

The Great Double Cross

by A.W. Tozer

The sermon 'The Great Double Cross' by A.W. Tozer explores the theme of betrayal and the consequences of seeking honor from the world at the expense of one's faith.

Duration: 32:19

Scripture: Matthew 27:1

Topics: "Cross of Christ", "Betrayal", "True Friendship in Christ"

Description

A.W. Tozer delivers a powerful sermon titled 'The Great Double Cross,' focusing on the betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot. He emphasizes the tragic irony of Judas's actions, driven not by hatred for Jesus but by a desire for money and popularity, ultimately leading to his own destruction. Tozer highlights the unseen influence of the devil in Judas's betrayal and warns against the modern-day betrayals of Christ that stem from similar ulterior motives. He contrasts Judas's fate with the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, urging listeners to recognize true friendship in Christ rather than in the fleeting approval of the world.

Transcript

My topic for this morning is the great double cross, and my text is found in Matthew 27. When the morning would come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. And when they had bound him and led him away and delivered him to Pontius Pilate, the governor, then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, that is, that Jesus was condemned, repented himself and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.

And they said, What is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasure because it is the price of blood.

And they took counsel and brought with them the potter's field to bury strangers in, for that field was called the field of blood unto this day. Now in this text we have described one of the most deeply emotional and significant moments in the history of the world. The most important nation in the world, for many reasons, was Israel.

And if you would challenge that, then I would read to you these words of Paul. What advantage then hath the Jew, or what profit is there in circumstances in much every way, chiefly because that unto them were

committed the oracles of God? And then he also says over here that who are Israelites to whom pertaineth the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the service of God and the promises, whose are the fathers and of whom is concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

Paul believes, as all the Old Testament indicates and as Bible teachers admit, that the most important nation in the world was Israel. And now at this moment of her greatest trial, when the one for whom she had been called into existence was standing on trial, and now this great and important nation, blind to the presence of the Messiah, alienated from her God by sin and unbelief, and allied with the greatest pagan empire in the world, allied for a purpose. She hated that empire, but she was allied with that empire for a purpose, to destroy a man.

A man who had done no evil, no harm, and had done only good all the days of his life. Now this quiet, meek, harmless man, this pure, clean, harmless man, stands before them and they join dirty hands with the pagan empire to destroy this man. And back of it all now, inciting and arousing and inflaming and provoking and instigating and urging on, there was the coming sinister and incredible wicked being we call the devil, unbelievably cruel I say he is, and with restrained cold ferocity.

He plagued nation against nation and man against man as a master on a chessboard. That old serpent, the devil, with his unbelievable cruelty, that one we call the serpent and the dragon, he was out to destroy this man, but he was unseen and unsuspected, and he was working to destroy the man, but along with the man the very nation, who was also trying to destroy the man, and unknown to them the very empire itself. That was the work of the devil, and in order to do it he had to have a man that he could use.

His cruel work of destruction required that he had a man, and so he searched for a tool, a vehicle, a victim that he could use, and he usually manages to find one. There is a frightening thing about human history when this wicked one, this shrewd, cunning, and all but infinitely wise and infinitely wicked being, sets out to destroy something or someone good. He can't come directly to it, so he has to work through a tool, and he usually finds a tool.

If Judas had only known that his treachery against Jesus was the suggestion of the devil, he would have recoiled in horror. He'd been brought up in the church, he'd been brought up among the Jews, he had heard the Torah read from his youth, and he had heard the songs of David sung as they mounted and sung the songs of ascent. On Passover days Judas was a religious man, but he had no idea that his treachery was not his own suggestion, but was the instigation of the devil, and that he was being used as a utensil by that devil to do something else, and then that he would be thrown cynically aside when his usefulness was ended.

I say if he had known that, the history of Judas and parts of the New Testament might have been different, but he didn't know that. That was part of the deception and the treachery that he never found out. It is part of the shrewd wisdom of that sinister dark spirit, that while we're being betrayed we don't know we're being betrayed.

So Judas betrays Christ with a kiss. Now here it seems to me adds something to all this, that Judas didn't hate Jesus. Nobody could have lived with Jesus three years and hated Jesus, and something of the way they lived in those days was indicated by the fact that when he told this empire with whom he was allied in black conspiracy to destroy Jesus, when he told them about the sign he said, the one whom I shall kiss.

Now kissing Jesus certainly was not an unpleasant thing, nor do I think it was an unusual thing. Jesus was 33 years old. He was the most perfect example of manhood since Adam.

His lips were clean, there was no smell of a foul habit upon him, and he never had uttered an unkind word in his life, and his beautiful lips had spoken only kind words of forgiveness and healing and pardon and deliverance. And there he stood in his beautiful manhood. I do not think that kissing Jesus would have been unpleasant, rather I think that it would have been the most pleasant thing.

And sure it was not unusual because John many times rested his head affectionately on Jesus' bosom. And there was nothing spiritually unusual about this kiss of Judas. He simply said, the one I shall go up and kiss.

Obviously it was not an unusual thing, I repeat. So Judas was not mad at our Lord and he didn't hate him. He betrayed him for two ulterior reasons.

He did not betray him because he said to himself, I want this Jesus to get what's coming to him. No. He betrayed him because he wanted to get financial gain and he wanted to secure public favor.

And my friends, those who betray Jesus today, I don't think there are many of them in civilized society that betray Jesus because they hate him. I do not think that. I think they betray him because there is an ulterior motive.

They want something that the treacherous betrayal will bring to them. That's all Judas wants. If Judas could have gotten the public favor of the empire and the money, he never would have betrayed Jesus.

He probably would have run, he was a coward, he would have slunk away like the rest of them did. But he had nothing against Jesus. He was just that pulled by his subsequent conduct.

When after he had seen them lead Jesus away, a wave of self-condemnation and warm affection for Jesus came over him, and he rushed boldly into the presence of the Pharisees and scribes and priests and said, Here, take this money back. I've been a fool. I've been a wicked man.

I've betrayed this innocent blood. That's the way it is. This innocent blood.

I've betrayed this innocent man. Why, there came over him in a wave of memory all the healings that he'd seen and the deliverances and all kind, pure words and the deep, friendly smiles and the pleasantnesses that they'd had together and the moments that he'd stopped to eat some simple meal beneath a tree or lain down in the mosque to sleep and wake the morning when they could go on their journey. So that Judas had nothing against Jesus.

He wasn't betraying him for that reason. He had two ulterior reasons, I repeat. He wanted money and he wanted to be popular.

And it is so today. People are betraying Jesus who have nothing against Jesus, who even will speak kindly about Jesus. There are people singing about Jesus on the radio now who have sold out, have walked out of church choirs, walked out of church choirs, who have been leading sopranos or tenor solos or basses and they've walked out of church choirs and sold themselves to the beer industry and are singing beer anthems now to sell beer to the public.

They have nothing against Jesus and in tender moments they speak and think kindly of Jesus. And their reason for betraying him is not that they hated him. They wanted money.

And there are people who betrayed Jesus because they wanted to be popular with their high school crowd. And they have nothing against him. And if anybody said anything against Jesus, they'd fight for him.

They'd stand up and say, Well, no, I'm not a Christian, I'm not very good, but I know better than that. They'd defend Jesus if it ever came to that. They have a kind appealing toward him, but they want to be popular with their crowd.

They want to stand well with the kids. They want to stand well with the business people with whom they work or in the office force where they work or the little group in their social circle. So they betrayed Jesus for popularity and to keep friends and keep from making enemies.

It looks like a pretty good motive. It looked like a pretty good motive to please the priests and the elders and the rest of them. It looked like a pretty good thing for Judas to be tolerant and want to get on the side of the religious people.

But it led Judas to betray Jesus with a treacherous kiss. An evil kiss. The vilest kiss that ever was given or received from the day that Cain kissed his brother and murdered him was the kiss Judas gave to Jesus.

And yet it was not because he hated Jesus. It was because there was something he wanted that was ulterior and not directly related. Something outside of Jesus that betraying Jesus would get him.

And there is our problem in the world today, and that's what's wrong today. People who become Christians and then slip away and go back to the world don't do it because they hate Jesus or found he wasn't what they thought he was. They apologize to their own hearts and pray and say these who go onto the air and sing for the devil.

They want the money and they want the popularity. But they're very happy if somebody, knowing the weakness of Christians and the weakness of the religious public generally, will sing a song about Jesus. They're glad to do it.

They solve their own conscience a little bit and say, well, I'm getting a little chance to witness. Witnessing nothing. They're getting a chance to throw a little kiss to Jesus while they sell him out and treacherously betray him.

If they had followed him and wanted to continue to follow him, they'd be back singing in that church choir and teaching a Sunday school class and attending missionary conventions, or they'd be out on the field, or they'd be in school, or they'd be supporting somebody that is. But they couldn't stand it. And so they're out there and they betrayed Jesus with a kiss.

My brother and sister, this is the cruel double cross. For when the man Judas had been overcome with self-accusation and felt so deeply condemned, he raced back with that money and said, here, take it, I've betrayed innocent blood. And they said to him, what is that to us? See thou to that.

And they tempted Jesus to betray Christ, and then they turned around and betrayed Judas. I say, there was the cruelest double cross in history. Out in the state of Ohio many years ago, I guess 25, I haven't

seen anything like it traveling through there since.

But a few years back, when automobiles were not as plentiful and the problems not as great as they are now, they had a practice there, obviously the Ohio Highway Commission had arranged it, that when anyone was killed on the highway at a crossing or on a curve or at a crossroads, they would put up a white cross to mark, no markings of just a white cross. And everybody knew, I'll have to slow down here, there's a cross, a man was killed here. I once saw a place where five crosses stood beside the highway.

Five people had died there. I guess they gave it up later as a bad job and quit. But the fear was that if a man driving along a little too fast or a little carelessly saw a white cross or two white crosses or three white crosses on the highway, he would say to himself suddenly, oh, this is terrible, this is a place where men die, and he'd take his foot off the accelerator and would slow down and thus save lives.

I suppose it did work, for I know it always sobered me when I saw white crosses on the way. Well, I tell you that on the high road of history, my brethren, there stand two black crosses where an apostle fell to mark the place where an apostle in a week hour sold and betrayed his own highest interest and betrayed his Savior with a kiss. It is the double cross, the two black crosses, and you can come down history from the day Cain murdered Abel, I say, to this present hour, and you will not find anything as cynically, cruelly, frighteningly terrible as the double cross that the Jews pulled on poor dumb Judas who had listened to his heart, which had listened to the devil, and he had made himself a utensil, a vehicle, a cheap, weak agent for stronger ones.

And he had pulled their chestnuts out of the fire, and when they no longer could use them, they said, What is that to us? What see thou to that? And turned their backs upon him. And I tell you, I have read considerable, in my time, considerable amounts of literature. I think I'm fairly familiar with the writings of Gegen Schiller in German, and I have read Aeschylus and Sophocles in Greek, and I have read Ovid, and I have read Plutarch, and I have read Dickens, and I have read Dostoevsky, the Russian, and Zola, and Victor Hugo, the Frenchman, and I have read Shakespeare and the rest of the English, those dramatists and novelists who know how to make things wonderful and terrible and present dramatically and colorfully the deeds of man on earth.

But I think I can say without any fear that I shall be successfully contradicted that nowhere in all the literature of all the geniuses of the world is there anything so drably, unqualifiedly, frighteningly terrible as these words, What is that to us? See thou to that. And we have the picture here of a little frightened man who for love of money and popularity had betrayed his Savior and treacherously sold his Redeemer to the murderers. Now this little frightened man, fated to exist forever and can never cease to be, will always have a memory and always will be able to recall his deed of shame.

And always, always he'll remember the double cross, always, and yet this little man can't escape. Earth and heaven are against him, and even his friends with whom he'd whispered and laughed before time. For don't think they managed to get Judas just by walking up in a businesslike proposition and asking him.

They cultivated him, they cultivated him behind Jesus' back. And these Jews, they stroked their silky beards and flung their phylacteries out to show how religious they were. And they cultivated Judas behind the back of the Savior.

And they laughed with him and no doubt invited him to lunch and were kind to him and patted his back and whispered to him. And they were friends, this little frightened man. And now they turn against him and say,

What is that to us? Who are you anyhow? Say thou to that.

And the stars in their courses he curses upon his frightened head. And he rushes out, puts a rope around his neck, and hangs himself. And the scripture tells us that poor foolish fool that he was, he couldn't even commit suicide with dignity.

His rope broke and he fell on the rocks from the precipice below and tore open his abdomen and disemboweled himself. As though the great wide heaven above were to say, the blackest double cross in history has got to have the messiest, most undignified, cheapest death in history. So there was a man who couldn't even commit suicide, make it stick.

And there he was, a vehicle, a utensil, a tool, an agent, and didn't know it till the last minute. He didn't know it, my brother. And so he went out, this man Judas, used by that incredibly wicked devil, that unbelievably cynical, cruel dragon, in order to destroy a man would ruin another man.

And that picture of the little dark man, why doesn't some artist paint it? I don't believe in painting pictures of Jesus, for nobody knows what Jesus looked like. But I could see how a man could paint a picture, and if I had the skill in my right hand to do it, I'd paint the picture of a little frightened man with the stars above looking down darkly upon him, and with the earth frightened as he ran, and with the very roof refusing to cooperate, and the sharp jagged rock below telling the story on the highway of the black double cross, where he betrayed his Savior and was betrayed in turn, a fool of his own lust and a victim of his own desires. That was Judas, and I think I could make a picture out of it.

Now, my friend, Judas has long gone to his own place, which is perdition, but the world and sin and the devil are still today betraying men. That was not once for all, that was but a sample dramatized for us, so to speak, but it's going on all the time, and the world will take a Christian. Remember, egged on, instigated by that cunning devil, incited and inflamed by the devil, the world will treat a Christian.

They will use him. They will stand in his way. They'll tear him down.

They'll lead him astray with professions of friendship and laughter and bravado and hospitality and back-slapping and jokes and flattery. They'll tear the young Christian down. They'll steer him away.

They'll shut up his testimony. They'll make him ashamed to pray when they eat in the restaurants. They'll make him ashamed to carry his New Testament, and he sneaks to church Sundays and hopes nobody will know that all week he was a coward and was betraying Jesus because he wanted to stand well with the people in the school.

The businessman will come to church and try to look pious on Sunday morning. He'll try to forget that all week long he kept as quiet as a mouse, lest his testimony offend somebody, or that he went along with a shady deal because he was a member of a partnership that was busy doing shady deals within the law. And so he kept his mouth shut and said it wasn't his fault and tried to soothe his conscience, but he's a vehicle.

He's being used as a utensil. And when he's old and rusted and battered and the devil can't use him anymore, he'll throw him cynically aside and say, what's that to me? You see the light. And in that black and awful hour when there appears the black double cross over the man's life who said he was a Christian who gave to missions and gave to the church and brought his family to Sunday school, but he's a coward and fearful in his daily living.

A young fellow who on the high school football team is ashamed not to do what the rest of them do and ashamed to let them know that he's a clean man. A girl with her crowd ashamed to testify and witness betraying Jesus to stay popular with the crowd. Oh, F.W.H. Meyer, that great English poet, in his great piece called St. Paul, he prays, makes St. Paul pray, God forbid that I should fall into the treason of seeking an honor which they gave not thee.

And yet there are those who today, even in Alliance churches, seek honor from the world that they never gave Jesus. And so they betray him, and the devil has the black double cross over their heads waiting for the end. And after they fall into a pit, the world turns its back and says, what have we got to do with that? See thou to that.

I say that not in all the literature, Shakespeare never thought of anything as tragic, as terrible, as cynically, bastardly cruel as this. That after they'd pulled a man into a pit, they could walk away rubbing their hands and say, we'll take this money and buy a pot of steel. We'll give it to the poor.

We'll, we'll, we'll cut the corners on this deal and keep a little, but we'll give two-tenths of it to the Lord. The Lord doesn't want your dirty two-tenths. The Lord will take a whole lot less and bless you for it, but he doesn't want a dirty two-tenths.

And he doesn't want anything that comes any way but a clean and a holy way. And yet businessmen and professional men and even preachers are willing to be used by Satan. What is that to us? See thou to that.

Let me say to you, and particularly you young people, no one is ever your friend who speaks lightly of your Savior. Nobody is ever your friend, no matter how warm and flattering and affectionate he or she may seem to be. They're not your friend if they speak lightly of your Savior.

They got their attitude and philosophy somewhere else. They got it from this cynically cruel old dragon who with his restrained cold hatred is out to destroy you and everyone that follows Jesus. No one is ever your friend who criticizes your church.

No one is ever your friend who invites you to sin. No one is ever your friend who laughs when you pray. Nobody is your friend who tells you off-color jokes.

Nobody is your friend, no one is your friend. They're utensils, they're tools, they're vehicles, they're instruments of Satan for your destruction. And the same Satan that used Judas and then betrayed him and left him to suicide in hell, that same Satan is out to get you.

He knows your name and your number. He knows more about you than you know about yourself. He knows where you live.

He knows you. And he's going to destroy you as he tried to destroy that good man whose kind, kind words had raised the dead and healed the sick and forgiven hearts. He was out to destroy them, and he did.

And he did. But I see another cross and over the highway where Judas traveled and where Judas died, I see standing the great double cross. But I see another cross, not black, not white, but red.

And on that cross I see your friend, your real friend. Judas was nobody's friend, and the world was not Judas' friend. And Rome was not Israel's friend, and Israel was not Judas' friend.

But the friend was the one who was betrayed, the man, the kind man that would be so easy to kill. That kind man, 33 years old, in perfect health, no anemia, no hardening of the arteries, no prostate difficulties, no fallen arches, no baldness, just nothing that men get, even good men get. So he was in perfect health.

He was God's lamb. And according to the Old Testament, the lamb had to be examined four days for defects. And if there were any defects found in it, it wasn't used.

Perfectly healthy lamb, so he was a perfectly healthy lamb. And they took that healthy, robust lamb to the cross and nailed him up there, not an anemic, bloodless creature to die easily, but a full-blooded man in the fullness of his young manhood whose veins ran hot and full with pure, rich blood. There is a fountain, wrote Cooper, filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

I say, beside the black crosses that mark the infamies of history, I see the red cross and the lamb dying, a lamb who isn't there on that cross now, but who did his work and said it's finished and went to the right hand of God, the Father Almighty, and who, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of God from hence waiting till his enemies be made his footstool. There is your friend. And there is the only real friend.

The person who tempts you to sin is your enemy, a tool of the devil, and not your friend. Your friend is yonder in the glory. Will you turn to your friend this morning, the only real friend? I'll be your friend, but I can't help you.

Maccarthy would be your friend. We have board members, we have godly people here, women and men, they'd help you, but they can't help you. What you need is a friend that goes beyond, and we can't go beyond with you.

We can only sing when you die and follow you out, and the undertaker can take three flowers and I can stand with my little book and say a story when he drops. That's all we can do with your friend. We'll be your friend, but we can't really be your friend because we haven't the power.

But there is a friend, and there he was on that red cross. The black cross stood alongside of the red cross. One marked the tragic eternal downfall of an apostle, and the other marked the glorious propitiation for the world.

Turn to Jesus while you may.

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