

## *The Beauty of Repent: Turn to Jesus*<sup>1</sup>

### Do Not Turn Away

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Introduction: Parenting can be risky business – kids not so angelic as we pray, seem eager to turn away from the Lord to the world and their friends. Love often spells pain.

Ministry is risky business – work for sermon prep...earnest prayer...heartfelt preaching...some seem to flip a switch when sermon starts...right to sleep before the preacher even has a chance. Counsel to Word and sacrament – cold hearts, your job. Instruct the youth – some turn off in the singing, turn on only to electronic games, turn away by Labor Day.

The rebellion of those we love makes it painfully obvious they are in no great hurry to get to heaven. Their coldness is a painful reminder that Eden is in the rearview mirror and it's still a long way to heaven.

Who of us has not felt the sting of betrayal by someone we loved? How much pain for Jesus when such a close friend and follower became His foe and a kiss meant death?

#### I. How did Judas come to such a state of betrayal? (vv.1-3a)

A. More than friends with Jesus – spiritual fellowship.

1. One of the Twelve disciples – sitting at feet of the Master Teacher, Preacher, asking questions
2. Picture Judas: preaching God's Word, cleansing lepers, healing sick, raising dead (Matthew 10)

B. Infamous picture of the man on a mission from Kirioth, now on a covert mission. (Matthew 26:47-50)

C. Judas went from raising the dead to betraying the Lord of life.

1. Did not wake up one morning and say, "Today I will betray the Son of God."
  - Serpent's head through a crack in the heart...slithering in, plenty of sin.

2. Point of departure: *greed*

✎ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1 Timothy 6:10 NIV84)

- Wandering away from faith, turning away from Jesus.

3. Real tragedy: Judas was warned

✎ "Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal." (Matthew 6:19f)

✎ "No one can serve two masters....You cannot serve both God and Money." (Matthew 6:24)

✎ ...the deceitfulness of wealth choke [the Word right out of the heart] (Matthew 13:22 NIV84)

✎ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (Mark 10:25 NIV84)

- Turned away from Jesus slowly, turned toward the shine of silver and the glitter of gold.

4. The nature of sin

- innocent at first – treasurer: "personal loan...I'll pay it back"

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- wealthy women with generous support for Jesus and disciples' ministry
- scolded Mary...no charity from *"a thief"* with his hand in the money bag (John 12:6)
- ☛ sin gets deliberate
  - easy money – Christ's enemies lined up to take Him out, willing to pay
  - discussed "business"...watched...carefully picked place...prearranged signal
- ☛ pay dearly – thirty pieces of silver: Got money, forfeited soul...penniless tonight in hell.

Transition: ~~"Poor Judas!"~~ → "God help us!" *"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"* (1 Corinthians 10:12 NIV84)

## II. Jesus rescues us from such a state of betrayal? (vv.3b-5)

- A. See how Scripture is littered and hell is bursting with examples of once-faithful Christians.
1. Turned away from Jesus to foreign wives, neighbor's wife, money, another gospel, sexual immorality instead of the bride of Christ
  2. "The road to hell leads straight through the doors of church."
- B. "I would NEVER fall away from / betray Jesus!" I pray so, but...once upon a time, Judas:
1. We've never stolen widows money, but don't like to hear what the Bible says about money.
  2. We love to hear Word, but so did every other member released for lack of Word & sacrament.
  3. "I won't betray Him; I'll just keep Him secret."
  4. Greed – "keeping up with the Joneses" – or – "...the Judases"?
- C. From God to greed, from Savior to silver, from disciple to unbeliever – an easy turn!
1. Sin unconfessed, premeditated sin, putting Jesus on the shelf, world first ~ toxic brew
  2. Judas turned to his guilty conscience instead of to his blessed Savior.
  3. Turned to corrupt priests as if any amount of money could unbuy his betrayal.
  4. Grabbed a noose instead of the lifeline of Christ's mercy.
- D. Instead of turning toward sin and self, turn to Jesus who turns to us in love!
1. With every word He ever spoke, every deed He ever did.
  2. Told lynch mob to let His disciples go.
  3. Called the kissing betrayer, "Friend..."
  4. Judge of living and dead, stood before petty judge with dirty hands.
  5. Feet that walked on water, walked up the dusty trail to death on Golgotha.
  6. Weapon in our hand-heart-mouth: *"Sword of the Spirit... Word of God"* (Matthew 4:1-11)
  7. *"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* (James 4:7)

Conclusion: Could Judas have been forgiven? Not "could have been." Judas already was forgiven:

- ☛ *"Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."* (Isaiah 1:18)
- ☛ *We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.* (Isaiah 53:6 NIV84)
- ☛ *If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.* (1 John 1:6f NIV84)

Like two other apostles, Peter and Paul, Judas would have made a living reminder of God's grace for the rest of his life on earth and forever in heaven. But He looked at himself and his sin – instead of focusing on his Savior.

Turn to Jesus; never turn away! Turn to Him – always toward Him. Never you; only Him! Amen.