

Common Men, Uncommon Calling: Judas Iscariot, Part 2

Luke 6:16

42-82

The story of Judas Iscariot. Luke chapter 6. We have in verses 14 to 16 of Luke 6 the record of the twelve apostles, their names. Jesus prayed all night. In the morning He called from His many disciples twelve to be apostles, messengers, first generation of preachers of the gospel after Him. There was Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John who were brothers, and Philip and Bartholomew, or Nathanael is his other name, and Matthew, also called Levi, and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas the son of James, and last, Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

He's always the last name in every list and always with a notation about him being a traitor. He's the most colossal failure, the most wicked monster in all of human history. He committed the most horrible act ever committed, betraying the perfect, sinless, holy Son of God for some money. His dark story is the most poignant example of what the human heart is capable of doing. Three years with Jesus Christ, all that time and his heart was growing harder, and harder, and more hateful, and more hateful all the time.

The other eleven have encouraged us greatly because they were common men lifted to an uncommon calling. And that's always encouraging to us who are common. We saw how the Lord took common men, greatly loved them, taught them, trained them and empowered them to the greatest calling that any person ever has had: that of being an apostle of Jesus Christ.

And Judas, as common as the rest, with no earthly credentials, started out like all the rest started out, but was never transformed like the rest. While they were becoming increasingly stronger sons of God, he was becoming increasingly more a son of hell, as the weeks passed. His sin ranks at the top of the list for heinous crimes in human history. His sin surpasses that of a thousand Hitlers.

The New Testament tells us plenty about him, enough to accomplish two things, not simply to dwell in lurid detail, but to accomplish, first of all, a clear warning about the danger of being near Christ and hardening. And secondly, a great lesson that no matter how sinful a person may be, no matter what treachery they may attempt against God, the purpose of God cannot be thwarted. And the worst of treachery finds its place in the fulfillment of the divine plan. In the end, God is not overthrown by the treachery, and the sinner is damned in unspeakable judgment. We'll have some reiteration of the lessons at the end, this morning.

Last week we started looking at Judas and we addressed two out of several points that I want to make. Number one was his name. His name is Judas, which is a form of Judah, a familiar name, actually the name of the southern kingdom, the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel, one of the twelve sons of the patriarchal period. The name means "Jehovah leads," which indicates when he was born his parents must have had great hopes that his life would be led by God. He's the son of

Simon, we're told in another place, a man named Simon, a very common name. It was also Peter's name. We are told here he is Judas Iscariot, which means he's from the town of Keriath. This is in southern Judea, twenty-three miles south of Jerusalem, seven miles from Hebron. He is the only non-Galilean. All the other eleven were from the north, the area of Galilee. They were brothers, they were friends. They worked together. Many of them they knew each other. They came from familiar background. Judas was a solitary figure who entered their midst from afar. They knew nothing about him. It was easy for him to be a hypocrite because nobody knew anything about his family, his background, his life before he showed up in following Jesus. So that played well into his strategy, to work his way into a place of trust and ultimately become the treasurer of the purse of Jesus and the traveling apostles.

We then looked at his call. And I simply wanted to make two points. One, he followed Jesus out of his own volition. He had messianic hope and messianic ambition. He was convinced that this Jesus was the Messiah, at least convinced enough to leave whatever other enterprises he may have been engaging in, to leave whatever other path toward wealth he might have pursued, leave what other avenue of ambition he might have been already on to pour everything, his whole life, into this matter of following Jesus. He was convinced that Jesus had powers that no other man had, that He was really the Messiah.

He followed Jesus surely, however, out of nothing more than selfish gain, nothing more than worldly ambition, avarice and greed. But he was determined to follow Jesus and when Jesus said very hard things, very definitive things that drove other disciples away, they didn't drive him away. His ambition was strong enough and his conviction that he was going to get rich by sticking with Jesus was firm enough to survive the hard words that drove others away.

He chose to follow. He chose to follow when following was

tough. He chose to follow when he had to be an excellent hypocrite to cover up the reality of what he was. He chose to follow because he really did believe that his ambitions for wealth would be tied to the robe of Jesus.

On the other hand, he not only chose to follow Jesus, Jesus chose him to be the betrayer in the fulfillment of prophecy. You remember back in Psalm 55 that the greatest amount of treachery, as David pours it out in that psalm, probably referring either to Absalom or Ahithophel, a son and a close friend who betrayed him with that kind of internal treachery that only a friend can bring upon you. In David's prayer he talked about how easy it would have been to deal with an enemy or somebody from the outside, but how horrible it was to deal with a familiar friend, somebody very close. You also remember the direct prophecy of Psalm 41:9, "My close friend whom I trusted, who ate My bread, has lifted up his heel against Me." And there in Psalm 41 is a prophecy of Judas which is stated to be fulfilled by Judas in the New Testament.

And then there's Zechariah chapter 11 verses 12 and 13 which lays out that Judas would betray Jesus for thirty shekels, thirty pieces of silver. The money would be thrown down in the house of the Lord and ultimately go to a potter. Every bit of that prophecy being fulfilled by Judas who sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, took the money back, threw it on the floor of the house of the Lord and it was given to a potter to purchase a field.

And so, Judas that solitary monster who by his own greed and by his own ambition, motivated by his own wicked heart chose to follow Jesus. And yet God chose him at the same time to fit him perfectly into the plan. He was always a devil, Jesus said in John 6:70. He was always a son of perdition, a lost soul whose very nature was damnation. He chose to be that and God chose to fit him into the plan.

I think Luke 22 verses 21 and 22 sum it up. Jesus said, "But behold! The hand of the one betraying Me is with Me on the table, for indeed the Son of Man is going as it has been determined." This betrayal has been determined. It has been prophesied. It will happen. But that does not remove the sin of Judas because Jesus immediately then said, "But woe to that man by whom He is betrayed." So that's just a review of what we looked at last time, the name and the call of the man.

I want to look this morning at his development, his development. This is a tragedy. This is a tragedy with no hope, no good, no relief, no mitigation of the pain, the sadness, and the sorrow. It is wrenching tragedy at its worst. And yet it is intensely instructive for all of us.

The definitive look at the development of Judas is brought to us by the apostle John in his gospel. Very often John colors in the apostles. They are outlined in other gospels, but John adds the color, and that is certainly true in the case of Judas. And you can follow the development, the progression of Judas to his ultimate disaster in the gospel of John.

As you watch the life of Judas, bringing all four gospels together, he becomes more and more disillusioned. And his disillusionment turns to hate and his hate turns to treachery. When he began to see that things weren't going as expected, as hoped for then he begins to become the monster that he latently was all the while.

I mean, at the start, all of the apostles thought of Jesus as the Messiah or they would not have left everything to follow Him. And to be honest with you, they were not all spiritually motivated. Even James and John, two that we would say are the nobler, the most intimate with Jesus along with Peter, sent their mother to ask if they could sit on the right hand and the left hand of Jesus when he entered into His kingdom, which they believed would be a earthly kingdom, a military kingdom, an economic kingdom. They all regarded the Jewish Messiah in the terms of an oriental monarch who would defeat the enemies of Judea, who would rid the land of Israel of the Roman occupation, send the Romans back to Rome and establish the kingdom that had been promised to David. They all regarded Jesus as the Messiah who had come to do that. They knew He was a miracle worker. He was a healer. They knew He had power over the kingdom of darkness, the spiritual world. They knew He had power over the physical world. They knew that no one ever taught the way He taught, spoke the way He spoke, or lived the way He lived.

But they learned very, very slowly that their notions of the Messiah were really false. It was only gradually that they began to discover that Jesus was coming not as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, but as the Lamb, slain, from Isaiah 53. That was really hard for them to understand. They had to repudiate their traditional view that the Messiah would come in some spectacular manifestation of divine power and immediately institute the kingdom and free Israel from all the trepidation that was introduced into their lives by their enemies.

Judas like the other apostles was nationalistic, he was patriotic. He was committed to the Messiah.

He must have been greatly influenced by the power of Jesus, by the teaching of Jesus, by the personality of Jesus. This man lived for one thing, money. And he had come to the conclusion in his mind that the most money was to be found in sticking with Jesus no matter how tough it became. He believed that Jesus was great, powerful, expected that he would have a place in this kingdom that Jesus would establish.

So Judas was a man with worldly views, but frankly they weren't much different than Simon Peter's or James and John's or anybody else. But when it became clear that this was a spiritual kingdom and that Jesus was a Lamb and not a lion, Judas had to become a better and better hypocrite. And he had to look for a way to get some money out of this three years.

The eleven were responding to the teaching of Jesus about the kingdom, responding to what Jesus said about the future, responding to even His comments about His death and responding to Him personally by loving Him more and more. Love for Him began to overcome their worldly ambition. They began to see the triumph of the spiritual over the material, though it was a slow and gradual process. And as they grew to love Him more and love Him more and to own the spiritual element of His kingdom, He became more precious to them and they became more devout. Worldliness was conquered. They began to see the kingdom that was spiritual rather than the kingdom that was material. But worldliness was never conquered in the heart of Judas, never. He joined Jesus with the expectation that he would have earthly dignity, earthly power, and it would bring him money...and he never ever, ever yielded to the spiritual dimension.

So the corrupt elements of his heart just got more corrupt and more corrupt and more corrupt. And his original attraction to Jesus became disappointment that ultimately turned to hate. Jesus had stolen his life. Jesus had robbed him of three years of making money potential. And greed and worldliness had so dominated that man's life that Jesus Himself couldn't penetrate his heart. His treacherous kiss was the sign of defeated love in its most blatant hypocrisy.

So once Judas had seen the collapse of his dream, once he had seen the canker at the root of his character rising up, he became a literally a passionate man. He was tyrannized by how could he get as much money as possible and get out. He had always been driven by greed, ambition and worldliness. I like that word "avarice." You can look it up in the dictionary. It sort of pulls all of that together. He was avaricious, always. But he reached the place where passion took over to such a degree that in a condition of almost panic he had to salvage something out of these wasted three years. And it came down to selling Jesus. The ultimate Faust, selling his soul to Mephistopheles, Judas sold his soul to Satan. He gambled and he lost forever.

Let's follow the story. Turn to John 12. John 12, Jesus had left the wilderness with His disciples. He told His disciples, "We're going to Jerusalem." The disciples knew that in Jerusalem there was potential death and that's why Thomas said, "Let's go with him and die." They knew that going to Jerusalem was exceedingly dangerous because the leaders of Judaism already had determined they wanted Jesus dead. But Jesus determined to go and He did go. They are now in Jerusalem. It is around the Passover time. Chapter 12 verse 1, "Six days before the Passover came, they came to Bethany," Jesus did, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had already raised from the dead. Made Him a supper there. Martha was serving. Mary and Martha were the two sisters of Lazarus. Lazarus was also there reclining at the table with Him and they therefore took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

This is an extravagant act. I mean, it's an extremely extravagant act to pour out this amount of perfume on Jesus. "And Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples," in verse 4. Always this little epithet, "who was intending to betray Him, said, 'Why was this perfume not sold for 300 *denarii* and given to poor people?'" You know how much 300 *denarii* is? Well a *denarii* was basically a day's wage. That's a year's work, if you take off Sabbaths and a few days. That's... That's some pretty valuable perfume. From time to time I enjoy buying my wife perfume, but I'm not about to spend a year's wages on it. This is a huge amount of perfume. I can't imagine what a year's wages of perfume would look like or smell like.

This was a lavish act on the part of a family that must have had some means. And then Judas' response, "Why wasn't this amazing amount sold so that we could give it to the poor people?" And all the disciples probably looked at each other and said, "Oh, oh, doesn't Judas have a big heart." But John, who at the time probably didn't understand his motive, does when he writes this, years later. Verse 6, "Now he said this not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it."

What kind of a person does that? Traveling band of evangelists with the Son of God, God in human flesh, and you're stealing out of the money box from your intimate friends, from the Messiah? This is a wretched person.

Well, Jesus responds in verse 7. Jesus said, "Let her alone in order that she may keep it for the day of My burial." He reminded them that He was going to die and be buried. Let her alone if she wants to anoint Me. She may want to use more of it. "For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have Me." And again, He sticks that knife in the heart of Judas about His death.

John, as he writes this in retrospect, is revealed by God the motive of Judas. He couldn't have known it when it happened, he was a thief. And Jesus really first unmasks Judas and Jesus rebukes him and says, "Let her alone." Judas faced the decision. Judas, you're out of line. He could have fallen on Jesus' feet right there, could have repented, "I am out of line, Lord, been out of line for a long time, been stealing from the money box, I want... My conscience is guilty, I want...I want Your forgiveness, I need Your mercy."

No, he didn't do that. It just made him resent Jesus more. Greedy pride hardened him even more. He reacted in hate, crept away, left Bethany, walked over to Jerusalem, not far, met with the chief priests and had his first fatal interview to betray Jesus. And there had to be a plan because everybody was afraid of the popularity of Jesus with the crowd. Just a few days before indicated by what we call Palm Sunday, when He entered the city and the whole town cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David." There had to be a way to do this secretly and quietly and it's going to take an insider to pull it off. The Jewish leaders had been trying for a long time to find a path in to take the life of Jesus. They had been unsuccessful. They needed an inside informant so they could find Him in a compromised situation in a place that was not in public view. And so he went for his first fatal interview.

The contrast is staggering. Our Lord is anointed with overwhelming love and betrayed with overwhelming hate. And you want to know something? That's the way it is every day, every day. There are those of you who every day are pouring out love to Him, and others every day betraying Him, hating Him. You either enthrone Him, as Mary did, or you eliminate Him, as Judas did. You

can't be neutral. You're either a Mary or a Judas.

This is the first time there's any exposure of Judas. He just blended in with the group. This is the first time and it's a direct rebuke. Follow the story by turning to John 13. Having set up his bargain, Judas comes back, blends into the group and in John 13:1 it's just before the feast of the Passover. They're gathered in the upper room on that wonderful night when Jesus knows His hour has come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them to the end. During supper the devil, having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him.

That's just a little note. The devil put it into his heart. Here he was in the presence of Christ for three years and he had become so hardened that the devil moved in and took control. The devil put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him. By the way, as a footnote, the devil is always the servant of God, isn't he? What the devil did, did not result in thwarting the work of God. It fulfilled prophecy and achieved the purpose of God.

Jesus then went on with this lesson of humility. You remember that He washed their feet, which means He washed the feet of Judas. Judas now because he is the world's worst sinner is the world's best hypocrite. He lets Jesus wash his feet and is unmoved, unmoved.

In verse 10 Jesus says, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean." And then He adds, "You are clean, but not all of you." And here we go from a rebuke to Judas to a direct statement that somebody in the group, and there were only the twelve and Jesus, somebody here is not clean.

I don't know what kind of buzz went around when He said that, some of you are clean, but not all of you. And then in verse 18, He gets even more direct. "I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen, but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, he who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me." There is that Psalm 41:9 fulfillment. And then directly, "From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass so that when it does occur you may believe that I am He. One of you, somebody eating bread, is going to betray Me." And they knew the passage. "Some familiar friend whom I trusted is going to betray Me. I'm telling you that so when it happens you don't think that I have lost control. Rather when it happens you will know I am God because I predicted it." So He goes from rebuking Judas to saying generically, one of you is not clean, to saying, one of you is going to betray Me, and when it happens you're going to know that I am — the Tetragrammaton, that's the name of God — that I am God.

And verse 21, direct statement, "Truly, truly I say to you, one of you will betray Me." And, of course, the disciples looking at each other are at a loss to know which one He was speaking. "Is it I," verse 25, "is it I?" I mean, they didn't suspect Judas at all. Verse 21: "When Jesus had said this He became troubled in spirit." Boy, troubled in spirit. Who is it? Verse 26, "Jesus therefore answered, 'That is the one for whom I will dip the morsel and give it to him.'" Whoever I give this morsel...It was a chunk of bread dipped in some jam-like paste that they ate, that was what you did to the honored guest. You gave him the first morsel. The host gave it. And He says, "To whom I give it, it's him." So when He dipped the morsel He took and gave it to Judas the son of Simon Iscariot."

That's it. What else do you need to know? He rebukes him. He says one of you is unclean. He says

one of you is going to betray Me. And it's him.

And then verse 27, "And after the morsel, Satan," who had already been putting this in the mind of Judas, according to verse 2," entered into him." The day of salvation closed. Divine mercy expired. Sin triumphed and Satan moved in and what follows is not just historical, it's deeply symbolical. "Jesus therefore said to him, 'What you do, do quickly.' No one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He said this to him, for some were supposing that because Judas had the money box that Jesus was saying to him, 'Buy the things we have need of for the feast, or else that he should give something to the poor.'"

I mean, they had just...Even though He had said it and even though He had given him the morsel, they just...It didn't compute, it...It can't be him. The worst sinner could fool his intimate friends, amazing. The most wretched man could fool his companions who were with him day and night for several years. Just...they...they couldn't come to that conclusion in their minds. Jesus said, "Go, and go now." And verse 30 says, "After receiving the morsel, he went out immediately and it was night."

It was not only night on the outside, it was night in his soul and it's still night right now. Jesus sent him away. It was night forever. It troubled Jesus to have him there.

I understand that. Jesus is pure and sinless and spotless and holy. Here is this wretched, evil presence and Satan has entered into him. And Jesus is not about to have the first communion service, the first Lord's Table service with the devil, or with Judas. Get out. And only when he left did our Lord institute the Lord's Supper. And even now when you come to the Lord's Table, you must examine yourself lest you come hypocritically to the table and bring about judgment. The apostle Paul says that in 1 Corinthians 11. Jesus was deeply troubled.

Well, of course He was troubled. That's pretty easy to understand. The fact that this wicked, wretched presence was polluting that fellowship agitated Jesus. The ingratitude, the rejection of His love, the hate that Jesus had for hypocrisy, the repulsiveness of the presence of Satan, the heinousness of sin, the horrors of knowing that hell was waiting his three-year companion troubled Jesus. Get out.

Well that's the development. Now we come to the betrayal. He did leave and it seems certain that Judas went to the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of Israel, seventy elders and told them that the breach had been made and negotiated the deal. Both Matthew and Mark tell us that he cunningly looked for a time when he could lead them to Jesus. Matthew 26:16: "He sought opportunity to betray Him." Mark 14:11: "He sought how he might conveniently betray Him with minimum of disruption."

Now you have to understand, Judas didn't act in a moment of insanity. He didn't act in a moment of passion. His dark deed is deliberately planned. He is a premeditated betrayer. He's been planning this for weeks, if not months. He waits for an opportune hour. All the way along he's been stealing, trying to replenish his pocket for what he thinks he's lost by following this Jesus, and he's stealing the money and putting it in his own pocket, getting as much as he can. And now he sees that in the end he can make a great sum because he knows the Jewish leaders want Jesus and he can have one last opportunity to cash in and make up for his wasted years.

Luke 22:6 shows what a coward he was because it says he sought opportunity to betray Him, quote,

"in the absence of the multitude." So Judas was trying to find the door to hell that was most convenient. And when he found it, he plunged in. He feared the popularity of Jesus. He feared the crowd. So while Jesus was instituting the Lord's Table in the upper room, Judas was making arrangements for His capture.

And he was trying to strike a bargain. He was in some pretty serious negotiations to sell Jesus. But all he could get was thirty pieces of silver. Really amazing, according to Exodus 21 verse...I think it's verse 32, that was the price of a slave. That was the cheapest price for buying the lowest of the low. You know what it was? About twenty dollars, maybe thirty. That's all he could negotiate. As much as he hated Jesus, all the leaders equally hated Jesus, and they hated Judas. They had disdain for Judas and they had disdain for Jesus and all he could negotiate was that. But his desperate greed caused him to strike an agreement. He's the blackest sinner that ever lived because he sinned against the greatest light. He settled for any price he could get. How horrible. And Matthew in his record tells us that he fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah, selling Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, struck the deal.

The next time we see the scene we turn to John 18. Judas appears again, brings the betrayal to its culmination. John 18, Jesus went forth after the upper room fellowship with His disciples where He instituted this table that same night. All through the night since Judas left, he's been negotiating the deal with the leaders and while he's negotiating the deal the Lord is giving all these promises with this incredible upper-room discourse. All the promises that Jesus gives in John 13 to 17 are the richest promises that He ever gave His own, It all applied to the eleven. They all apply to us. And while He's pouring out blessing and blessing and blessing and promising them love and promising them peace and promising them power, and promising them a home in heaven and all of this...all of these promises, Judas is shut out of all that promise. He's negotiating for his blood money.

And then the end of the evening, Jesus is through speaking. He went with His disciples across the ravine, east of the temple ground on the east side of Jerusalem, down the little slope between the temple mount and the Mount of Olives, a little Kidron Valley, where a brook seasonally runs through. They crossed the Kidron and they went into the garden. And they went there because they very often went there and Judas knew it. Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place for Jesus had often met there with His disciples.

Judas then, having received the Roman cohort, and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees — a Roman cohort would number about 600 men, it's a substantial Roman battalion — "came there with lanterns and torches and weapons." They expect the worst. They expect a battle on their hands. "Jesus therefore knowing all things who were coming upon Him went forth and said to them, 'Whom do you seek?'" Walked right up, didn't try to hide, just walked right up in front of them, said that. "They said, 'Jesus the Nazarene.' He said to them, 'I am.' And Judas also who was betraying Him was standing with them."

Boy, Jesus standing with the eleven, Judas standing with the crowd. "And when He said to them, 'I am,' they drew back and fell to the ground." This...The very statement of the name of God knocked them all down, incredible display of power. Here is Jesus giving another evidence that He's the Messiah, another evidence to Judas who picked himself up with everybody else and dusted himself off, convincing display of divine power which then makes the subsequent kiss all the more diabolical.

They get up, dust themselves off, the power of Jesus again established, and verse 47 of Matthew 26

picks up the account. "Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a great multitude with swords and clubs, the chief priests, elders of the people." This is the same crowd that we were reading in about in John 18. Now verse 48, "He who was betraying Him gave them a sign saying, "Whomever I shall kiss, He is the one, seize Him." That's what he had told them. "Whomever I shall kiss, He's the one, seize Him." What a diabolical way to point out Jesus. But his wretchedness is so profound that his hypocrisy is so wicked that he seemingly knows no conscience. And immediately he went to Jesus and said, "Hail, Rabbi, and repeatedly kissed Him." That's the Greek, repeatedly kissed Him. And Jesus said to him, "Friend," amazing, "Friend, do what you've come for."

Kissing is the mark of homage. It still is. It's the mark of love, it's a mark of affection, it's a mark of tenderness, it's a mark of respect. It's a remark of intimacy. This is feigned innocence. This is devious hypocrisy, trying to make Jesus think that he's not the betrayer. He kisses Him repeatedly in some bizarre act of concealment of his treachery. And the hatred of the priests was one thing to endure, the loud raucous noise of the multitude, the later pitiful cowardice of Pilate, the mistreatment of Annas and Caiaphas, the disdain of Herod, the brutality of the soldiers, Jesus suffered all of that in relative calm and quiet. But this pierced Him so painfully that He responds by saying just, "Just do what you came to do."

He profaned the Passover that night. He profaned the Son of God. He profaned the place of prayer where his Master went with His disciples so often to pray, betraying the Lord with a kiss. We could ask the question, is this act of Judas unique? It is yes and it isn't no. Don't we read in the Old Testament of those false teachers who claim to represent God? According to Ezekiel, they pollute God among the people for handfuls of barley and for bread. And doesn't Amos tell us about those who sell the righteous for money? And haven't there always been and won't there always be those who sell Jesus to get rich? They're all over the place.

A poet wrote:

It may not be for silver, it may not be for gold.

But yet by tens of thousands the Prince of Life is sold,

Sold for a godless friendship, sold for a selfish aim,

Sold for a fleeting trifle, sold for an empty name,

Sold in the market of science, sold in the seat of power,

Sold at the shrine of fortune, sold in pleasure's bower,

Sold for your awful bargain, none but God's eye can see. Ponder, my soul, the question, shall He be sold by thee?

Sold, oh God what a moment, stilled his conscience's voice,

Sold and a weeping angel records the fatal choice.

Sold, but the price accepted to a living coal shall turn,

With the pangs of a late repentance deep in the soul to burn.

He sold Him. Upon selling Him his conscience immediately came alive. And he was in a hell of his own, hammered by his conscience for what he had done. To find out what happened we turn to Matthew 27 and verse 3. Matthew 27:3, "Then when Judas who had betrayed Him saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and he returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.' But they said, 'What is that to us?'" And I guess we could say of...of all the sinners, they were the closest to Judas. "What is that to us? See to that yourself." We don't want your money back.

And he threw the pieces of silver into the sanctuary and departed...into the house of the Lord, and left. It's a short story from then on. "He went away and hanged himself." He was already in a hell of his own conscience. Hell is, you know, a conscience that won't be silenced. Sin leaves terrible guilt, monumental sin leaves monumental guilt. The monumental sin of Judas brought about him unbearable conviction. He didn't repent. He was sorry because he didn't like what he felt. He wanted to undo it but he didn't want to change. He wanted somehow to relieve his brutal conscience and the only thing he knew to do was to give back money because he lived for money. That's all he ever thought about.

He didn't seek the forgiveness of God. He didn't seek the mercy of God. He didn't seek deliverance from Satan. He thought, "I could pacify my conscience if I just give the money back." His sin was unbearable and that's what hell is. In some ways, hell doesn't change the sinner. It just crystallizes into permanency what he already is. He regretted it. He felt bad about it. And so his unforgiving heart, rather than crying out for a true repentance, cried out for vengeance on himself, as it often does. His despair was so profound that he himself demanded vengeance on himself and he went away and hanged himself. Many people kill themselves under the screams of conscience. Frantic, confused, guilty, this is the grief of a madman who's lost control.

One other scripture, Acts 1, adds the final note to this tragedy. Acts 1 in verse 16, Peter is speaking, talks about Judas. At the end of verse 16, "It was Judas who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus." Go down to verse 18. Well, verse 17, "He was counted among us and received his portion in this ministry. He was one of us, this Judas." And then verse 18, "Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness." Now remember back in Matthew that when Judas went into the temple and they wouldn't take his money, he threw it on the floor, they picked it up and Scripture says in Matthew they bought a field from a potter. They turned that field into a cemetery for poor people. And that's what verse 18 means. "This man acquired a field." It wasn't that Judas bought the field. It was that the money that was his was used to purchase a field. That was the price of his wickedness.

But then it says about his death, "Falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out." Now some people have suggested that this is a contradiction because we just read a very clear testimony of Matthew chapter 27 that Judas had in fact gone out and hanged himself. And that is exactly what it says in Matthew 27 and that is precisely what happened. It follows on to say, the chief priests took the pieces of silver. They said we can't put it in the temple treasure because it's blood money. They had a meeting, they took the money. They bought the potter's field for a burial

place for strangers. "For this reason the field is called Field of Blood to this very day." That which was spoken by the prophets concerning thirty pieces of silver and the use of the money has come to pass.

They had the money, they bought the field. As far as the account of Matthew goes, that's where it ends. What we have here is an additional note. Judas was such a tragic figure that he couldn't even kill himself the way he wanted to. What you do to find the truth about this is to eliminate the thought of a contradiction and realize that either the rope broke or the branch broke. Judas attempted to hang himself, putting himself out over some precipice, was inept at that. It's not hard to imagine that he somehow made an arrangement by which he could swing out and hang himself only to find that he broke the branch or the rope and plunged to the depths below where his body burst open and his bowels gushed out.

That's the last thing ever said about Judas. What an unbelievable tragedy, amazing tragedy. So the price of betrayal...Well he betrayed the most significant man who ever lived and the money he got ended up making a burial place for the most insignificant people who lived, the poor.

Judas thought he could end the misery of his conscience by giving back the money. It didn't work. He thought he could end the misery of his conscience by hanging himself. It didn't work. He right now as I speak is enduring eternal misery as his conscience screams about his iniquity. Acts 1:25 says that Judas turned aside to go to his own place. He was a child of hell and he was a son of perdition. He went to his own place where he belonged.

One final point: the lessons we learn, just briefly. First lesson, Judas was the world's greatest example of lost opportunity. He stood in the fairest surroundings the world has ever presented and he was a damned man, in spite of spending his time in the presence of God.

Judas secondly was the world's greatest example of wasted privilege; the greatest privilege, the greatest waste. He tried with money and missed the true riches, a stupid bargain.

Thirdly, Judas is the world's greatest illustration of how far the love of money will go in becoming the root of all kinds of evil. The love of money can be so great that you would sell the Son of God.

Fourthly, Judas is the world's greatest example of betrayal and there are Judases in every age. He's not the only betrayer, he's just the model, the example, the prototype. Krummacher writes, "Would that the traitor's kiss had remained the only one of its kind, but in a spiritual sense Jesus has still to endure it a thousand fold to this hour, for hypocritically to confess Him with your mouth while your conduct belies Him, to exalt the virtues of His humanity to the skies while divesting Him of His divine glory and tearing the crown of universal majesty from His head, to sing enthusiastically hymns and oratorios to Him while trampling His gospel by word and deed underfoot, what is all this but a Judas kiss with which men have the audacity to pollute His face again," end quote.

Number five, Judas is also the greatest lesson of forbearing patient love as we see the Lord reaching out even at the last to say, "Friend."

Sixthly, Judas provides an essential qualification in preparing Christ for His high priestly work. Jesus was perfected through suffering and this was the worst of suffering, prior to the cross itself. When

you think you've been betrayed, you can go to Jesus. He's been betrayed in ways you couldn't even comprehend and He is a sympathetic high priest in the matter of betrayal.

And finally, Judas is the greatest example of the deceitfulness and fruitlessness of hypocrisy. He is the John 15 branch with no fruit, cut off, thrown into the fire. And so good at it that even the eleven couldn't tell. He faked it, but in the end that son of perdition died and went to his own place and the place he's in is the severest of hell's torments because he was exposed to the greatest light.

Don't be a hypocrite. Coming and not believing and being hardened is a Judas kind of hypocrisy. Don't be content with an outward association without Christ in the heart. That is the unimaginable magnitude of a Judas sin that results in the severest eternal judgment. The heathen world could never produce a Judas. He can only appear in the bright light of Christianity. That kind of person can only be produced close to Christ. So, the severest punishments of hell are reserved for those who never believed but associated with Christ. And the tragedy of his life lies in the possibility of his success.

In summing it up we could say it this way: Still as of old, man by himself is priced for thirty pieces. Judas sold himself, not Christ. Let's pray.

Father, this account of this man is sometimes more than we can bear, that You would have endured this, such proximity, that You would have suffered this treachery. Lord, You didn't deserve to suffer this, You didn't deserve to die for our sins, but You did. How we love You for it. How we love You as our sin-bearing Savior and as our sympathizing High Priest who knows what it is to be betrayed by those You love, those close. Oh I pray, Lord, that there are no Judases here, that there are no hypocrites here, there are no people who are being hardened, and hardened and hardened by the truth with which associate. May You break up that hard soil even today, shatter that hypocrisy and may the bright light of the truth shine into that darkness and penetrate it. May there be real repentance and faith and salvation. This we pray in Christ's glorious name. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2017 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).