

Our next Memento of Jesus' Passion is a money bag with Thirty Pieces of Silver. That is probably something we would all like to have in our collection. Especially if they were actually from Jesus' time. They would probably be worth millions today. We read about the role these pieces silver played in Jesus' Passion in Matthew 26:14-16

“Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?” And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.”

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

We don't know how much those thirty pieces of silver were actually worth. That's because the Bible doesn't tell us which particular silver coins these were. But scholars all agree, it wasn't a particularly large sum of money. Some suggest that, at most, it was about four months of minimum wage. Which was enough to be tempting but really not a life-changing amount.

Those thirty pieces of silver are worth much more to us as a memento of our Savior's Passion, to prevent us from making the same horrible mistake as Judas. They teach us, 1. To remember the real value of money, and 2. To remember that Jesus is our truly Priceless Savior.

We use the title of the hymn we just sang as our theme:

Jesus, Priceless Treasure

So what is the real value of Money? It certainly has some value. With it we buy the things we need to live: our food, clothing and shelter. We even buy many comforts and pleasures with money. However, our sinful nature always tends to OVER estimate the value of money. It doesn't seem to matter how much money one has or doesn't have, you can always use more, right? Money seems to be the solution to every need. As a result, we tend to focus on how we can get more of it. That is when we are inclined to over value money.

God warns us about this in many places. Probably the most direct warning is found in 1 Timothy 6:10, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” Judas is certainly a prime example of one of those who strayed from the faith and pierced himself with many sorrows.

Let's take a closer look at Judas' actions and learn from his horrible mistakes. First of all notice how Judas is introduced in our text, “Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot.” Judas was one of Jesus' closest, hand picked disciples. He had spent three years traveling with Jesus, listening to Him every day, seeing His miracles. Don't think this couldn't happen to you. It could happen to any of us.

We should know that Judas didn't just decide one day out of the blue, I think I'm going to betray the Son of God. We see a progression in Judas' life. James, the brother of Jesus, tells us about the progression of sin. “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” James 1:14-15

We can follow that progression in Judas' life. When Judas rebuked Mary for “wasting” that expensive perfume on Jesus and suggested that it should have been sold and given to the poor, the Apostle John tells us, “He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.” 12:6 Notice Judas **“used to** help himself.” This was an ongoing thing. It began with a love of money. When he

was put in charge of the money box, his desire for money enticed him to help himself. Perhaps he fought the urge at first, but the more he thought about it the more he was drawn to it. He no doubt made up excuses why it wouldn't be so bad. No one would notice. Finally he put a little in his own pocket. When he got away with it, his thoughts and desire escalated, so he did it again, and then again, until as James said, his sin became "full-grown." That is how sin can take over one's heart and life.

Judas valued money too highly. He considered money of greater value than doing God's will. He ultimately valued those thirty pieces of silver more than Jesus his Savior. Instead of seeking first the kingdom of God and trusting God to provide everything else, he sought money first and forsook the Kingdom of God. In effect he sold his own salvation for 30 pieces of silver. He sold an eternity of bliss in paradise with God for about four months wages. What a shame, and he truly pierced himself through with many sorrows—such great sorrow that he went out and hanged himself and sealed his eternal doom. This was truly tragic. And this can happen with any sinful desire. How foolish to forsake Jesus to satisfy some desire of the flesh. May we learn from Judas and the thirty pieces of silver not to make that mistake.

In contrast to that, we can see that **Jesus** truly is our **Priceless Treasure**. In our introduction we mentioned that if we actually had thirty pieces from Judas' time, they would probably be worth millions today. Would that have been a more worth while trade for Jesus? Absolutely not! There is no value in the whole universe that would be worth selling Jesus for. He is truly priceless for He gives eternal life. As Jesus said, "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matthew 16:26

What value can you put on Jesus' love? Think of a comparison:

Let's just say you know 1000 people. Everyone you know from casual acquaintances to your close friends and immediate family. That includes even enemies who can't stand you. Could you love all of those people all the time the same? There's no way! We simply do not have the capacity of such love. Even with our closest loved ones, our love fails at times and we get angry and lash out rather than loving them. And when it comes to the people who hate us and try to make our lives miserable, we would rather see them suffer. That's hardly love at all.

But Jesus does love all the Billions of people in the world with the same depth of love. It's impossible for Him not love someone because He IS love. Is there anyone people despise more than someone who sells out their friend for money? Imagine how deeply this hurt Jesus to be betrayed by his friend and for such a small price! Yet Jesus still loved Judas just as much as He loves you and me. However, Jesus shows His love in different ways depending on what the individual needs the most.

When Judas scolded Mary for wasting the costly ointment on Jesus. Jesus' love gave a gentle rebuke to show him that there are things more important than money. That was pure love, but Judas seemed to resent that.

When Judas had made arrangements with the priests to betray Jesus, Jesus showed Judas that He knew what he was doing by identifying Judas as His betrayer. Then He gave this warning, "The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born." Matthew 26:24 I know what you're doing. You are making a huge mistake. It's not too late to back out.

When Judas came up to Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said, "Judas, are you betraying

the Son of Man with a kiss?” Really? Think about what you are doing. Ultimately Jesus died for Judas just as much as for everyone else in the world. Jesus desperately wanted to rescue Judas, forgive him and get him back on the path of faith, but Judas didn’t allow it. He resented Jesus’ rebuke and kept following his own sinful heart. And so Judas is in hell, not because Jesus didn’t love him, not because Jesus couldn’t forgive him, but because Judas rejected Jesus’ love.

What a powerful warning to us not to resent it when Jesus rebukes you for your sin, or if He sends one of His believers to point out your sin. Recognize that such rebuke comes from a heart of deep love that wants to rescue you from your sin and give you His own life to save you from all sin. Rather accept that rebuke and confess your guilt, then Jesus is able to pour out His love by forgiving you. Then Jesus is able to lavish you with His love in every other way as well. It’s not that Jesus loves you any more than He loved Judas, but by faith you are able to receive and enjoy His endless love more fully. Who can put a value on that love?

Do any of you remember the old Master Card commercials? They said, “Some things money can’t buy, for everything else there’s Master Card.” Then it would show several items along with their price tag, and finally they would show some act of love like a smile and a hug from a child and they would say, “Priceless.”

What could be more priceless than a Savior who “who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Gal. 2:20 Or as the Apostle Peter said, “You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” 1 Peter 1:18-19. May we always see **Jesus** as our **Priceless Treasure** and never sell Jesus out to any sinful desire of our flesh, but love Him with all our heart and serve Him forever.

Amen.