

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*Judas: A Discarded Vessel – Part II.*"

Please stand and open your Bibles to **Matt 27** to read verses 1-10...

Matt 27:1 When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put Him to death. **2** And when they had bound Him, they led Him away and delivered Him to [a]Pontius Pilate the governor. **Judas Hangs Himself** **3** 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."

You may be seated.

Let me give you the background to this message...

Last Sunday we looked at the potter and the Clay in Jeremiah 18. The Jews were hard and stiff in the Potter's hands, so they became a vessel that was only good to be discarded...and God discarded them in Babylon.

I told you the New Testament contains a discarded vessel, and that's Judas. On Wednesday night we looked at the verses in Jeremiah – that Matthew just mentioned – that prophesy of Judas being that discarded vessel.

We finished w/ this verse...

Acts 1:18 [Judas] purchased [the potter's field] with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out.

Judas didn't actually purchase the field himself, but it's worded this way b/c the field was purchased w/ the money he returned.

When Judas hanged himself, either the branch or the rope broke and his body fell to the ground and broke open. It's graphic, but it creates the image of a vessel being discarded and then breaking open in the field.

This morning we're going to talk about what led to Judas hanging himself, and let me be clear about why we're looking at this...

Judas committed suicide b/c he was experiencing so much sorrow. There's much sorrow in the world today. Judas shows us how NOT to deal w/ that sorrow, and we're going to talk about what that sorrow should produce instead.

We must begin w/ a brief discussion of WHY Judas betrayed Jesus, so we can understand why he was sorrowful later.

First, we know Judas was greedy. He was the treasurer for the group and **John 12:6** says **he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take [money that] was put in it.**

So we know at least part of the reason Judas betrayed Jesus was for the money he'd receive from the religious leaders.

Another reason Judas betrayed Jesus probably had to do w/ the Jews' view of Jesus' first coming...

They were persecuted and oppressed by Rome, and what did they expect the Messiah would do?

They thought He would:

- Be a great deliverer like Moses and deliver them from their oppression like Moses delivered Israel from Egypt
- Be a great military leader like David – after all the Messiah was “the Son of David” – and deliver them from Rome like David delivered Israel from the Philistines
- Be a great king like Solomon and restore the nation to their Golden Years when they were wealthy and powerful like they experienced under Solomon

Now here's the question...

During Jesus' First Coming, did it look like the Jews were on their way to overthrowing Rome and becoming rich and powerful again?

No.

Did Jesus look like a rich, powerful king, and leader?

No.

And think about this...

Who gave up the most to follow Jesus?

The twelve disciples!

So they thought they would rule and reign w/ Him. Listen to this...

Mark 10:28 Peter [said to JESUS], “See, we have left all and followed You.”

“Look at all we’ve given up. What are we going to get in return? What sort of place in Your Kingdom can we expect?”

A few verses later...

Mark 10:37 [James and John] said to [JESUS], “Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.”

James and John wanted the number 2 and 3 positions. They expected to have their thrones right next to JESUS’ throne.

They didn’t understand Jesus was establishing a spiritual kingdom in His first coming...and the physical kingdom would be after His Second Coming.

Now Judas – more than even the rest of the disciples – craved fame and fortune, and put yourself in his place for a moment...

At the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, He was unbelievably popular. Most people desired just to be near Him. Crowds of thousands followed Him relentlessly.

But over the last year:

- Jesus didn’t become...
 - Any richer...
 - Any more powerful...
- He’s still:
 - Walking around from place-to-place...nowhere to lay His head
 - Serving people...
 - Teaching about humility, love, forgiveness, service, and dying to self...versus greatness, ruling, and reigning...
 - Instead of planning the rebellion against Rome, He’s talking paying taxes to Rome

You can be sure this didn’t go over well w/ Judas:

- He can tell this poor, itinerant Teacher isn’t going to make him rich and famous.
- He can tell Jesus isn’t going to be a great, powerful leader

It actually seems like Jesus has been moving in the OPPOSITE direction!

- He’s becoming more unpopular...
- He’s experiencing greater rejection...

Judas feels like he’s on a sinking ship.

So he betrayed Jesus. At least then he could get a little money out of it.

And there's one final reason Judas might have betrayed Jesus and it relates to what we've been discussing: to get Him to act!

How many times had the people tried to make Jesus king?

Quite a few!

Here's just one instance...

John 6:15 Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, - I'm sure this thrilled Judas – but then it says – [Jesus] departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.

Every time it looked like Jesus was about to become King, He'd escape!

So Judas might have betrayed Jesus...

- To force Him to become the Messiah...
- To force Him to overthrow Rome...
- To force him to become the king he wanted to see.

But...

Things didn't go the way Judas expected...look at **Matt 27:1**...

Matt 27:1 When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put Him to death. 2 And when they had bound Him, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

When Judas sees all this take place...

Matt 27:3 Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that [Jesus] had been condemned (this means condemned to die), 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!"

First we'll talk about the religious leaders, and then Judas...

The religious leaders were supposed to serve as mediators between God and men. Their primary job was offering sacrifices that atoned for people's sins.

People felt convicted...

- They'd go to the priests at the temple...
- The priests would offer a sacrifice for their sins...

- The people would feel alleviated of their guilt b/c their sin was covered.

Judas felt so terrible he went to the priests at the temple to make restitution. In his mind if anyone can absolve him, it's them.

But instead of helping him, they said two things...

First, they said, "**What is *that* to us?**"

That meant:

- *Why are you telling us?*
- *What do you expect us to do about it?*
- The NLT says **What do we care?**

The only thing they wanted from Judas was for him to betray Jesus. Now that they got what they wanted, they're done w/ him.

The second thing they said is "**You see *to it!***"

This is their way of saying:

- *This is your problem...*
- *You handle it.*
- *We're not going to help you.*

The sad thing is by this point there's nothing Judas could've done to help Jesus...but the religious leaders could have...and more than likely that's why Judas went to them:

- They could've tried to get Jesus' sentence reversed.
- They could've told the authorities that Jesus was **innocent**. More than likely, this is **WHY** Judas said, "**I have betrayed INNOCENT blood.**"

They had no intention of helping Judas, b/c that would mean helping Jesus, and they've been waiting **WAY** too long for this moment.

Now let's talk about Judas...

His actions look like they don't make sense!

You read this and say:

- *If Judas betrayed JESUS, why would he be upset when he sees JESUS is condemned?*
- *Doesn't he want to see JESUS killed? Isn't that why he betrayed him?*
- *If Judas didn't want to see JESUS dead, why'd he turn him over to the religious leaders in the first place?*

Basically, Judas responded exactly oppositely of what we'd expect:

- We'd expect him to rejoice
- Instead, he's grieved

Why is that?

Things didn't go the way he expected.

Notice it says [**when**] Judas [**saw**] that [**Jesus**] had been condemned [**to die he**] was remorseful and [**returned**] the [**money**].

Judas never imagined his actions would result in Jesus' death.

And He's not the only one who didn't believe Jesus would die. Jesus told the disciples He would die on three separate occasions, and they didn't believe Him either.

Why wouldn't they believe it?

There are a few reasons...

First, they thought He'd be the powerful, worshiped, reigning King and Messiah...which is hard to reconcile with dying.

Second, Jesus seemed invincible:

- Think of all the miracles...He raised people from the dead...He's not going to get killed.
- He knew things nobody could ever know...of course He'd know if His life was in danger.

Third, Judas probably expected Jesus to escape...b/c He always escaped.

What happened every single time:

- It looked like He was going to be stoned or killed?
- It looked like He was going to be arrested or seized?

He escaped!

Listen to this:

- **Luke 4:29** [The people] rose up and thrust [JESUS] out of the city, led Him to the brow of the hill...that they might throw Him over the cliff. **30** Then **PASSING THROUGH THE MIDST OF THEM, HE WENT HIS WAY.**
- **John 8:59** They took up stones to throw at [JESUS]; but [He] **HID HIMSELF AND WENT OUT OF THE TEMPLE, GOING THROUGH THE MIDST OF THEM.**
- **John 10:31** The Jews took up stones to stone Him....**39** Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand.

There is no way that Jesus could really be in any danger. He always escapes. But not this time!

Judas watched things unfold:

- Jesus was beaten, mocked, and abused
- It was one terrible event after another

Until finally He was led away to be killed and it was more than Judas could take. He knew it was his fault, so he took the money back and tried to get the religious leaders to help.

Now to be clear, I'm not defending Judas's actions:

- They were terrible...
- There's no excuse...

But this wasn't what he expected. Things went way beyond anything he imagined.

And there's a great lesson for all of us in this...

LESSON 1: WE UNDERESTIMATE THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR SIN.

Obviously, the consequences of our sins don't compare w/ Judas's sin in betraying Christ

But we can relate to what Judas experienced, b/c:

- We have sinned...
- We have made decisions...

And:

- We didn't expect it to go the way it did.
- We underestimated the consequences.

Then we found ourselves watching the consequences spiral out of control.

Maybe...

- We started spending money, and then we look back years later and we can't believe how much debt we have.
- We wasted time on activities w/ no eternal value, and then we live w/ the regret of knowing we can't get that time back.
- We didn't set a good spiritual example for our children – maybe we didn't pray w/ them or we didn't take them to church regularly – then they got older and they don't pray much or go to church regularly, and we feel like it's our fault.
- We give in to our flesh and say hurtful things to our spouse, then as time goes on we can tell we've changed the way our spouse feels toward us, but we can't rewind time and take back the things we said.

And we would all say we didn't expect these consequences.

- If we expected them, we wouldn't have committed these sins in the first place.
- We would give anything to go back and undo what we did, but there's nothing we can do about it now.

Listen to this verse...

Jer 2:19a Your own wickedness will correct you, and your backslidings will rebuke you.

This means God doesn't even have to discipline us sometimes! The consequences of our sin can be discipline enough!

Unfortunately, in some Christian circles if you talk about sin, you're considered legalistic, unloving, or self-righteous, but...

- I tell you as your pastor...
- I tell you as someone who cares about you...
 - We make some decisions in this life and they can't be reversed.
 - We set some plans in motion that won't be undone.

Judas is the best example in Scripture. He was remorseful, but he couldn't do undo what he did.

At different times I've heard people defend Judas, minimize his actions, and even claim he was a believer. It always relates to him:

- Bringing back the money...
- Saying he sinned
- And showing sorrow over what he did.

The problem is that Scripture discusses two types of sorrow: godly sorrow and worldly sorrow...

2 Cor 7:10 Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

Judas was experiencing great sorrow, and it was going to produce one of two outcomes in his life:

- Godly sorrow that would produce repentance.
- Or worldly sorrow that would produce death.

Look at **verse 5** to see what Judas's sorrow produced...

Matt 27:5 Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.

Judas is a perfect example of worldly sorrow that produces death.

In his case we see the physical death, but it also resulted in his spiritual death, b/c he went to hell. Sometimes b/c Judas sorrowful and returned the money people wonder if he went to heaven. Let me give you some verses that demonstrate this isn't true...

Matt 26:24 [Jesus said], "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! – referring to Judas – It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

Jesus could only say this if Judas went to hell. If Judas went to heaven, it wouldn't matter how bad his life was, it wouldn't be better if he was never born.

Jesus called Judas a devil...

John 6:70 Jesus [said], "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" 71 He spoke of Judas Iscariot, for it was he who would betray Him.

Devils don't go to heaven. They go to hell.

Jesus said Judas didn't belong to Him, but belonged to perdition...

John 17:12 [Jesus said], "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition."

Perdition is another name for hell...

When Peter discussed Judas's replacement in **Acts 1:25** he said Judas [went] to his own place. This isn't how you talk about people going to heaven.

And Judas' sorrow teaches us something very important...which brings us to Lesson 2...

LESSON 2: FEELING BAD ISN'T REPENTANCE.

Judas teaches an important lesson:

- Feeling bad about what we've done...
- Experiencing sorrow...
- Even feeling bad enough to commit suicide...

Doesn't mean repentance has taken place.

I want to tell you about someone I was friends with when I was in CA...

He lived a pretty religious lifestyle. He was very involved in the church, and by outward accounts I'd say he looked like a Christian.

Then he began living a very prodigal life:

- He started engaging in lots of drinking, partying, and womanizing
- He threw himself into the world and engaged in more immorality than you'd see from most unbelievers. Even the world would probably condemn the way he was living.

During this time our friendship came to an end.

But then something happened...

- He hit rock bottom.
- It seemed like he had the same experience as the Prodigal Son: **Luke 15:17 he came to himself.** Many translations say **he came to his senses.**

 Then he wanted to meet w/ me. If I remember correctly he was so ashamed of himself he didn't even ask me directly: he sent one of our mutual friends to ask me if I would meet w/ him.

Of course I said I would, and initially it was awkward b/c I hadn't seen him in a while:

- I knew how he'd been living.
- He knew I knew how he'd been living.

But pretty quickly it was obvious that he felt terrible about what he had done...

- He was convicted...
- He was experiencing great sorrow.

And one of the best parts was he didn't make any excuses:

- There was no justifying.
- There was no minimizing.

There was just plain honesty...and it was refreshing and wonderful.

 Let me clear about what I didn't say to him...

I didn't say:

- *I can't believe you acted like that...*
- *God must've been so angry w/ you...*
- *How could you be in ministry and turn from the Lord like that?*
- *Think of the terrible witness you've been...*

I didn't say any of these things b/c he already knew them. When people are broken you don't make them feel worse.

What I did tell him was that even though he felt terrible, I thought this was the best place he'd been in for years – maybe the best place he'd been in his entire life – b/c he was never saved before, and now he could repent and be saved.

We prayed together and in his prayer, I still remember that he told God that he missed Him:

- He knew how far he had been from the Lord.
- **Isa 59:2** says **your sins have separated you from God**, and he felt that separation.

For me it was one of those wonderful moments in the Christian life:

- I missed my friend.
- I was thrilled to see him experiencing this much sorrow over his sin.

And his sorrow was going to result in one of two things:

- Repentance that led to salvation
- Or death

Now here's why I share this story...

Verse 3 says Judas was **remorseful**.

Do you know how many times before this it's recorded that Judas ever felt remorse?

Not once! There's no record of him ever feeling bad about anything!

That means...

- It doesn't say he felt bad when he stole money from the money box...
- It doesn't say he felt bad when he met w/ the religious leaders to betray Jesus...
- It doesn't say he felt bad when he kissed JESUS on the cheek, and JESUS lovingly asked him, **"Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"**

But now – finally – after watching JESUS be condemned to die, Judas experienced great sorrow!

He felt so bad he returned the thirty pieces of silver and even said, **"I have sinned by betraying innocent blood."**

I would say that – like my friend – this was the greatest opportunity of his life.

But here's the problem...

He felt bad...but he didn't feel bad enough to repent.

So the question is, what would it have looked like for him to repent?

We typically say repentance means turning from sin – which is true – but we don't often say what it means turning to. It's almost like we're putting off without putting on.

It's clear Judas turned from sin...

- He regretted what he did...
- He tried to undo it...
- He wouldn't do it again...

But he didn't turn to the right thing...and that's Christ...and this brings us to Lesson 3...

LESSON 3: GODLY SORROW LEADS TO CHRIST.

Judas turned from sin, but he didn't turn to Christ.

If he was truly repentant – if he had godly sorrow – he would've been more like Peter.

Follow me for a moment...

The event that took place right before Judas returned the money is Peter's denials...

- He denied Jesus three times...
- Including to a servant girl...
- After pridefully boasting that even if all the other disciples denied Jesus He wouldn't...
- Which Peter said after Jesus warned him he would deny Him

Then look at the last verse of the previous chapter to see what happened...

Matt 26:75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." So he went out and wept bitterly.

What did Peter feel?

Extreme sorrow!

But did Peter hang himself?

No.

He turned to Christ.

Peter didn't see Jesus again until Peter was out fishing and Jesus was standing on the shore. Listen to this...

John 21:7b Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he...plunged into the sea.

This is a unique way of turning to Christ, but there's no denying that's what He did!

Now let me be clear about the relationship I see this having to the Coronavirus...

There's a lot of sorrow in the world right now. More sorrow than perhaps any other time in our lifetimes.

Maybe you've heard about suicide being on the rise. I read one article this past week that was titled, *"More People Died From Suicide Than Coronavirus In Tennessee This Week."*ⁱ

President Trump said, *"You're going to lose more people by putting a country into a massive recession or depression. You're going to have suicides by the thousands."*

Whether Trump's statement is true or not, there's enough sorrow from the Coronavirus that people are talking about suicide, and some number of people are committing suicide.

These people are experiencing worldly sorrow that leads to death. They're turning from Christ instead of toward Him.

Jesus told us what's important at a time like this...

Luke 13:1 [People] told [Jesus] about the Galileans Pilate [murdered]. 2 Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans [who were killed] were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? 3 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

This was a trying and scary time for the Jews. Pilate was persecuting them. Many of them died...probably some of them lost friends and even family members.

Jesus said the important thing was repentance so people wouldn't perish...and He meant eternally.

Luke 13:4 Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

Again, another difficult time that saw the death of many people, and again Jesus said what's needed is repentance.

Here's the question...

Why is it that when something bad is happening Jesus kept bringing it back to repentance?

Because as bad as something is that can lead to physical death, there's something even worse and that's spiritual – or eternal – death.

This means whatever bad situation is taking place around us, whether it's:

- People being murdered or persecuted...
- Natural disasters
- Or the Coronavirus

People still have the same need, and that's repentance and turning to Christ

Let me close w/ this...

People are experiencing sorrow, and they're going to be in one of two categories:

- They're experiencing worldly sorrow that leads to death. Their sorrow leads them away from Christ.
- They're experiencing godly sorrow that produces repentance which leads to salvation...which is to say they turn to Christ.

If we apply Jesus's teaching, the best thing we can be doing is turning to Christ, and the best thing we can do for others is point them to Christ.

Let's pray.

ⁱ <https://thefederalist.com/2020/03/27/more-people-died-from-suicide-than-coronavirus-in-tennessee-this-week/>