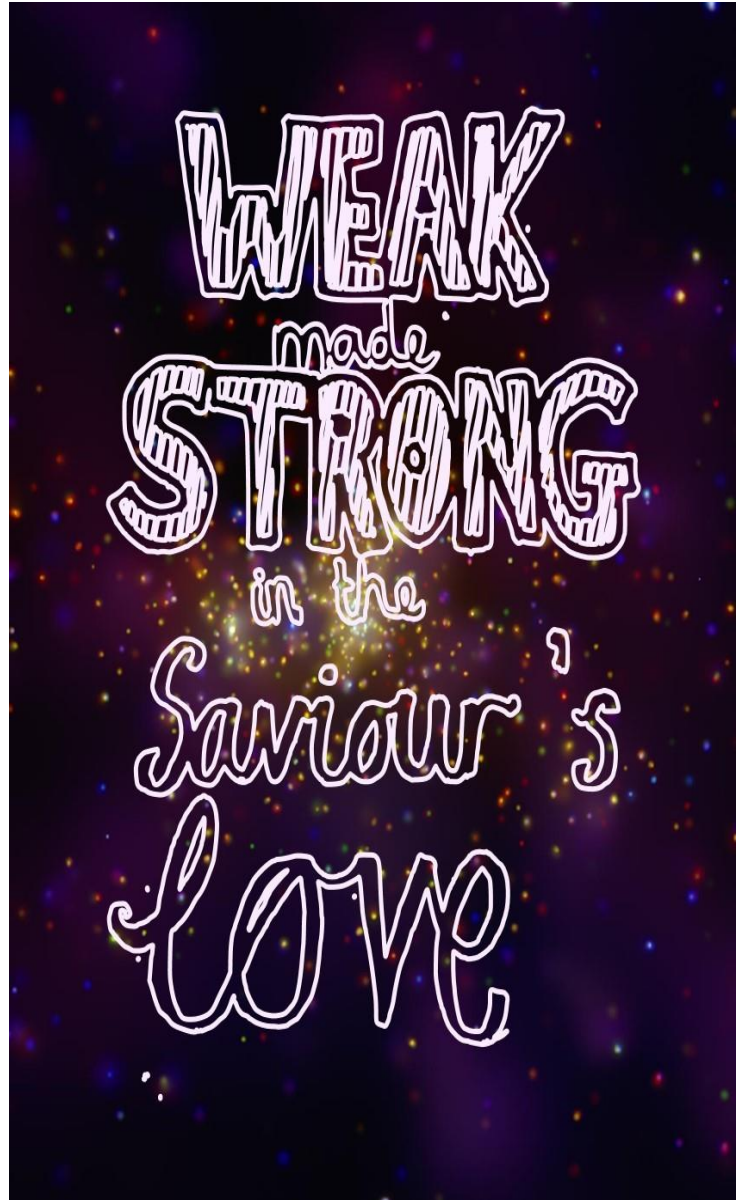
[In Christ Alone \(Official Lyric Video\) - Keith & Kristyn Getty, Alison Krauss - YouTube](#)

In Christ alone my hope is found  
He is my light, my strength, my song  
This cornerstone, this solid ground  
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm  
What heights of love, what depths of peace  
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease  
My comforter, my all in all  
Here in the love of Christ I stand

In Christ alone who took on flesh  
Fullness of God in helpless babe  
This gift of love and righteousness  
Scorned by the ones He came to save  
Till on that cross as Jesus died  
The wrath of God was satisfied  
For every sin on Him was laid  
Here in the death of Christ I live

There in the ground His body lay  
Light of the world by darkness slain  
Then bursting forth in glorious day  
Up from the grave He rose again  
And as He stands in victory  
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me  
For I am His and He is mine  
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life, no fear in death  
This is the power of Christ in me  
From life's first cry to final breath  
Jesus commands my destiny  
No power of hell, no scheme of man  
Can ever pluck me from His hand  
Till He returns or calls me home  
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand



**The reading today is Matthew 26** [Matthew 26 NIVUK - The plot against Jesus - When Jesus had - Bible Gateway](#)



## **The Great Simnel Cake Question**

Last week on Easter Sunday I was offered simnel cake and was asked if I thought it should be 12 or 11 decorative balls. I said twelve as there were twelve disciples. However, this was followed with “do you disagree with Mary Berry, she says eleven as we exclude Judas”.

This has had me thinking all week about Judas and his role in the history of our Christian faith.

There are many stories and myths linked to the simnel cake and a rich history, but traditionally, the top of the cake includes 11 or 12 marzipan balls to represent the 12 apostles – that is, 11 if you exclude Judas.

My immediate thought was without Judas there would not be the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ and therefore no Christian faith. Many in the conversation thought that there should only be the 11 disciples represented on the cake but I in my strong headed way stood firm with my wish for him to be included as a significant part of our Faith.

This has had me thinking this week about what we know about Judas and his discipleship? Why would Jesus let someone into His inner circle who He knew would betray Him? How could Judas walk with Jesus for three years and then sell Him out?”

We do know however, that Judas played a key role in God’s redemption of the world through Jesus Christ.

During this week I have found three things that I want to share about Judas:

### **1. Jesus knew exactly who Judas was.**

The Bible gives no information about Judas’ life before he became a disciple other than identifying him as “the son of Simon Iscariot” (John 13:26). We don’t know how he met Jesus or what he was doing when Jesus called him to be a disciple. What we do know is that Jesus did call Judas, and that Jesus knew exactly what He was doing.

Nothing about Judas surprised Jesus. Jesus told His disciples, “Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.” (John 6:70).

Jesus was not caught off guard by Judas. He was not fooled or deceived by him. As Jesus washed the disciples’ feet at the Last Supper, He called them “clean”—all except for one (John 13:10-11).

Jesus knew that Judas, would soon betray Him, and Jesus had known it all along.

Jesus knew God’s plan. He knew it would take Him to the cross, and He knew that Judas would be a key player in getting Him there. This is one of many examples of Jesus’s commitment to carry out God’s plan all the way to the end, even though He knew it would involve betrayal, rejection, and suffering.

### **2. Judas’s betrayal was a part of God’s plan.**

This is a really complex notion that God’s sovereignty and our free will can work together. God didn’t make Judas greedy and selfish. He didn’t send Judas to the Romans to make a deal to bring Jesus to them. Judas made those choices himself.

But God had known from the beginning of time what Judas would do, and He used it as part of His rescue plan to save the world from sin.

Shortly after Jesus ascended into heaven, Peter said, “Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry” (Acts 1:16-17).

Peter was referring to the Psalms written over 1,000 years before Jesus was born. King David had said, “Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me” (Psalm 41:9). David was writing about his own circumstances, but as a prophet, he was also penning the words that Jesus would one day speak about Judas (John 13:18).

Judas’ betrayal was part of God’s plan all along.

Judas didn’t have to sin. He could have made a different choice. God wasn’t controlling him; Satan was (John 13:24-27). But as Joseph said way back in Genesis, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Genesis 50:20).

It is amazing that God can use sin and betrayal for His saving purposes.

### **3. Judas was and acted like a disciple, but his heart was never changed.**

We know that there’s a difference between acting like a follower of Christ and actually *being* a follower of Christ. This may be the most important lesson we learn from Judas.

God had known from the beginning of time what Judas would do, and He used it as part of His rescue plan to save the world from sin.

Judas travelled with Jesus for at least three years. We can assume he heard all of Jesus’s teaching. He saw Jesus’s miracles. He held the miracle in his own hands when he and the other disciples picked up the leftover bread after Jesus fed the 5,000 (Matthew 14:13-20).

Judas was given “power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases” when Jesus sent out the twelve to proclaim the good news and heal people (Matthew 9:1-6).

He was very much a part of Jesus’ life and ministry. Judas was trusted.

There is no indication that any of the other disciples had any suspicion about Judas. They put him in charge of their money—not something you do with someone you don’t trust. When Jesus said that one of them would betray Him, no one pointed to Judas. He had completely blended in with his fellow disciples.

We don’t know who belongs to God and who’s just going through the motions, blending in, but we do know that God wants our whole hearts.

Going to church doesn’t save us. Reading the Bible and memorizing verses doesn’t save us. It’s making Jesus Lord of our lives that saves and transforms us. God wants real relationship with us—not just appearances. God loves our good deeds, but He wants our wholehearted commitment to Him.

As previously stated, God can use even the most confusing, hurtful, sinful actions of others to bring about His good work.

## Why did Judas betray Jesus?

The bible doesn't answer this question to my knowledge other than to say that Satan entered him (John 13:24-27).

It could have been simple greed. Maybe he was trying to protect himself by getting in good with the Romans. Or maybe he was disillusioned like other Jews who wanted Jesus to lead a revolution that would overthrow their Roman oppressors. We can only hypothesize.

What we do know, though, is that Judas was a means of getting Jesus to the cross. And Jesus' work on the cross is what the Good News is all about. Judas was part of God's great plan for redemption.

God uses even the most confusing, hurtful, sinful actions of others to bring about His good work.

I had more questions and comparisons. I wanted to explore his role of betrayal to that of Peter who we hold in admiration and was "The Rock" to Jesus but continued to deny Jesus 3 times after Jesus had told him he would. Or compare his actions to that of Thomas who doubted that Jesus could have risen.

However, these are questions for another day. Today I started with whether we include or exclude Judas from the top of the Simnel Cake. You may call me strong headed, but I choose to leave him there with the others for his role in God's Plan to save the world from sin.

What is your answer to the question, how many icing balls on top of the Simnel Cake?



## Our closing hymn for today “I have decided to follow Jesus”

[I Have Decided to Follow Jesus ~ Cedarмонт Kids ~ lyric video - YouTube](#)

I have decided to follow Jesus  
I have decided to follow Jesus  
I have decided to follow Jesus  
No turning back, no turning back

Tho' none go with me, I still will follow  
Tho' none go with me, I still will follow  
Tho' none go with me, I still will follow  
No turning back, no turning back

The world behind me, the cross before me  
The world behind me, the cross before me  
The world behind me, the cross before me  
No turning back, no turning back

Will you decide now to follow Jesus?  
Will you decide now to follow Jesus?  
Will you decide now to follow Jesus?  
No turning back, no turning back  
No turning back  
No turning back.



### Today's Pray:

Dear Jesus, we all know we betray you in some way every day and we are ashamed of our weakness. Help us to be strong and to live our lives each day so that we can say, “Not me, Lord. Not today.” We thank you for being able to turn our confusing, hurtful, sinful actions to bring about Your will, Amen.

## Simnel cake



**Preparation time**  
less than 30 mins

**Cooking time**  
1 to 2 hours

**Serves**  
10–12 people

### Ingredients

For the almond paste

- 250g/9oz caster sugar
- 250g/9oz ground almonds
- 2 free-range eggs, beaten
- 1 tsp almond essence

### Ingredients

For the cake

- 175g/6oz butter or margarine, plus extra for greasing
- 175g/6oz soft brown sugar
- 3 free-range eggs, beaten
- 175g/6oz plain flour
- pinch salt
- ½ tsp ground mixed spice (optional)
- 350g/12oz mixed raisins, currants and sultanas
- 55g/2oz chopped mixed peel
- ½ lemon, grated zest only
- 1–2 tbsp apricot jam
- 1 free-range egg, beaten for glazing

### Method

1. For the almond paste, place the sugar and ground almonds in a bowl. Add enough beaten egg and mix to a fairly soft consistency. Add the almond essence and knead for 1 minute until the paste is smooth and pliable. Roll out a third of the almond paste to make a circle 18cm/7in in diameter and reserve the remainder for the cake topping.
2. Preheat oven to 140C/120C Fan/Gas 1. Grease and line a 18cm/7in cake tin.
3. For the cake, cream the butter and sugar together until pale and fluffy. Gradually beat in the eggs until well incorporated and then sift in the flour, salt and mixed spice (if using) a little at a time. Finally, add the mixed dried fruit, peel and grated lemon zest and stir into the mixture.
4. Put half the mixture into the cake tin. Smooth the top and cover with the circle of almond paste. Add the rest of the cake mixture and smooth the top leaving a slight dip in the centre to allow for the cake to rise. Bake in the preheated oven for 1¾ hours. Test by inserting a skewer in the middle – if it comes out clean, it is ready. Once baked, remove from the oven and set aside to cool on a wire rack.
5. Brush the top of the cooled cake with the apricot jam. Divide the remainder of the almond paste in half. Roll out a circle to cover the top of the cake with one half and form 11 small balls with the other half. Place the circle of paste on the jam glaze and set the balls round the edge. Brush the cake topping with a little beaten egg.
6. Preheat the grill to high. Place the cake onto a baking tray and grill for 1–2 minutes, or until the top of the marzipan begins to brown. Alternatively, lightly heat the cake topping using a cook's blowtorch, until the marzipan is golden brown.

