

INI - SDG

Ash Wednesday
1st Mid-Week Lenten service
March 9, 2011
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Hecla, SD

Mid-Week Lenten Theme: PROFILES OF THE PASSION

1) Judas Iscariot - Profile of Betrayal

Text: Matthew 26:14-16

Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross we spend,
Life and health and peace possessing
From the sinners' dying Friend.

Lord, in loving contemplation
Fix our hearts and eyes on Thee
Till we taste Thy full salvation
And Thine unveiled glory see.

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ Jesus, who gather together this night to ponder our Savior's passion - His suffering and death to purchase our salvation, grace and peace be multiplied to you in His name!

Profile - those of you who make use of the social networking tool called "Facebook" will be very familiar with that word "profile." On Facebook you have the opportunity to tell your friends and the world something about yourself and you put that on your "profile" page. You can include such information as a picture of yourself, your birthday, your relationship status, your political views, your religious views, your hobbies, your favorite quotes, and who your Facebook friends are. But even if have never been on Facebook, you probably know what a profile is. When we are talking about a personality profile, we are talking about an informal biography of someone. A sort of sketch or outline of their life and characteristics.

The Passion account of Jesus suffering and death is made up of many different people who were involved in different ways. Certainly our Lord Jesus Christ is the central figure in the Passion. It is His Passion. It is the account of His suffering and death for our salvation. But as we read the Passion account, we hear about different people. Who were these people? What role did they play? Why did they do the things they did?

During our Mid-week Lenten services we want to consider just that - profiles of the Passion. We want to examine the profiles of different players in the Passion account. My plan is that by drawing on what Scripture tells us about these people, to present their profile in the first person - let them tell you their story and what we can learn from them as we examine their profiles. Tonight we begin by examining the Passion profile of Judas Iscariot, a profile of betrayal. To guide our meditation this evening, we turn to the Word of God as recorded in the

Gospel of Matthew, chapter 26, reading verses 14 through 16:

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests 15 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. 16 So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.

So far the Word of God.

Good evening. My name is Judas. I imagine you know my name pretty well and probably don't anything good with my name. I am not speaking to you tonight to make light of or excuse the things that I did. You have every right to be disgusted and appalled at me.

Let me begin tonight by telling you a little about myself. I am often referred to as Judas Iscariot. I am referred to this way so that you do not get me confused with another one of the 12 apostles, Judas, the son of James, sometimes also called Lebbeaus or Thaddaeus. I was called Judas Iscariot, because Iscariot means "man from Kerioth-herzon," the region of Judea that I came from.

Out of the many disciples that Jesus had, he chose me to be one of the 12 men to be His special students. As one of the 12 apostles I was with Jesus from the beginning of His ministry. Along with men like Peter, James, and John I followed Jesus for three years. I saw many, many miracles performed by Jesus. I was there when Jesus fed the 5,000 and then the 4,000. I helped collect the baskets of leftovers. I saw Him heal the sick and paralyzed, give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and speech to the mute. I saw Him cast out many demons. I was in the boat when Jesus calmed the seas. I saw with my own two eyes, Jesus walking on the water and then calling Peter out of the boat to walk on the water too!

But more than what I saw is what I had the opportunity to hear from Jesus. From His own lips I heard Him expound on the Gospel. I was there when He delivered His Sermon on the Mount. I heard Him tell those many parables that you even teach your children about in Sunday School. I heard Him say so many things about what the Kingdom of God was and what it was not. I heard the Gospel from the mouth of Jesus.

And after following Jesus and being taught by Him for a couple of years, He sent us out. Along with the other 11 apostles, He gave me power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. Along with 11, He commissioned me to preach the kingdom of God and heal the sick among our fellow Jews.

Though I saw all this, heard all this, and did all this, there was one thing I loved more than all of it combined. I loved money. I coveted it. I wanted as much as I could get my hands on. And I loved my job as one the 12 apostles. I was in charge of the group's money bag. As Jesus would preach, teach, and heal, people would give us money - in the same as you take up an offering during your worship services here. What was so great about being the treasurer of this group? Well, the other 11 were so gullible and trusting, that no one ever audited me. I could take as much as I wanted out of the money bag for myself and no one was ever the wiser! Meanwhile I was accumulating much wealth for myself!

It was my love for money that led me to eventually sell-out to the enemies of Jesus. For some time I had known that they were looking for a way to get rid of Jesus. The leaders of the Jewish church couldn't stand Him or His teaching and wanted to kill Him. I thought this seemed like a great business opportunity for me and my bank account. After all, if Jesus was

really who He said He was, He could certainly escape unharmed from the hands of these men, just as He had done before! But if Jesus did not escape, and they killed Him, He would be shown to be the fake Messiah that they thought He was. Either way, I thought, I was going to get paid!

So during Holy Week, I snuck away from Jesus and the other apostles, and met with the chief priests. I proposed the following business transaction with them, ***“What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?”*** They couldn’t have been more pleased to see me and hear my proposal! And then, right there in front of me, they counted out 30 pieces of silver. It was amazing to see that silver shine! I couldn’t wait to get my hands on it. So I waited for the right opportunity to trade Jesus for those 30 pieces of silver. Those 30 pieces of silver would have been something like 70 of your U.S. dollars today.

During the celebration of the Passover, I found my opportunity. Jesus was alone with the other 11 apostles. There were no big crowds that would cause trouble. And I knew where Jesus would be. Jesus had often taken us to the Garden of Gethsemane to get away from the crowds and pray. So toward the end of the Passover meal, I left the table and went to the Temple to arrange the exchange - Jesus for those 30 pieces of silver.

The chief priests and elders of the Temple sent with me a detachment of well armed temple troops and officers. I had the perfect plan. I arranged to give the soldiers a sign, so that they would know who they should arrest. I would give Jesus a friendly kiss. I thought it was the perfect plan because then they could get their man and the other apostles wouldn’t suspect a thing. I would just tell them that the troops and officers must have been following me.

But it didn’t go the way I had expected. That silver that once shimmered and looked so beautiful, now looked like the ugliest thing I had ever seen in my life. Jesus knew! Jesus knew exactly what I was up to! I should have known I couldn’t hide anything from him! When I kissed Him, He spoke these words that have haunted me ever since, ***“Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”*** (Lk 22:47) Then they bound Jesus and took Him away! Jesus didn’t resist, He didn’t fight. He went along with them willingly. When they spit on Him and mistreated Him, He didn’t fight back. When He was being whipped, He did not slip away from their grasp as He had before, but endured it silently. And then the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, condemned Him to die by crucifixion.

I couldn’t take it. The silver that seemed so enticing before, now made me sick when I thought about how I had gotten it. I went back to the chief priests and elders and told them, ***“I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.”*** But do you know how they responded? They who had been so glad and eager to work with me before, now said coldly, ***“What is that to us?”*** (Mt 27:4) They didn’t care what I was going through! They only cared that they got Jesus and He was on His way to die.

That was the last straw. Not all the money in the world could comfort my soul! I couldn’t show my face again to the apostles. I betrayed my own Master and Lord! I betrayed the Son of God! The only escape I could think of, was to kill myself. So I went out and hanged myself only to find that this was no escape but entrance into an eternity of torment in hell!

So what can you learn from looking at my personal profile? There is much my wretched example can teach you. The chief lesson I have for you, is to not harden your hearts to

warnings from the Word of God. Time and time again, Jesus warned me about the path I was headed on. He loved me and was trying to call me to repentance. Jesus never extended anything but love to me, even though He knew I would betray Him. In fact, just hours before I would betray Him, Jesus washed my feet. Something only the lowliest of servants usually does for their master and his guests. He washed my feet! The feet of His betrayer!

At the Passover meal, Jesus came right out and told me that He knew I what I was up to. But I ignored Him and played dumb. When Jesus said that someone at the table was going to betray Him, all the other apostles asked if they were the ones that was going to betray Him. So rather than being obviously guilty, I joined in by asking, ***"Rabbi, is it I?"*** knowing full well that I was going to betray Him that night. Jesus, once again, reaching out to me in love, trying to call me back to Himself said, ***"You have said it."*** (Mt 26:25)

Jesus also warned me that night saying, ***"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."*** (Mt 26:24) Jesus was trying to get me to think about what I was doing. Not only was Jesus warning me about it, but the Old Testament prophets were warning me about what I was about to do! They prophesied that I was going to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver - the value of a dead slave! It would have been good for me if I had never been born, rather than choosing the road I chose, which continues on forever in torments of hell.

My heart was cold to the words and love of Jesus. That is because something else was more important to me - money. What the Apostle Paul would later on write about money, might as well have been written on my gravestone. ***"Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 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."*** (1 Tim 6:9-10) I loved money more than I loved Jesus. And the devil took advantage of my desire to be rich. When faith in Jesus left my heart, the devil entered in and worked with my sinful desires to betray Jesus into death.

Learn from my profile. Do not follow on my path to destruction. Nothing is more valuable than Jesus. When Jesus calls out to you in His Word warning you about the path you are on, do not ignore Him. When a follower of Jesus warns you about your sin, examine your heart to see if it is true, repent, and look to Jesus for forgiveness. The death that Jesus died was not in vain. He died to pay for all sins of betrayal. I rejected His forgiveness and redemption and am now paying the price forever in the darkness and unquenchable fires of hell. Jesus is your hope, your forgiveness, your salvation, and your life. There is no sin too great for Him to forgive.

May my horrid profile cause you to examine your hearts, repent of your sins - even your sins of betrayal - when something in your life became more valuable to you than Jesus, and in faith look to that Jesus who was sold for the price of a dead slave and see your Savior. When you fall into sin, do not hopelessly despair unto death as I did, but in sorrow over your sins run to Jesus and find cleansing in His innocent blood. Please, learn from my horrid profile of betrayal! Amen.