

"SILVER"
Matthew 26:14-16; 27:3-10

March 20, 2013

Lent Service 6

Tonight, we want to look at a very beautiful picture. This is something that many people in America love and cherish. This is something that provides happiness for many people. No, it's not a picture of Jesus. It is a picture of money -- silver coins.

In our text tonight, there is a man who loved money. His name was JUDAS. He was one of Jesus' 12 disciples and treasurer for that group. He took care of the money, paid the bills for the group, and so on. But he was also a thief. Once, when a woman named Mary used some expensive perfume to anoint Jesus feet, Judas complained and said, "We should have sold the perfume and given the money to poor people. It was worth 300 silver coins." That sounds very fine, but the next verse says, "Judas did not say that because he cared about the poor people but because he was a thief; he was keeper of the money bag and he took money out of it for himself." (John 12:6)

Judas apparently loved money so much would do anything to get more money. He would be hypocritical and lie. He would steal from his friends. In our text tonight, Judas does the most despicable thing: he goes to Jesus' enemies and asks for money to BETRAY Jesus. What IS "betrayal"? We don't have a really good sign for that. We use cheat. BETRAY means that Judas gave his friend to His enemies and accepted money for that accepted money, profit for it.

When we read that, we may get angry and criticize Judas. How could he do that? We feel very proud because we would never do that. Or, would we? Do we ever "sell" Jesus out for something? "Sell" means that you give up something to get something, usually money. If you sell a car, then you give up the car and get money. Perhaps we don't "sell" Jesus for money. However, do we ever give up Jesus to get something else? Perhaps we do.

We may give up Jesus to get fun. Every year, young people are confirmed here. They make promises to follow Jesus and never give up. However, within a few years, many are not attending church. They would prefer to be out with their friends, having fun. Worshiping Jesus can get in the way of that. So, some young people "sell" Jesus to keep their fun.

We may give up Jesus to get friends. Perhaps your friends give you a hard time because you are a Christian. When you support a Biblical teaching, you can get a lot of grief. When you live according to the Word of God without compromising, you will be insulted. Sometimes, it is hard to continue in that way. We don't want conflict. We don't want people saying bad things about us. We just want peace. So, we "sell" Jesus to keep our friends.

Perhaps we give up Jesus to get time. We live in a very busy world. We need more time to do all that we want. Christians are busy, too. How can we get more time? Some Christians give up their worship time on Sunday to get more time to rest. They give up time to serve the Lord to get more time to enjoy themselves. People "sell" Jesus to get more time.

Perhaps we are like Judas and do give up Jesus for money. Jesus said that when we help someone who is hungry, thirsty, naked, or sick, and we help that person, that is the same as helping Jesus. But our society tells us to enjoy ourselves. So, when we have taken care of our needs and have money left, how much do we use to help the poor? How much do we use to support the Lord's work here at church? Often we use all of our discretionary funds (money left) to enjoy ourselves, satisfy our desires, and buy the newest toy. We "sell" Jesus so that we can keep more of our money for desires.

Stop and think about it. This is just like Judas. And that's depressing because Jesus has loved us very much even though we have betrayed Him. When Judas realized he had betrayed Jesus, he was depressed, too. The Bible says, "he was seized with remorse." Judas went to the temple and tried to give back the money. Judas said, "I have sinned. I have betrayed an innocent man." The priests didn't care. They had succeeded in arresting Jesus. They didn't want the money back. So, Judas threw the money into the temple and left.

Judas had done a terrible thing. Now, he felt guilty. How could he have any peace? How could his sins be forgiven? There was only one way: turn to God and His forgiveness. Why? Because God had sent His Son, Jesus, to do the same as Judas. Judas gave up something to get something else. Jesus did the same.

Judas wanted money and was willing to sell Jesus to get that. Jesus did not want money. Jesus wanted you. Jesus wanted all people. Jesus wanted us to be His own (belong Him) and live with Him forever. However, we were stuck in our selfishness and sin. We were not good enough for Him. If Jesus wanted us, then He would have to pay a high price to get us.

Jesus did that. Jesus bought us, but He did not use money. Martin Luther wrote, "He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature. He purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; [He did] not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death." Jesus bought us with His blood. That's odd, isn't it? We give up Jesus to get so many other things in our lives. But Jesus willingly gives up His life so that we could get many things. We have forgiveness, new life, and salvation because of Jesus' death.

Judas could have had that, but he did not. Judas could not believe that God would forgive him. Judas gave up. He went and killed himself. That is so sad. Jesus willingly would have forgiven him, but now it is too late for Judas.

But it's not too late for us. Maybe, when you see all your sins and feel all your guilt, you think that Jesus could not love you, could not forgive you. That's wrong. The blood of Jesus shed on the cross forgives all those sins, wipes them away clean. Now, each one of you is His holy person. Each of you belongs to Jesus. He gave Himself up for you. He bought you. He owns you.

That's great, exciting news. We come here regularly to thank and praise God for that. But there is more. Jesus did this for a reason. Jesus gave up His life to get us so that we can give up our lives for Him. He redeemed us so that we can serve Him. He owns us - our time, our money, our skills, our things. Now, we are free to joyfully use all of those things first to serve Him and secondly to take care of ourselves. This means that we will boldly proclaim our faith in Jesus, whether we may lose friends or not. We will plan our schedule so that we have time to worship and serve the Lord first and then choose other activities. We will decide to use our money and things to care for our needs and then help other people and serve the Lord first and then take for our enjoyment. Maybe that seems very different. It is. Maybe it seems very difficult. It can be with the wrong attitude. Yet when

we realize how much Jesus loves us and how much Jesus gave up to get us, then we can do those things with the power of the Holy Spirit working within us.

When you look at this picture and see the money, then you will remember what Judas wanted most and what He did to get it: sell Jesus. But, when you want to see what Jesus wanted most, look in a mirror. He wants you. When you want to see what Jesus gave up to get you, look at the cross and remember His blood shed to purchase you and forgive your sins. When you want to see what Jesus wants you to do from now on, then look around you -- love and serve one another. Jesus has bought you. You belong to Him. Live unselfishly for Him. Amen.