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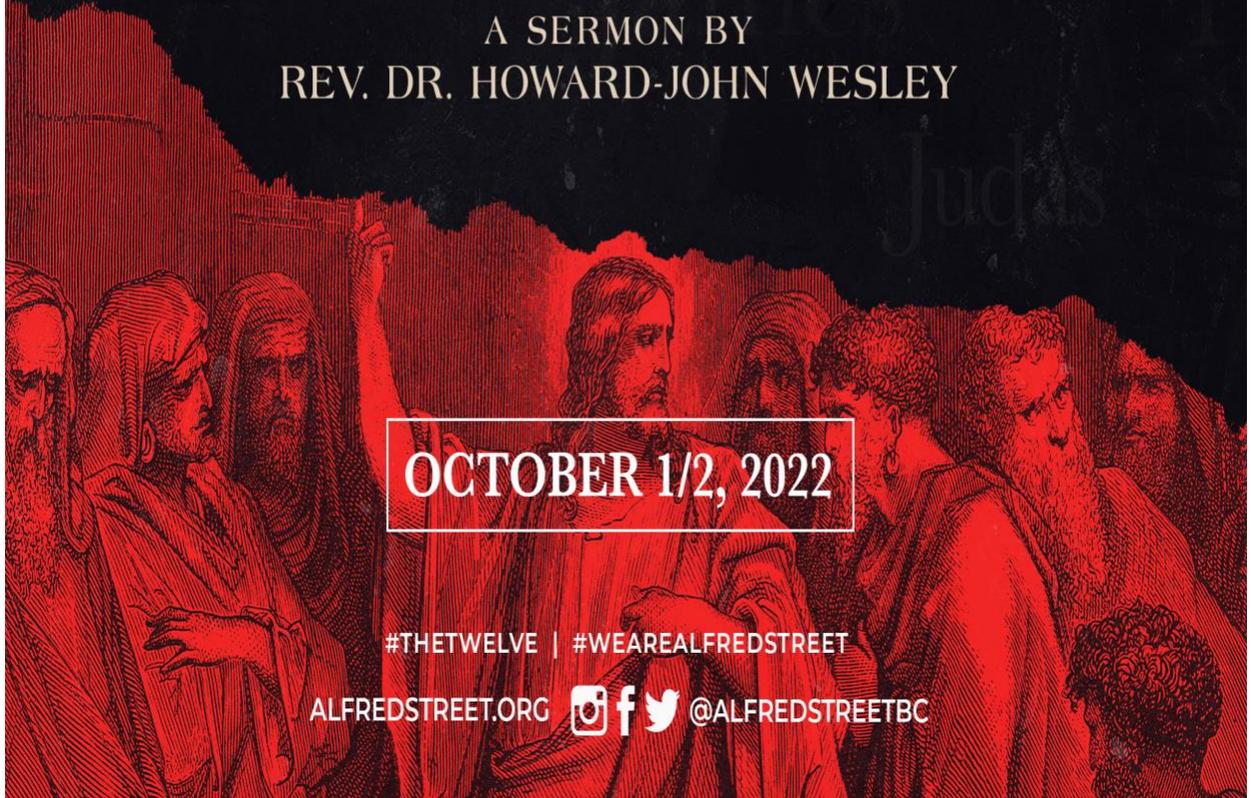
AND JUDAS



PART 1

MATTHEW 9:35-10:4

A SERMON BY
REV. DR. HOWARD-JOHN WESLEY



OCTOBER 1/2, 2022

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Date: October 1 - 2, 2022
Preacher: Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley
Sermon Title: "And Judas!"
Scripture: Matthew 9:35 - 10:4 (NIV)

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

SERMON SUMMARY:

The calling of the twelve, in the Gospel of Matthew, is the beginning point for this weekend's sermon. It is also the opening of a sermon series focused on the disciples selected by Jesus to follow and obey him.

In Matthew chapter nine, Jesus invites the disciples to ask the Lord of the Harvest to send laborers into the fields. This is because the harvest is ready, but, the laborers are few. Pastor Wesley notes that the work ahead of the disciples is much larger than they can accomplish individually. In fact, God's assignment in each of the disciples' lives, and in our lives, is greater than can be accomplished alone. In this text, Jesus, the Savior of the world, models before the disciples the importance of asking for help. Pastor Wesley makes the point that everyone needs to ask for help, to bring others alongside, in order to accomplish the work of the Kingdom. This realization reminds both ancient and modern-day disciples to create productive partnerships.

Despite the need to be in partnership, Pastor points out that seeking productive partners does not mean gathering a crowd around you. Crowds can never confirm God's purpose for our lives. In fact, crowds will include a "Judas", someone who wants to be part of the organization, but never gives it their heart. Judas can also be someone who joins to see what they can get. Pastor offers a word of caution that though the Judas' in our lives are trouble and choose to never live into the fullness of God's plan for them, they are inevitable and necessary. The Judas' around us can push us toward our crosses, point us in the direction of God's glory, and provide clarity on God's calling on in our lives.

As we create powerful, productive partnerships, we **will** encounter Judas. But, we must not let Judas erase the good of others or stop us from seeking out the “somebodies” that God has purposed to help us. We must not allow Judas to deter us from God’s plan for our lives. We are able to do this because the power of the Judas’ in our lives is never greater than God’s blessing over our lives. In the life of the believer, there is always an answer to the crowd and to the Judas’ in the crowd. That answer is, “And God!”

KEY POINTS:

1. It is necessary to have the right people in your life.
2. The six categories of people described in the gospels are:
 - a. The **Crowd** - those who were fascinated by Jesus and desired to benefit from him.
 - b. The **Disciples** - those who were committed to follow him.
 - c. The **Twelve** - those who were chosen, by name, by Jesus.
 - d. The **Apostles** - those who were confirmed by the Holy Spirit to receive power and an assignment to go out into the world to share the gospel.
 - e. The **Inner Circle** - Peter, James, and John were the three closest to Jesus in his ministry.
 - f. The **Beloved Disciple** - John. The only one of the disciples who was named as present at the cross.
3. Not everyone who is in the crowd moves up to be a disciple. Not all disciples are chosen to be one of the twelve. Not all of the twelve become Apostles. Many people come into our lives, but everyone is not suited to move through all levels of relationships. God places boundaries around some people to help us determine the difference between the “somebody’s” necessary to our lives and the “everybody’s” who are not.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU QUESTIONS:

1. Today’s scripture says, *When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.* When you look out across our world today, what causes you to feel the emotion of compassion? Why?
2. The six distinct categories of people identified in the Gospels are noted in the Key Points above. Where do you fall in these categories? Is there a story you can share about moving from one category to another?

INTO THE BIBLE QUESTIONS:

1. Pastor Wesley states that “God’s assignment for our lives is bigger than our ability.” He uses the second chapter of Genesis and the story of Adam as an example. By the end of Genesis, chapter 2, God notes that Adam needs help. Where else in the Bible is it evident that the person’s assignment is greater than their level of ability and that they need help? What biblical partnerships inspire you to have better relationships?
2. Pastor Wesley makes a point that Eve is not created to serve Adam, instead, Eve is created to help Adam fulfill God’s assignment for humanity. In Genesis 2:18, the word used to describe Eve is “help meet”. In Hebrew, the word for help meet is ‘ezer. This same word is used to describe God’s help in several places in the Bible (cf. Deut 33:26, Psalm 33:20, Hosea 13:9). How does this understanding of the word *help meet*, shift your understanding of Eve’s role as well as Adam and Eve’s partnership?

***Village Members and Facilitators,
The Curriculum Team does not expect you to cover all the questions. We ask the
facilitators to choose the best questions, in each section, for your Village.***

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Pastor Wesley says, “I am committed to living life to its fullest.”
 - a. In what ways are you committed to living life to its fullest?
 - b. What hindrances do you face that make it difficult for you to live your best life?
 - c. What scriptures and/or which of God’s promises inform you as to what your best life is?
2. As we travel life’s journey, relationships with some people may change or cease to exist. Reflect on some of the relationship changes in your life. Are there any people you have tried to place in a role in your life to which they were not called? If so, what did you do after you recognized the incongruence?
 - a. How do we release our dreams for other people when it is clear that is not the dream they hold or that God holds for them?
3. According to Pastor Wesley, Howard Thurman suggests that life boils down to two questions, “Where am I going?” and “Who’s going with me?”. Another favorite author of our Pastor, Leonard Sweet, posits, “You need other people to get the job done.” How do we discern those few who are ordained for our lives from the crowd? How does God’s purpose for us shape our decisions about relationships?

4. Pastor Wesley reminds us that the closer Jesus came to his purpose on Calvary, the smaller his circle became. Do you see evidence in your life that you are moving closer to your purpose? If so, how does this perspective change the way you process the loss of relationships in your life?
5. Pastor Wesley states in his sermon that you don't need everybody. Are you willing to relinquish the people in your life that you know aren't good for you? How do you set up boundaries in your life to separate yourself from the "everybody's"? How did you learn to do this?

"CAN I PUSH IT?" QUESTIONS:

1. Reflecting on leadership in churches, where have you seen healthy models of partnership? Where do you hope to see more? What is the cost when healthy models of church partnership are absent?
2. Modern culture often views a request for help as a weakness. However, this weekend's sermon suggests the opposite: that a request for assistance reflects wisdom. What other contemporary cultural positions must the church stand against? What godly wisdom might the church seek to replace these culturally promoted inaccuracies?

ACTIVITY:

1. Pastor Wesley says we all need an "and". Who is your "and"? Who is the person with whom you have formed a positive, productive partnership? Write a prayer thanking God for that person. If you are moved to do so, share the prayer with your "and" person this week.
2. Write a note/craft a vision board to remind yourself about the tasks to which God is calling you. Place this reminder somewhere where you will see it. Each time you do, ask God to guide you on the right path.

SPIRIT WORK:

1. In Matthew 35:37, Jesus says “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.” Reflect on the ways God is calling you to contribute to the work of the kingdom in your church, home, community, or workplace.
2. Pastor Wesley states, “God’s complete assignment for your life is always greater than your human ability to handle it by yourself.” In this season of your life, consider how God has provided necessary help for your assignment. Thank God for those who have come alongside you as help.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Within the structure of Village there are various affinity groups. Each week the team creates questions, especially for the individual groups. However, any village may draw from the questions listed below if the Spirit so moves.

For Married Couples:

1. Pastor Wesley states, “God’s assignment is bigger than your ability.” He also reminds us that after every facet of creation, God says that it was “good,” or that it is sustainable. By the end of chapter 2, God says that Adam being alone is not sustainable. How do you create direction for your marriage so that your relationship is “good” or sustainable?
2. At the end of the creation story, God rests. If God rests, how can we be intentional about ensuring that our resting together enhances our marriages?

For Young Adults:

1. In this world of “likes” and followers, it is easy to believe we have many more friends than we do. How do you respond to the power of social media in your life? What impact does it have on you? What impact would you like it to have?
2. In this sermon Pastor Wesley reminds us that we need “an And” and that we should seek our partners and “somebody’s” to help us achieve our assignments. However, in reaching out, people can be exposed to conflicting perspectives. How do you discern the right people to mentor and guide you along your journey?

For Parents:

1. The model of partnership is important to demonstrate to our children. As you think about the way Jesus seeks partners in his ministry, what attributes and values does he display in reaching out to others? How can we model these attributes and values for our children?
2. At the end of Matthew, chapter 9, Jesus is traveling, teaching, preaching, and healing all diseases. Although He is the Son of God, He acknowledges that He needs help. Similarly, parenting can be a challenging assignment. When you need help, how do you discern when and who to ask for it to achieve your purpose? Do you have a story of asking for help that you would like to share?

For Seniors:

1. At the end of Matthew, chapter 9, Jesus is traveling, teaching, preaching, and healing all diseases. Although He is the Son of God, He acknowledges that He needs help. How might pride or a desire for privacy stop you from asking for help when you know you need it?
2. Pastor Wesley states that in scripture, Jesus calls the names of the disciples and the apostles, and both lists include Judas. Yet, Judas never lives up to the title of an apostle. There will be Judas' in our lives. Who did you place in your circle to fulfill a specific critical role in your life, but they were unable to do so? How did you fill that gap?
 - a. What supports and boundaries can we put in place as our circle gets smaller?

For Women:

1. Pastor Wesley states that, "Nobody really models for us the power, the principles, and the practices of productive relationships more than . . . our savior and our Christ." What is the value of your productive relationships? How do you decide when to prune or when to nurture those relationships, especially with the "And Judas" people?
2. In Matthew 35:37, Jesus says "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few." As women, we often find ourselves feeling overwhelmed with responsibilities. In what ways can you create a community of people to help you navigate the vicissitudes of life?

For Men:

1. Pastor says, the closer Jesus got to Calvary, the smaller his crowd became. When face challenging times, does your crowd grow larger or smaller? Why?
2. As men, we often find it difficult to ask for help. How can we encourage each other to rebuke social norms that prevent us from finding strength in an honest request for help?

For Returning Citizens:

1. Have you ever used the crowd to confirm your purpose, only to find out that the crowd was wrong? What did you learn from that experience?
2. Pastor Wesley reminds us that powerful, positive relationships are important in our lives. What have you done to establish, nurture, and/or repair important relationships in your life?
 - a. What relationships have been most affirming to you as you rebuild your life?

For Differently-Abled Persons/People:

1. At the end of Matthew, chapter 9, Jesus is traveling, teaching, preaching, and healing all diseases. Although He is the Son of God, He acknowledges that He needs help. When one has overcome the stereotype of dependence, seeking help can be difficult. How can we balance independence and dependence, and recognizing that all of us need help sometimes?
2. Pastor says we all need somebody, but no one needs everybody. If you have an inner circle, who is in it? Why did you allow them in? If you do not have an inner circle, what are the characteristics of the people you desire to be included?

REFERENCES FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1. Definitions: While a disciple is a "student", "follower" or "learner." An apostle is a "messenger" or "one who is sent".