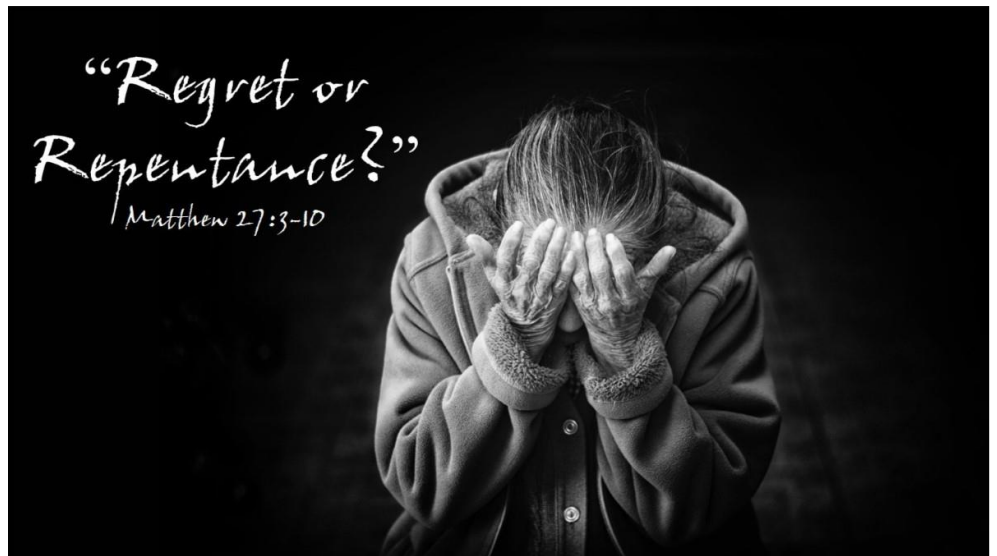


“Regret or Repentance?”

Matthew 27:3-10

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at **JF Believers Church**
in **Menomonie, Wisc**
on **January 13, 2018**



Matthew 27:3-10 *Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4 saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!" 5 Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. 6 But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood." 7 And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. 8 Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. 9 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, 10 "and gave them for the potter's field, as the LORD directed me."*

As in all matters of sin, there comes that day...*that moment*, when reality arrives. Consequences take place. Truth manifests. We probably will never know just what was in Judas' head during all of this. Was it just greed? Self-preservation? Who knows? And I guess it really doesn't matter, because no matter what, the 'deed was done' now ...it was a *fait accompli*. There was no going back now...no undoing what had been done. And now sorrow, regret and compunction had arrived. It was time to "pay the piper."

What did Judas do about this error...and further, his realization of such? Older original KJV translations use the word "repent." (Matthew 27:3.) The wording therein is literally he "*repented himself*." The Strong's description of that phrase is "care to one afterwards." So Judas' "repentance" wasn't of the classic sort. For the one that Judas cared about after this sin was himself.

A more accurate rendering of the language there would be "seized with remorse." Nothing more really, for although Judas was gripped with the stark reality of what he had done, he never asked for forgiveness. He never "repented" in the fully scriptural sense. He never lived on to turn away from that sin and live a different life. You see, there is a world of difference between the two paths before us. 2Corinthians 7:10 (NLT) tells us that "...*the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death.*" Many people who feel sorry for their sins never come to God and ask for forgiveness, and they never turn away from the act of that sin. Judas regretted he had done what he did. Judas *felt* bad about what he had done. But how is that any different than the world? One doesn't have to be a Christian to experience that kind of regret! Those of the world often experience such.

Judas tried instead to undo his sin...to undo his betrayal, but it was too late. Some actions cannot be undone. Some things cannot be taken back. Judas no doubt wept bitter tears as he threw the money back into the temple. But his remorse (as sincere as it was) was not true repentance but rather simply regret. But regret did lead to change. It did not lead to forgiveness. It led instead to suicide.

Tears and personal angst over our stupid mistakes do not substitute for the broken heart that leads to repentance. How often we are crying when we should be praying. We are beating ourselves up when we should be grabbing the life preserver that is Christ and rejoicing that we have such a rescue. **Could** Judas have repented? Yes. **Did he?** No.

The English Anglican Bible commentator John Trapp once remarked that “**Till** we have sinned, Satan is a parasite; **when** we have sinned, he is a tyrant.” Caught and overcome by that tyrant, Judas lost everything, including his life and apparently his soul.

Proximity to the things of Jesus ironically cut both ways. If you spend enough time with the church and all of its joys and its trappings, your heart will either grow soft or it will grow hard. Despite being “in the fold”...being a very player in the move of Christ on this earth, Judas still hardened his heart, isolated himself, and attempted to hide his true self away from those around him. His self-centered world view...*his pride*, would not repent. He locked the door from the inside and attempted to blaze his own way.

We must understand that there is a **Godly** repentance, and there is a **worldly** repentance. Judas was the poster boy for the latter. There was indeed “repentance,” but one that encompassed more of a “sorry I did that, sorry I got caught.” That’s worldly repentance. Worldly repentance stems from a knee-jerk reaction to the pain of guilt and consequence. Something that ironically has been built into us by the Master Artist upon creation. But such was designed to drive us to our knees and point us toward home. Such was not meant to be itself the end of such a process.

The most common understanding of “repent” is “turn” or “return”. Two critical aspects of that kind of repentance is a turning *from* as well as a turning *to*. It is “to turn **from** evil, and to turn **to** the good.” There must be both. One without the other is empty and meaningless. A lot of folks will attempt to embrace only one side of that equation and such will always fail. Ezekiel called to the people of Israel: “*Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices!*” “*Repent! Turn away from all your offenses*”, “*Turn! Turn from your evil ways*”. Part of such turning *away* from these things is turning *to* Christ, His grace, His mercy, and the discipline that occurs as I walk closer to Him.

Part of repentance is also confession. Confessing of sins is an oft presented biblical ideal. Overall, there is an innate aspect of transparency and openness that is to take place in the body of Christ. Posing and posturing are never to be a part of Christian community. We scripturally read so much about the apostles “dirty laundry” ...the very men who founded the church! Yet we tend to go *way* out of our way to cover **our** back side and present a glossy appearance! When one is guilty of sin, God has designed as part of the process the aspect of “coming clean.” I don’t think God is asking that we wear our heart on our shirtsleeves, and walk around in a tear-filled puddle confessing our garbage to people at the bus stop. But the reverse is just as crazy...sweeping our sin under the carpet and putting on our happy smiley church face each week and coming in here and pretending you are something that scripture says you are not. Romans 3:10-12 As it is written: “*There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.*”

From the beginning repentance was part of the story. John the Baptist, and then Jesus Himself began their public ministry with the call to “repent.” Then Paul came along and preached to both Jews and Gentiles to “turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.” The reality is, true repentance is a very condition of true salvation. The practice of repentance brings glory to God even in our personal failure and shortcoming, for it then expresses the goodness of God, His divine love, His passionate desire to see sinners saved. Our action of repentance and what follows from Christ is a display of that very gospel message!

But true repentance also requires true brokenness. True repentance is NOT asking the Lord for forgiveness in order to change one's perceived standing in the eternal order. You are not getting saved again, nor are you getting God to love you again. You are just returning to that place of His love and relationship. 2 Timothy 2:13 tells us that *"If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is."* If anything is so changed it is the lines of communication. After all, Psalms 66:18 says *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear."* But you have not overpowered the cross by your sin, and God has not ceased to love you...*not even in the slightest degree.*

Repentance is an honest, regretful acknowledgement of sin with commitment to change. I say "commitment" because it would be a wonderful if every time I "repented," that I never committed that sin again. But sadly, that has not been the case in my life. But if I **am** committed, I will repent **again**, get back on that horse, and rejoin the fight. Because nothing gets done in personal pity parties that I conduct locked in my room away from everyone. If I am a child of God, then I am growing and maturing.

That means I stay in the fight and in doing so I get stronger, more faithful, and more Christ-centered every day...*and literally every time I fall.* For when I do, I get back up with eyes open wider and I'm a little wiser and a little more determined. Such a declaration as this is not meant to provide anyone with a long leash. And if you are playing that game, it will surely one day turn and bite you. Your heart in this matter says everything as to the reality of your motives. I believe that if you truly stay in the fight, Jesus does too. He never "leaves a man behind."

But Judas tried another approach at "making things right." He attempted the impossible task of backpedaling. We all want, in such situations, to erase the past; to make it all go away like it never happened! But so often such cannot be done. It happened. We did it. To his credit, Judas *did* acknowledge his sin as he verbalized such before the high priests and elders. This was and is a good thing to do...a necessary part of the process. Yet many have followed suite with Judas and have also regretted *before men*: men that tend toward the rolls of priests, psychiatrists, and counselors. But so many of us fail to do so before the ultimate victim of our sins! We fail to do so before the human victims. We fail to do so before God.

Judas also found out something else. Something that those who turn against God always find out in the end. And that is that inevitably those who we think are our friends out there in the world, those outside of the fold, will sooner or later expose their true selves. Today, tomorrow, or next week... that day will come! The priests pretended to be his friends, but they turned against him in the end. The pretended to be his friends to serve their own agenda and their own benefit. They *used* him. And the world will do the same to us, and they spit us out on the other side of ruin.

When it all was over, these arrogant self-interested priests were brazen enough to still hold to their pious religiosity. They "put on their spiritual hats" and took the high road of self-righteousness. It's a crazy world out there when people actually think their lives are still about doing the good and upright thing after throwing someone under the bus for their own gain! Yet John 16:2 warns us that *"the time is coming when those who kill you will think they are doing a holy service for God."*

The "right thing to do" apparently was to buy a field with this coin and establish a poor man's cemetery. After all, they couldn't righteously use that blood money for good and godly temple pursuits, right? They knew that they could not use this money in the temple because the Law states that money gained or used in an evil way was not acceptable to God. They clearly knew what they had done. What these priests had here was a religion of their own invention. A man-made religion, with man-made rules. Sort of like the version of religion that is so prevalent today!

This passage records the tragic end of Judas' life. An end brought on by a series of mistakes, personal weakness's and an unwillingness to move to correct them. His was a life dominated by fleshly desires and the sin it brings, and it culminated in a horrid death. As I read this passage I was reminded of James 1:15, "...when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death."

Take a moment to consider the events of those last few hours before it all unraveled for Judas. He had been among the disciples as they broke bread together in the Upper Room. He was there to have his feet washed by God in flesh, the Savior of the world. As we push back further, He was there for all the prayers, the teaching, the miraculous, the storms calmed, the feeding of the 5000, the blind made to see, the crippled made to walk, the demonic set free. He was there when Lazarus came back alive, when Jesus turned over the tables in the temple, when He walked upon the water... *and still his end was utter ruin and personal suicide.* I'm not sure there is a more tragic account in all the Bible. This man had literally and physically walked with Jesus! He had experienced all of His majesty and the undeniable evidence that He was the Christ. He even had verbally declared the innocence of Christ.

"When sin is finished, it brings forth death" James 1:15

If you ever think that you would never...that you are beyond such apostasy, please remember Judas. He saw it all, experienced it all, knew all the truth, and confirmed all the facts, and he still went down in flames. I am convinced that Judas knew that Jesus was the Christ. *That He was who He said He was,* but he refused to receive Christ as his Lord. He refused to have someone else call the shots and direct his life. He refused to be humbled. He refused to acquiesce. As the old saying goes, he apparently would rather "rule in hell, than serve in heaven."

It would be easy to dump this guy and move on, but unless we can learn from the errors of Judas we are in danger of repeating them. Trying to undo our wrongs will never result in salvation. Seeking to rectify our past mistakes will not make us acceptable unto God. Simply feeling sorry for sin, and even realizing that Jesus is the Christ is never enough. God does not classify sin, or rate sinners. *All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.* Sin brings separation. You can seek to fix every wrong you have ever committed, but if you fail to come to Christ by faith, receiving Him as your Savior based on the finished work of Calvary, you are yet in your sin.

***"But unless you repent, you too will all perish."* - Luke 13:3 (NIV)**

***"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* - 1 John 1:9 (NIV)**

***"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."* - 2 Chronicles 7:14 (NIV)**