

SERMON NOTES

Dangerously

Sunday, January 10, 2021

OPENING: Matthew 16:25 (CEV)– *“If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.”* (I encourage you to look at and read various different versions of scripture. It’s a nice way to understand some of the things the bible teaches us.) This is one of the most misunderstood scriptures. It talks about hanging on to your life you’re going to lose it by putting your efforts there, but if you give it up, you’re going to save it. Well, that just doesn’t make a lot of sense sometimes.

For many of us, we feel that the disciples and others who were with Jesus almost have an unfair advantage over you and I today. Because they were there to witness what Jesus did, they were there to hear the stories and comments. They were there to witness all of the things that Jesus did. You and I from today’s perspective, we can look at that and say if I had been there with Jesus, to see and experience all these things, it would be easier for me to trust in Him today. After all, look at the tremendous faith that was developed in the disciples! Every one of them died for their faith in Jesus. Certainly, all of them had a strong, strong faith. . .

I. **Well, almost. What about Judas?**

- a. The life of Judas Iscariot is mentioned twenty-two times in the Bible
- b. Who was he?
- c. What did Christ have to say about him?
- d. Did he repent after betraying Jesus just like Peter had a change of heart after he denied the Lord three times?
- e. How did Judas die?

II. **Judas Is . . .**

- a. Biblical history’s most unfortunate and tragic biblical figure
- b. He a very tough way to go because he became a pawn in Satan’s war against God
- c. There’s an old tradition, a historical one, not a biblical one, that says from childhood, he and Jesus had been friends, or they had some knowledge of one another prior to following Jesus in his ministry
- d. Christ continually had to pull him out of trouble
- e. Although this tradition may not be quite true, it is logical that the two were more than mere acquaintances

III. **Regarding the Life of Judas**

- a. While scripture is silent regarding the life of Judas before he became a disciple, it does tell us a few things about him during the ministry of Jesus
 - i. He was one of the twelve apostles
 - ii. His surname, Iscariot, is believed to mean “a man of murder”
 - iii. He was in charge of the group’s money
 - iv. He was a thief who regularly stole from them
 - v. He was a liar who was also deceitful and greedy
 - vi. He was called a traitor and was identified as the betrayer during the last Passover meal that Jesus celebrated in the Upper Room

- vii. He was prepared to pretend to honor Jesus, even though he was there for his own selfish purposes
- viii. Judas was referred to as a devil and a son of perdition
- ix. Jesus made a comment that “it would have been better if he were never born.”

IV. Super Interesting

- a. Christ not only knew he would be betrayed; he hand-picked his betrayer!
- b. Jesus stated, when he selected the twelve men who would follow him, *“Did I not choose you twelve, and one of you is a devil?”*

V. Judas Was Possessed

- a. We know from scripture that Judas was possessed at one point during the Passover meal that Satan entered into Judas, and Jesus told him to go and do what you’ve got to do and do it quickly
- b. The price paid for his betrayal was thirty pieces of silver
- c. In the aftermath, this left Judas felt so bad after betraying Jesus, that he tried, unsuccessfully, to return the bribe money paid to him
- d. His self-hate continued to grow, even after he gave the money back
- e. We know that Judas continued to feel remorse for his actions, he knew he had sinned, he knew he had betrayed Jesus
- f. His sorrow did not change his heart, he didn’t experience true repentance
- g. Kind of like Peter did, remember when Peter denied Jesus three times and Jesus ended up restoring Peter
- h. Judas didn’t have that, he didn’t have a change of heart.
- i. He just simply felt bad about what he did and then he committed suicide

VI. Judas as the Villain

- a. It’s easy for many of us to consider Judas as villain, or a maybe victim, but . .
- b. Judas was a follower of Jesus and a preacher of the gospel
- c. But there was a doublemindedness about him.
 - i. That’s what got him into trouble
- d. In the end, he abandoned the faith he started out with

VII. Three Noteworthy Things About Judas

- a. Focus and understand as we compare Judas and the apostle Paul\
- b. Commitment he made
 - i. Judas made a commitment to Jesus
 - ii. There’s no reason for us to think or believe that the original commitment of following Jesus in faith wasn’t a sincere thing that he did
 - iii. Like the rest of the disciples, Judas left everything in order to follow Jesus
 - iv. Judas was actively involved in the ministry of Jesus and the disciples
 - v. He was even given these remarkable spiritual gifts
 - vi. Luke tells us that Jesus “called the twelve together”, that included Judas and He “gave them power and authority over all demons”
 - vii. Jesus sent them out and they cured diseases, and they proclaimed the kingdom of God in the areas that each of them were sent
 - viii. They healed people, they cast out demons, they talked of Jesus and the coming of the Kingdom of God, and they preached, and Judas was a part of that

- ix. NOTE: This brings up an interesting point, being actively involved in ministry is a good and wonderful thing, but it is not, in itself, a guarantee of a true spiritual life or spiritual health. You could be involved in ministry and doing many wonderful things, but if your heart hasn't been changed, you're wasting your time.

c. The Opportunities He was Given

- i. Judas walked with Jesus for three and half years
- ii. He saw the greatest life ever lived up close and personal
- iii. I don't think you can have a better model of faith than Jesus
- iv. He directly witnessed the miracles
- v. Jesus fed the 5000, Judas was there to help gather the left over in the baskets
- vi. When Jesus calmed the storm, and Peter stepped out of the boat. Judas was there watching all of this
- vii. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, and the stone was rolled away, and Jesus said, "Lazarus come forth" Judas was there for that one too.
- viii. You can't have better teaching experience outside of what Judas perceived when walking with Jesus for 3 – 3 ½ years.
- ix. The problem is this, the one we all have: in the book of Jeremiah 17:9 it kind of sums it up for us. It says the *"heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"*
- x. The human heart can be wicked, it's beyond understanding. We all have faults, we don't do things the way we are supposed to, we tend to start off good then end up bad, it's just part of what we consider human nature today

d. The Choice He Made

- i. Satan made a relentless assault on Judas's heart and soul
- ii. It's easy to look at Judas and say, "poor Judas, he didn't have a chance. Satan entered him, he just didn't have a chance."
- iii. But what we've got to remember is that Judas is the one who opened the door for Satan to come in
- iv. Judas had been stealing from the money bag
- v. He had been orchestrating things for his own benefit
- vi. He made a deal with the chief priests
- vii. He even sat down at the table with Christ on many occasions, with known sins inside of his life and inside of his heart and he was unwilling to address them or to confess them to Jesus
- viii. Unfortunately, unconfessed sin always seems to open the door to the power of Satan
- ix. When you have unconfessed sin in your life, all you are doing is giving Satan a foothold.
- x. Satan doesn't gain a foothold in the lives of people who are honestly and actively walking in the light with Jesus
- xi. Satan only gains that foothold, when we open the door, especially when there's unconfessed sin
- xii. The story of Judas reminds us that nothing good can ever come for a person who gives up on Jesus
- xiii. Don't give up on our faith, what we have been taught over the years, what we read and glean from the scriptures

- xiv. Don't give up on Jesus, you and I might not understand it all, we might not agree with it all, but don't ever give up on Jesus

VIII. The Life of Paul

- a. He was a Roman citizen, born of a Jewish family from Tarsus, to a well known Jewish family with status in that community
- b. Paul studied under one of the most respected teaching lineages in the Second Temple period
- c. Paul had all kinds of opportunities for learning and becoming the most that he could become
- d. History tells us that he also studied philosophy, sociology, law, history, etc.
- e. Scripture tells us in Acts that he was a Pharisee of Pharisees, he was quite the religious authority
- f. We know he was a tent maker by trade, and that he worked with Priscilla and Aquila, who are also mentioned as co-workers
- g. But Paul was also a persecutor of the gospel

IX. Paul "the Persecutor" was Transformed

- a. Paul is depicted in Acts as a persecutor of the early Jesus movement, which they called "The Way"
- b. He is named as among those who approved of the stoning of Stephen to death, he was standing there holding everybody's coat.
- c. And we know that one day on the road to Damascus, Paul had an encounter with Jesus
- d. This encounter leads Paul to trust that Jesus is truly the Messiah
- e. He devotes all of his energy from then on to proclaiming the message of Jesus to Jews and the gentiles
- f. Paul was eventually arrested in Jerusalem for those teachings about Jesus and about who Jesus was
- g. Really, the thing that got him into trouble was he taught people that Jesus was Lord and not Caesar
- h. He was transferred to Caesarea, where he was a prisoner for two years
- i. Paul took the opportunity to "appeal to Caesar" as a well-respected Roman Citizen
- j. This led to Paul's whole group being shipped out to Rome for trial
- k. After being ravaged by shipwreck, he eventually made it to Rome to make his appeal to Caesar
- l. Under house arrest, Paul lived in Rome for two years (at least) as he awaited his trial.
- m. Paul was eventually executed, learned not from the New Testament, but from the writing attributed to Ignatius
- n. From this we learn that Paul was martyred in Rome for his proclamation about Jesus was the Truth, The Way and the Life.

X. The Question We All Need to Answer

- a. Did Paul have a more transformational experience with Jesus than Judas did over a 3 1/5 year period?
- b. Which one had the greater advantage?
- c. Which one do you relate with better?

- d. Like I said earlier, most of us feel like if we had been there with the disciples, we would have been convinced by all of the miracles and it would have had a positive affect on our unbelieving hearts. Not so much with Judas, right?
- e. We look at Paul and we see someone persecuting Stephen, throwing Christians in jail left and right.
- f. Which one had the greater advantage?
- g. It's the question we all have to ask, and answer
- h. What is the defining difference between these two people
- i. Other than the very details of each of their lives, I think, it's all about what you, and I are willing to give up
- j. Judas held on to all of his worldly attachments, he held onto the things that he valued most and he felt were assured; things that were somewhat controlled by him, things that he could do, accomplish or plan, his own destiny, or so he thought; he held on to his money, and status, and all of the worldly things
- k. Consider the worldly things that Judas held on to they are the things that are talked about today, this is where I'm at today
- l. The things that Jesus talked about and promoted were about tomorrow; this is what's going to take place tomorrow, my kingdom is not of this world, it's coming but it's not until tomorrow
- m. Paul let go of the things that he realized were temporal and fleeting
- n. Even though we was considered being a Pharisee of Pharisees, even though he was well respected, even though he basically had the Temple Church behind him in all that he was doing
- o. He realized that he needed to let those things go and submit his life to the Will and Testimony of who Christ is
- p. He knew what to let go of while Judas did not;
- q. Judas tried to have it both ways, he wanted to be a disciple and all the good things, then again he couldn't stop looking out for himself and the worldly things that would bring him contentment
- r. Paul understood that everything he had gained was nothing in comparison to knowing who Jesus is

XI. William

- a. I knew a man back when I was at Sears/Evart area
- b. He was an older man, I came to know over a period of three or four weeks
- c. He was very ill, and he seemed to be a good man
- d. He was respected by his family, he had some notoriety in the community
- e. He talked a good talk and his family loved, honored and cared for him
- f. He was also a Christian, and he was dying
- g. During those conversations I had with him over those couple weeks, he could not let go of the things that he had planned and worked hard for in his life and that he expected in the end
- h. They were a stumbling block for him
- i. That was the difference between Judas and the apostle Paul. Paul knew what a stumbling block was all about
- j. Even though it was extremely costly for Paul to give up the things he accomplished in the past, he also knew that this would keep him from a saving relationship with Christ

CLOSING: Remember, Matthew 16:25, *“If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.”* As we compare these two individuals, I hope that gives us a new perspective of what this confusing scripture is all about. You see, what Jesus is saying here, is that if you try and do it all on your own, and you try and accomplish and hold on to the things that you can see and you can control, then you are not living for me, but if you give up those things, then you can live for me, you can live openly and freely, and you can live knowing that your identity and your future is absolutely secure. That’s the challenge for each one of us. I hope and pray that each one of you will think about these things. Take a look at the lives we mentioned today and think about what it is that is or has become an obstacle for each one of us in our lives.