

Desire and Destiny

Luke 22:1-23

Human desire is a powerful, motivating force in our lives; for good or for evil. I recall my Dad saying something like this; “Everything in life has its price.” In other words, if you desire something strongly enough you’ll find a way to get it; to meet the price. Proverbs 13:19 says “*A desire fulfilled is sweet to the soul.*” All of us know the truth of that statement.

God created you and me with desires: desires for food, for companionship, for intimacy, for acceptance, and many other things. These desires are all good because God doesn’t make anything that’s not good. The early church leader, Augustine, reminds us that “sin comes when we take a perfectly natural desire or longing or ambition and try desperately to fulfill it without God. Not only is it sin, it is a perverse distortion of the image of the Creator in us. All these good things, and all our security, are rightly found only and completely in him.”

I’m told there’s a courthouse in Ohio that stands in a unique location. Raindrops that fall on the north side of the building go into Lake Ontario and the Gulf of St. Lawrence, while those falling on the south side go into the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. At precisely the point of the peak of the roof, just a gentle puff of wind can determine the destiny of many raindrops. It will make a difference of more than 2,000 miles in their final destination.

Raindrops can’t make choices; but you and I make choices every day. How we deal with our desires can set in motion consequences that change the course of our lives today and affect our eternal destiny. Desire and destiny are closely linked together.

In our study of Luke’s Gospel we move into the opening verses of chapter 22. In this text we’ll notice and contrast the desires of the chief priests and the scribes, the desires of Judas, and the desires of Jesus. We’ll also examine the destiny those desires produce. I’ve title our study “Desire and Destiny.” The text will reinforce the linkage between these two. So listen carefully as I read the text, **Luke 22:1 to 23.**

Our text provides three ILLUSTRATIONS of the relationship between desire and destiny. The illustrations will help us examine our own desires and the destiny to which they lead.

The First ILLUSTRATION is,

The Desire of the Leaders

Our text opens by noting that the feast of Unleavened Bread, called Passover, was drawing near. The Passover was celebrated on the first day of the 8 days of Unleavened Bread. So the terms were often used interchangeably. It's helpful to remember this was the one feast in Israel's religious calendar that was obligatory for men and women. So Jerusalem was jammed with pilgrims. This detail helps set the stage for what is about to happen.

The chief priests and the scribes were still looking for a way to kill Jesus. Their hatred of Jesus had been growing almost from the beginning of His ministry. Luke chapter six records the healing of the man with the withered hand; in the synagogue on the Sabbath day! Following that miracle, verse 11 records "*(the religious leaders) were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.*"

This hostile desire kept growing throughout Jesus' ministry. In Luke 11, verses 53 and 54 we read "*And as He said these things to them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently, and to cross-examine Him about many things, lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him.*"

Luke 19 records Jesus cleansing the Temple and how as a result of His actions the religious leaders continued seeking how they might destroy Him. Jesus was tampering with their very financially lucrative system. By exploiting their fellow countrymen they were enriching themselves. They didn't want anyone messing with their program.

In chapter 20 and verse 19, after the parable of the wicked tenants, the leaders sought to lay hands on Him because they understood the parable was spoken against them. They were the unfaithful tenants who were conspiring to kill the true heir to the vineyard. But, they feared the people. Just as it's recorded in our text, the fear of Jesus' followers was a major hindrance to the fulfilling of their desire.

When someone has such a deeply rooted animosity toward another person, and a desire to destroy them, we logically ask "what's the reason for this?" Though these men were supposedly the custodians of Israel's spiritual life, many of them were morally and spiritually bankrupt. They were more interested in maintaining the status quo than engaging with the truth.

Their grip on power, status, and wealth depended on their submission to the power of Rome. When Jesus pointed out the hypocrisy of their fixation with the smallest details of the law, while ignoring the Law's true intent, they knew they could not peacefully coexist with Him. When Jesus' ministry drew huge crowds, they became jealous. When Jesus entered Jerusalem in triumph just a few days before Passover, these leaders petulantly declared, *"You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!"*

The desire of the leaders was to maintain their position of power and influence; it was self-preservation. They would brook no opposition and would go to any length to eliminate it, even if it meant putting an innocent man to death; the Son of God, no less. But their intense desire brought with it an inescapable destiny as Jesus warned in Luke 9:24 and 25. *"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?"*

Furthermore, in Luke 21 Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the nation. The very thing the religious leaders' feared – domination by hostile powers – would come upon them in a few short decades. Israel would cease to be a nation for nearly 1900 years! The sacking of Jerusalem and the complete destruction of the magnificent Temple would fulfill Jesus' prediction that not one stone would be left upon another.

Now; what about today? Do you know any religious leaders today who sacrifice truth to maintain the status quo? I know people whose reputations have been unjustly "crucified" in order to protect the reputations of leaders who were hiding sin personally and in their leadership team. I know of places where church leadership has elevated the guidelines of the church above the Word of God! There are other leaders who have used slander and false accusation to defame character and divide congregations and even families; all in the name of preserving the appearance of godliness.

But it will not stand, my friend. Like these men in our text it may preserve their position and power for now, but ultimately God will bring judgment. The destiny of such people is one I want to avoid at all costs, and I hope you do too.

As the religious leaders continued seeking a way to kill Jesus their desire would seal their destiny. It would also lead them to one of Christ's followers; one who provides the next example of desire and destiny.

The Second ILLUSTRATION (of desire and destiny) is,

The Desire of Judas

Verse 3 makes a very tragic statement. *“Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve.”* So how did this happen; did Satan all-of-a-sudden decide to move in on Judas? I believe you know the answer to that question.

First, we should understand that two differing views of Messiah developed during the period of time between the Old and New Testaments. One view was of the conquering King coming to set up His kingdom on earth; the kingdom restored to Israel. This is a prominent theme in prophetic Scripture portions. That the Twelve expected Jesus to set up an earthly kingdom is clear from the Gospel record.

The other view was of the suffering Servant as per Isaiah chapters 52 and 53, and some of the Psalms. Because it was very difficult to reconcile these opposing views, eventually, the suffering Servant concept was ignored.

Judas Iscariot; who was he? The Scriptures only give us few details about him, but there are some clues to help us understand his actions. John’s Gospel tells us that Judas was a callous man who didn’t care about the needs of the poor; although he pretended to. He was also a thief and was the treasurer for Jesus and the Twelve. You can read this in John chapter 12. Jesus knew about Judas’ master passion; his covetousness. And yet He entrusted him with the finances of the little group. Isn’t God’s grace amazing?

The name, Iscariot, identifies him as being from Kerioth, a small, nondescript town in the Judean hill country. Judas was the only one of the Twelve from outside Galilee. Like the other disciples he must’ve seen Jesus as the One who could deliver Israel from the yoke of Roman bondage. When it finally became apparent that Jesus was going to fulfill the suffering Servant aspect of Messiah, Judas was disillusioned and sought an opportunity to betray Him.

Judas’ desire for gain, for money, became his undoing. It was the avenue Satan used to “enter” into his heart and affect his choices. All the time he walked with Jesus and the other disciples he was given opportunities to embrace the teaching of his Master and make right choices. But his life bears witness to Paul’s words in First Timothy 6:9 of the corrupting influence of money. The desire to be rich leads to many snares and ultimately to destruction.

Remember, Judas wasn't the only one Satan tried to use to keep Jesus from fulfilling His Father's will. Both Matthew and Mark record Jesus' rebuke of Peter. Jesus was telling the Twelve about His approaching suffering and death. Peter began to rebuke Jesus; in other words, telling Jesus that what He was saying wasn't going to happen! Jesus said to him "*Get behind me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.*" Peter was not literally Satan, but he was allowing Satan to use him to try and dissuade Jesus from His ultimate goal – the Cross.

So Judas' desires guided his choices and would ultimately determine his destiny. Just prior to our text Matthew, Mark, and John record the anointing of Jesus in Bethany. It was here that Judas complained about the waste of valuable perfume and exposed his covetous heart. Jesus' rebuke probably stung him. It may have, as we say, "pushed him over the edge." It finalized the rift that had been growing between them. Judas could now retaliate against Jesus – and make some money in the process.

And what was his price? According to Leviticus thirty shekels of silver was the price you paid if you accidentally killed a male or female servant. But what was such a small sum compared to what he was promised by Jesus? Jesus said in His kingdom the Twelve would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel! What kind of bargain was Judas making?

But that's what covetousness does; it focuses on the immediate and blinds us to eternal realities. The verb tense here indicates that the religious leaders paid the money to Judas on the spot. So he was most likely carrying that money when he rejoined Jesus and the other disciples! By paying him up front, they bound him to deliver what he promised. If he didn't deliver, they had the authority to arrest him.

Judas' goals and the goals of the religious leaders met because of their desires. Up until this time the leaders didn't know how they were going to arrest Jesus. Remember, they feared the people. Jerusalem was bursting at the seams with Passover crowds. There were the recent events of the Triumphal Entry, and Jesus' cleansing of the Temple. The leaders didn't know which way to turn. Then Judas shows up! They had what Judas wanted, money. Judas had what the leaders wanted; someone who knew the details of Jesus' private life and could arrange his arrest away from the crowds.

Now, what about you and me; what kind of desires do we have? Are we motivated by covetousness? This desire has many different forms, you know. And we see it in both the religious leaders and in Judas. I don't want to sound cynical, but in my lifetime I've observed this connection between money and religious leaders. Money often purchases access just like it did in this text. Or it shuts the mouths of those who know the truth. Either way it leads to destruction; and woe to you and me if we allow this desire to control us.

Are you disillusioned with God? Has He failed to meet your expectations in some area of your life? Most of us have those experiences at one time or another. Then we need to "watch out" because Satan will try to use those unfulfilled desires. He will suggest to us that God is not fair or just; if He were, he would give us what we want. Those kind of thoughts need to be rejected immediately! We do not want to turn out like Judas.

As we reflect on the evil desires of the religious leaders and Judas it provides a stark contrast with the final illustration in our text.

The Final ILLUSTRATION (of desire and destiny) is,

The Desire of Jesus

The strongest expression of Jesus' desire is found in verse 15; eating this final Passover with the Twelve. But let's notice some other desires of Jesus leading up to this.

Jesus had the desire to fulfill His Father's will in the Father's timing; and part of that will was to eat this final Passover meal and imbue it with new meaning. If he would've announced beforehand where they were going to eat the Passover meal, Judas could've brought the authorities and had Him arrested before this desire was fulfilled.

So Jesus sent His two most trusted disciples, Peter and John, to prepare the place for the Passover meal. The rest of the Twelve didn't know where they would gather. Whether Jesus had made arrangements beforehand with the homeowner, or relied on His divine foreknowledge, we don't know. What we do know is that the place was waiting for them. This was highly unusual in the city so crowded during the Feast days.

The sending of Peter and John to prepare for the Passover also gives us evidence of Jesus' knowledge of the law and His desire to fulfill it. We're told that only two men (out of a group sharing a Passover lamb) were allowed to enter the Temple court for the ritual slaughter of

that lamb. As Peter and John were slaughtering the lamb they would've repeated these words from the Hallel; *"save now, I beseech thee O Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord."*

So now, the hour has arrived and Jesus and the Twelve recline around the table to share the Passover meal together. In His opening words to the Twelve, Jesus makes clear the significance of this event. His desire is expressed differently in different translations of the Scripture. The KJV repeats the word; "with desire I have desired..." Other translations use words like earnestly, fervently, and eagerly desired. All of these express the deep the feelings of our Lord as He approaches this final meal, just prior to His suffering and death.

Jesus informs those gathered with Him that the reason for his earnest desire to share this last Passover with them is twofold. First, He is about to go through suffering and death. And though He has a sense of dread over the horror that awaits Him, he also has a sense of longing to fulfill the Father's plan. This reminds me of Luke 12:50 where Jesus said *"I have a baptism to be baptized with (His crucifixion), and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!"*

Second, He informs them He will assuredly not (a double negative is used) eat this meal with them again, or drink the wine...until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. So this final Passover meal is looking forward to the culmination of God's divine plan of redemption. After Christ's sacrifice there is no longer a need for the Passover; all its types and shadows are fulfilled in Him. Eating together in the kingdom must refer to its future consummation.

Jesus began the Passover meal just as the Twelve were accustomed to doing it. And while there may be some benefit in tracing those traditions individually, that's not our goal here. Verse 19 shows us Jesus attaching a new covenantal meaning to the Passover observance.

Bread was a staple of life in the ancient world. The bread of the original Passover was unleavened. Why? Because the people of Israel left Egypt so quickly they didn't have time to let the bread rise in the normal way. Also, leaven represents the presence of sin, so Jewish homes were cleansed of leaven before the Passover. You can read about this in Exodus chapter 12.

Now, Jesus takes the bread, gives thanks, breaks it, and distributes it to the Twelve. In doing this He states *"This is My body which is [being] given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."* You will recall that in John chapter 6 Jesus introduced this concept. In verse 50 of that chapter Jesus said *"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this*

bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh (or body), which I shall give for the life of the world.” It was the misunderstanding of this teaching that caused many of His disciples to leave Him and go back to their familiar religious observance. Because they thought only in the natural sense, they missed the spiritual application.

Just like natural bread is understood as the sustenance of physical life, so the body of Christ is the sustenance of the spiritual life. As the physical bread is eaten, it enters the digestive tract and begins to break down by the action of gastric juices in the stomach. The process of digestion enables the nutrients in the bread to be assimilated by the body, thereby giving strength and sustaining life. So too those who appropriate Christ, the Living Bread, and who ingest and assimilate His Word, find themselves spiritually alive and nourished.

Remember that eating together in Eastern culture is a sign of acceptance and fellowship. We don’t know everything Jesus said to them in this setting, but it’s obvious He was inviting them into a relationship and a level of fellowship with Him they didn’t have before. Jesus’ prayer and words imbued the bread with a meaning we still observe today when we participate in the Lord’s Table. His command to “do this in remembrance of me” is a call for us to reflect on all that was accomplished for us through His suffering and death.

In verse 20, after the meal, Jesus takes the cup (some scholars think this was the third cup of the Passover, so-called “the cup of redemption), and gives it new meaning. One Orthodox Jewish website I looked at said this cup represents “the splitting of the sea, after which the Jews felt completely redeemed, without fear of the Egyptians recapturing them.” I especially noted the words “completely redeemed.”

The blood of Christ, the spotless Passover lamb, represented by this cup would forever end the era of the Old Covenant and usher in the era of the New. No amount of animal sacrifices could ever cleanse the worshipper from sin; only the precious blood of Jesus could do that! And Jesus with the sharing of this cup was anticipating our full redemption. “*This is the new covenant in my blood, which is [being] shed for you.*” Praise God!

What a contrast between the desires of Jesus and the desires of Judas and the religious leaders. They were trying to save their lives (and their position) at any cost; ultimately they lost them. Their desires, and the actions they took to fulfill those desires, had a predetermined

destiny. Judas' money perished with him and the religious leaders eventually lost all they had hoped to retain when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD.

Contrast those with the completely selfless desire of Jesus in this text. He was intent on losing His life, voluntarily laying it down, so He could accomplish our salvation. And not only that, He was giving us a lasting memorial in observing the Lord's Table. He knew our human frailty and how easily we forget the price of our redemption. The apostle Paul reminds us in First Corinthians 11:26 *"For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."*

In the final two verses of our text Jesus gives a solemn warning. He announced to the Twelve reclining around the table; *"...the hand of him who will betray me is with me on this table."* How audacious this betrayer was! He had the nerve to eat with the betrayed. What a violation of culture and custom. Jesus knew Judas' heart and He knew the agreement Judas had made with the religious leaders. And yet this seems to me like one, final appeal to Judas to reconsider his choices, his desires.

Yes, Jesus would die; that had already been determined and decreed in eternal counsels of God even before the Creation. It could not be altered. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility meet in this event. But Jesus pronounces a "woe" on the man, Judas, who is going to betray Him. Woe is a word of calamity, a word of doom, a word of judgment. It is the polar opposite of blessing. It was graphically fulfilled in the horrible end of Judas. He, the worst of men, would betray Jesus, the best of men.

Naturally, the other eleven were curious about who would do such a thing. It was unthinkable! And yet, we know from the next section of verses that, the reality of Jesus' words had not entered their consciousness.

Jesus calls all that would follow Him to eat this bread and drink this cup of the New Covenant. He calls us to lay down our physical lives in order to take up His cross and follow Him. That requires us to subordinate all our desires to His desires for us. His will becomes our will; His wish becomes our command. When we do that we can fully expect to receive what He has promised. We will recline with Him at the table at the marriage supper of the Lamb. We are heirs and joint-heirs with Him in all the riches of God's kingdom.

My friend, you and I are faced with a choice. Whose desires are we going to fulfill? Will we pursue our own, earthly desires and try to preserve our little earthly accumulation of possessions, our little earthly kingdom? If we make that choice our destiny is already prescribed, and we will have a miserable end like Judas.

Or, will we yield to Jesus, allowing Him by the Spirit and the Word to crucify our flesh with its affections and desires? Will we allow Him to empty our hands in order that He might fill them with His true riches and power? Making that choice will assure us of a glorious, eternal reward. What is the destiny of your desires?