

And Judas Iscariot

by J. Wilbur Chapman

The story of Judas Iscariot serves as a warning to others of the dangers of hypocrisy and the consequences of sin, and illustrates the importance of regeneration for true change.

Scripture: Matthew 7:21, Matthew 26:14, Matthew 26:47, Matthew 27:3, Mark 3:19, Luke 22:3-47, John 13:18, Acts 1:18, Acts 1:23, 1 Corinthians 9:27, Galatians 6:7

Topics: "Biblical Betrayal", "True Repentance"

Description

J. Wilbur Chapman preaches about the tragic story of Judas Iscariot, highlighting his heartless betrayal of Jesus, rejection of grace, and dreadful end. Chapman draws lessons from Judas' life, emphasizing the importance of true repentance, the danger of hypocrisy, the slow but sure progression of sin, and the need for genuine transformation through regeneration. He contrasts Judas' fate with the possibility of redemption if one humbly seeks forgiveness and mercy from Jesus, illustrating the tragic consequences of rejecting God's grace.

Transcript

TEXT: "And Judas Iscariot."--Mark 3:19.

There is something about the name of this miserable man which commands our attention at once. There is a sort of fascination about his wickedness, and when we read his story it is difficult to give it up until we have come to its awful end. It is rather significant, it would seem to me, that his name should come last in the list of the Apostles, and the text, "And Judas Iscariot," would suggest to me not only that his name was last, but that it was there for some special reason, as I am sure we shall find out that it was. It is also significant that the first name mentioned in the list of the Apostles in this third chapter of Mark was Simon, who was surnamed Peter.

The first mentioned Apostle denied Jesus with an oath, the one last referred to sold him for thirty pieces of silver and has gone into eternity with the awful sin of murder charged against him. The difference between the two is this: their sins were almost equally great, but the first repented and the grace of God had its perfect work in him and he was the object of Christ's forgiveness; the second was filled with remorse without repentance and grace was rejected. The first became one of the mightiest preachers in the world's history; the second fills us with horror whenever we read the story of his awful crime.

Different names affect us differently. One could not well think of John without being impressed with the power of love; nor could one consider Paul without being impressed first of all with his zeal and then with his learning. Certainly one could not study Peter without saying that his strongest characteristic was his enthusiasm. It is helpful to know that the Spirit of God working with one who was a giant intellectually and with one who was profane and ignorant accomplished practically the same results, making them both, Paul and Peter, mighty men whose ministry has made the world richer and better in every way. But to think of Judas is always to shudder.

There is a kindred text in this same Gospel of Mark, but the emotions it stirs are entirely different. The second text is, "And Peter." The crucifixion is over, the Savior is in the tomb, poor Peter, a broken-hearted man, is wandering through the streets of the City of the King. He is at last driven to the company of the disciples, when suddenly there rushes in upon them the woman who had been at the tomb, and she exclaims, "He is risen, has gone over into Galilee and wants his disciples to meet him." This was the angel's message to her. All the disciples must have hurried to the door that they might hasten to see their risen Lord--all save Peter. And then came the pathetic and thrilling text, for the woman gave the message as Jesus gave it to the angels and they to her, "Go tell his disciples--and Peter."

But this text, "And Judas Iscariot," brings to our recollection the story of a man who lost his opportunity to be good and great; the picture of one who was heartless in his betrayal, for within sight of the Garden of Gethsemane he saluted Jesus with a hypocritical kiss; the recollection of one in whose ears to-day in eternity there must be heard the clinking sound of the thirty pieces of silver; and the account of one who died a horrible death, all because sin had its way with him and the grace of God was rejected.

The scene connected with his calling is significant. Mark tells us in the third chapter of his Gospel that when Jesus saw the man with the withered hand and healed him, he went out by the seaside and then upon the mountain, and there called his Apostles round about him, gave them their commission and sent them forth to do his bidding.

In Matthew the ninth chapter and the thirty-sixth to the thirty-eighth verses, we are told that when he saw the multitudes he was moved with compassion, and he commissioned the twelve and sent them forth that they might serve as shepherds to the people who appeared to be shepherdless. "Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." And then he sent the twelve forth. As a matter of fact the Scriptures concerning Judas are not so very full, but there is a good outline, and if one but takes the points presented and allows his imagination to work in the least, there is a story which is thrilling in its awfulness.

The four Evangelists tell us of his call, and these are practically identical in their statement except concerning his names. Matthew and Mark call him the Betrayer; Luke speaks of him as a Traitor, while John calls him a Devil. The next thing we learn concerning him is his rebuke of the woman who came to render her service to Jesus as a proof of her affection. In John the twelfth chapter, the fourth to the sixth verse, we read, "Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein."

Next we hear of him bargaining with the enemies of Jesus for his betrayal. The account is very full in Matthew, the twenty-sixth chapter the fourteenth to the sixteenth verse. "Then one of the twelve called

Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him."

Then we are told of his delivering Jesus into the hands of his enemies, in Matthew, the twenty-sixth chapter, the forty-seventh to the forty-ninth verses: "And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude, with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed him." And then finally comes his dreadful end, the account of his remorse in Matthew, the twenty-seventh chapter, the third and the fourth verses. "Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he 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 the statement of his suicide in Matthew, the twenty-seventh chapter, the fifth verse, "And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself."

I

The natural question that comes to every student of the life of Judas must be, "Why was he chosen?" but as Joseph Parker has said, "We may well ask why were we chosen ourselves, knowing our hearts as we do and appreciating our weakness as we must." It has been said that if we study the Apostles we will find them representatives of all kinds of human nature, which would go to show that if we but yield ourselves to God, whatever we may be naturally, he can use us for his glory. It was here that Judas failed. I have heard it said that Jesus did not know Judas' real character and that he was surprised when Judas turned out to be the disciple that he was; but let us have none of this spirit in the consideration of Jesus Christ. Let no man in these days limit Jesus' knowledge, for he is omniscient and knoweth all things. Let us not forget what he said himself concerning Judas in John the thirteenth chapter and the eighteenth verse, "I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." Again, in the sixth chapter and the seventieth verse, "Jesus answered them. Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" and finally, in the sixth chapter and the sixty-fourth verse, "But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him."

There were others who might have been chosen in his stead. The Apostles found two when in their haste they determined to fill the vacancy made by his betrayal. Acts 1:23-26, "And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."

It seems to me that there can be no reason for his having been called of Christ except that he was to serve as a great warning to those of us who have lived since his day. There are many such warnings in the Scriptures.

Jonah was one. God said to him, "Go to Nineveh," and yet, with the spirit of rebellion, he attempted to sail to Tarshish and we know his miserable failure. Let it never be forgotten that if Nineveh is God's choice for you, you can make no other port in safety. The sea will be against you, the wind against you. It is hard

indeed to struggle against God.

Jacob was a warning. Deceiving his own father, his sons in turn deceived him. May we never forget the Scripture which declares, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

Esau was a warning. Coming in from the hunt one day, weary with his exertions, he detects the savory smell of the mess of pottage, and his crafty brother says, "I will give you this for your birthright," which was his right to be a priest in his household; a moment more and the birthright is gone; and in the New Testament we are told he sought it with tears and could find no place of repentance. But many a man has sold his right to be the priest of his household for less than a mess of pottage, and in a real sense it is true that things done cannot be undone.

Saul was a warning. He was commanded to put to death Agag and the flock, and he kept the best of all the flock and then lied to God's messenger when he said that the work had been done as he was commanded. He had no sooner said it than, behold, there was heard the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen. "Be sure your sin will find you out."

The New Testament has many warnings like these in the Old, but Judas surpasses them all. There is something about him that makes us shudder.

It is said that in Oberammergau, where the Passion Play is presented, the man taking the character of Judas is always avoided afterwards. He may have been ever so reputable a citizen, but he has been at least in action a Judas, and that is enough.

I was once a pastor at Schuylerville, N. Y., where on the Burgoyne surrender ground stands a celebrated monument. It is beautiful to look upon. On one side of it in a niche is General Schuyler, and on the other side, if I remember correctly, General Gates; on the third, in the same sort of a niche, another distinguished general is to be seen, but on the fourth the niche is vacant. When I asked the reason I was told that "It is the niche which might have been filled by Benedict Arnold had he not been a traitor."

The story of Judas is like this. He might have been all that God could have approved of; he is throughout eternity a murderer, and all because grace was rejected. Numerous lessons may be drawn from such a story. Certain things might be said concerning hypocrisy, for he was in the truest sense a hypocrite. Reference could be made to the fact that sin is small in its beginnings, sure in its progress, terrific in its ending, for at the beginning he was doubtless but an average man in sin, possibly not so different from the others; but he rejected the influence of Christ. Or, again, from such a character a thrilling story could be told of the end of transgressors, for hard as may be the way the end baffles description. Judas certainly tells us this.

II

However much of a warning Judas may be to people of the world, I am fully persuaded that there are four things which may be said concerning him.

First: He gives us a lesson as Christians. There were many names given him. In Matthew the tenth chapter and the fourth verse, and in Mark the third chapter and the nineteenth verse, we read that he was a betrayer; in Luke the sixth chapter and the sixteenth verse he was called a traitor; in John the sixth chapter and the seventieth verse he is spoken of as a devil, but in John the twelfth chapter and the sixth verse he is mentioned as a thief. To me however one of the best names that could be applied to him is

that which Paul feared might be given to him when he said, "Lest when I have preached to others I myself should be [literally] disapproved" (1 Corinthians 9:27). It is indeed a solemn thought, that if we are not right with God he will set us aside, for he cannot use us. I have in mind a minister, who once thrilled great numbers of people with his message. Under the power of his preaching hundreds of people came to Christ. There was possibly no one in the Church with a brighter future. To-day he is set aside, for God cannot use him. I have in mind a Sunday school superintendent, who used to be on every platform speaking for Christ, and then yielded to undue political influence of the worst sort, lost his vision of Christ and his power in speaking, and to-day is set aside. But of all the illustrations, I know of nothing which so stirs me as the story of Judas. He might have been true and faithful and he might have been with Christ to-day in glory; instead, he is in hell, a self-confessed murderer, with the clinking of the thirty pieces of silver to condemn him, and his awful conscience constantly to accuse him. It is indeed enough to make our faces pale to realize that, whatever we may be to-day in the service of God, we can be set aside in less than a week, and God will cease to use us if we have anything of the spirit of Judas.

Second: I learn also from Judas that environment is not enough for the unregenerate. It is folly to state that a poor lost sinner simply by changing his environment may have his nature changed. As John G. Woolley has said, "it is like a man with a stubborn horse saying, 'I will paint the outside of the barn a nice mild color to influence the horse within.'"

The well on my place in the country some years ago had in it poisoned water. It was an attractive well with a house built around about it, and the neighbors came to me to say that I must under no circumstances drink from it. What if I had said, "I will decorate the well house that I may change the water?" It would have been as nonsensical as to say, "I will change the environment of a man who is wicked by nature, and thereby make him good." Judas had lived close to Jesus, he had been with him on the mountain, walked with him by the sea, was frequently with him, I am sure, in Gethsemane, for we read in John the eighteenth chapter and the second verse, "And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples." He was also with him at the Supper. But after all this uplifting, heavenly influence of the Son of God he sold him for silver and betrayed him with a kiss. Nothing can answer for the sinner but regeneration. His case is hopeless without that.

Third: Hypocrisy is an awful thing. The text in Galatians is for all such. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." Those words in Matthew in connection with the sermon on the Mount are for such, when men in the great day shall say, "Have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out Devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" Jesus will say, "I never knew you." If we read the commission in Matthew the tenth chapter the fifth to the twentieth verses inclusive, we shall understand that these Apostles were sent forth to do a mighty work, and evidently they did it. Judas had that commission, and he may have fulfilled it in a sense, but he is lost to-day because he was a hypocrite. The disciples may not have known his true nature. In John the thirteenth chapter the twenty-first to the twenty-ninth verses we read, "When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is to whom I shall give a sop when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag,

that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or that he should give something to the poor." Which would seem to impress this thought upon us. Oh, may I say that it is a great sin to be untrue? The only time that Jesus is severe is not when sinners seek him out, nor when the woman taken in adultery is driven to him by those who would stone her with stones, nor with the thief on the Cross, but when he faces hypocrites; he can have no tenderness for them.

Fourth: I learn from Judas that sin is of slow progress. There may have been first just a natural ambition. He thought that the Kingdom of Jesus was to be a great temporal affair, and he desired to be a part of it. How many men to-day have wrecked their homes and all but lost their souls, because of unholy ambitions! It may be an ambition for your family as well as for yourself. Doubtless Jacob had such when he stopped at Shechem. The result of his tarrying was his heart-breaking experience with the worse than murder of his daughter. There are souls to-day in the lost world who were wrecked upon the rock of ambition.

Fifth: He was dishonest. It is a short journey from unholy ambition to dishonesty. The spirit of God Himself calls him a thief. But,

Sixth: Let it be known that while sin is of slow progress, it is exceedingly sure. In the twenty-second chapter of Luke and the third to the sixth verses we read that Satan entered into Judas. It seems to me as if up to that time he had rather hovered about him, tempting him with his insinuations, possibly causing him to slip and fall in occasional sins, but finally he has control and then betrayal, denial and murder are the results.

I looked the other day into the face of a man who said to me, "Do you know me?" and I told him I did not, and he said, "I used to be a Christian worker and influenced thousands to come to Christ. In an unguarded moment I determined to leave my ministry and to become rich. My haste for riches was but a snare. I found myself becoming unscrupulous in my business life and now I am wrecked, certainly for time--oh," said he, "can it be for eternity? I am separated from my wife and my children, whom I shall never see again." And rising in an agony he cried out as I have rarely heard a man cry, "God have mercy upon me! God have mercy upon me!"

III

There are but three things that I would like to say concerning Judas as I come to the end of my message.

The first is that he was heartless in the extreme. It was just after a touching scene recorded in Matthew the twenty-sixth chapter the seventh to the thirteenth verses, "There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." It was after this that Judas went to the enemies of Jesus and offered to sell him, and as if that were not enough, it was just after he had left Gethsemane, in Matthew the twenty-sixth chapter the forty-fifth to the forty-ninth verses, that he betrayed him with his kiss. "Then cometh he to his disciples and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest; behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me. And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a

great multitude, with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed him." The blood drops had just been rolling down the cheeks of the Master, for he sweat, as it were, great drops of blood; and I can quite understand how upon the very lips of Judas the condemning blood may have left its mark. But do not condemn him; he is scarcely more heartless than the man who to-day rejects him after all his gracious ministry, his sacrificial death and his mediatorial work of nineteen hundred years.

Second: His death was awful. Acts 1:18, "Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out." I can imagine him going out to the place where he is to end it all, remembering as he walked how Jesus had looked at him, recalling, doubtless, some of his spoken messages, and certainly remembering how once he had been with him in all his unfaithful ministry. All this must have swept before him like a great panorama, and with the vision of his betrayed Master still before him he swings himself out into the eternity; and then as if to make the end more terrible the rope broke and his body burst and his very bowels gushed forth. Oh, if it be true that the way of the transgressor is hard, in the name of God what shall we say of the end?

Third: I would like to imagine another picture. What if instead of going out to the scene of his disgraceful death he had waited until after Jesus had risen? What if he had tarried behind some one of those great trees near the city along the way which he should walk, or, possibly on the Emmaus way? What if he had hidden behind some great rock and simply waited? While it is true that he must have trembled as he waited, what if after it all he had simply thrown himself on the mercy of Jesus and had said to him, "Master, I have from the first been untrue; for thirty pieces of silver I sold thee and with these lips I betrayed thee with a kiss; but Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me"? There would have been written in the New Testament Scriptures the most beautiful story that the inspired book contains. Nothing could have been so wonderful as the spirit of him who is able to save to the uttermost, and who never turned away from any seeking sinner, and he would, I am sure, have taken Judas in his very arms; he, too, might have given him a kiss, not of betrayal, but of the sign of his complete forgiveness, and Judas might have shone to-day in the city of God as shines Joseph of Arimathaea, Paul the Apostle, Peter the Preacher.

The saddest story I know is the story of Judas, for it is the account of a man who resisted the grace of God and must regret it through eternity.

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