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February 24th: Acts 1:15-26 & Matthew 9:35—10:23

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Alastair Roberts

The choice of Matthias as replacement for Judas. Jesus sends out the Twelve.

Psalms 69:25, 109:8 (Scriptures fulfilled in Judas); John 13:18, Psalm 41:9, 2 Samuel 15:12 (the familiar friend who betrays); 2 Samuel 15:23, 16:1-14, Luke 22:39-46, Matthew 26:47, John 18:1-11 (Jesus follows the same route as David); 2 Samuel 17:23, Matthew 27:3-10 (Ahithophel and Judas hang themselves); 2 Samuel 18:6-15 (Absalom, the rebellious son of David, hung on a tree); 2 Samuel 20:8-12 (Joab's treacherous assassination of Amasa); 1 Kings 2:28-35 (the removal of Joab from office); Acts 15:7-9 (the choice of the Spirit).

1 Kings 22:17 (sheep without shepherds); Numbers 27:16-18 (the appointment of Joshua); Ezekiel 34:2-6, 11-16 (God judging and replacing the wicked shepherds); Matthew 4:23 (Jesus' own pattern of ministry); Mark 3:16-18, Luke 6:14-16, Acts 1:13 (other lists of the Twelve); Numbers 13 (spies sent into Canaan); Joshua 2 (Rahab shelters the spies); Genesis 18—19 (Abraham's hospitality and Sodom's inhospitality); Matthew 25:31-46 (the Sheep and the Goats).

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglican church.net/>).

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Transcript

Acts 1.15-26 So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us, one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection. And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, You Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry, an apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.

And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. Today, as it is the feast of St. Matthias, we're looking at the second half of Acts chapter 1. Now this is a strange interim period, a period between the time of the Ascension and Pentecost, where certain things are being sorted out, but yet the spirit has not come and things have not yet begun moving fully. It's a strange time then, and a number of the details of the period are also strange.

Peter is presented as the leader of the twelve at this point, and they need to select a replacement for Judas. There needs to be twelve, and they are the centre of restored Israel. In Luke 22, they were told that they would be sitting on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

If there's only eleven of them, there would seem to be one fewer than the corresponding number of tribes that they'll be judging. So having twelve seems to be quite important. They're spoken of as the twelve on a number of occasions.

They are not just a group of people that happen to be twelve in number, they are a group of people that are supposed to stand for the twelve. And so if there's one missing, there's a problem. The twelve are the guardians of the tradition.

They've just been listed by name, the eleven that remain, and they're surrounded by a larger group of people, 120 altogether. The twelve increase tenfold. Judas had a lot in the ministry, but now a lot has to be cast for his replacement.

And scripture, according to Peter, is being fulfilled in Judas' betrayal. The specific scriptures being fulfilled are from the Psalms. Psalm 69 verse 25, May their camp be a desolation, let no one dwell in their tents.

And it's talking about the enemies of the Davidic king. The second verse is from Psalm 109 verse 8, May his days be few, may another take his office. This is once again speaking about an enemy of the Davidic king, someone who in return for love accused him, and someone who gave evil for good, and hatred for love.

Peter sees these things being fulfilled in Christ. Christ is the true and greater David. Such verses serve to confirm the character of Christ as the true Messiah.

They're not so much predictive that you could predict that a certain person of this type would come. But yet there is a prospective force to biblical narrative. On a number of occasions things that happen in the past are anticipations of what will happen in the future.

And same with the events that happen to characters like Joseph or Moses or Jacob or Abraham, and in this case David. They need to be fulfilled in some other form in the future. And for Peter, in Christ these things are once again coming to pass.

Christ has a scripture shaped life. You should probably also recognize that Judas wasn't just a dud. It wasn't the fact that Jesus chose 12 and one just happened to not work out.

Rather Judas had a shadowy role to perform and he performed it. He performed it in sin and rebellion but he went to his own place. And he performed a particular pattern in history that we've seen on previous occasions.

He's like Judah in the story of Joseph. He's like Ahithophel in the story of David and Absalom's revolt. And Peter's declaration that the Holy Spirit spoke about Judas through David treats David's words concerning his own life as typologically revelatory of what will befall his greater son.

In the Gospels we also see these sorts of narrative parallels between David and Jesus. Judas is the trusted friend. He sits with Jesus at the table yet he betrays him.

And in John 13 verse 18 there's a quotation from Psalm 41 verse 9. David is betrayed by Ahithophel, his close friend and advisor. 2 Samuel 15 12 and 31 and that's again something that's taken up in John 13. David leaves Jerusalem crossing the brook Kidron, weeps as he ascends the Mount of Olives in 2 Samuel verse 23 of chapter 15.

And that's brought out in Luke 22 39 to 46 and John 18 1. He's ministered to by a messenger in 2 Samuel 16 1 to 4. That parallels with Christ's experience in Luke 22 43. He's then assaulted by Shimei with violence and cursing in 2 Samuel 16 5 to 8. And that parallels with Christ being assaulted by a mob in Matthew 26 47. His right hand man, David's right hand man, Abishai, like Peter, wishes to strike his king's enemy down but David prevents him in 2 Samuel 16 9 to 14.

And we see Peter's case in John 18 10 to 11. So Jesus and David have a very similar pattern of life. In Matthew we're told that like Ahithophel in 2 Samuel 17 23, a regretful Judas parted ways with the conspiracy he had initially assisted and then he goes out and hangs himself in Matthew 27 3 to 10.

In 2 Samuel then we have both the betrayer Ahithophel and the unfaithful son of David Absalom ending up hanging from trees in 2 Samuel 17 23 and then in 18 6 to 15. And in Matthew both the Judas and the faithful son of David suffer a similar fate. Now the way that these stories are told is important.

Many have noted the differences between Luke's account in Acts here and Matthew's account in his gospel. They both tell of the death of Judas but do so in ways that are quite different and many have struggled to put them together with various degrees of plausibility. It seems most likely to me that Luke is foregrounding another connection between Judas and David typology here.

I think what he's connecting is Judas as Joab. Joab was the sort of serpent in the garden of David's kingdom. He was the treacherous commander of his army.

He was Machiavellian. He could manipulate things and organise plots and coups. He was twice involved in coups.

The first successful internal coup, wresting control of David's army from Amasa during the rebellion of Sheba and then the second in his support for the pretender Adonijah in 1 Kings 1. He betrayed Amasa with a kiss in 2 Samuel 29 before cutting Amasa's stomach open with his sword so that his entrails came out. Amasa's bloody body was then placed in a field and everyone who passed by it was arrested by the sight of it as we see in chapter 20 verse 12 of 2 Samuel. Now how does this fit in with the character of Judas? We can certainly see some of the similarities.

Judas is another person who betrays with a kiss and he seems to suffer a grisly fate that's similar to the victim of Joab, Amasa, in 2 Samuel. Now at the beginning of 1 Kings we have the final days of David's reign. He gives instructions to his son Solomon concerning the kingdom and establishes him on the throne and there are a number of similarities that could be observed between that account and this account in Luke.

There's a similar resumptive character to both narratives. 1 Kings takes up the narrative at the very end of David's reign and Luke takes up the narrative at the very end of Christ's ministry just before he's about to ascend into heaven. In both cases the David character is giving instruction to his successor about establishing a kingdom.

At the start of his reign Solomon has to lay the foundations by exiling or executing unfaithful members of his father's administration and other rebels who have had Neger, Abiathar, Joab and Shimei and they're replaced in their offices and in 1 Kings chapter 2 verses 28 to 35 Joab is killed by his replacement Benaniah the son of Jehoiada and buried in his house in the wilderness and we should maybe recognise the close applicability of the imprecatory psalms cited by Peter in Acts chapter 1 to Joab's situation. Let his homestead become desolate and let there be no one to live in it. He's buried in his house in the wilderness and then again let another take his position of overseer.

That's what we see in the case of Benaniah. He takes the role of Joab. So Judas suffers a death strikingly similar to the man that Joab betrayed with a kiss and like Joab he has a desolate habitation and so we're seeing the dawn of a new glorious administration of David's greater son and this is soon to be heralded by a gift of the spirit of wisdom and

that again parallels with the story of Solomon where in the chapter after this Solomon receives the spirit, receives wisdom for his rule.

Recognising these parallels can help us to resolve some of the tensions between Matthew and Luke's account. It makes clear to us that Matthew and Luke are not just giving us these accounts as bare historical recounting of the events. These events did take place but what they're trying to do is highlight certain features of the event that will help you to notice the significance of what is happening.

In Matthew's case he wants you to see the parallel between Judas and Ahithophel and then the way that it fulfills prophecy from Zechariah and also from Jeremiah. Whereas for Luke there's a different purpose. Luke wants you to see the parallel between Judas and Joab and within the larger picture how this is a new Solomonic administration that's being established.

The sons of David, those who are going to act in his name and increase and develop his kingdom and dynasty. Had Luke just given us a blow-by-blow account of what occurred we'd probably not recognise this parallel. It's the way he tells his story that enables us to see this and I believe that what he's doing is taking one aspect of the event and foregrounding it for people who presumably knew the other account.

So they knew that Judas went and hung himself but they did not know maybe about him falling head long and bursting open and his entrails coming out. That is what enabled them to draw the connection with Joab and the story of Amasa. The choice of the replacement for Judas has to be from one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us.

One of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection. There are a number of things to note about this statement. First of all the centrality of the resurrection.

It's that fact in particular that needs to be borne witness to. It's that fact that sticks out of all these other realities that surround the ministry of Christ. It's not his teaching that's emphasised, it's not even his death, it's his resurrection.

That is the key fact that stands out. Another thing to notice is that this person has to have been a witness from the ministry of John the Baptist. There's a continuity with the earlier ministry of the last of the prophets, John the Baptist, who handed on the baton of ministry to Christ.

The person to be chosen is to be chosen from one of the men. It seems that the only people in view here were the males of the group, even though we've just read about the presence of a number of women with them and the presence of Mary as well. Despite

the presence of many significant and gifted women among the group, even those who were the first to witness the resurrection and those who had been around with Christ from his very birth, it seems that the task of being a custodian and a guardian of the tradition was peculiarly entrusted to males among the group, both by Christ and his original choice of the twelve apostles, but also in the apostolic recognition that it was from the men that the replacement for Judas would be found.

The group of disciples put forward two potential candidates and the choice between these two candidates is decided by lot after prayer for God to determine between them. In chapter 15 verses 7 to 9 we have a similar choice made by God between people and a revelation of what God has chosen through the work of his Holy Spirit. Here it's by means of lot.

The Spirit has not yet been given and this establishment of the new people to hold particular offices is something that occurs in preparation for that event. Later on we do not see the church casting lots in this same way again. A question to consider.

Looking through the book of Acts, Judas is just the first of several characters who stand against Jesus as the greater David and Jesus defeats his enemies in various ways. Can you think of some of these other examples and the way in which it displays Christ's power and authority and also the seriousness of his judgment? Matthew chapter 9 verse 35 to chapter 10 verse 23. And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.

When he saw the crowds he had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

And he called to him his 12 disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to cast them out and to heal every disease and every affliction. The names of the 12 apostles are these. First Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother.

James the son of Zebedee and John his brother. Philip and Bartholomew. Thomas and Matthew the tax collector.

James the son of Alphaeus and Thaddeus. Simon the zealot and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him. These 12 Jesus sent out instructing them go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and proclaim as you go saying the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You receive without paying, give without pay. Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, no bag for

your journey or two tunics or sandals or a staff for the laborer deserves his food.

In whatever town or village you enter find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. As you enter the house greet it and if the house is worthy let your peace come upon it but if it is not worthy let your peace return to you and if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. Truly I say to you it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

Behold I'm sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour for it is not you who speak but the spirit of your father speaking through you.

Brother will deliver brother over to death and the father his child and children will rise against parents and have them put to death and you will be hated by all for my name's sake but the one who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town flee to the next for truly I say to you you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the son of man comes. At the end of Matthew chapter 9 our passage is introduced by the fact that Jesus is going through all the cities and the villages teaching in the synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of healing diseases and afflictions.

The good news is that God is establishing his reign. The crowds however are like sheep without a shepherd. This description is one that can be found in the Old Testament in 1st Kings chapter 22 verse 17 as a result of a rout in battle.

Israel is described as like sheep without shepherds on the mountains. A more significant parallel can be found in Numbers chapter 27 verses 16 to 18 where Moses says to the Lord let the Lord the God of the spirits of all flesh appoint a man of the congregation who shall go out before them and come in before them who shall lead them out and bring them in that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep that have no shepherd. So the Lord said to Moses take Joshua the son of Nun a man in whom is the spirit and lay your hand on him.

In a similar way Christ will go on to appoint 12 disciples to ensure that Israel is not left as sheep without a shepherd. He will send out under shepherds to guide these cities and these villages that he's been going through. A further important piece of Old Testament background can be found in Ezekiel chapter 34 verses 2 to 6 and then verses 11 to 16.

Their God condemns the false shepherds of Israel the ones who have not been faithful who have left the people as if they are without a shepherd and then he says that he will

be their shepherd. He will search for and restore the lost sheep and he will bring them out and gather them from the various countries and bring them into their own land. He's going to feed them, he's going to heal those that are injured, he's going to protect them from predators and he's going to judge the unfaithful.

Having gone through the cities and towns Jesus has seen the spiritual state of Israel and in one respect they're like sheep without a shepherd. On another hand there's a plentiful harvest but not enough people to go out and to reap and labour within it and so Jesus is preparing people as shepherds but also people to do the work of harvesters. Moses gave authority to Joshua to lead the people and Jesus now gives authority to the twelve to carry out a mission throughout the land.

All that Jesus has just demonstrated in his actions in the last two chapters which arguably restored a group of twelve people. He is commissioning his twelve disciples to perform. The harvest is ready, it's time for division to occur, it's time for shepherds to be given to the lost sheep to restore them, to heal them, to rescue them.

And the twelve are labourers for the harvest and shepherds for the flock. They are to continue the work that Jesus has started according to the pattern that he has shown. The description that he gives them authority over unclean spirits to cast them out and to heal every disease and every affliction draws our mind back to chapter 4 verse 23 where it says, And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

This is the same thing that Christ has done. Now he's commissioning his disciples to do the same. It's important that he chooses twelve.

They are twelve patriarchs for a restored Israel. At the beginning of the book of Numbers chapter 1 verses 1 to 16 there is the choice of twelve men to assist Moses, one from each of the tribes. Now the twelve here are not a substitute for or a replacement for Israel.

Rather they are the seed of a new Israel within the life of the old and there's going to be a new Israel gathered around them as Israel is reformed and revitalized. The twelve are listed here. They're also listed in Mark chapter 3, 16 to 18, in Luke 6, 14 to 16 and in Acts 1 verse 13.

The ordering of the twelve is worth paying attention to. Peter has primacy. Peter we're told is first and that first is not merely that he's the first to be called or that he is the first to be listed in an arbitrary ordering.

Rather in the listings of the apostles he is always the first. He is the one that has the most significant and honored role. He's the one that leads the apostles on the day of

Pentecost in the mission to the Gentiles.

He also leads the way on the council of Jerusalem and on a number of other occasions. He is the most prominent apostle and he's the one who leads the church in a particular way. Now this doesn't mean that we have to hold a Roman Catholic view of the primacy of Peter as the first pope but I do think it means that we should accept that Peter was the leader of the apostles.

He was the first among them. The last of the apostles is always listed in the same way. It's the one with the least honor.

It's Judas who, spoiler alert, would betray him. Maybe worth noting at this point that scripture has no problem whatsoever spoiling the narrative ahead, telling us what's about to come. We may be used to reading stories for the first time but scripture is not written for the first time reader.

It's written primarily for people who are reading it again and again and again and as a result it's constantly calling forward to events that will happen in the future. It's presuming knowledge of the end of the story, even in the middle of the story, because most people who are reading it are expected to be reading it for the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, hundredth time. Matthew is the only one whose vocation is given here and there are differences in the way that the apostles are treated in different gospels.

Thomas and Philip are prominent within the Gospel of John in a way that they're not within the Synoptics. Simon the Zealot probably is a reference not to some sort of political revolutionary work that he was involved in or had previously been involved in but to the fact that he was a man characterized by zeal. Perhaps we should see in those cases where some other name is attached to the apostle or there is some relation or some vocation that's attached to them just the commonality of that particular name that they had.

So Simon was a common name so he needed to be distinguished from others by being a zealot or by being called Peter. James had to be distinguished by being the son of Alpheus and there are other sorts of distinctions that needed to be made, not just within the group of the apostles themselves like there's two Jameses and there's two Simons but also within the larger group of disciples and within people of those days. That can be one of the things that helps us to realize the authenticity of the gospels, the fact that the names that are common within the gospels were also common within the other records that we have from that period and that location.

One interesting feature of this particular list that we do not find in the other lists in Luke and Mark is that they're ordered in twos. This presumably was because the apostles were sent out in twos. We see that in the other gospels, it's not mentioned here but they're ordered in twos before they're being sent out.

Might also explain why Andrew occurs in parallel with Peter his brother whereas in others he might seem to come in the fourth position after James and John who with Peter comprised the three at the heart of the disciples. Jesus sends the disciples out to the towns and cities of Israel. In some respects what he's doing is not dissimilar from a politician on a campaign trail.

He's raising grassroots support, he's making people aware of his larger mission and when the time comes there will be a people ready to receive it. However we could also compare what he's doing to the sending out of the spies who go throughout the land in twos preparing for a future conquest. We see that in Numbers chapter 13 and as they go throughout the land they present a test of hospitality.

They must depend upon the generosity of others and this will be the test. We see that they do not have supplies for the journey, they do not have the means to protect themselves, they do not have the means to clothe themselves and house themselves. They're dependent upon other people and in the same way as Rahab was tested and blessed as a result of her reception of the spies, so the people of Israel are being tested in preparation for a new conquest.

We see this test of hospitality in the book of Genesis. In Genesis chapter 18 three angels, one of them being the Lord, come incognito to Abraham and he greets them and welcomes them and shows them great hospitality and is blessed as a result of it. On the other hand the next chapter in chapter 19 those two angels come to Sodom and Sodom is judged as a result of their failure to receive them in the right way and so this testing of the land through a test of hospitality is an important theme within scripture and Christ uses it on various occasions.

We see it again in chapter 25 when Christ comes incognito in his brothers and those who do not receive them are judged, those who do receive them are blessed. Beyond the fact that they must depend upon other people's hospitality they must be confident in God's generous provision. God is the one that's going to provide everything that they need for this journey.

They don't have enough of their own resources, they're being sent out into the most dangerous circumstances without provision and they must depend wholly upon God's goodness towards them. They are told that it would be worse for the cities that reject them than for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment and again this draws our mind back to the test of hospitality that was presented to Sodom and Gomorrah. They are presenting another test of hospitality and the judgment that follows this is going to be even more severe.

They're sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, not to the Gentiles yet but to the flock of the firstborn nation of Israel, the nation that's supposed to lead the others. They are to be shepherds but they are also themselves sheep, sheep sent out in the midst of

wolves but sent out in the midst of wolves under the rule of a greater shepherd, the shepherd that is promised in Ezekiel chapter 34 where God says that he himself will shepherd his people. Their defenselessness and their dependence is a sign of their sheep-like character and the success of their mission is a sign of the greater shepherd that's overseeing it, their reliance upon the good shepherd.

They are sheep sent out in the midst of wolves but under the rule of a shepherd who will snatch them away from any that will try and harm them. They need to be shrewd but innocent. They will have to use their cunning, trickery, wit and deception to survive and escape from oppressors and opponents.

You can maybe think about David fleeing from Saul. They will be persecuted, hated, abused and brought before rulers and kings. They'll live in treacherous times where even those closest family members and friends might turn on them.

It's important to remember that the group of disciples aren't just random individuals. Many of them are closely related. Probably at least three of them are first cousins of Jesus.

James and John the sons of Zebedee and James the son of Alphaeus. James the son of Alphaeus according to tradition and James and John according to piecing together some of the details concerning the women who are at the cross. Other disciples like Simon, Peter and Andrew are brothers themselves and within the group of the apostles we can probably expect that there were further first cousins or second cousins and people who had grown up around each other or worked together.

James and John and Peter and Andrew presumably knew each other very well working alongside each other and so this was a tight-knit group of people with a tight-knit family network around them and so when family started to turn on them it would be an incredibly difficult thing. Something that would strike at the very dynamics at the heart of their group. Their group was developed out of the life of families and the sort of connections that exist between young males who work together and associate together within a region.

This is not just isolated people. These are people who are tied together by familial and friendship and kinship bonds. Perhaps the nearest modern analogy we have for it is something like a mafia family where within a mafia family there are interplays between the biological family and the family that is the fictive kinship of the criminal group.

In these sorts of relationships there is an intertwining of the two in complicated ways and betrayal has a particular force within contexts like that where the tensions between the fictive family group, the larger family group, and the more intimate biological family group can be felt incredibly keenly and can be very bitter. They are told that even when they are brought before kings and rulers they are not to worry about their defence. Just

as God will provide them with provisions on the way he will provide the words that they need for their defence and these words will be given to them by the spirit.

Once again this is presumably anticipating events later on in the story when the spirit will be given in the events of the day of Pentecost. They will still be going through the cities of Israel when the Son of Man returns. Now this return of the Son of Man is presumably at the end of that particular period of time in AD 70 when there will be judgement upon Israel and they are leading up to that judgement, preparing the people.

There is an event of judgement and harvest on the horizon and they need to get the people prepared. They need to lead the sheep away from danger and they need to prepare the division of this nation into those who are faithful and those who are unfaithful. A question to consider.

Christians can talk a lot about hospitality evangelism, about the importance of opening our homes to others and showing them generous hospitality and giving them good food, a place to stay, these sorts of things. These things are very good but we don't talk very much about a test of hospitality, about the importance of requesting other people's hospitality or putting ourselves at the mercy of other people's hospitality. Reading this passage and the associated passage in Matthew 25 concerning the sheep and the goats, can you think of any ways in which Christ might be calling us to practice tests of hospitality in our contexts?