

## The Suicide of Judas

Matthew 27:1-10, Laetare Sunday (Lent IV)

March 10, 2013

Beloved of the Lord.....There was an article in the news this week about the death of Venezuelan President, Hugo Chavez. He died at the age of 58. Hugo Chavez was a socialist ruler, idolized as a champion for the working man, the oppressed, those who were supposedly exploited by big business capitalists. Yet during his short time in power, rather than improving economic conditions and reducing poverty, he exploited his own people by plundering and accumulating for himself two billion dollars which he certainly did not distribute equally. Venezuelans are worse off now than when Chavez came to power. Margaret Thatcher said, "Sooner or later, socialism runs out of other people's money." What good did those two billion get him? Now, like Judas, he is dead and judged by God for his unbelief. Psalm 55:23 says, "But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee."

What is true for Hugo Chavez is also true for Judas Iscariot, they despised the Time of Grace God gave them for repentance. If they repented of wickedness and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, they would both be in heaven now. Certainly with Judas who committed suicide, there is no doubt he is in hell. In Psalm 109, Jesus speaks of Judas as He prays, in verses 6 and 7 saying, "Let Satan stand at his right hand. When he shall be judged, let him be condemned." Luke also tells us "Judas by his transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." People who commit suicide do indeed perish in hell, but it is not because suicide is a sin greater than others. Suicide is murder and we are all guilty of murder by way of hatred. Also consider that when Jesus Christ suffered and died on the cross for the sins of all, He was making blood payment for this suicide of Judas. The real reason suicides perish in damnation, is because by taking their own life, they cut themselves off from any repentance afterward. You cannot repent when you are dead. It is too late. Suicide permanently cuts off a person's Time of Grace short, so there is no more opportunity to repent and believe in Jesus.

As for suicide itself, we dare not speak lightly of this horrible sin and we should emphasize suicides perish in hell for they can no longer repent. Also, a suicide violates natural law, which is the law of self-preservation, and by no means should we reason that it is our life and we can do with it what we want. Our life is not our own, but being redeemed by Christ it belongs to God. Our time of passing is His choice not ours. Suicide is also wicked because it scars and permanently damages the family and friends around the person. Such a person wounds all their neighbors deeply, and they can never go back and say "I'm sorry for this evil, please forgive me." One suicide only leads to more despair and more suicide. The worst thing about suicide however, is such despise Jesus Christ, their

own Savior, who earnestly laid down His life so they would live with Him forever in heaven. No matter how hopeless or terrible things appear in this world, with Jesus and His forgiveness we always have the certain hope of everlasting life, and no man (not even a thousand devils) can take that away from us. The Bible says this hope in Christ, "maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

I. The sin of covetousness. Last week we heard about the two or three trials Jesus endured at the hands of the Jews in the middle of the night, the third trial being at the break of day. After this terrible night of abuse and suffering, Jesus is now led bound to Pontius Pilate, "to put him to death." Jesus would be killed by the Romans and not the Jews, because it was God's preordained plan Jesus would be pierced for our sins. In Psalm 22 Jesus prays, "For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet." This blood which flowed from His wounds gives us the strength to suffer also for the glory of His name.

Returning now to Judas, we remember first he was the treasurer of the Lord's disciples. In John 12, when Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with expensive perfume, Judas said, "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." This shows us Judas coveted this money which was wasted in his sight. So it is safe to assume Judas had stolen before, and over time His greed grows and grows inside his heart without sincere confession of his sin and repentance. As with any other sin, when we yield to sin little by little, it quickly overpowers us and puts a chokehold on our faith. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Using the example of Hugo Chavez, even if we covet and steal two billion dollars, all our wealth is turned over to someone else when we die, and there are no hearses with luggage racks. This is why Jesus said in Matthew 26, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" While God commands us all to work for our daily bread, it is yet true we are to pursue the meat of God's Word above and over the meat our bodies need to live. Therefore "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."

By faith then we should be careful not to get caught up in the love of this world, which includes our house, our possessions, our money in the bank, wealth, etc, for our heart which covets these things can get obsessed with them. That is what happened to Judas. The love of money pierced his soul. Rather than repenting of his coveting, he nurtured it and fed it like a little pet which grew up into a lion which devoured him. Satan thus loves to lure us into greater and

greater sins, so we get so deep in the hole it seems impossible to get out.

We are no different from Judas, and this is especially true in the workplace. While we are free to pick and choose the best job or place to work, for whatever wage agreed upon, Jesus also said, "Be content with your wages." That is the problem with socialism. Man always covets the wealth of the wealthy, and he'll listen to any "Chavez" which promises to get it for him, a chicken in every pot. Socialism is always an easy sell for the poor working man, for the premise is rich people are rich only because they exploit the working man. God however forbids us from judging the rich that way. We ought to put the best construction on their wealth, and not covet, but work with our hands the thing which is good, for "If any would not work, neither should he eat." We have so many people on welfare today who are well able to work, but they follow their flesh instead and live off a government check, and that money comes from other people's hard work. This is shameful. While there are some in true need of welfare, and we do not resent them, when we receive money from those who work while we don't, those in true need ultimately suffer. When the money runs out all will be hungry and many will die. God doesn't want that to happen and so He commands us, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

II. The repentance of Judas and our own. All of this is said to point out the greed of our own heart, and also our need for repentance. You notice that when Judas realized he had betrayed innocent blood, Judas "repented himself", returned the 30 pieces of silver. Judas was genuinely sorry for this sin. He had true remorse. Also He owns up to his sin and doesn't blame anyone else, for He confesses "I have betrayed innocent blood." He doesn't say "YOU led me into this sin." He doesn't sugarcoat his sin, but he sees he has betrayed "innocent blood." Also his confession of sin is public before the chief priests. He also hates what he has done and loathes himself. He can't stand to live in his own skin.....he feels so terrible. Finally by returning the money, he is trying to make things right. When a person confesses to theft, yet they hold on to the money, they're not really sorry, and they have no forgiveness.

This repentance of Judas puts own our repentance to shame. Too often we Christians have a sleepy conscience, not much troubled by sin. Rather than being terror-stricken over what we have done, fearing God's wrath and punishment, we view all is sins as small and trivial, and we make little effort to amend our sinful ways. How often is it true we make a general confession of our sins in church the Sunday before communion, or even the Sunday of Communion, yet we feel very little grief in our hearts compared to Judas. And while it is true we can thank God we do not earn heaven by our repentance, or the depths of our repentance,.....let us be careful of the other side also, namely beware if we have no fear of God's wrath and punishment for your sins. To believe in salvation by grace

alone is to also at the same believe we are truly evil, covetous by nature, desperately wicked, and we do really deserve only God's wrath and eternal damnation.

Yet because of Christ we need not despair. His innocent blood has been offered as a payment for all the sins committed by our guilty hands. We should therefore not be as Judas who despaired, or those cold priests who said, "What is that to us?" Consider how after the suicide they said it was "It is not lawful" to put the silver in the treasury "because it is the price of blood." Unlike Judas they were completely blind to their sin of betraying Christ, yet they proceeded forth to keep God's law by keeping blood money out of the treasury? How blind is this blindness of salvation by works! This is like murdering someone in cold blood, and then going to church afterwards because God commands it! What God desires of us is something altogether different. We should repent and truly be sorry as Judas, but most importantly our repentance should be coupled with faith in Christ our Redeemer. "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." Judas had the sorrow of the world. He knew his sins but he didn't put his faith in Christ. To die in unbelief is the only "unforgivable sin". Godly sorrow however is something we need not repent of. When we as Christian repent, what grieves our heart is not the shame we might have to suffer on earth for our foolish sins, but it grieves our hearts we have offended the Almighty God, whose gracious name we wish to honor all our days. Love for Him who first loved us, is what causes our hearts to be sorrowful. Yet because of the innocent blood of Jesus we can say, "If God be for us, who can be against us. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Though our hands are indeed guilty of all the same sins as Judas, and we daily betray Christ by thought, word, and deed, let our comfort be ever and always this: we were not redeemed with gold or silver, "But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." "He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but has everlasting life." Amen.