

**WHERE WE SIT IN COMMUNION**  
**Three Part Sermon Series on Judas Iscariot –Communion –February 5, 2012 – Luke 14: 1-14**  
**The Church of the Covenant**

I always remember the church I served where some folks thought they were holier than thou. They felt there were “spiritual elders” and “non-spiritual elders” and so when they saw the Session and deacons filing in they would move to the side of the church where the “spiritual elders” were going to be serving communion. Steve Warren is teaching a class on Wednesday evenings and one of the ancient heresies he is teaching about is the Donatist Controversy where certain priests recanted their faith in the context of severe persecution but then were restored to office and the Donatists then argued that communion was ineffective if it was served by a priest who had recanted and then been restored. To the contrary, the orthodox position was that the relative holiness of the priest has nothing to do with whether communion is effective or not. God can use people who are not perfect to work out His perfect will. Whew! That’s a relief; because I am such a sinner that we would have had to cancel communion today if only my holiness made communion effective. God alone is HOLY; I am not.

This begins a three part sermon series on Judas Iscariot, the man who sealed his betrayal of Jesus with a kiss. So I am asking what led up to that betrayal? What was going on in his heart before he accepted the 30 pieces of silver as blood money? What led one of the 12 to betray their Master? Judas, we know from his name, was a Hellenized Jew –in Hebrew his name should be Judah, but in Greek it is Judas. So he probably came from a cultured home with Greek influences. He was in charge of the money for the disciples, so he was probably one of the best educated, in relation to the rest who were mostly simple, uneducated fishermen. (John 13: 29) Scholars also believe he was likely in the camp of the Zealots, those Jews who were politicized and wanted the Messiah to declare Himself to be King and to lead a revolt to throw out the hated Romans. Sophisticated, educated, a person given a position of authority, with a particular agenda, this is likely who Judas was. And then there is where he sat in communion; where he sat at the Last Supper, when Jesus gathers His disciples together for the last time to break bread and share a cup, right as Jesus is betrayed, goes to the cross, His body broken, His blood, shed.

Where did Judas sit at the Last Supper? Scholars believe he sat to the immediate right of Jesus, in the seat of honor. To be seated to the right of the person hosting the meal was to honor that person. Why do we know this? Because Jesus said whoever shared a morsel with him and whoever dipped the bread at the same time with him was the person who would betray Him. And only the person seated to the immediate right of Jesus physically could have done that. (John 13: 26) So Jesus hands Judas the bread morsel and declares: *“What you are going to do, do quickly.”* (John 13: 27) So Judas flees and makes haste to do this act of betrayal. Interestingly, he receives the bread and what enters him is not God; what enters him is Satan. (v. 27) Our scripture for today is about where we are seated in a marriage feast. Jesus tells a parable of how people when they enter a feast *“how they chose the places of honor”*. (Luke 14: 7) Jesus is laying out how at a party everyone scrambles for the best seat in the house. At the Last Supper that is what the disciples must have been doing also. They ran in to claim the best seat and Judas claimed the best seat of all, the seat of honor. What does it tell you about someone when they run in and grab the best seat? What does it tell you about someone when they seize the seat of honor? It tells you they have a pretty high opinion of themselves; they are pretty full of themselves; they probably struggle with pride; they have a sense of wanting to “Lord it over” others. So who grabbed the best seat at the Last Supper? Judas did. But Jesus’ parable is about taking the lowest place; run in and grab the worst seat in the house not the best. Then the Master will say to you, *“Friend, go up higher.”* (Luke 14: 10) Who elevates you is God, not yourself. What elevates you is the Lord, not what you seize by yourself. God says: When you are faithful in a little then I will give you more. Not –when you strive

for more then you will get more. Jesus knew who it was to betray Him because he knew the very person who struggled with the issue of spiritual pride the most, the disciple who wanted to sit in the best place and in the seat of honor, was Judas. **That's how Jesus knew it was Judas who was to betray Him.** Judas fell because Judas thought he was someone special. Judas fell because he thought he had it all figured out. Judas fell because of his own spiritual pride. He was puffed up with pride. He was the one who was the only one smart enough to watch over the money. He was the one who came from a good family. He was the only one who was educated. Beware when you think you stand, lest you fall, Judas. So he ran in to the Upper Room where the feast of unleavened bread was prepared and there at The Last Supper seized for himself the seat of honor, which was to become the seat of betrayal, which was how Jesus knew which of the 12 was to betray Him...Where do you sit in communion??????

Like the Apostle Paul I am "the chief of sinners". I have many sins on my list. But the one I struggle with most is the sin of spiritual pride. Spiritual pride is the one where you look good on the outside but your heart is far from the Lord on the inside. It took me to a large church in the nation's capitol where I worked endless hours and thought I was doing it all for the glory of God, only to discover I was doing it all for the glory of Stu. It was all about me and it had nothing to do with Jesus. People who are smart and educated and think they have it all figured out and have read the Bible and know all the right words, we are the ones who are the most in danger of succumbing to spiritual pride. It is so subtle; it is so pervasive. We know we are saved by grace and what Jesus has done for us but pretty soon we start believing in our heart that what really matters is what we do, not what God does. And success only makes it worse. I found myself taking credit in my own heart just recently for the Light the Fire Campaign; I did nothing; I didn't solicit the gift from the generous anonymous donor; God put that into their heart, not Stu. Do you see how dangerous is spiritual pride? Do you see how it takes God from His throne and puts our own ego there? Do you see how it sets us up for a great fall? How it takes us far away from the very Lord we seek to serve? Why I'm smarter than all of you; I have plaques and degrees and letters attesting to my own humility hung all over the wall of my office. It is not about me; it really IS about YOU, Lord...The sin of spiritual pride. It set Judas up to betray Jesus. It sets us up to fall away from the Lord...Lucifer fell from heaven to hell because he let it get to his head that he was the angel of light. His own spiritual pride kicked him out of heaven and into hell. Just like Judas' spiritual pride set him up to betray his Master.

No, get this right. JESUS died for me. Long before I ever did one good thing, the Lord went to the cross and died for my sin. I didn't figure it out; He did it for me. My smarts and my intellect didn't help me, if anything they hinder me. I played no role in my salvation –Jesus paid the price and grants me the gift of forgiveness and forges the abyss between me and God through HIS blood and through HIS perfect obedience. I am not perfect; HE is. I am not holy; only God is holy. He is wise; I am foolish. He is right; I am amazingly always, wrong. I am never wronger than when I think I am righter. I am never further from God than when my pride tells me I have God all figured out. That's where I sit in communion. Where we sit in communion is important. I sit as a sinner standing in need of the grace I can only receive from Jesus. Judas sat in the seat of honor and fell to betray his Master and friend. Where do you sit today? Got it all figured out? Really? Got this God stuff all down to a science? Really? Beware when you think you stand, lest you fall. **"For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."** (Luke 14: 11) That's exactly what JESUS did at Calvary, humbled Himself, and that's exactly what Judas did at the Last Supper, exalted himself. And the difference, the difference, my beloved, was spiritual pride. And Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA  
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*

