

“30 PIECES OF SILVER...”

MATTHEW 12:14-25



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by Pastor Tim Dodson
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Matthew 12:14-25 *Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests 15 and said, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?" And they counted*

out to him thirty pieces of silver. 16 So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him. 17 Now on the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" 18 And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples."'" 19 So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover. 20 When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. 21 Now as they were eating, He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me." 22 And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?" 23 He answered and said, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me. 24 "The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born." 25 Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, "Rabbi, is it I?" He said to him, "You have said it."

**“Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted,
Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me.”** Psalms 41:9

When a new child is coming to a family, rarely if ever is the name “Judas” considered. Even amongst unbelievers and avowed atheists that name never seemed to catch on. No doubt because that name has come to embody the very essence of betrayal, the very picture of disloyalty and infidelity.

Certainly Judas was a failure as an apostle. But he failed also as a disciple and many would say even as a human being. His failure was epic, ultimately widely public and has gone down in history as the exemplification, *literally the symbol for*, a traitor, a hypocrite, and deceit for selfish reasons. It’s hard to be in anyway merciful, understanding and gracious in this matter! For Judas had been present through all of the same teaching that the other apostles heard, and **they** went on to **thrive** spiritually!

He witnessed the same miracles and was involved in the same ministries as the others. Yet, clearly Judas never came to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. He was without excuse and after spending three years with the Lord Jesus Christ and he died **lost**. The others were converted during their time with the Lord, while Judas slowly became a spiritually hard, calloused and hateful individual.

The other eleven disciples went on to be used by God in amazing ways. Their lives demonstrated the truth that common, ordinary people can be orchestrated by the Lord for epic opportunities. Judas however, like many of us, stands as a flashing warning about the dangers of wasted “open doors,” hardness of heart, wicked lusts, and spiritual carelessness, all the while being surrounded by church and overt spirituality.

The fact is, the only thing we know for sure that Judas was good at, was the fine art of hypocrisy. Truly he was one of the most successful hypocrites of all time. He played his part so well that no one but Jesus Himself knew that Judas was a fraud and a pretender! He was as common and as ordinary as the rest of the disciples. He was so ordinary that he never stood out from the rest. He hid in plain sight, shrouded by the camouflage of the herd. Lost in the crowd, no one noticed he wasn't what he pretended to be. ***No one but Jesus that is.***

In order to know the impact of this occurrence, there are two basic truths we need to get our minds around.

1. It is possible to be near Jesus and other true believers... and to associate with Him and them closely, and still be hardened in sin...*still be so very lost.*
2. Judas is a clear reminder that the purposes of God stand sure. No matter what anyone may do, they will never thwart the plan of Almighty God. God always accomplishes what He determines to do, (Isa. 46:10-11; Eph. 1:11.)

Our subject had the name of "**Judas**". The name has two possible meanings; "**Jehovah Leads**" or "**He Whom Jehovah Praises**". This name suggests that his parents certainly had high hopes for his future! With a name like that, they were probably a deeply religious family, who hoped that he would be led by God and that his life would bring praise to the name of the Lord. Thus Judas stands as living proof that coming from a Godly family is not enough to save the soul. Having Christian parents cannot guarantee one's salvation nor one's discipleship. There must be for every individual a conscious repentance and salvation: a surrender to God on all levels. There must be a personal life-changing, soul-saving encounter with Jesus Christ. He must "know you" as much as you might believe you "know Him."

Since Judas was from Judea, He was the only one of the twelve not from Galilee. Many of the rest of the disciples knew one another. Some were brothers. Others were coworkers and friends before they came to know Jesus. But Judas rolled into this lot as the only real stranger in the group. Thus he would have no doubt been a step removed from the other boys. He would have been able to walk in secret easier. That is the inevitable downfall of those who stand outside of true active-life community. Judas no doubt found it easier to keep a low profile because of this small but significant caveat. If no one really knew him, then no one would suspect his behavior as odd. And sadly, his own perpetuating of his seclusion would have also helped justify his treason against Jesus and his thievery from the rest of the disciples. It's the "me-against-the-world" routine.

Many folks have traveled that same road. Claiming that "no one likes me" or "people ignore me" or "I'm not given the same opportunities as others" makes it real easy to turn on those same people later. In reality, such individuals invariably withdrawal from people and fail to BE friendly themselves! They fail to engage others on an equal playing field, and fail to acknowledge that to have friends you must BE a friend! They are into human contact for purely selfish reasons!

Despite all of this, Judas was given opportunity to be a part of the work of ministry. He had indeed worked his way into a place of trust far enough to be chosen as the treasurer for the group, but Judas used that position to steal from the bag. (See John 12:6). Along with being a hypocrite, Judas was a thief. Once again, such was no doubt personally justified in his own head.

Judas was called by Jesus and ordained for the ministry. He had all that was necessary ***and then some***, in order to succeed in life and calling! He was connected, commissioned, and confirmed, and yet he did not make it. Here we have an individual who lived with the Lord Jesus, traveled with Him, saw His miracles, heard His teaching, and witnessed the miracle of His sinless life—one whom Jesus could call "my familiar friend ... who ate my bread" (Ps. 41:9). Despite seeing it all, this person betrayed the One he no doubt *claimed* that he loved!

Ultimately we must realize that words are cheap, and it is our *lives to the end* that express the true reality of our heart and commitment. Will we, as Paul the apostle spoke, *finish well*?

Judas, who had it all, betrayed the greatest gift of his life for a mere thirty pieces of silver, which was the common price paid for a slave in that day! It seems so senseless and so trite! Yet so many of us will sell out our Lord for even less! What is *your* price today? The frivolity of fame? The pleasures of a moment of flesh? Success? Comfort? Big money? If you have a price, no doubt Satan will one day offer you your price...your "30 pieces of silver." I have seen such play out over and over! But Satan is liar! He will pull the "bait and switch" with you and even what you thought you had you will lose. (Matt 25:29) He will take *this* life and take your *next one* too. All while promising you the world! "*When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*" John 8:44

Jesus, here in this account, began the preparations for what we know as His "last supper." That, of course, is a misnomer, for He Himself spoke in Mark's gospel concerning a "supper" that was yet to come. He did say however that He would not partake of it all again until that gathering... where He would "*again partake in the Kingdom of God.*" Indeed there is a grand feast coming, and His true children will be there to share it with Him!

A note: We are never told the identity of this nameless man who hosted this historical dinner. No name, no brass plate over a doorway somewhere, no worldly credit; but what an honor, what a privilege! Would *you* trade worldly recognition and status for an opportunity to play such a significant role in the plan of Christ? For that is the only promise of ministry. For Judas, the answer was no.

"When it was evening, Jesus sat down at the table with the twelve disciples. While they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me." (Verses 20-21)

Well, that would certainly put a damper on the party! What's amazing about this is that Jesus knew all the time that Judas would betray Him, yet He showed the same love towards him as He did to the others who would ultimately die for Him.

We must acknowledge that anyone who is a church under-shepherd will know such back-stabbing rejection at some point in his ministry. But we should find comfort in the fact that even the *Great Shepherd* knew such pain! He experienced it, and furthermore, He *let it happen*. For those of us in the ministry...and for that matter all who call themselves His sheep, such a fact cannot be ignored! And yet Jesus still **loved**. The door to redemption was still open. The path to forgiveness was still available. Jesus did not herein *name* the perpetrator, but by simply breaking bread with them **all**, He included Judas as a friend. But even in His friendship, even in His very *love* for Judas He was not absolving him of the responsibility of his actions. Judas would stand for what he had done. Just as we all will outside of the redemption/salvation of Christ.

In the account of the "Woman caught in Adultery," Jesus did not absolve her of her sin, nor did He condemn her for it. She was simply given another chance, and an opportunity for repentance and change. An "opportunity". An "open door." But she and **we** have to move on such. Otherwise such opportunities will slip between our fingers and be lost.

This begs the question, "**Could Judas have been saved?**" Yes! Had he turned to Christ by faith, he would have been saved. Had he repented and sought forgiveness he would have been forgiven. He certainly had opportunity to do so! Judas could have turned back. He could have repented. He could have yet been saved, but he instead felt sorry for himself and eventually took his own life. The parables of the unjust servant, the man without a wedding garment, and the ten virgins were all designed to speak to Judas and turn him from his evil plans. But what he heard from Christ was never received as being applied to him. They were always words for someone else...never for him!

In this passage (vs 25) we notice that while the others called Jesus “Lord,” it was Judas alone who called Jesus “Rabbi,” meaning *teacher*. Judas never made that leap from Jesus as his *teacher* to Jesus his *Lord*. And that seemingly small issue made *all the difference*. For Jesus is “there” before us all today. But *who exactly is He to you?* The answer to that question will make all the difference to your *today* and your *forever!* And remember! Words are cheap, and they will not save you. ACTIONS speak of the position of our heart. Love moves you!

Somewhere along this faith journey of ours, Jesus has to move from the place of teacher to that of Lord. If we fail to give Him that move, we stand to take our place beside Judas. Scriptural evidence tells us that after Judas left, he never made it back again. He had it all and he let it slip between his fingers. He stood in the very presence of deity and yet lost his way.

However, the eternal mystery was in the fact that the Jesus knew before he chose Judas that Judas would betray Him into the hands of His enemies. So, while Judas could have been saved, Jesus knew that he would not. Why then would Jesus have allowed such a thing? Hebrews 4:15 reminds us that “...*He faced all of the same testing’s we do, yet he did not sin.*” Is it possible that Jesus let all this happen so we might know that we are not alone in such experiential betrayal? That He knows what it is like to be so hurt by someone we loved and trusted? And further, to show us how to act when we have been so double-crossed...when we have been so hurt?

Jesus didn’t chase Judas down to confront Him. In fact, we have no record of Jesus ever doing that. But He always held the door open...He always offered the second chance for the one who wanted it. Yet even that *was not* and *is not* without its own pain! I have no doubt in the similar case of Peter’s denial, there was great personal embarrassment and pain to come back to Jesus. But He did so because the price of doing otherwise was extremely high. For he had seen it play out with Judas. He knew where that road led! Do we?

This account is also a clear reminder that one never knows the true condition of the hearts of those around us. Yet even in that, Jesus understood *though He understood it alone!* Scripture tell us in John 2:24 that “*Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men...*” The other disciples never did figure out that Judas was a traitor until after he had betrayed the Lord Jesus. They always assumed that he was one of them and one *with* them. Perhaps even Judas believed that all was well. Either way, it reminds us that the heart is very deceptive. Jer. 17:9 reminds us that “*The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?*” It also challenges us to be sure that we are in a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ: “*So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away.*” 2 Pet. 1:10, “*Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith.*” 2 Cor. 13:5.

So once again I ask: “What is your price today?” What will it take to have you reject Christ and the community that is around you today? Discomfort? The feeling that someone slighted you in some way? A bruised ego? An expectation on you that you do not want to deliver? A request upon you that you do not want to give? A “no” when you so badly wanted a yes? Some desire or gain offered elsewhere? A worldly position...and earthly possession? The right guy or the right girl? More money elsewhere? Better visible position elsewhere? What will it take? What is the cost?

Because Satan has his checkbook open today, ready to “make all your dreams come true....”

Psalm 55:12-14 – “For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.”