

SILVER PIECES FOR A SOLD SOUL**Matthew 26:1-27:10**

Intro: For this final message in this REBOOTING series which began as the Christmas season was concluding, I'm talking taking a direction that reflects this Lenten season we find ourselves in now. I've looked at seven Bible heroes, Habakkuk, Rahab, Elijah, Job, David, Peter, Paul, all whom God restored and transformed; hence the term rebooted. He restarted them for effective and consistent ministry in the time that remained for them. Today, I'm taking a negative tack. Sometimes rebooting doesn't seem to work. Several weeks ago Dale and Pat's new computer was on the fritz and Dale told Karen she needed to ask me, "What happens when you reboot and it doesn't work?!"

I have to admit, that is a good a valid question. And in the case of Judas Iscariot, Jesus's disciple who betrayed his friend and rabbi, we have one who could have been rebooted and restored, but he chose not to. Let's look into it and you'll see what I mean.

(Read Matthew 26:1-16)

One sacrificed a huge amount of money to show her love for Jesus, the other sold him for the pittance price of a slave

- Matthew does not identify the woman who anointed Jesus's head and washed his feet with this expensive ointment, but John points out that it is Mary who shows such tremendous dedication to her beloved Lord (John 12:3).
 - Mary's story would have been a great study in rebooting. In John 11 we have an extensive account of how her brother Lazarus was sick and then died while Jesus seemingly tarried several days travel away and allowed it all to happen. As you read that story it quickly becomes obvious that Mary felt very much let down by Jesus's failure to act on her brother's behalf. But then Jesus does more than she could have hoped and raises Lazarus from the dead a full four days after he died. To say she was grateful, is an understatement.
 - So this tremendously touching act, where Mary enters the home where Jesus is dining and, disregarding all gasps of indignation and harsh words of judgment, lovingly anoints Jesus. Her heart was full of love and bursting with gratefulness for all Jesus had done for her. Her selfless act showed her incredible dedication to Jesus.
- On the other hand we have the others in the dining room as Mary anointed Jesus including Judas and the other disciples. Now, mind you, Judas isn't even named when we read *And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor."* Matthew 26:8-9 (ESV). **ALL** of the disciples were grumbling. And Jesus quickly takes them to task by defending what he describes as "*a beautiful thing*" (v. 10).
 - But only one of them ignored Jesus's admonishment, and maybe is angry about it, and goes to the chief priests and takes 30 pieces of silver in exchange for betraying his friend.
 - F. B. Meyer goes a little deeper with this. "*We cannot fathom the secret thoughts of the traitor. Did he hope that his act would compel Christ to take the course of self-vindication, which his mighty acts appeared to make possible? It seems unthinkable that there's not some explanation other than mere greed! Yet when we look into our own hearts, can we be altogether surprised? How often have we betrayed the Lord by our reticence, when we should have spoken; by the kiss of the lip, when we are selfishly exploiting our association with him to our own advantage!*" It's a good question.
 - Others have conjectured in the same way by suggesting that Judas was trying to force Jesus's hand hoping that Jesus would zap the enemy and take his rightful place as King of the Jews. But it's only conjecture, and Meyer is right – we can't know what Judas was actually thinking as he sold Jesus, his friend and travel companion of 3 years, down the river.
 - We do know that Judas had a heart that was getting harder with each passing minute. In the John passage that describes this same event, we read, *But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.* John 12:4-6.

Judas was a thief, and then he became a betrayer and ultimately he became an accessory to murder.
All for the price of a slave.

- And then, as he enjoyed the meal (as much as one can enjoy a meal with someone he had just sold out) he had the nerve to join his fellow disciples in the question...

Is it I?

- And he **KNEW** it was! Listen, (Read Matthew 26:20-25)
- Judas's waning love for Jesus is obvious in his question to Jesus. Whereas the other disciples were asking, "*Is it I, Lord?*" (v. 22), showing their deep love and reverence for Jesus; Judas's question was "*Is it I, Rabbi?*" (v. 25). It is a not so subtle slip of the tongue that betrays the betrayer. The slide into the abyss was picking up speed.
- Jesus shares the first communion meal and then he and his disciples, less Judas, head out to the Mount of Olives to the Garden of Gethsemane. As they are walking, Peter proclaims his faithfulness to Jesus to the very death and Jesus predicts Peter's denial. We just looked at this a month ago when we saw how God rebooted Peter, but keep your finger there because we will refer to it in a bit when it becomes obvious to Judas that . . .

Hell-bent plans always fail

- Judas betrayed Jesus. (Read Matthew 26:47-56)
- Notice that ALL the disciples left him and fled (v.56). Let's just make that clear here.
- And then let's think about the fact that Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss. This wasn't a weird thing – it's how disciples greeted their rabbis in those days. But it was still a betrayal. Judas brought the enemies of Jesus right to him and gave him away. Now, it's beside my point, but don't forget, this was all playing into God's plan and it only happened because God the Father and God the Son allowed it to happen. But Judas didn't know that. He only knew his own selfish designs. And so, he betrayed Jesus with a kiss. Michael Card put this into powerful poetic form in his song *Why?*

Why did it have to be a friend?

Who chose to betray the Lord?

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

- They hauled Jesus off to the kangaroo court and there they convicted him of blasphemy.
- Peter, as predicted, denied that he knew Jesus. As predicted he denied him three times and each time more vehement and profane than the previous one. And then when he saw the convicted Jesus, bound over for a meeting with Pilate, *he went out and wept bitterly.* Matthew 26:75. Remember that.
- All the while things are not going as Judas had hoped. (Read Matthew 27:1-10)
- FB Meyer writes, "*Judas apparently watched the scene from afar. It may be that he was stricken with horror when our Lord did not exert his mighty power in self-deliverance. The only expedient that occurred to the traitor as practicable was to attest the Lord's innocence. What a tribute that was to the absolute purity and beauty of the life which he had known for so long in the closest intimacy! If there had been a flaw he would have caught it as justifying his deed but there was none. The money burnt his hands and rang on the marble floor. Who can estimate the despair, the horror, the blackness of darkness that drove him to suicide's fate? Note how punctilious these false priests were, it is certain that even after this, if he had repented he would have been forgiven. But despair has seized him. He went to his own place! Each of us is making a place for himself and is going to it.*"
- It was waaaaay too little and waaaaay too late. The deed was done. Peter wept bitterly and eventually was restored and rebooted by Jesus. His repentance was real. Judas did no such thing. Instead of throwing himself on God's mercy he took matters into his own hands AGAIN and ended any chance for restoration. Suzanne de Dietrich writes of Judas, "*The remorse of Judas is outside of the presence of God; his end*

reveals this, for his remorse does not lead him to repentance but to despair. Judas takes his own life. Thus Matthew shows us that he who rejects proffered grace destroys himself.”

- Sean McDowell points out the simple fact that *“Peter denies Jesus three times, and Judas betrays him. Peter went out and wept bitterly, Judas went out and killed himself.”* He goes on to point out that *“Peter’s impulsive denial of Jesus is undoubtedly more severe than Judas’s premeditated betrayal. Yet remember, Jesus had earlier said, “Whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 10:33). Both Peter and Judas had betrayed trust, which is considered one of the most heinous offenses in antiquity.”*
- Here’s my point . . .

God could have and would have rebooted Judas

- But Judas did things his own way. When you do things your own way and leave God out of the equation, the result is disastrous and maybe even eternally so. That seems to be exactly what occurred with Judas.
- Judas wasn’t killed by God, he killed himself. Judas didn’t have to die and suffer eternal damnation – he damned himself. God doesn’t damn people to hell – they do it very much on their own. McDowell puts it this way, *“The sin of Judas was great. He had seen the miracles of Jesus and heard his teachings, and still betrays him for money. And yet Jesus would have restored him.”* But Judas never gave him the chance. Peter did and he was restored.

Conclusion: In his syndicated column back on May 23, 2003, Billy Graham responded to a question from a reader identified only as F. B.. Here’s the interchange:

DEAR DR. GRAHAM: Do you think God forgave Judas for betraying Jesus? I got to thinking about this over Easter. Judas seems to have been sorry for what he did (from what I’ve read), and I know God is merciful, but I wonder just how far His forgiveness goes. -- F.B.

DEAR F.B.: No, Judas was not forgiven for his betrayal of Jesus -- and one reason is because he could not bring himself to repent of the sin he had committed.

You see, there’s a difference between feeling sorry over something we have done, and actually repenting of it. Judas knew he had done wrong, and when the full force of his terrible act hit him, the Bible says “he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins” to those who had paid him (Matthew 27:3). Although he admitted he had sinned, it was too late, and the Bible says he went out and killed himself.

What a tragedy! Judas had been with Jesus most of His ministry, hearing Him teach and seeing His miracles. And yet Judas never committed his life to Jesus, and lived only for himself. His story stands as a sober warning for all time, reminding us of the dangers of a superficial belief in Jesus. Jesus said of His disciples, “None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction” (John 17:12).

Don’t let anything keep you from an honest, wholehearted commitment to Christ. Even if you have been in church all your life, make sure your commitment is sincere. Yes, God’s grace and mercy can save even the worst sinner -- but only when we truly repent of our sins and trust Christ alone as our Lord and Savior.

That’s exactly right! Repentance is the only way to rebooting. Nothing you have done while you are still breathing and cognizant is beyond the redeeming power of God’s grace. Lori put it this way a while back in our online discussion – its grace over guilt. But you have to make yourself available for it. It’s the one thing we can do – no matter what our sin, God’s grace is greater. When we encounter Jesus, we encounter grace.

God will make a way when there seems to be no way – because his is the only way. Amen.