

Judas Iscariot one of the twelve

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[0 : 00] and Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve. Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve.

I don't remember the way I heard this and it just comes back to me unsnackly.

I heard the story of a man who a long time ago had a vision, had a dream of hell itself.

And he said that we're searching areas in hell that were darker than others.

And when he went through the darkness of the areas, he heard a moon in the form of a figure, counting out thirty pieces of silver, over and over again.

[1 : 17] When we come to look at the tragic figure of Judas, I think we come face to face with the most tragic figure in history.

Some people have said that the most tragic figure in history was Pontius Pilate, who gave sentence against the Son of God, against his petty headman.

I don't think that's the truth. Pilate was in a dilemma because he had to disregard the law he had sworn to uphold.

Judas was different because he had to disavow, he had to despise, and he had to defile both the persons, the things that he committed himself to follow, and the love that he claimed to embrace.

This evening we are faced with a part of the story that most of us know very well. Now what I want to do this evening, knowing that we all of us know the sad history of Judas Iscariot, is to try and follow Judas' path of declension.

[3 : 01] I want to look at it, perhaps, from that point of view. Many people have tried, down through the years, to vindicate Judas.

There comes an extent to say that he was nothing more than a thorn in the hand of God. Can I refuse this, my friends, and say to you, there is not one of God's own creations, not one of the human beings, who is in that sense a thorn in the hand of God.

The moment that God has placed mankind above the animal, the moment that he gave him a mind to be them, he also gave him a responsibility to be accountable for.

Never let us be deceived that any of us are torn in the hand of an inflexible God. That is an error from the script.

Mankind is the ultimate in God's creation. And mankind is responsible for every act that he commits.

[4 : 34] And whate'er the mystery we find, in the sovereignty of God, at the end of the day, we will find that it never has, and never will have conflicted with the responsibility of men.

Judas was a responsible man. And bearing that in mind, we remember his story, how he became a follower of Jesus, and he was taken in to the company of the inner circle.

. And there is no doubt that, for three years, whatever form of inner development took place, whatever the form of disillusionment, ending and antagonism, ending in rejection, ending in betrayal, disillusionment, ending in antagonism, ending in rejection, ending in betrayal.

Whatever the process that took place in his mind, I think there is no doubt that during that three years when he was subject to the teachings of Christ, there would be heights in which he aspired to something better, mingled between death, that he had to rise from. I think that's fair to say to him that he was almost from the beginning of the man in the grip of a tension between good and between evil. I think also from the scriptures there were moments in his three years when the restraining influence of the Spirit of God was upon him.

Although I am forced to say that the influence of the saving Spirit of God was not upon him.

[6 : 53] And this is one of the very solemn things that we find in the scriptures, that there is the natural restraints and teachings of the Spirit of God that go on in unregenerate men, restraining them, enlightening them, guiding them, and directing them, which do not lead ultimately to their

surrender to God.

But ultimately they are fought against, resisted until a person comes to an opposite decision in their mind.

Now the intricacies of the saving influence of the Holy Spirit and the natural influence are varying. That's not our theme of evening. But let us say this, that Judas, it would seem, went through the whole gamut of religious experience and aspirations during three years.

But he ultimately came to the place where he rejected the light that he had received.

[8 : 24] And he rejected the Christ who came to save us. That's the common thing about Judas. After the three years we are almost finished. We do not read it in Mark's Gospel. It is one of the few things that I am going to talk about outside the Gospel of Mark.

You find it in Luke 22 and 3 and I will quote it. We read this, And Satan entered into him. And then you have another phrase, And he put it into his heart to betray him. I want you to stop there. And Satan entered into him. And put it into his heart to betray him. Satan. These are very solemn words.

Satan had bidden his time for three years. Next to God, I don't think that there is anyone who is the patient of Satan.

For three years he had bidden his time. He had kept sowing the seeds of doubt.

[9 : 54] Kept raking the embers of personal disillusionment. There is no doubt that most people believed that Judas really believed that Christ was to be the Messiah in the early stages.

And he saw himself, most people think, as one of the right-hand men. One of the inner councils wielding authority, probably, as Chancellor of the Exchequer of the new society that Jesus was going to lead in.

But like many others, Judas had to learn the wonderful concept of Jesus. That the society that he was to lead in was to be a society based on peace.

A society that was to embrace the whole world. A society which was in the world, but not of the world.

A society of which Jesus said, my kingdom is not of this world. Judas couldn't grasp it as the years went on. He saw his position being taken away from him.

[11 : 21] And he wasn't prepared to accept the implication of Christ's kingdom. Which said quite clearly, he who will not give at all will receive nothing.

That's what the Bible said. Now Judas, over the years, was no doubt in the midst of a tension. He no doubt thought that Christ was the Messiah and he was going to rule in his way.

And then it all changed. It wasn't going to happen that way. And no doubt the evil one took the seeds of doubt. This is not the Christ. This is not the Messiah you expected.

Yes, Satan had sown the seeds as he normally does. And it seems that Judas, when these seeds were being sown, did not be taken himself to Christ.

And I'll pause here and I would say to anyone in this congregation, if you have atheistic thoughts, if you have inner struggle, if you do find a part of you a tension with the word of God, never, never move away from the revealed word of God.

[12 : 54] Whatever the temptation. Because ultimately you'll find it to be truth. Whatever the struggle in your mind.

But Judas listened and the seeds grew. It is suggested by some that Judas only fell on this great occasion.

But that's not what the scriptures tell us. They do tell us that he fell at least once. And the suggestion was that it was more than once that he stole out of the bag.

And it's never said in the scriptures that he had sinned at this level and he betook himself to Jesus to say he was sorry. It doesn't say that.

It would seem that Judas always kept up a facade. Do we? Do we keep up a facade in company and in the church?

[14 : 02] When our spiritual life is almost nonexistent? When the candle is almost going out? When everybody in our home will tell us how fearful we're to live with.

How those at our work will not want to be with us. We keep up the facade. Now we've got to be very careful here. When the desire not to come to the house of God fills us.

We drop off here and there and then some put on the facade. Others don't and we respect them for it.

What I'm saying here is this. When we begin to deviate from truth, we're in danger ground. And it's never said that Judas took himself to Jesus to tell him what was going on in his mind.

Satan then, at a certain moment, entered into him. But don't miss it. The second thing you notice here is that Judas took the initiative.

[15:15] Judas went to the high priest. It was a personal decision he came to.

It was a positive decision he came to. It was a perilous decision he came to. And whenever we, my friends, you and I, come to a decision to go against the truth of God.

To deviate from the truth of God. To willfully to go an opposite direction to the truth of God that we know. Who knows. But it is the same spirit that motivated Judas Iscariot.

I say that because it's very helpful. You see, there are two kinds of sins. Some might say, well, we're all sinful. That's exactly true. There is no good in any one of us.

That's exactly true. We have all got an evil heart of unbelief. That's exactly true. But then again, there is the sin that we know to be sin.

[16:30] And there is the path that we tread that we know to be sin before we tread it. Well, if we tread that path, we do it deliberately making a choice.

There are other kinds of sins. We call it spontaneous sins. When our temper revarts. When our tongue bursts forth. When a moon comes over us.

And lo and behold, we went to these sins before we know them. They are destructive. They spoil our witness. They make us small people. But we seem to be in them before we understand it.

Well, that's not the kind of sin that Judas was guilty of. He came to a personal decision. A positive decision. A perilous decision.

It was a deliberate disavowal of Christ before others. Are you guilty of that in another area of mine? You see, we are when we go in deliberate, a deliberate defiance of a person, another truth.

[17:39] We might say we are not as bad as Judas. But, is that true? You see, with Judas it was deliberate.

He went. It wasn't a slip. It wasn't even a slip that easily beset him. And maybe in all honesty, the love of money was a slip that beset him.

But it wasn't that. It wasn't the strength that he was handed to the bag. He was going to go the whole hog. And he made a choice.

All right. That's the second thing. The third thing is this, that Judas, I think you remember last week we looked at the woman pouring out the box of alabaster ointment.

I think seeing the ointment wasted on Jesus, this expensive ointment, was the last straw.

[18:43] Perhaps, like some of the disciples, he said, why the waste? Judas. You see, here's where Judas missed out. He couldn't understand the commitment of love.

He followed Jesus for what he would get, not for what Jesus was. And you know my friends, although we may come to Christ and be saved from him, because we fear the judgment, and we'd be wise to fear it.

We may come to Jesus because he's only the Savior and he's the only one that can help us. Unless we go a stage farther and love him for what he is himself, we may not have crossed the barrier that faith takes the people of God over.

He couldn't understand the commitment of love. And when he saw that woman pouring the ointment over Jesus, he couldn't understand the confession of our love.

And when he gazed at her, he couldn't follow the extravagance of love. He couldn't understand the commitment of it.

[19:59] He couldn't understand the confession of it. He couldn't understand the extravagance of it. Why is she wasting that on him? What a fearful state of mind.

4. Judas planned ways in which the betrayal might take place.

And he sought how he might conveniently betray him. We read that there. We find out that this was not an action taken quickly, immediately to be regretted.

For we read also in the scriptures that he sought opportunity to betray him. Therefore we see a developing action. He was coming more and more deeply into the power of sin.

Let me say this my friends, that when we turn away from what we know of God, we develop in sin.

We become worse. Much worse. And yet, while all this was going on, Judas was hypocritical to the end.

[21 : 24] He kept up the false face of the Lord's Supper. He kept up the final kiss. He kept up the final kiss. The final blasphemy was this, Master, Master.

And he kissed him. And yet, like us, Judas was warned in two ways by Jesus.

It's funny how he kept on, although he was well warned, until you start looking into your own heart. And I start looking into mine. You see, Judas was told, first of all, Jesus told Judas that he knew who he was.

It's he that did it with me. And then Jesus told Judas what his end would be. He says, it would be better that the man who does this would not be born.

[22 : 25] And in spite of these two clear warnings, that Jesus was well aware of what was going on in his mind, and what he had planned. Judas defied the warnings.

This is why I say we're responsible for what we do. Do we defy the warnings of scripture? Well, this is what we've got to ask ourselves.

Judas was warned by Jesus. Now we come to a strange part in the history. After he had betrayed him, and Judas was taken away, we read that Judas repented.

And he went to the chief priest and he said, I have betrayed an innocent man. But when you go to the epistles, you read these words.

That Judas did not find forgiveness. How is it that a person who repented did not find forgiveness?

[23 : 49] I wondered about why Judas repented. And this afternoon when I was looking at the scriptures, I think I found out why.

The reason that Judas repented was not because the Holy Spirit was working in him to make him repent.

Judas' repentance, I feel, was a rational repentance.

You see, the Spirit of God had left him. How Satan had anchored into him. Now, it's fearful enough to be indwelt by Satan.

Yet Judas was rational enough to know and to feel and to fear the acts of his sin and the consequences of it.

[24 : 58] Why? Why? Why? Why if he was going to feel the gigantic feeling that he felt with regard to what he did?

Why? Why? Why? Why? Because Judas, although in the grip of Satan, had never lost his rationality. And something happened between the time Judas repented and the time he betrayed the Lord.

You go to the scriptures, you'll find them. You'll find that when the soldiers came and Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss immediately afterwards, when the soldier said, who are you? Jesus said, I am he.

And at that moment God Almighty let the curtain down and the eternal glory of the Son of God shone through his humanity and the soldiers fell to the ground.

And Judas was there. And he knew then what you and I will know at least at the moment of death, that the eternal God was clothed in human form in the person of the Son.

[26 : 42] And Judas was rational enough to know, although possessed by Satan, that he had made the biggest mistake of his life.

My friends, he then saw the value of 30 pieces of silver and he threw it away.

He then saw the light itself had no value of and he went and hanged it. He was rational repentance, not spiritual repentance.

He never betook himself to Jesus, even then. The lessons this evening I want us to learn are few but real.

One is the danger of anything less than total obedience to Christ in all that he says.

[27 : 53] Two, the folly of anything less than total commitment to the Son of God. And the folly is this.

The folly of thinking we can go on without total obedience which we once gave and still end up in the city of God.

That's the danger in Judas for all to see. How Judas lost the will to fight. How the tension grew and he made his choice.

How the tension grew and he made his choice. We do not know. But this is what we do know. That Judas seems to be a living illustration of the person described in Hebrews 6.

Who knew something of God. Who tasted something of God. And who afterwards was guilty of crucifying afresh.

[29 : 08] the Son of God. The person who left the path of total obedience. The person who left the path of total commitment.

You find that person described in Hebrews 6. And I finish with four things. First of all, Judas' profession.

He was one of the twelve. But it didn't save him from losing his soul. Two, the possibility. It would seem right up until the very love feast. The agape. When Jesus gathered them all in the upper chamber.

The possibility was that he had up until that moment deceived them all. Because they all said, is it I? Not one said, is it Judas?

[30 : 10] So there is the profession. One of the twelve. The possibility that we might deceive everybody. The peril.

What diminishing commitment could ultimately lead to. The peril.

When I was in Australia. When I was in Australia. And this is not second hand. When I was in Australia. I went to see an old lady. Whom I knew.

Thirteen years ago. She was a godly woman. And she had three sons. One of them died not long ago.

In an accident. The brightest of them. As a Christian. She had another son. A leader. A Christian brethren. And she had a third one.

[31 : 07] Whom I knew very well when I was in Australia. He was the most active person. At that time. And zealous. For the things of God.

He left Australia. And the next time I saw him. Was as a Baptist minister. In London.

At a reformed conference. We again had fellowship together. I went out. And I spoke to his mother. And she said, did you hear him John?

I said, no. How is he? Well she says. He's not going to the church at all now. He's back in Australia. And he's got a job. He's away from God. And I thought. Well. I'm sorry to hear that.

And I went to see his brother. And I don't know if his mother knew this. He said to me. You know John. I had a coronary. He recently had an open heart surgery. He thought that would bring him back. But he was hearing. To tell him that his brother was in different parts of Australia. And he was hearing.

[32 : 02] He was hearing. To tell him that his brother was in a different part of Australia to where he stays. He said to me, you know, John had a coronary recently and had open heart surgery.

He thought that would bring him back. But he was here in the town that his brother was, a different part of Australia to where he stays.

And he was up as a publishing distributor, distributing a book and trying to spread it all over Queensland and New South Wales of astrology.

Astrology. And he said that even his own men did not seem to move them in the slightest.

The peril of what diminishing commitment can make do and diminishing contact with God.

[33 : 13] And finally, prevention. Examine yourself. Let me examine myself.

The story of Judas is not to malign a man. The story of Judas is to be a lighthouse. To help me. To help me be you and me. To learn from the tragedy of the most tragic figure in history.

Judas is to be a psychiatrist. Judas. Judas. Iskariot. So we pray. Eternal God, we ask thee to help us to learn from this man.

Help us to learn how responsible we are personally to thee for every act that we do, every path that we follow.

Help us to know the deceitfulness of sin. Where we've failed thee, where we've had our struggles, where we've been in the grip of tension, where our minds have been almost overthrown by satanic conflict.

[34 : 55] We bring them all to thee and ask thee to sort the past. Help us to hold on to truth.

As given to us by thy Son, in thy work. And whatever our feelings, and whatever our failures, help us to confess them, to forsake them, and to turn to thee, lest we end up at a beauty.

For Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.