**The Sorry Traitor: Judas**

**Matthew 26:14-16; 47-56; 27:3-10**

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We began a new series last week called *Close Encounters with Christ*. Today, we continue that series. Last week, we considered the religious leaders in that great passion narrative that all the gospels emphasize. Today, we’re going to focus on Judas. So we’re looking at *Close Encounters with Christ*, particularly of unbelievers. And yet, with each unbeliever, there are some believers that have closely aligned. Last week, we saw that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were part of that Sanhedrin, and yet they became believers. They saw, but the rest of them, it seemed like they remained in darkness. Today of course, we have Judas and then the eleven. Particularly, we think of Peter and his denials. There are many similarities, and yet what great differences between those two men! We’re going to be looking at Matthew 26 and then I’m going to skip over to chapter 27. You have to pay attention today if you’re going to follow along. I want to pick up particularly these parts of the narrative that relate to Judas.

***14*** *Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests* ***15*** *and said, “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” And they paid him thirty pieces of silver.* ***16*** *And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.*

***47*** *While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people.* ***48*** *Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; seize him.”* ***49*** *And he came up to Jesus at once and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” And he kissed him.* ***50*** *Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you came to do.” Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him.* ***51*** *And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.* ***52*** *Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword.* ***53*** *Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?* ***54*** *But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled that it must be so?”* ***55*** *At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me.* ***56*** *But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples left him and fled.*

**Chapter 27**

***3*** *Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders,* ***4*** *saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” They said, “What is that to us? See to it yourself.”* ***5*** *And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself.* ***6*** *But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, “It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money.”* ***7*** *So they took counsel and bought with them the potter’s field as a burial place for strangers.* ***8*** *Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.* ***9*** *Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, “And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel,* ***10*** *and they gave them for the potter’s field, as the Lord directed me.”*

May God encourage us through His Word!

This past week, there was a man in Albany, Texas who climbed under his house to see why his cable wasn’t working. While he was under there, he saw a few snakes. That scared him, so he scurried out of there and he called the local snake remover company. They have those down there. And this is what the snake experts wrote in their report: “We arrived around lunch time and as soon as I crawled under I could immediately see that there was far more than a ‘few.’”By the end of the job, they had removed 45 rattlesnakes that had been living under this man’s house.

Do you know it’s possible to have snakes in your house and not be aware of them? Today we consider Judas. He is a snake in a group of twelve who walked with Jesus and served alongside Jesus for three years. And yet, not one of the other eleven disciples of Jesus guessed the darkness that was in Judas’ heart. And more, there is no reason to believe that Judas himself saw the snakes in his own heart. I think that if you asked Judas if he were sincere in his love for Jesus, he probably would have been offended. “How dare you ask me such a question! Of course, I love the Lord Jesus. I love Him sincerely.” And I think that Judas believed his own lie.

That’s what is so dangerous about spiritual deception. We not only deceive others, but we can become self-deceived. When unbelief fills a person’s heart, often the last person to perceive it is the unbeliever himself.When we think about Judas, we like to think of him as really, really distant from ourselves. We think that we are more perceptive than the disciples who lived around Jesus. We think, “If I were one of the eleven, I would have been able to tell that something was not quite right with him. I’d have been able to sniff out the sin in his heart.” We certainly don’t think that we’re in danger of *being* Judas; that Judas’ heart, his attitude is a temptation for us. We don’t think that it is a snare, a danger.

Way back in 1983, Michael Card released an album, *Known by the Scars*. I still think to this day that it’s his best album. It touched my heart as I listened to it as a college student. He meditates upon the sufferings of Jesus in this album, in the last week of Jesus’ earthly life and ministry. Two of those songs on that album are about Judas’ story. They still convict me when I hear them. One of them is entitled, “The Traitor’s Look.” Michael Card writes:

*Was it because He washed your feet
That you sold Him as a slave
The Son of Man, the Lamb of God
Who'd only come to save*

*How heavy was the money bag
That couldn't set you free
It became a heavy millstone
As you fell into the sea*

 *Now Judas don't you come too close
I fear that I might see
That traitor's look upon your face
Might look too much like me
Cause just like you I've sold the Lord
And often for much less
And like a wretched traitor
I betrayed Him with a kiss*

I think there’s a lot of truth in that song, a lot of conviction, a lot of heart searching that we have to go through. The story of Judas creates a healthy tension inside of us as believers in Christ’s gospel. On the one hand, we are right to be confident in Jesus’ care over our soul. God doesn’t want us to live every day in fear of whether our soul is secured by Christ. Jesus Himself does protect His own from becoming like Judas.We are not among those who waver, who fail to endure to the end, because Christ is in us. He is working. He is praying for us. He is interceding. Yet on the other hand, we must not be as those who think we stand. The Scriptures warn us against that. Don’t think you stand. Take heed, lest you fall. (1 Corinthians 10:12)We are right to humble ourselves in our daily dependence upon the Lord lest we fall into severe unbelief, because unbelief is not far from any of us; not naturally. If we disconnect ourselves from the vital union that we have with Christ through sincere and simple faith, we are left to our own strength. In our own strength, we will fail. And so we are people who press on daily to be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. As we think of Judas today, let’s do so with humble, broken and contrite spirits. In our weak, natural selves, not one of us is far from this man, this betrayer. We remain faithful to the Lord only because of His grace, only because of His mercy that is constantly at work.

Let’s consider this story, this morning. Judas’ story begins where the other disciple’s story begins. Jesus chooses Judas to be one of His inner circle; one of His twelve.Every one of the twelve were common men. They were ordinary folk, weak folk. Everyone was unqualified for the calling of representing the Son of God, representing Jesus’ mission. Yet here they are. Now understand that the choosing of Judas by Jesus is strategic. It’s not stupid. Luke tells us that Jesus spent all night in prayer before He chose the twelve. In other words, He was seeking the Father in all of His decisions, and particularly in this one, this really important decision of “who is going to remain with Me and walk side by side with Me, and that I’m going to send out to do ministry for the course of My earthly ministry.” And so Jesus bathed this decision of the twelve, before His Father in prayer.

Here, we learn something, don’t we? If Jesus bathed His decisions in prayer to His Father, and He is the all-knowing Son of God, how much greater is our need to pray! I fear that we often lack wisdom because we’re not asking God for His guidance, for His direction. Now, praying doesn’t protect us from all suffering. In other words, when Jesus prayed, God had Him choose Judas, and Judas brought great suffering and pain to Jesus. But prayer does keep us inside of God’s good and sovereign plan for us. It keeps God as our leader. John records that shortly after choosing the 12, Jesus will say,

**John 6:70-71** “Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.” He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him.

So even early on, as He has made this choice of the twelve, He recognized that one of the twelve is a devil. Now, John is writing of course in hindsight. John doesn’t know this as he is experiencing the choosing of Judas alongside of him. But in John 6, he writes in hindsight that Judas is the one who was going to betray Him. And again, when Jesus comes to the Upper Room, the first thing He does is He sheds His outer garments. He puts on a towel and He washes the disciple’s feet. And He says this in John 13:

**John 13:18-19** “I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled,‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’ I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.”

So Jesus is picturing Himself orchestrating everything. He doesn’t make a mistake in choosing Judas to be one of the twelve. In fact, it was part of the fulfillment of Scripture. There are two specific Scriptures that are fulfilled by the choice of Judas as part of the twelve. The first is Psalm 41:9.

**Psalm 41:9** Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.

And then also, Zechariah 11.

**Zechariah 11:12-13** Then I said to them, “If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them.” And they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver. Then the LORD said to me, “Throw it to the potter”—the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD, to the potter.

The point I’m making is that Jesus is not taken aback by Judas’ betrayal. He’s not surprised. Everyone else is surprised, but not the all-knowing, sovereign Son of God. Every piece on the chess board of human history are God’s pieces. God is moving them! He’s moving both the light colored pieces and the dark colored pieces. He is moving them for His glory. He is working to bring the greatest glory of His Name! So understand thatJesus did not make a terrible mistake in choosing Judas. God had predetermined to use Judas so that Jesus would be betrayed and He would suffer for our sins.

Now, as God is sovereign in the choice of Judas and even in the working of Judas, understand that we’re not saying that God tempted Judas or coerced him to sin. Judas is fully culpable here. He is fully responsible for his decisions. But it’s really important for us in all of the passion narrative to understand that Jesus is not a victim. He is the conqueror! He is the saving Lord who came for the very purpose of dying upon the cross as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. This is a point that the early church is going to press into, because they don’t want anyone to think of Jesus as a weak, helpless victim of these powerful, mean people. This was planned before the foundation of the world. Peter, in his first sermon says this:

**Acts 2:22-23** “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”

Judas is one of those lawless men who is part of this crucifixion. Matthew, Mark and Luke explain that Jesus called His twelve disciples and He gave power to the twelve disciples to heal diseases of all kinds, to cast out demons. He gave them the authority to preach the gospel, to call people to repentance. And as He charged them to go out to do these things, every one of the twelve did. They went out by two’s, but Judas went out just as the other eleven. Judas cast out demons in the name of Jesus. Judas healed diseases in the name of Jesus. Judas preached the gospel with fervency. Judas called people to repentance. This work that Jesus assigns to Judas consumes Judas’ life. He is fruitful in this work. There seems to be no external sign whatsoever that indicates that Judas had less power, less fruit, less effectiveness in these good works. In fact, Judas, at the end, is one of the most esteemed by the other disciples. We know that because John 13 tells us that the group, the other eleven, gave Judas the money, to care for it and account for its use. They trusted him to that degree.

Now whenever the Gospels list the twelve, Judas always appears last, and it is highlighted that he was a traitor. In hindsight, it seems that Judas did show his true colors on a couple of occasions. Remember last week we talked about how on Wednesday night Jesus goes to Simon the leper’s house, and there He is with Mary and Martha and Lazarus. Mary pops open this expensive jar of perfume and fragrance fills the house, and she anoints Jesus’ head. She just pours it over Him as an act of devotion. And Judas in particular gets really, really upset by this. He says, “Why this waste? This could have been sold for 300 denarii.” Now catch that! He even knows how much Mary’s bottle of perfume is going to cost. Why is that? He’s an accountant. As soon as Mary takes it out, he has his little ledger sheet out in his head and he’s thinking, “Okay, it looks like it’s about this much, and it looks like this kind of perfume. 300 denarii! That’s nearly a year’s wages! That’s a lot of money!” And all the disciples seem to get on board with Judas. They say, “Yeah! Why is she wasting this?” And Jesus of course says, “Leave her alone.”

**Matthew 26:10-13** But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.”

You see, Jesus’ words to Judas and to the disciplescould have awakened Judas at that moment. “What is the gospel? What is important? What is a priority? What is significant?” But Jesus’ words didn’t awaken any conviction of his love of money. They didn’t awaken him to the treasure that was in front of him, the treasure of Jesus who would die for him and raise again. Instead, what awakened inside of Judas was panic, frustration, and anger. Judas feels like the gambler who put everything he has into the pot, and he’s just lost it all on one big bet. You see, Judas put all of his life in Jesus’ hands, believing that Jesus was going to bring about economic prosperity, freedom from Roman oppression, peace in the land, a glorious day for the nation of Israel. He didn’t realize that the first coming of Jesus was going to include suffering. The second coming is going to include such glory. And so, like a gambler, he says, “I’ve thrown everything into the pot because I want this economic prosperity.” In fact, undoubtedly he thinks that when Jesus gets on the throne, “because I’m so close to Him, He’s going to make me the national treasurer. I’ll be in charge of the whole treasury of the whole nation. Then I’ll really be set for life!” And now all of those dreams are crashing down when Jesus tells them that His body is being prepared for burial; that He’s going to die. In a panic, and in hope of recouping some of his losses because he spent three years with this guy, with Jesus, he goes to the religious leaders and says, “I know you’re after Him. You said on many occasions that you’re after Him.

***15*** *and said, “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” And they paid him thirty pieces of silver.*

And that was again, a fulfillment of a prophecy made hundreds of years earlier. You see, Judas thought he was selling Jesus for 30 pieces of silver when in reality, Judas was selling his own soul for that price. What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul? (Mark 8:36) How much is a soul worth? For Judas, it was thirty pieces of silver.

The next night then, after Judas comes to the chief priests, Jesus gathers His disciples into an Upper Room to celebrate the Passover. They’re back in Jerusalem, now. And Jesus takes off His outer garments. He puts on a towel then, and begins to wash the disciples’ feet. Judas is still present and he hears Jesus speak to Peter about how you need to have this cleansing. He understands that this is more than just washing physical feet, here. What Jesus is doing is He is ministering. He is offering cleansing for the soul. And he hears Jesus say, “Not all of you are clean.” (John 13:10) I don’t know whether he was awakened at that point. It doesn’t seem so. But he allows Jesus to wash his feet. I wonder what thoughts roll through his mind as he knows that he awaiting for this guy who is now serving him, the Lord of Glory who is serving him by washing his feet, who is extending mercy one more time to him. He is giving him an offering of grace, an offering of gospel, an offering of hope, and Judas is cold to it. He doesn’t allow any of this grace from Christ to sink into his own soul so that he would be saved. There are so many opportunities Jesus gives to Judas to turn from sin and to find mercy. But in every opportunity, Judas just turns away.

John relates then that after this time, Jesus was troubled in His spirit. It indicates that our Lord Jesus is fully human. He has walked with this guy. He has cared about this guy. He is washing this guy’s feet. He later will call him “friend.” And He is troubled in His spirit. He is emotionally hurt and moved by what He knows this guy is planning and plotting and will ultimately do. Sometimes we lose sight of the humanness of Jesus. Jesus is stirred, He is agitated and has emotion that a friend who has been with Him for these years would now act to have Him put to death. He is agitated like you and I would be if a friend betrayed us.

Turn to Matthew 26 and John 13. We’re going to look a little bit at both these texts now.

**Matthew 26:21-22** And as they were eating, he said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, “Is it I, Lord?”

The disciples, in looking at each other, they don’t know who it is. Picture a low-lying Middle Eastern table. They’re not sitting around a table like Leonardo DaVinci painted. They have kind of a U-shaped table. They’re all laying on their sides. They’re sort of resting on their elbows around that table. Their feet are kind of kicked out. And there is one of them, John, that is leaning against Jesus. He’s close, right there to Jesus. And Peter is on the other side of that U-shaped table and he motions to John, “Hey! Who is it? You’re the one closest to Him. Whisper to Jesus and see if you can find out the inside scoop.”

**John 13:26a** Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.”

Judas, who would betray Him, even asks Him after he receives this morsel, he says, “Rabbi, is it I?” Now Judas knows it’s him. Jesus knows it’s him. But Judas is still playing a game. “Am I sure that Jesus knows?” And Jesus answers him straightforward, “You have said so.” (Matthew 26:25)

**John 13:26b-27** So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.”

Satan enters human hearts through unbelief. But even here, God is in charge. God is in charge of the devil and the devil’s working because God is bringing about the death of His Son. Now at that point, Judas gets up and he leaves the room. And everybody thinks, “He must have left in order to buy something for the feast. After all, he has the money bags. So maybe that’s what he is doing.” And this is a part of the story I don’t really understand that well, because I think: How could the disciples have missed this huge clue that Jesus gave them? It seems so obvious. Any yet, it wasn’t obvious to them. They were literally clueless.

So then, Jesus institutes the Lord’s Supper. He gives them a new commandment to love one another. And He says

**John 13:35** By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

He waits until Judas leaves the room to give that new commandment and to offer the bread and the cup. And then they sing a hymn as they walk out from Jerusalem. They go down the Kidron Valley and they go up to the Garden of Gethsemane. There in the Garden, Jesus is asking His disciples to pray for Him. He is overcome with grief by the prospect of bearing the sins of all who would come to Him. He asks them to stay awake and pray, but they fall asleep. And then, finally, at the end, he says,

**Matthew 26:46** Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”

At this point, in the darkness, Judas comes. And behind him is this huge crowd of people. Some think there could have been as many as 600 people with soldiers and what not, to take Jesus by force. They think there is going to be a big riot when they arrest Jesus. They have lanterns and torches and swords.

***48*** *Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; seize him.”* ***49*** *And he came up to Jesus at once and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” And he kissed him.*

The gospels tell us it’s not just one kiss, but it’s many kisses. It’s just kiss, kiss, kiss, kiss, kiss, kiss, kiss.

**Luke 22:48** but Jesus said to him, “Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?”

In other words, “Really? Is this the sign?” A kiss indicates love and acceptance, honor.

***50*** *Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you came to do.” Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him.*

**John 18:4-6** Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, “Whom do you seek?” They answered him, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus said to them, “I am he.” Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground.

Judas also falls down. He feels the power of Christ when He says, “I AM!” And then they lead Jesus from the Garden and down the Kidron Valley, first to a series of religious trials. The first is before Annas, who is the former high priest. Then He will go before Caiaphas. These two are longer trials. Jesus is being abused physically as well as legally in these two trials. Both these trials take place before 3:00 in the morning. And then after the sun rises, when it is now technically legal to have a trial, they have one more trial before Caiaphas. It’s probably just a short five or ten minute kind of trial where they condemn Jesus and lead Him off to Pilate.

Judas has been following these illegal court proceedings through the night. Do you remember how Peter was warming his hands by the fire and he denied the Lord three times? We’re not told exactly where Judas was, but Judas has been around. He stuck around to find out what is going to happen to Jesus. And we know that because in Matthew 27:3-4 it says

***3*** *Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders,* ***4*** *saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.”*

Could there be a better expression by a person who is filled with remorse? They looked at him and said

*They said, “What is that to us? See to it yourself.”*

And here’s the irony. What hypocrisy it is to say, “We can’t take this money and put it back in the temple treasury because it’s blood money.” Well, where did it come from? It came from the temple treasury. So somehow, it got dirty once it hit Judas’ hands, but it wasn’t dirty when they gave it. And then it says

***5*** *And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself.*

He committed suicide! There are five lessons from the life of Judas, if you’re taking notes.

**Lesson 1: We can give a credible testimony of faith in Jesus and not own it.**

Judas made a really strong outward confession of faith in Jesus. He is convinced that Jesus is the Messiah. He is sincere about that. But he had a picture of a political, economic kind of Messiah and leader, only. He had an external, of-this-material-world, kind of Messiah. He is just as active in Christian ministry as any of the other disciples. He preaches the Gospel. His message seems to be on point. We’re not told that anyone corrects him. He heals the sick just as compassionately as John does. But here was a man who preached repentance to others, yet failed to repent of his own sinful heart. He appeared to be a follower of Jesus, but his heart never yielded to the Master’s will. Throughout, Judas will conceal inward sin, unwilling to set it before Jesus in confession to gain forgiveness and cleansing. He hid it from Jesus. He hid it from the other disciples, although Jesus saw through it. The sin of selfishness and willfulness and the love of money robbed his soul of the life that Jesus offered to him freely. It was free of charge!

Here is a truth that I think we learn. Friends, it is not a credible testimony of faith in Jesus that connects us to Jesus. Can I say that again? It is not a credible testimony of faith in Jesus that connects us to Jesus. I think that if Judas were to stand up in a church ceremony to give a testimony of his faith in Jesus, we’d all think, “Yes, that’s pretty good. It’s credible.” It is a broken, contrite heart that calls out to Jesus in faith and dependence that connects us to Jesus. It’s not our testimony; it is a broken and contrite heart of repentance and faith that connects us to Jesus. If you have a broken, contrite heart over your sin and a belief that Jesus is the Savior, you will have a credible testimony. So everyone who is a true disciple of Jesus has a credible testimony. But just because you have a credible testimony doesn’t mean you’re a true disciple of Jesus. Don’t rest on your testimony. There are two applications.

1. Lean in to your own faith and repentance every day.

Don’t presume it in your own soul simply because you have a testimony. Through faith in Jesus we fight so that we will endure to the very end of our lives in repentance and faith. So let’s lean in every day, to our own faith and repentance.

2. Pray for those around you who give a credible testimony of faith and speak words of spiritual encouragement to them.

It would be wrong to doubt everyone who gives a credible testimony, but it also would be equally wrong to presume that everyone who gives a credible testimony has a healthy soul. Let’s reach out to one another to give spiritual encouragement. That’s what the church is to be about. That’s why we emphasize Small Groups and relationships; real relationships where we talk to each other about where we are in our walk with the Lord.

**Lesson 2: We can have incredible spiritual opportunity and squander it.**

Think of Judas’ amazing opportunity! For three years he was personally connected with the living Lord Jesus. He saw Jesus give sight to the blind. He saw Jesus still the storm. He saw Jesus feed the five thousand. He was one of the guys who handed out the baskets of food and gathered up the leftovers. He listened to Jesus personally give the Sermon on the Mount, personally give the Olivet Discourse. No one in history of the world squandered spiritual opportunity like Judas did. Rather than receiving eternal riches from Jesus, that’s what Jesus was offering, he lusted after 30 pieces of silver. Think how often Judas heard Jesus warn of the dangers of loving money throughout his three years. Did Judas ever listen? The answer is, no, he didn’t. He was with the most powerful preacher to ever walk the earth. He was so close to Him, listening to every word and probably impressed by every word, but not impacted by His word. Scripture tells us

**James 1:21b** in humility, receive the word implanted which is able to save your souls.

We’re not impacted by preaching or the presence of miracles apart from us having a humble heart that receives the gospel implanted inside of us. And for Judas, it was all on the outside. If we listen to the truth of God’s Word without receiving it implanted in our soul, we are walking in the way of Judas. What a danger that is!

Just as an aside, many Christianparents experience the heartache of a child who turns away from faith in Christ. They struggle with questions like: Where did I go wrong? Could I have loved them better? Could I have shared the gospel more? Could I have been a better example? And almost in all of those questions, the answer is yes. You could have been a better example. Yes, you could have shared the gospel more. There are none of us who live perfect lives as parents. But friends, Judas reminds us that a person can have a perfect example, they can have the very best teaching, they can have the greatest environment, and still be spiritually dead. God uses our example. He uses our teaching. Let’s press into that, to be sure. But every human heart needs a personal miracle to be spiritually alive. And that’s what we pray for.

**Lesson 3: We can have great respect from others and abuse it.**

Trust from one’s peers is a high gift and privilege. Judas had it. He had trust and respect from his peers. But instead of honoring his brothers, he deceived them. What a miserable life that uses the people who love and respect you! There’s a warning here. When we fool those who trust us and respect us, we are robbing ourselves. It is not hard to deceive the people who love us most. That’s not a great accomplishment. Of course we can deceive them. They’re going to give us trust. They’re going to give us respect. And here is Judas. He could have had such a family and he squandered it because of his love of money.

**Lesson 4: We can see much of Christ and still be blind to Him.**

Few people had more opportunity to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus than Judas did. And he is still blind to the beauty of Christ. It is his opportunity to see so much of Christ’s glory that causes his sin to be all the more wretched. The more Judas was around Jesus the more hardened he became to Jesus. What a tragedy! How can that be? What is the source of Judas’ spiritual blindness? I think there are two things to acknowledge with Judas.

Source #1: Disappointment with Jesus.

Jesus didn’t meet Judas’ expectations. He wanted a person who was going to take the throne from Rome and establish economic prosperity and national prominence in the world. But as Jesus talked more of His death, Judas became more disillusioned. His disappointment with Jesus’ Person and Jesus’ mission and Jesus’ actions led him to resent Jesus and even hate Him.

Friend, let me ask you: Does disappointment with God ever tempt your soul? Do you ever pray for something and God doesn’t act the way you want Him to? It is a great temptation. We should look at Judas and say, “Oh no! I don’t want to press into my disappointment with Jesus. I want to lament before Him, but I want to lament in faith and trust God. ‘You’re God! I can trust You! I’ve seen You do miracles.’ I know who Jesus is.”

Source #2: Unconfessed sin.

He justified his sin. He minimized his sin. He rationalized his sin. But he didn’t confess his sin. He had the greatest High Priest right there, willing to take his confession, able to forgive him, able to cleanse him. Friends, let’s beware of unconfessed sin. It leads us step by step into spiritual darkness, so that Jesus can be right in front of us and we don’t see how wonderful He is.

**Lesson 5: We can have great remorse over our sin and still be overcome by it.**

Remember, Judas cried out, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” What pain the guilt of our own sin brings to us! I don’t think anyone in all the world is more sorry and sorrowful over their own sin that Judas is. He was torn up by it. He is really, really sincere in his sorrow over his sin. But his sorrow was turned inward toward self. It’s filled with self-pity and self-righteousness and self-correction and self-salvation. Judas thought that he could gain some relief from the pain of his guilt by going to the religious leaders. He went to the wrong people. He should have gone directly to Christ. The religious leaders couldn’t help him. He only left there in greater despair. And the passage tells us that he went out and hanged himself. If you read in Acts, it says that he fell headlong and burst open (Acts 1:18). The indication is that in his hanging himself, either in the act or some days later, somehow the branch of the tree broke or the rope broke and he fell down this cliff where he had hung himself and he burst open. What an ignoble end!

Friends, I want you to contrast this with Peter. Peter sinned really gravely and yet, Peter recovered. Why is that? It’s because Peter bent into Christ. He said, “I’m going to love You. I do love You and I want to be near You.” Do you have a sin to confess to the Lord, today? Here’s what I would encourage you. Take the whole of it, not just part of it, to the Lord. Judas just took part of his sin. He didn’t take all of his sin to the Lord. He just took that little piece that he really, really felt bad about. He left the other unattended.

Secondly, let’s cast off all penance. Your pain will never pay for your own sin. We can’t do enough penance to rid ourselves of the pain of the guilt of our sin. It’s repentance, not penance. It’s Jesus’ suffering, not our suffering.

Third, sorrow over your sin with a broken contrite heart. Have no more pride to protect you. Just cast that pride aside. Just sorrow with a broken, humble heart before the Lord. He loves that! He loves a broken heart.

Confess your love for Jesus. Jesus cannot be distant from one who confesses love for Him. We cannot be cold to Him while we confess our sin. That’s not genuine confession. Our sin is first and foremost against Him.

And finally, come with confidence that Jesus hears us and that He can resolve the guilt of our sin. He gives us a future. He will bring us hope. Come to Him absolutely knowing that’s who we are coming to.

I want to close with Michael Card’s second song about Judas on that album.

*Why did it have to be a friend who chose to betray the Lord?
And why did he use a kiss to show them, that's not what a kiss is for?
Only a friend can betray a friend, a stranger has nothing to gain
And only a friend comes close enough to ever cause so much pain

Why did it have to be a thorny crown place upon his head?
It should have been a royal one, made of jewels and gold instead
It had to be a crown of thorns, because in this world that we live
All that would seek to love a thorn is all the world has to give

Why did it have to be a heavy cross he was made to bear?
And why did they nail His feet and hands; His love would have held him there
It was a cross for on a cross, a thief was supposed to pay
And Jesus had come into the world to steal every heart away
Yes, Jesus had come into the world to steal every heart away*

Does He have your heart? It’s the only place for a heart to be. It’s the only place for a heart to be clean. It’s the only place for a heart to have life. Does Jesus have your heart?