



# SUNDAY SCHOOL APRIL 6, 2025

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## OLD TESTAMENT

### Isaiah 43:16-21

#### *THE LORD GIVES WATER IN THE WILDERNESS*

Thus says the Lord,  
    who makes a way in the sea,  
    a path in the mighty waters,  
who brings out chariot and horse,  
    army and warrior;  
  
they lie down; they cannot rise;  
    they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:  
Do not remember the former things  
    or consider the things of old.  
  
I am about to do a new thing;  
    now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?  
  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
    and rivers in the desert.  
  
The wild animals will honor me,  
    the jackals and the ostriches,  
for I give water in the wilderness,  
    rivers in the desert,  
to give drink to my chosen people,  
    the people whom I formed for myself  
so that they might declare my praise.

#### *OVERVIEW*

Isaiah 43:16–21 is a poetic and prophetic declaration from God, highlighting His power over creation and history. It transitions from a memory of past deliverance (especially the Exodus) to a promise of future transformation. The key message is God’s intent to do a “new thing” — one that surpasses the past miracles and brings renewal, hope, and a fresh identity to His people.

#### *BIBLICAL CONTEXT*

This passage falls in **Second Isaiah (chapters 40–55)** — a section **written to the exiled Israelites during the Babylonian captivity**. These chapters aim to **comfort, encourage, and promise restoration**. Earlier in Isaiah 43, God reminds Israel of His relationship with them, His redemptive acts, and His role as their only Savior. The passage here builds on that by urging the people not to dwell on past glories or traumas but to embrace God's forthcoming act of deliverance and renewal.

Key themes:

- **Redemption** (from exile)
- **Divine providence** (even in barren places)
- **New creation** (echoing Genesis language)
- **God’s sovereignty over nature and nations**



### HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

This passage was likely written **during the late 6th century BCE**, when the Israelites were in **Babylonian exile (587–538 BCE)** after Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians under **King Nebuchadnezzar II**. Politically, Babylon was the dominant superpower. However, during this time, **Persia under Cyrus the Great** was rising. Isaiah 45 later refers to Cyrus as God's anointed, the one who will help free the Jews.

This context makes the promise of “a new thing” radical: it implies the downfall of Babylon, the rise of Persia, and the end of exile — ideas that seemed impossible to those suffering in a foreign land.

Additionally, the reference to “a way in the sea” alludes to the **Exodus** — a story of liberation from Egypt — while suggesting something even greater is on the horizon.

### HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

Event/Period	Approximate Date
First Isaiah (Chapters 1–39)	~740–700 BCE
Destruction of Jerusalem	587 BCE
Babylonian Exile	587–538 BCE
Rise of Cyrus of Persia	Began ~550 BCE
Likely writing of this text	~540 BCE (pre-538 BCE)
Persian conquest of Babylon	539 BCE
Edict of Cyrus (return)	538 BCE

### SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION & MODERN-DAY CONTEXT

#### Metaphorical Themes:

- **“Do not remember the former things”** – Letting go of the past, whether painful or glorious, is key to receiving what God is doing now.
- **“A way in the wilderness” / “Rivers in the desert”** – These symbolize **hope in barren times, life in dry places, and unexpected renewal** in desolation.
- **“New thing”** – This represents transformation, both communal and personal. It is a *creative act* from God that redefines reality.

#### Modern-Day Context:

- **Personal growth:** Many people cling to past hurts or achievements. This passage encourages openness to healing, growth, and transformation, even when it seems unlikely.
- **Societal hope:** In times of war, division, or climate crisis, this message of renewal feels deeply relevant. God's promise suggests justice and restoration are possible even in bleak circumstances.
- **Church life:** For congregations facing decline or transition, this can be a rallying cry to embrace new expressions of faith, outreach, or community engagement.

This passage is often invoked in **New Year’s messages, recovery ministries, or social justice movements** to highlight God’s power to bring change in impossible situations.



## SUMMARY

Isaiah 43:16–21 reminds the Israelites that while God has acted powerfully in the past (like parting the sea during the Exodus), they should not dwell on that past. Instead, God is preparing to do something new — something just as miraculous and transformative: renewal in the wilderness and abundance in the desert. Even nature itself will respond with awe. This new act of deliverance, rooted in divine love and power, is not only for the survival of the people but so that they might live lives of praise and purpose.



## NEW TESTAMENT (GOSPEL)

### John 12:1-8

#### MARY ANOINTS JESUS FOR HIS BURIAL

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him.

Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus's feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?"

(He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.)

Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

#### OVERVIEW

This passage recounts a tender and symbolically rich moment in Jesus' final days before his crucifixion. Six days before the Passover, Jesus visits Lazarus' household in Bethany. During a dinner, **Mary (sister of Lazarus)** anoints Jesus' feet with **expensive perfume** and wipes them with her hair—an act of love, humility, and perhaps prophetic insight. **Judas Iscariot objects, under the pretense of concern for the poor.** Jesus responds by affirming Mary's actions as preparation for his burial.

#### BIBLICAL CONTEXT

- **Placement in John:** This passage occurs right before Jesus' **triumphal entry into Jerusalem** (John 12:12–19). **It follows the raising of Lazarus (John 11), a pivotal miracle that triggers the growing hostility of religious authorities toward Jesus.**
- **Mary and Martha:** This is one of three significant gospel episodes involving Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Mary's actions often reflect contemplation, while Martha's reflect service (cf. Luke 10:38–42).
- **Anointing Traditions:** All four gospels feature an anointing of Jesus by a woman (see Matthew 26:6–13, Mark 14:3–9, and Luke 7:36–50). John's version is unique in naming Mary and in emphasizing the preparation for burial.

#### HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

- **Economic disparity** was sharp in first-century Palestine under Roman occupation. **Perfume such as nard (spikenard) was extremely rare and costly, imported from India.**
- **Burial customs** involved anointing the body with spices and perfumes to honor the dead and combat the odor of decomposition—Mary's act foreshadows this.
- **Hospitality culture:** In Jewish society, hosting a meal and caring for guests' feet were significant acts of honor and service.
- **Political tension** was rising. The religious authorities saw Jesus as a growing threat (John 11:47–53). **His presence in Bethany was both spiritually meaningful and politically risky.**



## HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **Approximate date of event:** ~30 CE, during the final week of Jesus' life.
- **Chronological setting:** *Six days before Passover*, which places this event on the **Saturday before Palm Sunday**.
- **John's Gospel** was likely written around 90–100 CE, so this story was shaped for a community already reflecting on Jesus' death and resurrection decades later.

## SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION & MODERN-DAY CONTEXT

- **Mary's anointing as prophetic:** Scholars see Mary as performing a **prophetic act**, recognizing Jesus' imminent death. Her use of perfume—often reserved for kings or burial—acknowledges both Jesus' divine kingship and his mortality.
- **Contrast between love and hypocrisy:** Judas, who feigns concern for the poor, symbolizes **false piety and hidden motives**. In contrast, Mary represents **true discipleship**, characterized by costly love and vulnerable expression.

### Modern Day Context:

- Mary's extravagant devotion challenges **utilitarian thinking** that values efficiency over love or symbolic acts.
- The passage also forces modern readers to consider **how we critique others' offerings**—do we dismiss them as "wasteful" when they are acts of love or worship?
- Jesus' statement "you always have the poor with you" is often misused to minimize social justice, but scholars clarify that Jesus is **quoting Deuteronomy 15:11**, which *commands generosity* to the poor. The implication is that care for the poor must **remain constant**, not be pitted against acts of devotion.
- This story raises questions about **how we balance worship and service**, or inward devotion versus outward activism.

## SUMMARY

In John 12:1–8, Mary anoints Jesus' feet with expensive perfume in a profound act of love, sacrifice, and insight into his approaching death. Judas, who would later betray Jesus, questions the act's value under the guise of helping the poor. Jesus defends Mary, emphasizing the spiritual importance of her actions as a preparation for his burial. This passage serves as a theological turning point, foreshadowing the cross and highlighting the tensions between genuine discipleship and superficial religious concern. For modern readers, it challenges assumptions about value, generosity, and how we honor both Christ and the marginalized.



## ADDENDUM

### The Motives Lesson (Tom's Rabbit Holes)

If you're expecting something in return for doing something good or for someone (or some "thing"), then what is your motive?

Are people doing good JUST so they can get to heaven?

Then, if so, what is Grace?

This **thinking deeply about the nature of faith, grace, and human motivation**, are core to spiritual maturity and helping others.

Let's trace that rabbit trail a bit, because it connects with our scripture today.

### GOOD DEEDS ARE NOT TRANSACTIONAL

That phrase is something I've referred to before.

- **Transactional giving** says: *"If I do this, I get that."* (Even if it's a simple thank you. It should not matter.) Please, do not expect anything in return. If we do, not only is our gift no longer a gift, but we are setting ourselves up for disappointments.
- **Transformational giving** says: *"I do this because love has already changed me."*

The moment we treat kindness or generosity as a form of **spiritual** or **cosmic bartering**, we've missed the heart of it. Jesus **called out this mindset** ... from the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-22) to the Pharisees who gave publicly for recognition (Matthew 6:1-4).

#### Mark 10:17-22

*As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"*

*Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."*

*When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.*

**This moment reveals that Jesus isn't just focused on external obedience (the man claims to have kept all the commandments), but is inviting a heart transformation ... freedom from attachment and deeper trust.**

#### Matthew 6:1-4

*"Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.*

*"So, whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others.*

*"Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.*



*“But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”*

**This passage is part of the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus critiques external religiosity without inward sincerity.**

### *DOING GOOD JUST TO GET TO HEAVEN?*

That’s a powerful tension.

- Some people **view salvation like a rewards program**: rack up points, cash in for eternity.
- But Jesus seems more interested in **who we’re becoming**, not just what we’re doing.
- Think of the **Sheep and the Goats** in Matthew 25: Jesus praises those who cared for the poor and imprisoned, but they’re **surprised** by the reward. They didn’t know they were doing it *for him*—they were just doing it out of love.

*If our good deeds are driven by fear or self-preservation, are they really good—or are they just self-serving in a different costume?*

### *What is Grace?*

I still get caught up with Grace ... doesn't Grace save everyone, then heaven would cleanse even the evil?

That’s a vulnerable question, and we’re not alone in wrestling with it. Honestly, I feel *this is the heart of the whole faith journey*:

- **What is grace really capable of?**
- **Where does it begin and end?**
- **Can anything resist it forever?**

Let’s break this down with care, both theologically and spiritually. This will circle the mystery of salvation, grace, transformation, and eternal destiny—and there’s *room for holy wondering here*.

### *DOES GRACE SAVE EVERYONE?*

***Short Answer: Grace is sufficient for everyone, but not all accept it.***

**But ... Long Answer? Much more complex:**

#### **1. Grace Is Radical and Unconditional**

- *Romans 5:8: “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*
- **Grace is not a reward; it’s a gift.** It reaches out before we even know we need it.
- And in some traditions (especially Wesleyan/Methodist), there’s a concept of **Prevenient Grace** ... grace that *goes before* us, nudging, whispering, inviting.

#### **2. But Not Everyone Responds to Grace**

- Scripture also warns of people **hardening their hearts** (Hebrews 3:8).
- So, some theologians argue that **God respects our free will** so deeply that He won’t force grace upon us.
- This is where the idea of rejecting transformation comes in—**not that God’s grace isn’t enough**, but that **we can tragically walk away from it**.



### BUT WHAT IF HEAVEN ITSELF IS TRANSFORMATIVE?

If someone enters God's presence—even reluctantly—**wouldn't they be transformed by that encounter?**

**That view is not without precedent:**

- C.S. Lewis's **The Great Divorce** imagines souls given a second chance ... offered heaven, but struggling to let go of their pride, anger, or shame.
- **Eastern Orthodox theology** holds a beautiful idea: that *"the fire of judgment is the same as the light of God's love."* The difference is how we receive it.
- Some Christian universalists believe **grace eventually wins everyone**, even if it takes ages beyond death.

So maybe this instinct isn't just conjecture, but a reflection of a **deep spiritual hope** baked into the heart of Christianity: That **love wins**, that **God is patient**, and that **heaven doesn't just reward the righteous—it heals the broken.**

### WHAT ABOUT JUSTICE?

It's the tough balance, right? If everyone is saved eventually, **what about justice** for those who caused harm and never repented?

That's where some theologians say: *Grace doesn't erase accountability—it transforms it.*

- Think of **Paul**—once a violent persecutor, now a vessel of grace.
- Or the **thief on the cross**, who didn't make it up to anyone, but turned toward Jesus in the end.

### THE THIEF ON THE CROSS

This is one of the most powerful and tender moments in all of Scripture. It's a small scene, but it holds massive theological and emotional weight, especially when we talk about grace, salvation, heaven, and transformation.

#### The Story: Luke 23:32–43

Two others, both criminals, were led out to be executed with Jesus.

One of the criminals mocked Jesus: *"Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"*

But the other criminal rebuked him, saying: *"Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."*

Then he said, *"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."*

Jesus replied: *"Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."*

#### What We Know About the Thief

- He's **unnamed** in the text, but later traditions call him **Dismas** (the "Good Thief").
- He's being **crucified**—a punishment for the worst crimes in the Roman world.
- He **acknowledges his guilt** and the injustice of Jesus' execution.
- He makes a **simple, honest plea**: *"Remember me."*
- And Jesus doesn't just forgive him ... He promises **immediate paradise**.



## Why This Moment Matters

1. Grace, Not Works (Moral behavior, Acts of Service, Obedient to Law, Religious Practices)

The thief did **nothing to earn salvation**:

- No baptism
- No good works
- No altar call
- No church membership

And yet, Jesus says, *"Today you will be with me in paradise."*

**This is grace in its purest form: a gift, not a transaction.**

2. A Last-Minute Turn Is Enough

This man turned to Jesus in the **final moments of his life**. That unsettles some people, but it also shows the **open-ended invitation of grace**.

**God's mercy doesn't expire on a clock. Even the dying and broken are not beyond redemption.**

3. Heaven as Presence, Not Just a Place

Jesus says: *"Today you will be with **me** in paradise."*

Notice the promise is not just *"you'll go to heaven,"* but *"you'll be with me."*

**The emphasis is on relationship, not real estate. Being "saved" is ultimately about being in union with Christ.**

4. The "Good Thief" As Archetype

Many theologians and artists see him as a kind of prototype of the saved soul:

- He represents the one who **awakens to truth at the last moment**.
- He models **humble confession, honest faith, and hope in Christ**.
- And he stands in contrast to the mocking thief—the one who **rejects grace even in death**.

## Modern Reflections

- This story unsettles people who want fairness: *"How can he just get in at the last second?"*
- **But grace isn't fair—it's generous.**
- It offers **hope** for loved ones we fear might've been "too far gone."
- It also challenges us to rethink **how we judge who is "in" or "out."**
  - **The religious leaders mocked Jesus, but a criminal saw his truth.**

## Fun Fact: Christian Art and the Crosses

In many early paintings and crucifixes:

- Jesus is in the center.
- The **repentant thief (Dismas)** is on **Jesus' right**.



- The **unrepentant thief (Gestas)** is on **Jesus' left**.

This gave rise to the symbolic idea that the “**right hand of Jesus**” is the place of blessing and mercy.



**Side Note:** I had thought that all crucifixions were nails, but the research I found indicates that both ropes and nails were used, with nails leading to the quickest death (loss of blood) and most brutal, but the ropes gave the most prolonged agony. Scripture does not say how Dismas and Gestas were crucified, just that they were.

#### *WHAT THIS ALL COMES BACK TO*

**Can grace reach even the most resistant heart?**

**And can heaven—pure presence, pure love—cleanse even the most wounded soul?**

There's mystery here, but here's the hope:

*“If grace is as powerful as we say it is, then yes ... it can transform anyone, anywhere, anytime—even on the threshold of eternity.”*

#### What Is Salvation?

##### *SALVATION AS MORE THAN “GETTING TO HEAVEN”*

Most people equate salvation with “*getting into heaven after you die*”, but biblically and theologically, it's **so much more holistic**:

- In the Greek, “*salvation*” (σῶζω, *sōzō*) means **to heal, to rescue, to make whole**.
- **Salvation is not just *post-death insurance* ... it's a *present transformation*.**  
**Think: freedom from sin, restored relationship with God, and a new way of living.**



*“Salvation is not just about where you go when you die—it’s about who you are while you’re alive.”*

#### IS SALVATION A MOMENT OR A JOURNEY?

- Some traditions emphasize a **“moment”**—you “get saved.”
- Others see it as a **lifelong process** (“work out your salvation with fear and trembling” – *Philippians 2:12*).
- Most biblical models show both: a **beginning point of surrender**, and a **lifelong path of transformation**.

#### WHO DOES THE SAVING?

- Spoiler: **Not us.**
- This is where **grace** returns front and center. We don’t earn salvation ... we receive it.
- Our “yes” to God is a **response**, not an achievement.

#### Are Both Good and Bad People in Heaven?

Now we’re getting into the deep mystery of **judgment, mercy, and the nature of grace**.

- Who gets to decide who is “good” or “bad”?
- Jesus consistently flips the script:
  - The **tax collector** goes home justified, not the “righteous” Pharisee (Luke 18:9–14).
  - The **thief on the cross** enters paradise (Luke 23:43).
  - The **elder brother** in the prodigal story, who *did everything right*, ends up outside the party.

*“If heaven is only for the “good,” we better be ready for some surprises—because Jesus seemed much more interested in the humble than the rule-keepers.”*

#### HEAVEN IS FOR THE REDEEMED, NOT JUST THE GOOD

- No one is good enough on their own. That’s the whole reason **grace exists**.
- Heaven, in Christian theology, isn’t a prize for the well-behaved—it’s the **presence of God**, shared with those who have been **made new** through Christ.

#### WHAT ABOUT JUSTICE?

- Many wrestle with: “Do really evil people get to be in heaven too?”
- Here’s where **God’s mercy and justice** intersect.
- In other words: **Heaven is open—but not everyone wants it.**  
Some choose pride, anger, or self over surrender.

#### ARE “BAD” PEOPLE IN HEAVEN?

- I say “Yes,” if they’ve been **redeemed**—because heaven isn’t about moral achievement.
- I say “No,” if they reject the transformation God offers.
- Which means **“bad people” may surprise us in heaven**, and **“good people” might miss it if their goodness was self-righteous armor**.



## Opie's Charity

This Andy Griffith episode is a *classic*, and it's one of the most **gentle-yet-profound moral lessons** in *The Andy Griffith Show*. The episode you're talking about is called “**Opie's Charity**” (Season 1, Episode 8); and it ties into our lesson today.

### Plot Summary:

Andy gets upset when Opie only donates **three cents** to a school charity drive. He lectures Opie about giving generously and doing the right thing. But later, Andy finds out that Opie wasn't being stingy—he was **saving up to buy a coat** for a little girl whose family couldn't afford one.

### The Moral Hits Hard:

Andy realizes that he judged the act without understanding the heart behind it. Sound familiar? It echoes exactly what we were talking about with motives, grace, and Jesus focusing on the “why.” Additionally, what was Andy's motive? He wanted to be viewed for having a child that was so generous based on his interpretation and how it reflected on him.

### Spiritual Reflection:

It's like the modern parable version of:

- The **widow's mite** (Mark 12:41–44)
- Or **Matthew 6:1–4**: *"Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so your giving may be in secret..."*

Opie wasn't giving publicly to be praised—he was sacrificing privately to love someone.

The closing line is a gem—humble, heartfelt, and classic Andy Griffith wisdom wrapped in a touch of humor. The line goes something like:

**“Opie'll be eatin' fried chicken ... and I'll be eatin' crow.”**

It's one of those perfectly understated moments that gets you right in the gut—funny, but with just enough self-awareness and grace to be deeply human. Andy, realizing he got it wrong, but doing so with humility and humor? That's a teachable spirit if there ever was one.

### How it Ties In:

- Just like **Judas misjudged Mary's gift**, Andy misjudged Opie's heart. And, was Andy's reasons pure, or for his benefit ... how Opie's actions reflected on him.
- Just like **Jesus defended Mary's hidden motive**, the episode reveals **Opie's quiet generosity**.
- And just like Andy eats crow, we're all reminded that sometimes the ones we think need correcting are actually teaching *us* what love looks like.



## Did Judas Repent?

What a powerful and often overlooked question. Did Judas repent? The answer is layered, complicated, and deeply human. Let's walk through it carefully, biblically, and compassionately.

### WHAT SCRIPTURE SAYS ABOUT JUDAS AFTER THE BETRAYAL

#### 1. Matthew 27:3–5 (NRSV)

*“When Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. He said, ‘I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.’ But they said, ‘What is that to us? See to it yourself.’ Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and he went and hanged himself.”*

**Key words:** *He repented.* (The Greek word used here is **metamelētheis**—which means *to feel regret or remorse.*)

#### 2. Acts 1:18–20 (a different version of Judas's death)

Luke describes Judas buying a field with the blood money, then falling and dying gruesomely. This version doesn't mention repentance—likely because the focus is on **Peter explaining why a new apostle is needed** to replace Judas.

### SO DID JUDAS REALLY REPENT?

**Yes, in the sense of remorse and confession**

- He **acknowledges his sin**: *“I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.”*
- He **tries to return the money**—literally trying to undo the deal.
- He is **overcome with grief**.

**But was it repentance in the full redemptive sense?**

That's where it gets harder to say.

- Judas's response leads him to **despair and death**, not reconciliation or transformation.
- He didn't turn back to Jesus or to the community of disciples—he tried to solve it himself.
- **Peter also betrayed Jesus** (denied Him three times) but was restored through an encounter with the risen Christ (John 21). Judas **didn't live long enough to experience that possibility**.

### IS THERE GRACE FOR JUDAS?

This is the deeper spiritual question—and many have wrestled with it. Some perspectives:

#### 1. Traditional View: Condemnation

Based on Jesus saying *“It would be better for him if he had never been born”* (Mark 14:21), many conclude Judas was damned.

Revelation speaks of names not written in the Book of Life, which some apply to Judas.

#### 2. Alternative View: Tragic but Redeemable



Some theologians and writers (like **Karl Barth**, **Fyodor Dostoevsky**, even **Pope Francis**) have hinted at **hope for Judas**.

They ask: *If God's grace can reach Peter, Paul, and the thief on the cross, could it not reach Judas—even in his final moments?*

### **METAPHORICAL/THEOLOGICAL ANGLE**

Judas represents the **tragic human struggle with guilt and shame**:

- What do we do after we fail?
- Do we isolate and self-destruct (Judas)?
- Or do we weep, wait, and receive grace (Peter)?

Judas may have felt remorse, but he **couldn't imagine he was still lovable**. That's the heartbreak. Not that he sinned—but that he **believed his failure was beyond forgiveness**.

### **CONCLUSION**

Scripture shows us that Judas felt deep remorse. He confessed his sin, gave back the silver, and was overwhelmed with grief.

Whether that remorse was true repentance in a spiritual sense, we can't say for sure. But perhaps the deeper lesson is about how we respond to our own failures.

Do we run from grace, or trust that even our darkest moments are not too much for God's love?

## **Judas: The Necessary Betrayer?**

### **1. PROPHETIC FULFILLMENT**

Jesus repeatedly references the Scriptures being fulfilled:

*"The Son of Man goes as it is written of him..."* (Mark 14:21)

- Psalm 41:9 says: *"Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me."*
- Judas's betrayal is framed as a **fulfillment of prophecy**, placing him in a role that was—mysteriously—*already anticipated*.

### **2. NO CROSS WITHOUT JUDAS?**

- The betrayal sets in motion the **chain of events leading to the crucifixion**.
- Without that betrayal, Jesus might not have been arrested that night in the garden... and **the path to the cross**, and resurrection, may have unfolded differently—or not at all.

***So, in a theological sense, Judas is a necessary part of the redemption narrative.***

### **WAS JUDAS A PAWN? OR RESPONSIBLE?**

Here's where the tension lies:

- **If God needed Judas to betray Jesus**, was Judas *destined* to be condemned?
- Or did Judas *choose* betrayal, and God wove that into the redemptive plan?

This gets into the deep mystery of:

- **God's sovereignty vs. human free will**



- **Foreknowledge vs. coercion**

Most thoughtful theologians land somewhere like this:

**God can work through even our worst choices—but that doesn't mean He forces them.**

Judas *chose* betrayal—but God used it to accomplish something far bigger than Judas could ever imagine.

## Redemption Through the Betrayer?

Here's a stunning thought some theologians have entertained:

**What if Judas wasn't just a tragic figure—but ultimately a redeemer, in his own way?**

He played the hardest part in the story:

- Not beloved disciple
- Not denier-turned-preacher like Peter
- But the one who handed Jesus over

And yet—without him:

- No garden.
- No arrest.
- No cross.
- No resurrection.
- No redemption.

**Where would we be without Judas?**

And if God can **use Judas**, maybe God can use even **our betrayals, our failures, and our deepest regrets** for something redemptive too.

*Overall, just a lot to think about.*