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Do it anyway

Acts 1:15-26

In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) and said, “Brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. He was one of our number and shared in our ministry.” (With the payment he received for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) “For,” said Peter, “it is written in the Book of Psalms: ‘May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,’ and, ‘May another take his place of leadership.’ Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.” So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. Then they prayed, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.” Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

Let’s us pray: “May the word of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your eyes, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer, Amen.” There are two people in contrast in today’s text. One is famous, I mean very famous, and the other is not famous at all, some of you here never heard his name before, didn’t even know that such person existed. Guess who am I talking about? Who is the famous guy? It’s…Judas, Judas Iscariot, we all know him, he is famous almost like Jesus, right? Actually, he is infamous. He is the one who betrayed Jesus and eternally damned. Then, who is the other guy? He is…Matthias.

In today’s story, there is a gathering of disciples, after Jesus was ascended to heaven. Then, Peter stands up and says, “You know, Judas betrayed us and had a brutal death” You know, Judas, he hung himself, then he fell, and what happened? (Pause) His body burst open, and all his intestines spilled out. That’s the death of the enemy of God. So, I’m telling you, don’t be God haters, don’t be an enemy of God.
Then, Peter continues, “We need to choose a person who had been with us throughout the ministry of our Lord, Jesus Christ.” So, they choose two people, Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. Then, they cast lots, and who gets picked? (Pause) Matthias. And, this man, Matthias, though he didn’t appear before and after this story, I guess this is the only place where his name is mentioned in the Bible, still he is an honorable man, one of 12 apostles.

When I was reading and pondering upon today’s story, I couldn’t take this thought off my head, that is…there are two kinds of work in our service to the Lord. One is the work of the flesh, like what Judas did, and the other is the work of the spirit, which is often hidden, but the spirit of God knows, like what Matthias did. So, the first point that I wanna share with you today is this.

*Let your service to the Lord not be the work of the flesh.*

If you think about it, Judas, he was a man on the stage, everybody was looking at him, because he was one of 12 disciples, people envied him. He left his family and his house, and he spent 3 and half years with Jesus, which is his entire ministry. He saw all kinds of miracles that Jesus did, when he was multiplying 5 loaves of bread and 2 fishes, he was there, he was passing out newly produced lunch boxes to the people. When Jesus was walking on the water and calming the sea, he was there, there he was amazed, worshiped Jesus, and said, “You are the Son of God!”

Even when Lazarus was raised from the dead, he was there! He saw that spectacle, so-called dead man walking, no resurrected man walking, he was there! And guess what? When Jesus was sending his disciples to preach the gospel, he was there as well, meaning he was out there proclaiming the kingdom of God and driving out demons! You see? But the thing is…listen, it was all the work of his flesh, not the work of the spirit. And, I am telling you right now, there are still so many people out there doing all kinds of things in the name of God, but deep inside, it’s actually the work of their flesh, even their service to the church has nothing to do with God!
This text meant a lot to me, because of what happened last Friday. You know, when you are in school, Friday is an exciting day. That’s all you are waiting for, right? But, not for me, because I am a pastor. I’m like, ‘It’s Friday, again!!’ You know, it’s a busy day, we have a Friday meeting, and I have to give rides, and also, I have to finish up my Sunday sermon with KM bulletin, on top of all the other things that Senior Pastor gave me, unexpectedly! It’s a chaos.

So, last Friday, I was busy doing my stuff as usual. But then, Senior Pastor came to my office, not a good sign huh? And, he asked me to pick up a man who recently got stroke and bring him to the doctor. So, guess what I thought, when I first heard it? I was excited, because that’s what pastor should do taking care of the people who are in need? No! I was not happy at all, I was angry, not at Senior Pastor, but at the situation, how things were happening. But then, what can I do? You know, I’m a pastor, this is what I signed up for not with God.

So, I went out, drove my car down to Duluth, waited another hour to pick him up, and brought him to the doctor near Duluth H-Mart. But, the doctor said that he needs CT scan to find what happened to his brain, you know he got stroke. So, I drove all the way to the Johnscreek to get CT, waited another hour. It was 3pm, and we didn’t have lunch, Trust me, I was dying of hunger. So, after CT, we stopped by Johnscreek H-Mart and had lunch, and the doctor called him to come back to see what he could do for him. So, again, I took him to the doctor, and later to his house. When everything was done, it was 5pm, it took 6 hours! I was exhausted and frustrated!

Guys, I am not bragging about what I did, not at all! But what I’m saying is…I was frustrated, I didn’t wanna do it. I did it, because I was a pastor! That’s the only reason. Doing all kinds of stuff, even serving God’s people, but there was no joy, no peace at all. Then, that was what? The work of the spirit? Or the work of the flesh? It was exactly…the work of the flesh.

So, guys, I am challenging you this morning, serve God, serve His church and His people
with joy and gladness, whether it’s VBS, Mission Trip, Retreat, Car Wash or Bakesale, whatever it may be, knowing that it’s not an obligation but a privilege. Don’t be like Judas please, doing all kinds of stuff, but still condemned, doing things with unsatisfied heart with anger and hatred. I know it’s easy to say but hard to do, but let me ask you again, enjoy your work, enjoy your service for this summer, ask the Holy Spirit to come and give you strength knowing that your little service to the little kids will remain forever in their hearts as well as in the heart of God.

So, the first point was, let your service not be the work of your flesh but be the work of the spirit. If the first point was a lesson from the life of Judas, the second lesson which I will share is from the life of our second character, Matthias. And the point is this: **Do it anyway, because God knows your heart.** No matter we know him or not, even though his name is written only once in the Bible, he was regarded as an apostle in the eyes of disciples and in the eyes of God.

You know, disciples, they needed somebody to be the last apostle, and this is what they say, listen, **“It is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us.”** Meaning, whole time, he was there, when Jesus was doing all kinds of miracles, wonders, and teachings, he was there, even though he was not on the stage. But, he was faithful. Though there was not much recognition, he did his work following Jesus all the way through.

But then, here is the thing my friend, God knew his heart. Listen to their prayer before casting lots, **“Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen.”** The original Greek text goes like this, **“Σοῦ κύριε καρδιογνωστα πάντων”** Literally, **“You, Lord, heart-knower of everyone.”** God is the heart-knower, He knew his heart.

Though Matthias, he was an invisible guy, hidden guy, off the stage unlike Judas, doing all kinds of menial things, God knew his heart, and that’s all that matters, Amen? That’s why I’m
challenging you, do it anyway, serve anyway, give anyway, though it’s not seen, though it’s not recognized by people around you, because God knows your heart. So, do it anyway.

But, the problem is…we wanna be recognized, even when we serve and do things in the church, we wanna be seen on the stage, just like Judas! It’s just human nature, we wanna show off! “Look at what I did!” You know, that’s what little babies say all the time, right? We still do it, it’s in our genes. So, we have this fancy picture of ministry, like when we serve people, people are changed, nations come back to God, heavens are open and the spirit of God is coming down.

Guys, let me tell you, take off that fancy image, notion of ministry, not because I don’t have faith, but because I want you to get down to the earth! For example, what happens when you do VBS? Miracles are happening? You see little kids repenting and coming back to God? No! What happens is that you have to prepare, you have to gather as often as you can and practice things, videos, body worships, games, and decorations, you will be tired! What if you lead praise team? Spirit of God comes upon you and upon praise team members? No! Most of time, you fight, you are yelling at people and frustrated. It’s just a mess! You know it. But, you do it, you be faithful just like Matthias, wait until God’s time comes, don’t give up. Then, He will lift you up.

It was hard for me as well to accept this real part of ministry. Guys, listen, people are people, they will be still mean and selfish, even if you serve them, that’s who they are and that’s who we are, so don’t be frustrated. Do it anyway, serve them anyway. When we were having the Pancake Brunch, at the last minute, we had some leftover pancakes, so June got a plate, he was going around and asking people, I mean, homeless people “Do you want the last piece?” But, there was no syrup on it, because we ran out of syrup. But then, they didn’t take it, though they were homeless. Why? because there was no syrup. (Pause) Having watched it, I was neither surprised nor angry, I just thought to myself, “Man~ that’s what I would do, if I were him, he is
being human.” Guys, don’t think that “Man~ what are you doing? Take it! You are homeless!” No.

I could understand it, because of one incident happened with a homeless. It was almost 2 years ago. I just started my second master’s degree at Emory, so I drove almost everyday, Monday through Friday, parked my car in a neighborhood, then I took a shuttle. But then, there was a man sleeping on the street with his sleeping bag. And trust me, it was almost winter, it was cold out there. It really broke my heart. So one day, I talked to him, “Did you eat?” “No,” he said. So, I said, “Can you get up and go to Publix, I wanna buy you food.” Then, he said, “It’s okay, but can you give me money?” So, I said, “I wanna buy you food instead of giving you money.” Then, he looked at me and said, “I don’t need it.” I was unhappy, no, I was angry, because that guy wanted to use that money not for food, but for something else, maybe for alcohol or something.

But, you know what? Now, I’m thinking about it, and I realized this, “Peter, what’s the matter? Do it anyway, because God knows your heart.” Don’t try to show off and don’t be disappointed, even when things do not go in the way you hope, don’t try to be on the stage like Judas. Rather, serve and give, be faithful anyway, like Mathhias, because God knows your heart.

Let me close today’s sermon by words from our beloved Mother Teresa: “People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered. Forgive them anyway. If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway. If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies. Succeed anyway. If you are honest and sincere, people may deceive you. Be honest and sincere anyway. What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight. Create anyway. If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous. Be happy anyway. The good you do today, will often be forgotten. Do good anyway. Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway. In the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.”
Let’s pray:

Father, we thank you for today’s message. That’s right, sometimes, we are disappointed by things happening around us, by unexpected things and by harmful things people do to us in response to our service. Even in those times, help us to serve them, give them, and love them anyway, like Christ accepted us and loved us anyway. Father, we ask you, if there is anything we try to do in our own strength, change our mind, grant us joy in our heart so that our work and service may not be the work of our flesh but the work of the spirit. We pray all things in Jesus’ name, Amen.