



[Pastor Keith GeRue](#)

**Sermon for Lent 3 Midweek**

March 11, 2026

# Angels of the Passion: Traitors!

## **Job 1:1, 6-12; 2:1-8; 1 Peter 5:6-11; Luke 22:24-34; John 13:21-30**

For the past two weeks, you've heard me call my *former* brother *the traitor*. Because that's what he is. You call him the devil, or Satan, but I just call him the traitor. He betrayed our Father, rebelled against him, and caused many of my brother angels to follow him. Our Father hadn't done anything to him! Nothing to give him any reason to do this. Our Father is only good and gracious - always! But as you heard last week, our Father loves you - you who the traitor calls *dirtlings* - and even made you in His own image! And then He sent His Son to become one of you, to save you! And that was all just too much for the traitor. He couldn't stomach that. So, he went off on his own, took a bunch of my now-former-brothers with him, and we had to cast them all down to earth.

And now he is working against you. To turn you traitor, too. He doesn't just want his fellow evil angels to follow him - well, he would say *they're* the good ones and *we're* the evil ones! But, you know, he's a liar. But he wants all of you to be like him. Turn traitor. Listen to him. Follow him. That's why Peter warned that he is ***prowl*ing around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour**. And Peter would know! As a leader of Jesus' disciples, Peter was one of his prime targets! Remember when Jesus had to say to him, *Get behind me Satan!* (Matthew 16:23) when the traitor got Peter to deny Jesus' cross? That sounded really harsh! But Jesus had to make Peter understand what was going on. How the traitor was playing with him. That yeah, Peter was in his crosshairs. And Peter was falling for it.

And you heard that again tonight. Jesus told Peter (who was also known by the name Simon): ***Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat***. I remember seeing wheat being sifted once . . . put in the sifter and then ground through a screen. Yikes! Was that going to happen to Peter? That's what the traitor thought he had a right to demand and do? And apparently our Father was going to allow it, for Jesus prayed for Peter, that ***his faith not fail***. Wow. Poor Peter!

But he was not the first. You heard about **Job** tonight, how the traitor challenged our Father and challenged Job. Sifted him hard! He lost everything! And the traitor thought he had him. Surely, he would curse our Father and die - both physically and spiritually. But he didn't.



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I was so proud of Job! But credit really to our Father, whose Word sustained him through that time.

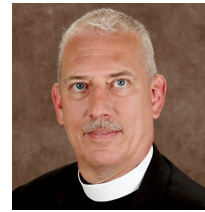
*Do you all think about this?* How the traitor and his evil minions are after *you*? How they want to put you through the sifter and pull you down to hell with them? That Peter wasn't the first, but he's also not the last! I think it's good to think about that . . . to be prepared . . .

But, back to Peter. The traitor demanded to sift him like wheat. But did you hear what Jesus then said, next? ***And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. When you have turned again . . . turned again, where? Back to Jesus!*** It sounds like **Jesus knew Peter would fall, but not be lost.** That our Father would then use Peter for good, to strengthen his brothers, because they would be next in the sifter. For you don't think the traitor was going to give them a pass, do you? No way!

Peter was so confident! ***Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death,*** he said! And I'm sure he meant it. But he got so scared. Even when it was just a little girl who came up to him, there in the courtyard of the High Priest, and said: *You were with Jesus* (Luke 22:56). Sift, sift, sift. ***No!*** Peter thundered! ***I don't know Him!*** Three times . . . sift, sift, sift . . . just like Jesus prophesied. The traitor was laughing with glee! He was having so much fun! Laughing, even as *Peter wept bitterly.*

And you heard about another disciple the traitor sifted: **Judas.** I don't know why Judas did what he did. Some say he didn't really want Jesus dead - that by betraying Jesus, he was just trying to make Jesus do something spectacular and be the kind of Saviour he thought he should be. He didn't want a weak, dying, crucified Messiah, just like Peter, when *he* denied the cross! I don't know. Maybe. But that's the traitor sifting the mind, isn't it? ***The cross? That can't be right!*** (sift, sift, sift) ***A Saviour wouldn't die!*** (sift, sift, sift) ***If you get the Romans to act, surely Jesus will have to step up and act, too!*** (sift, sift, sift) And Judas does it. Agrees to betray Jesus to them. Make Jesus be *his* kind of Messiah . . . and make a little coin on the side, too!

But Judas was playing a dangerous game, a deadly game, as it turned out. Don't mess with the traitor! Remember, he's a prowling lion! He's not playing games! He doesn't just want to trip you up - he wants to devour you. And he did Judas. Did you hear that fateful phrase John included in his Gospel? ***After Judas had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him.*** Oh, you don't want that! And then he went out. On the traitor's team. ***And it was night,*** John said. And not just because the sun was down. ***It was the dark night of Judas' soul.***



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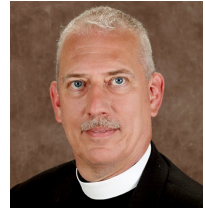
As I said, I don't know why Judas did what he did. With Peter, *the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak* (Matthew 26:41). I get that. But Judas? Maybe Judas thought he was doing a good thing, helping Jesus. Maybe he was just greedy. But that's what the traitor does - he makes things sound good, right, and reasonable. If that doesn't work, he plays on your **fears**. And if that doesn't work, he plays on your **pride**. If that doesn't work, he plays on **something else** in you. He won't give up! He'll keep sifting and sifting and sifting until something works; until he finds a soft spot in you and then he sinks his teeth in. This is no game to him! So, take him seriously. And take sin seriously. It's not little, and it's not harmless.

So again, I ask, *do you all ever think about this?* Your sifting? How the traitor is attacking you? I hope you are . . . I hope you learn from Peter and Judas . . .

And follow the example of Peter! No, not in denying Jesus! (You knew I didn't mean that!) **But in turning back to Jesus**. That when you fall, when you fail, when you mess up, when you get sifted, when you let your fears or your pride get the best of you, when you follow your own thinking, what seems right to you, or your own desires, what you want, instead of following our Father . . . that you turn back to Him in repentance. **Because he will forgive you**. You don't have to wonder about that or worry that He won't. Because **He already has!** All your sins were already put on Jesus on the cross and He already paid the price for them. It's done! Signed, sealed, and delivered! So, turning to Him in repentance is just *receiving* the gift He already has for you.

And thus, strengthened by our Father's forgiveness, won for you by Jesus, our Father can use you like He did Peter, for good. To help each other, and encourage those who are being sifted, or those who have fallen, or even those who don't know any of this, but are going through hard times. You know. You can help. You can tell them and give them hope. Because you know what it's like. You know how hard it is. But you also know Jesus, your Saviour, and that He is even greater, and so merciful, gracious, and good. *Always*. You can *always* turn back to Him. And He will *never* turn you away.

Now, one more thing I want to tell you . . . You might be thinking: *Where are the good angels in this story tonight?* Your Pastor named this Lenten series "Angels of the Passion," after all. Well, remember . . . there aren't just us *good* angels in this story. The *evil* angels, traitor and his evil minions, my former brothers, play an important part in this story as well. But as we considered tonight, **our Father can even use them and the evil they intend for His good and gracious purposes**. Like Jesus' cross! Like Peter strengthening his brothers.



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Oh, how they hate that! When our Father uses for good what they meant for harm! But the traitor is no equal to our Father, though He wants you to think that he is! That there is our Father and there is him, and that they are equals, doing battle, the outcome in doubt. But it's not that way at all! The traitor is not a god. He is an angel. Our Father created him. He didn't create him evil - that was his own doing! But he's no equal to our Father. Oh, how he wishes he was. So, remind him of that! He won't like it. But he already doesn't like you. Remind him, as the apostle John would later write in one of his letters: *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world* (1 John 4:4).

And that's true! Absolutely true. Yes, the traitor is dangerous, and yes, sin is nothing to mess with. But you belong to our Father. You are precious to Him. He has already overcome the traitor. And in Him, so do you.

That seems like a good stopping point for tonight; a good thought to stop on, with that confidence, with that assurance. So, until next week, peace be with you . . . in the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.