

Name Your Price

by Chuck Smith

The sermon explores the theme of the value of a soul and the consequences of selling out one's spiritual values for material gain.

Duration: 42:01

Scripture: Psalm 139:1-4, Isaiah 64:8, Zechariah 11:12-13, Matthew 16:21-28, Matthew 27:3-10, Romans 9:20-21

Topics: "Soul Value", "Redemption Price"

Description

This sermon delves into the betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot for 30 pieces of silver, highlighting the concept of 'seller's remorse' and the tragic consequences of selling out one's soul for worldly gains. It explores the value of our souls in comparison to temporary pleasures or gains, drawing parallels from biblical stories like Balaam and Absalom. The sermon emphasizes the redemption and salvation purchased through Jesus' sacrifice, despite being sold for a seemingly cheap price, and challenges listeners to consider what they are willing to exchange for their souls.

Transcript

For our scripture reading today, let's turn to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 16, and our scripture reading will be the latter portion of this 16th chapter. We will begin with verse 21, and we will go through the end of the chapter, Matthew 16, 21 to 28. I'll read the odd-numbered verses, we ask you to join in the reading of the even-numbered verses, and let's stand as we read the Word of God.

From that time forth began Jesus to show to his disciples how he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed and raised again the third day. But he turned and he said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art not an offense unto me, for thou savest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your Word, and Lord, we just pray that today as we turn to your Word and study your Word, that the Holy Spirit will give us clarity and understanding, guide us, Lord, into all truth, and bless, now we pray, Father, as we open our hearts to receive from you the engrafted Word by which we might be strengthened, by which we might be led and guided by your Spirit.

In Jesus' name, Father. Amen. You may be seated.

Well, we are just about to close out with the Old Testament. We'll finish Zechariah tonight. So, Zechariah chapters 8 on through to the end of the book tonight, and then next week, our Italian friend Malachi, or Malachi, whichever you prefer, and then we will move on into the New Testament.

So, finishing off in the Old Testament in a couple of weeks, starting then into the New Testament. This morning, we'd like to draw your attention to the 11th chapter of Zechariah, and verses 12 and 13. Here we read, And I said unto them, If you think good, give me my price, and if not, forbear.

So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver, and the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter, a goodly price, that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord. There is an experience that they call seller's remorse.

Now, you've heard of buyer's remorse, but there's also seller's remorse. You've sold something, but then later you think, You know, I could have gotten a lot more for that than what I sold it for. I shouldn't have let it go so cheap.

And you are sort of ruining the fact that you sold that particular possession. Or, maybe you find out, Oh, I could use that if I only had, Why did I sell it, you know? And you just realize that now you have a great need for it, and it was foolish to have sold it, because you can't replace it for what you got for it. And so you're thinking, I should have hung on to it.

Why didn't I hang on to it? As we read this particular prophecy that does refer to Judas Iscariot, selling Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, it seems that Judas, after he sold Jesus, was smitten by what you might call seller's remorse. He brought the money back to the priest, and he said, Take this money back. I have betrayed innocent blood.

Of course, they said to him, What's that to us? It's your problem. And so he threw the money down there in the temple, the Bible said, and he went out and he hung himself. Seller's remorse.

Actually, the fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah, where he tells us 500 years before the event ever took place, exactly what was going to happen, where Zechariah tells us that they said unto him, If you think good, give us my price, and if not, forbear. And so they weighed for my price 30 pieces of silver, and the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter, a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the 30 pieces of silver, cast it to the potter in the house of the Lord.

And we read the fulfillment of that prophecy in Matthew 16, 14. Then one of the 12 called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priest and said unto him, What will you give me? And I will deliver him unto you. And they covenanted with him for 30 pieces of silver.

And from that time on, he sought opportunities of betraying Jesus. And then in Matthew 27, beginning with verse 3, Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, he repented, and brought again the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priest and the elders, saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? It's your problem.

And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and he departed, and he went out and hanged himself. And the chief priest took the silver pieces and said, It's not lawful for us to put it into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And so they took counsel, and they bought with them the potter's field to

bury strangers in, wherefore the field was called the field of blood unto this day.

Thirty pieces of silver. What a cheap price to sell your soul for. For basically, rather than selling Jesus, Judas was selling out himself.

His relationship with the Lord. He had been a disciple of Christ. He had been one of the followers of Christ.

But now he's giving that up. He's selling out. He's selling out Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.

Selling out his relationship with Jesus. It didn't take him long to realize how foolish he had been. Tried to undo the transaction, went back to the high priest, tried to give the money back and rescind the deal, but couldn't do it.

And thus he threw the money down there in the temple, went out and hanged himself. He just couldn't stand to think about how foolish he was in selling out his Lord for 30 pieces of silver. Jesus asked an interesting question.

What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Judas exchanged his soul for 30 pieces of silver. But that brings up the question. What are you willing to sell your soul for today? Many people are willing to sell their souls for much less than Judas received for his.

Some sell their souls for foolish pride. They will not accept Jesus as their Lord for fear of what someone might say about them if the word gets out that they were Christians now. They're afraid that word would get out that John has got religion and they just don't want to face that embarrassment of people, you know, making fun of their getting a experience with Jesus Christ.

And so they are willing to sell out and not have that experience with Jesus just in order to maintain their pride. Some sell their souls for a moment of illicit pleasure. Others are selling their souls for dishonest gain.

It's tragic how foolish people can be sometimes as far as value is concerned. And they take something that is of great value and they sell it cheap. We read of the early people who came from Europe to America how that they started trading with the Indians.

For the Indians here had gold and silver that they had mined out of the land and these Europeans were taking advantage of the Indians who loved the sparkle of the glass beads. And so they were trading glass beads, worthless glass beads almost, for the gold and the silver that the Indians had. And you think, well, it was too bad that they were so ignorant of the value of the gold and the silver that they would sell it so cheap, just glass beads, exchange it for glass beads.

30 pieces of silver. That was the price that a man would have to give if his ox gored a slave. If you, say, in those Bible days, had an ox and your neighbor had slaves and your ox gored one of his slaves that he died, you would have to compensate him for the dead gored slave.

30 pieces of silver. No wonder the prophet said, a good price I was prized at by them. Can you imagine betraying Jesus for 30 pieces of silver? It's interesting, Satan was probably gloating over that deal, thinking that he had really made a great deal, just this dumb disciple of Jesus, Judas Iscariot, selling him for 30 pieces of silver.

And through, of course, exposing where they can find Jesus in order that they might crucify him, put him to death, he sold out his lord for 30 pieces of silver. But ultimately, you realize that those 30 pieces of silver that he sold Jesus for actually purchased our salvation for Jesus in his death, actually redeemed us from our sin. So the Bible said we are redeemed, not with corruptible things like silver and gold from that empty life that we once had, but with the precious blood of Jesus who was slain as a lamb without spot or without blemish.

30 pieces of silver. The death of Jesus ultimately freed millions of people from Satan's control, from the bondage of sin, and as the people would come to know Jesus as their personal lord and savior. And so here we are today, so many of us redeemed by the blood of Jesus, the price that he was sold for, but it purchased our redemption through his death.

His price was sufficient to cover the sin of all mankind. The price to redeem me from the power of sin has been paid in full. All my inequities on him were laid when Jesus was nailed to the tree.

Jesus, the debt of my sin fully paid, he paid the ransom for me. Consider this. Judas agreed to sell Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, the price of a gourd soy, but he was never able to enjoy the fruit of his wickedness.

That is, he wasn't able to spend the 30 pieces of silver that he received. He tried to give it back, realizing his folly, and just ultimately threw it at their feet and went out and hung himself. It is true that for many, people are willing to sell Jesus for just so cheap, and they are not satisfied with the things that they receive in exchange for Christ in their lives, and whatever you have exchanged for not having Christ in your life will ultimately become very distasteful to you.

A relationship or a possession or whatever it is, it would make to me an interesting survey question. What did you exchange Jesus for? And then the second question, was it worth it? Jesus asked a couple of thought-provoking questions in Matthew 16, 26. What shall a man be profited if he should gain the whole world but lose his own soul? Basically, he is suggesting that your soul is worth more than this whole world.

Don't sell cheap. What shall a man give, the second question, in exchange for his soul? And this is the thing that puzzles me. The trite little worthless things that a man is willing to accept in exchange for his eternal soul, for his relationship with God made possible through Jesus Christ.

Many years ago, when we were pastoring a church in Tucson, Arizona, our second church, we had a young fellow in our church, and his mother came to church on occasion, and his father was the manager of a Safeway store in South Tucson. It was one of the most successful Safeway stores in the United States. And his dad sat down with me one day and said, Chuck, I would like to come to your church.

I would like to be a Christian. I would like to, you know, fellowship with you at the church. But he said, the job that I have is extremely stressful.

And when I get home in the evening, he said, I just open up a couple of cans of beer, and I just enjoy the beer. It relaxes me and all. And I would love to, you know, be a Christian.

I would love to serve the Lord at your church, but I just can't give up my two cans of beer because I need the relaxation that it gives to me when I get home in the evening. In other words, he is saying, you know, I'll exchange my salvation and my hope of eternal life for a couple of cans of beer. And I think, you know, how foolish.

How foolish. I thought, well, I'll call the guy. I'll call his bluff, sort of.

I said, Eddie, who said that you can't have a couple of cans of beer in the evening? Who told you that? I said, you can have all of the beer you want. You know, and of course, he just didn't want to hear that. But I figured, you know, if you accept Christ, you're not going to want it anyhow, so you have all you want, but you won't want it.

If you really, you know, have a real relationship with the Lord, you won't be looking for that to give you, you know, relaxation or whatever it's doing for you. The prophet Balaam in the Old Testament was willing to sell his soul for the riches that were offered to him by King Balak. When the children of Israel were passing through the land of Edom, the king of Edom, Balak, sent to this prophet, whose name was Balaam, who had a reputation of being able to cast curses on people.

And so he was wanting Balaam to come and to curse these people that were coming through his land. And so he sent these emissaries to Balaam, and he sent them with treasure from the kingdom there. And so they came to the prophet, and they offered him, you know, to... here's the money the king wants you to come and curse these people.

The prophet said, well, let me just seek the Lord on this, spend the night here, and in the morning I'll give you an answer. And in the morning, or in the night actually, the Lord spoke to him and said, you're not to go with them, you're not to curse these people, they are my people. And so in the morning, the prophet said to these men from King Balak, tell your king I'm sorry I can't come, I can't curse these people, they are God's people.

There is no curse or enchantment that I can develop against them. And so they came back to King Balak, and they said the prophet wouldn't come. He said that there's no enchantment that he can make against these people, they're God's people.

King Balak said, I just didn't offer him enough money. Go back to the prophet and tell him, I'll double the money that I've offered to him, just come and curse these people for me. So as they came back to the prophet, and offered him now the amount that the king was now suggesting that he would give to him, he said, well just let me pray about this again.

I think his prayer was a little different this time. You know, this promise of all of this wealth, I think that he was really saying, Lord, please, you know, you've got to let me go. Lord, please, you know, please, and just really pressing the Lord.

And the Lord finally said, well, go, but don't say any more than what I've put in your mouth. Be careful you don't go beyond my word. And so they came back, and he went to see the king, and with this, go, but don't go beyond my word.

When he got to the king, the king took him to look over the children of Israel, their encampments, and as he began to prophesy, he prophesied blessings upon them. Finally, the king was so upset, he was clapping his hands, and he said, I paid you to curse them, and you're just blessing them. He said, if you can't say something bad, don't say anything.

You know, just keep your mouth shut, you know, if you can't really say something evil about them. And so the king said, I was going to make you a rich man, but your God has kept you from the riches. But the prophet just was upset for the loss of the prophet that was promised to him by the king, and he said, well, I

told you, king, that I could not, you know, go beyond the word of God with these people, but I'll tell you what.

Though I can't bring a curse upon them, I can tell you how you can bring a curse upon them. Send your young girls out and let them flirt with the young guys and get them into their tents and begin to have illicit relationships with them because their God is a holy God, and if you can entice them into these practices, their God will begin to curse them. And so the king followed the advice of Balaam, the counsel of Balaam, and they sent out the young girls who flirted and got the guys all excited, got them in the tents, and as they were having their illicit relationships, the wrath of God came upon the camp of Israel and the men began to die and, you know, brought the curse on the people.

But, again, the interesting thing with this prophet is that he wasn't able, the king paid him the money, but he wasn't able to spend it. In a subsequent battle, he was killed along with many others, and thus, again, the wages that he got for his sinful activity was something he wasn't able to really enjoy himself. We do read another interesting story out of the Old Testament, and that was in the family of David, his one son, Absalom.

And, you know, David had many wives and sons by the different wives, and so a lot of the children of David were just half-brothers and half-sisters. And Absalom had a sister whose name was Tamar, and she was a very beautiful young girl. And Amnon, a son of David by another wife, thus a stepbrother or half-brother to Absalom and to Tamar, was madly in love with Tamar.

In fact, he was so desirous for her that he actually became sort of sick, lovesick. And so one of his friends came in and said to him, you know, what's your problem? You look so sick and all. And it's a cousin of his, a smart, wicked kid.

But anyhow, he said, oh, I'm just so much in love with Tamar, I just can't stand it. I just want so desperately to have her. And so his cousin said, well, I'll tell you what, just pretend like you're really sick in bed, and when they come to take care of you, just groan and just say, you know, I just need for Tamar to feed me, you know, some food.

And so they made arrangements to send his half-sister Tamar in to prepare some food before him and to feed it to him. And as she had prepared it and was ready to feed it to him, he ordered the servants all out of the house, and he grabbed hold of her and said, you know, I want to lie with you. And she said, well, don't do this sin.

And she begged him not to force the issue but to seek permission. She said, maybe David will allow me to marry you, but don't do this evil wickedness before the Lord. But he wouldn't listen to her, and he raped her.

And after he had raped her, then he loathed her. He couldn't stand her, and he ordered her out of his house. And she said, you know, now that you've done this and you're ordering me out, you know, and, you know, that's worse than what you did in raping me.

But he wouldn't listen and ordered her to leave the house and ordered the servants to put her out and lock the doors against her. And so, you know, it was a thing that he thought he wanted it so desperately, but when he got it, it was something that it was distasteful to him. You've got to be careful about fantasizing about things.

A lot of times when you are fantasizing about how exciting or wonderful a certain experience might be, if you have to go to illegal means to accomplish that purpose and all, many times you'll find that when you obtain it, it will be something that will not be pleasant or meaningful to you, but it will be something that will actually cause you to just be upset over it. And such was the case with the son of David who had raped his sister, thinking that, you know, that was really the thing that would really satisfy him more than anything else. So, this prophecy that we have here in Zechariah concerning the Lord is an interesting twist in this prophecy in that when Judas brought the money back to give it back to the priests, they then became very sanctimonious and they said, well, the law says we shouldn't put it back in the treasury, so what can we do with this money? And it's interesting, these guys are willing to purchase the whereabouts of Jesus in order that they might put an innocent man to death, and yet they're concerned now because they might violate one of the little traditions that money that has been used to buy blood should not be brought into the house of God.

Interesting to me that they were not concerned with that greater evil of putting an innocent man to death, but were very particular about what should be done with the money that had been returned to them, that they might not violate the tradition of the people. And so their decision was to buy a potter's field that they might bury the strangers in it. Next to the potter's houses in those days, there was always this field or this lot that was next to his house where when he would be firing the vessels that he had made and had shaped and were firing them, if they would say crack and all during the firing, and they would then be worthless and he would just toss them out into this field and it would be covered with pottery shards and all of these pieces of broken pottery that didn't withstand the firing process when he was making the vessel.

So I think there's a beautiful picture here too. In the Bible, a vessel made by the potter often was likened to the power that God has over our lives, of making of us a vessel that pleases him. The Bible says that we are like a piece of clay in the potter's hand, and God has that power to make of this lump of clay whatever vessel he wants.

But oftentimes the vessels are marred in the hands of the potter. If there is a lump in the clay, if it hasn't been kneaded fully enough and there is a lump in it, it will cause the vessel to be marred in the hands of the potter. And many times they will start over again if they haven't fired it and they will knead it some more, get all of the lumps out, and then make a vessel as pleased as the potter.

But again, so often it was in the firing process that the defect was found and the vessel was cracked and it had to be thrown into the potter's field where it would just... Well, the field became worthless because so much pottery shards were in it that you couldn't use it for anything. And so they, with this, cast it to the potter. And, of course, it became a place of... Usually it became sort of a cemetery, a place of burying the dead because you couldn't cultivate the land with all of the pottery pieces in it.

So as Isaiah said, Lord, you are our father, we are the clay, you are our potter, and we all are the work of your hand. Paul said to the Romans, Who are you to challenge God? Shall the thing that is formed say to him that formed it, Why have you made me like this? Does not the potter have power over the clay from the same lump to make one vessel to honor and another to dishonor? I find it fascinating to realize that the money that was given to Judas to betray Jesus was used to buy a broken, worthless field of the potter, but yet to make something of use out of it. And so it's interesting how the Lord can take something that has very little worth or value and make something of value of it, something beautiful, something good.

All my confusion he understood. All I had to offer him was brokenness and strife, but he made something beautiful out of my life. So the story of the potter and the working on the clay and the likening unto us as in his hands.

But this interesting prophecy cast it to the potter, a goodly price I was prized at of them. How can you rationalize that this prophecy concerning Jesus was made 500 years before he actually came on the scene? Now if you today decided you wanted to be a prophet and you were going to tell us things that are going to happen in the future and you would say, well, you know, 500 years from now this is what it's going to be like. You know, what chance would you have of accuracy as far as foretelling the future of 500 years from now, things that would be transpired? How do you know that the world would even be here in 500 years? The rate it's going today, you know, there's a real question to that.

Will we exist that long? But here they are telling 500 years in advance and 500 years later just as they prophesied so did it happen. God knows the end from the beginning and he knows the issues of our life and that's the thing that amazes me and thrills me that God knows what's going to be happening in my life in the future and he doesn't really give me advance notice it just, you know, you take things as they come but it's interesting to know that our lives are bound up in his hands and he knows all about our futures. Father, thank you for your love for us.

Thank you for your concern. Thank you Lord that you know all about us and knowing us so completely you still love us. You love us so supremely that you were willing to allow your son to be sold for 30 pieces of silver to be placed upon the cross that through his death he might purchase for us eternal life.

Lord, we thank you for that gift of eternal life that is ours through Jesus Christ today. Lord, for those that are here that have not yet accepted that gift for those that are here who are still hanging on to the paltry trinkets of the world and will not let them go because of their desire just to hang on to the world the worthless things of the world Father, we pray that this might be the day that they would let go of the worldly things and receive that eternal glory that you have for them through Jesus Christ, our Lord. We ask this, Father, in his name.

Amen. Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front and they're here to pray for you that might like to this day find your true value. By surrendering your life to Jesus Christ and coming into a real relationship with the Lord.

So we would encourage you as soon as we're dismissed make your way on forward and they will be here to pray with you to pray for you to help you to come to a real understanding of what Jesus has done for us in redeeming us from our sin paying the price to set us free from the powers of darkness and so may you just experience this day that work of God in your life and may you go forth in his strength and in his victory enjoying the work of God in you bringing you eternal life the hope of salvation it's all there for you today. The Lord bless thee and keep thee the Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee and be gracious unto thee the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace. God bless you.

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