

Jesus made me do it

I wonder if Judas got a bad rap. Has history just looked poorly on Judas?

We all remember him, right? He sold Jesus out to the religious authorities of the time which in turn led to Jesus' crucifixion.

I bet if you asked Judas, he would have told you that Jesus made him do it. And maybe he did. From the passage that Jorge read, it says that Jesus told Judas that he would betray him.

Maybe that is where Judas got the idea. Sure he had thought about betraying Jesus before, maybe even met with the religious authority to decide if betraying Jesus was something he wanted to do.

But since Jesus suggested that he was going to do it anyway, why not just go through with it and get the money for it? I mean, it was Jesus' idea, wasn't it?

Some of you may have heard of a book called the Gospel of Judas. It was written several hundred years after Jesus' death – and it is extremely doubtful that it was even influenced by Judas since he hung himself shortly after he betrayed Jesus.

But none-the-less, if you read this book, which isn't in our Bible, you would get the impression that the writer really wanted to blame Jesus for Judas' betrayal.

It is kind of funny if you think about it. In our day and society, we typically say, "Oh the devil made me do it."

Isn't it so easy to blame it on the devil? But to say that Jesus made you do it – that just sounds strange.

But sometimes we like to blame others – or even God - for making us do things. If we look at some of the people in the Bible, at first glance we would say that God made them do it.

Look at Moses - God spoke to him from a bush telling him to go to Egypt. Noah - God told him to build an ark.

There is a movie that just got released about a modern day Noah called "Evan Almighty". God did the same thing to him – told him to build an ark.

So God appeared to Noah and Moses and told them to do something. So maybe Judas thought the same thing. Maybe he thought Jesus told him to betray him - so the prophecy could come true. Someone had to do it, right? Why not Judas?

So maybe Judas just thought – Jesus Made Me Do It.

But when we look at the stories of Moses, or Noah, or even Evan Almighty, God told them what He wanted them to do – not what they had to do. They all could have said, "No."

God told Noah that he wanted him to build an ark. Noah could have said, "No, thank you. I have better things to do with my time." But he was faithful and did what God asked. Although his neighbors probably thought he was nuts – he still built the ark.

Then Moses, he tried to come up with excuses why he wasn't the right person to go speak to the Egyptian Pharaoh. But every time he came up with a reason why he shouldn't go, God would help him get past the reason.

For example, Moses told God that he wasn't a good public speaker. So God told him to take his brother Aaron with him who was good at speaking in public.

But neither with Moses or Noah did God force them to do anything.

Since Adam and Eve and the "apple" tree, God has given us free will to do what we want.

Sure he speaks to us in our hearts and might nudge us one way or another – but it is only a nudge. We decide for ourselves what we want to do.

So saying that God made us do something or even the devil made me do it – isn't really correct. Nobody can make us do anything.

People may make suggestions to us, sometimes even forcibly, but it is our own will – our own free will – that ultimately decides what our actions will be.

And it is those actions that define who we are. When we act on our own free will, we should ask ourselves, what are the consequences of my actions?

I am responding this way, or acting this way for the betterment of my family? The betterment of my church? The betterment of my community?

Or am I acting this way because I want to be vindictive? Or because it will help me advance my own personal agenda? Or am I responding this way simply because I don't care about others and that is just who I am?

Jesus tells us to love others and boy that can be hard sometimes. But when we use our free will, we should really look and ask ourselves, "What are the consequences, and will this action help or harm others?"

None of us are perfect, but to live as a Christian is to work towards improving ourselves and work towards perfection. Once we all start working together, as a family, as a church, as a community, great things can happen. But in all of our actions, even if we have the best intentions, we need to think about the consequences that may happen.

Here is what I feel really happened with Judas. I don't think Jesus made him do it; I don't think the devil made him do it. The Bible doesn't say this, but I personally don't think greed made him do it.

I feel that Judas might have thought that Jesus was the Savior, the Messiah that they were looking for. But I don't think Judas liked sitting around using the "be nice to everyone" approach that Jesus was taking.

Sure he had a large following from time to time, but if this guy is the Messiah, he needed to do something a little more forceful.

See, the common theory was that the Messiah would come and bring salvation – but the Jews weren't thinking about everlasting life. They were getting salvation mixed up with liberation.

They were expecting the Messiah to come and liberate them from the Romans. Many Jews expected that the Messiah would come to get an army together and this Messiah would be a great military leader and destroy the Roman Empire – or at least get them out of Jerusalem.

So maybe, just maybe, Judas thought that Jesus needed some help. That he was taking way too much time getting an army together and that something had to happen right now.

So maybe if he pushed Jesus into a corner – if the religious authority confronted Jesus and there was no where to go but fight, then Jesus would finally break out of his shell and become the soldier he was destined to be. Well, at least in Judas' mind.

So, put yourself in Judas' shoes, Here is this person that is the leader, just not doing what you think he should be doing. Sure you've made hints now and then, but he doesn't really listen or gives you some excuse about love and peace – blah blah blah.

So then you decide he needs a nudge, "Hey, let's go get these people over here to confront him, then he'll finally do what I want him to do."

Then, at zero hour, when Jesus is confronted by the religious authority and you expect him to break out of his shell and become the military leader you want him to be, he acts like this – From the Gospel of Matthew (MATT 26:49-56).

Imagine how you would have felt if you were Judas. This man that you followed for 3 years – you were pretty sure he was the one. The one that would bring salvation – or liberation – to your people. When the time came for him to actually show that he was the military man you thought he was, he just went quietly saying that's the way it's supposed to be – quietly.

So because of the actions of Judas and his need to influence Jesus, although well intentioned, still, an innocent man died.

We can see similar things happen today around us. Maybe we don't know someone we think will be a great military leader and liberate Marana.

But, maybe in our homes, or our work, we see things happening that we think shouldn't be happening a certain way – so we try to change it to be the way that we think it should be.

Maybe we are confrontational in public, maybe we try to sabotage or undermine the other persons' plans, maybe we try to change the way the other person is by any means at our disposal.

It may not cause that person's death, but maybe heartache, undue stress; maybe if it is a co-worker, the loss of their job, which could lead to bankruptcy, and then homelessness.

These all could be consequences of our actions – especially if we really don't think through our actions.

As Christians, we should always try to take a step back first and look and listen. Maybe there is more going on than we are privy to. Judas didn't know that Jesus was there for salvation, not liberation.

Maybe we should ask for clarification. Moses didn't really think that he was the right person for the job, but he allowed God to show him that he was.

Or maybe we should just try trusting others a little more. Noah trusted God.

He could have argued with God, he could have told him that he didn't have the funds to do it, or that building an ark would interfere with his Monday Night Bowling, or that building an ark was just a waste of money and time and that God was doing it for his own benefit.

But he didn't. He took the time and listened to God. He trusted that God would lead him the right way. He had faith.

We need to remember that neither God nor the Devil makes us do things, we have free will and decide for ourselves.

So, to live our lives as Christians, we need to take the time to respect and love others, and realize that our actions define us. So we need to decide how we respond to situations: should we be a Judas and act without knowing the facts, or a Noah where we trust in others and have a little faith?

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