



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapelDallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Gospel of Matthew

“Judas Iscariot, a Message for Disciples,” Matthew 27:1-10

TRANSCRIPT

We do appreciate that very much, and I think that you have the makings of a choir, and that would please me very much. In behalf of the elders of course we want to wish you a very Merry Christmas, and we hope that you survive the day. Christmas should be one of the fast days. That is, the days you eat in a hurry, but unfortunately, it is not. And of course, with the advent of the football season, biblical terms take on new meanings. Conversion no longer means turning to Christ [laughter] but the point the point after touchdown and things like that, but we do what to wish you a very, very happy holiday season, and we hope you enjoy the times with your family.

We appreciate very much the support that you have given to the elders and the deacons and others who have been working at Believers Chapel this past year. I heard one time of a man who got up on Easter morning, and he was an elderly minister who had had a great deal of experience, and he said that this is Easter morning as you know and since I will probably not see the great majority of you again until next Easter morning, I want to wish you a Merry Christmas [laughter]. And we are very fortunate in Believers Chapel that we don't have to do that. We appreciate very much your support particularly your prayers for the ministry of the word here.

I want you to turn with me in your Bibles to Psalm 109, and I want to read a passage that has a very direct reference to the subject of the message this morning: Judas Iscariot. So will you turn with me to Psalm 109 and listen as I read a most interesting section beginning at the 6th verse through the 19th verse. Psalm 109 verse 6 through verse 19:

“Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand. When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few; and let another take his office.”

Will you notice particularly that expression, “And let another take his office”?

“Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually wanderers, and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places. Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labour. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children. Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the Lord; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. Let them be before the LORD continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth. Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart. As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing as with his garment, so let it come into his inward parts like water, and like oil into his bones. Let it be unto him as the garment

which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually.”

Now if you had time to read through and ponder this Psalm, you would notice that in the opening part of the Psalm, the psalmist speaks about his adversaries in the plural. In verse 4 he said, “For my love they are my adversaries, but I give myself unto prayer.” And then in verse 20, “Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the LORD.” Striking thing about this Psalm is the verses that I have read, we have “the adversary” in the singular, almost as if the psalmist writing about adversaries in general suddenly now by the Holy Spirit is carried in such a way that he speaks of adversary in the singular and says specifically with reference to him, let another take his office. Now later on, we will point out the significance of this and how this Psalm has reference to Judas Iscariot who is the subject for our exposition this morning.

Many of you know my wife is not noted for unusual tact when speaking to me [laughter], and she loves to say, You love to hear the sound of your voice [more laughter]. And of course it’s true, but I want to say that I had a fleeting feeling over me that I would like to hear you continue and not speak this morning, but I’ve rejected that idea. We do appreciate very much the beautiful number done so wonderfully. And we are very, very grateful for the singing this morning. It was really outstanding in spite of the fact that you didn’t feel free to use our voices up here on the platform.

I’ve always felt incidentally that the ideal in a congregation is to have a congregational choir, and we took a little step along that way this morning I think. I think it’s, to me at least, the ideal situation is for us to have a congregation that sings like a choir out of gratitude, out of joy for the spiritual experience that each one of us has had through the Lord Jesus. So thank you very much for each of you for your participation.

In spite of the of the fact that it is popular on Sunday morning to speak concerning the Incarnation, feeling led of the Holy Spirit, I want to turn again to Matthew and continue our exposition, and we are turning today to the 27th chapter and the subject

is Judas Iscariot: a Message for Disciples. Judas Iscariot is probably the supreme enigma of the New Testament. Just think of it – apostle of Jesus Christ, and yet also called by Jesus Christ a devil. Chosen by the Lord Jesus after a full night of prayer; nevertheless used by Satan for the crucifixion of the Son of God.

The thought of Judas Iscariot really boggles the human mind. He is an important man as the space devoted to him in the New Testament shows, but it is his failure that has left its imprint most definitely upon the students of the New Testament. He may be indeed the greatest failure in the history of man, because he had the highest trial in history. His villainous betrayal is probably the blackest page in human history.

There have been attempts by modern theologians to resuscitate Judas or to rejuvenate him in some way, to rehabilitate his reputation. For example, William Barclay an outstanding Scottish theologian, has suggested that Judas’s intention was really good; that he wanted to force the hand of the Lord Jesus; that he knew that he must die, and if he forced Jesus’ hand then he would display his power deliver himself from the Romans and establish his kingdom apart from a cross.

Sholem Asch, in his book *The Nazarene* has another theory. He said that only Judas understood that our Lord Jesus must die, and since it was in Scripture already prophesied that there would be someone who would betray the Lord Jesus and Judas was the man, Judas, understanding he that the Lord Jesus must die and understanding that this was the word of God set forth in holy Scripture, is the only man really who understood what was going on, and as a matter of fact what he did was the will of God, and so therefore we should not think of Judas as a traitor in the sense that we ordinarily do.

Now when we read the New Testament we do not find anything of these theories that contemporary theologians and others have given us. We find the Lord Jesus saying for example in the chapter of the Gospel of Matthew that precedes this, “The Son of man goeth as it is written of him, but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed;

it had been good for that man if he had not been born.” So the uniform testimony of the New Testament is that Judas is the man who betrayed the Lord Jesus.

The message that I’m giving you this morning goes back many, many years ago to a radio program that I used to have in Dallas—well at least twenty-five, probably thirty years ago. The title of it was Musical Mornings in the Psalms, and it was my duty in this program, because it was put out and supervised by someone else, to expound the Psalms in order. I can still remember it was in the early days of my own experience as an expositor of the word of God coming to Psalm 109 and being puzzled about this Psalm.

It is an imprecatory Psalm; that is it’s a Psalm in which the psalmist pronounces those terrible curses upon men that seem so out of harmony to some people with the tenor of biblical doctrine. For example, let his days be few, let another take his office, let his children be fatherless and his wife a widow, let his children be continually wanderers and beg, let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places, as he loved cursing so let it come unto him, as he delighted not in blessing so let it be far from him. Terrible curses which the Psalmist pronounces upon someone whom he calls his adversary.

Well, I still remember that this was such a problem to me that when I came to the Wednesday morning Musical Mornings in the Psalms, I finally decided that the only thing I could speak on was on the imprecatory Psalms themselves, and I gave a message in which I sought to explain how in the Bible we may have these curses given under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But then in the course of the study of the Psalm, I noticed that there was a marginal reference by the side of one of the passages – the passage that I have tried to stress, verse 8 of Psalm 109 – by the side of that little statement, let his office another take. And I looked over into the New Testament and was startled to read that that passage had to do with Judas, for Peter at the occasion of the selecting of the disciple for the place of Judas, stood up in the midst of those who were there and said, “Men and brethren this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled which the Holy Spirit by the mouth

of David spoke before concerning Judas, who was guide to them that took Jesus; for he was numbered with us and had obtained part in this ministry.

“Now this man purchased a field with the reward of inequity, and falling headlong he burst asunder in the midst and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem insomuch as that field is called, in their proper tongue, *akeldama*, that is to say, the field of blood,” for Peter says it is written in the book of Psalms, “Let his habitation be desolate and let no man dwell therein”— that’s a citation from Psalm 69, a Messianic Psalm – “And his bishopric or his office let another take.”

Now Peter then says that these words of Psalm 109 have to do with Judas. Well that was also startling to me, because I must confess, I’d always thought of Judas as a kind of ill-starred, unfortunate fellow who had been flattened by the wheel of fortune, and I must confess that I often felt sorry for Judas as I read the story of the betrayal of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament. It startled me, and I think it also puzzled me that the New Testament spoke so severely about Judas when it seemed to me, in the light of the fact that what he did had been prophesied by the Old Testament, and particularly in the light of the fact that after he had betrayed the Lord Jesus, he came back, threw the money down by in front of the chief priests, repented according to the Scriptures and went out and hanged himself.

Now can we justify these statements of New Testament? Was Judas simply an unfortunate victim of circumstances or was he the kind of man that the psalmist says that he was and that Peter says that he was? Well we look now at Matthew chapter 27 and see what this particular passage has to say concerning that question. The Lord Jesus has now been taken in hand by the Sanhedrin, and in the first two verses of chapter 27 we read of the proceedings by which he came to be before Pontius Pilate:

“When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: And when

they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.”

Now remember, the trial of the Lord Jesus falls into two parts. There is an ecclesiastical trial. He appears in an informal meeting before Annas, who is the power behind the throne of the high priest Caiaphas. There is an illegal meeting during the middle of the night before Caiaphas, the reigning high priest, and we have read about that in our last study. And then there is a formal meeting in the morning confirming the decision made at the illegal meeting, and affirming that our Lord Jesus was guilty of blasphemy in speaking of himself as a king.

Now they of course knew that the Romans would not accept a theological charge that the Lord Jesus had blasphemed by speaking of himself as the Messianic king of the Old Testament and affirming his deity. They knew that the Romans would not be too responsive to a charge: he has been guilty of violating our Old Testament Scriptures. And so it was necessary for the Jewish leaders to in bringing him before the civil authorities to invent another charge, and so the charge that they invented was the charge of treason.

Now the civil trial also as three parts to it. He appeared before Pilate and then Pilate hearing that Herod was in town and thinking that he might be able to transfer the burden to him had the Lord Jesus sent to Herod, but Herod would not take the bait and sent him back to Pilate again, and with the charge of treason our Lord Jesus was condemned to die.

The key word in the charge is the term, king. Now that is I think evident from the Matthian account. It is even more evident in the other accounts, such as the Lukan, but we do read in verse 11 of chapter 27, and Jesus stood before the governor and the governor asked him saying, art thou the king of the Jews? Jesus said unto him, Thou

sayest. So it is evident then that the charge that the Jewish people brought before the civil authorities was, he says that he was a king.

Now we turn secondly to the suicide of Judas in verses 3 through 5. Let me read these verses of chapter 27. “Then Judas, who had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.”

Will you notice the little word, then, which begins verse 3? Then Judas who had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned. It is possible that that little word, then, is just a formal word of introduction to a new paragraph. But if it is not, if it is a word that is designed to contribute to the flow of thought of the passage, then evidently that then is a reference to the preceding verses, and in those preceding verses, Judas who must have been standing by with the Jewish authorities as he saw the Lord Jesus being led away for the crucifixion, that was the occasion for this remorse that seemed to grip this wicked man. Then – that is as they had bound the Lord Jesus and led him away – then Judas who had betrayed him when he saw that he was condemned, repented.

The story of Judas is a remarkable story and I think to understand this repentance we need to just review it very briefly. You may remember that Judas was chosen just as the others of the Twelve were chosen. The Lord Jesus, the Scriptures say, went out and prayed all night, and Mark adds that he chose whom he would. There is no question but that Judas was chosen by the Lord Jesus intentionally. That is it was the will of God for the Lord Jesus to chose Judas among the Twelve. He spent all night in prayer, and so this perfect man this God-man we know, but this perfect man, this sinless man selected Judas to be among the Twelve.

Now Judas’s character is not described, but we have an inkling of it in the fact that in John chapter 6 after the feeding of the five thousand, the Lord Jesus makes a little

comment concerning Judas. He says that Judas was a devil. What was there about the feeding of the five thousand that might have given the Lord Jesus in his human nature the clue to his character? Do you remember that after the feeding of the five thousand the crowd rushed forward and wanted to make our Lord Jesus a king, but he refused to become a king, and evidently that gave Judas some insight into our Lord’s ministry that he had not had before.

He evidently had thought that he was going to be the kind of king that would allow the Jews to again rule and reign as they had in their glorious past. He was the kind of Messianic king in Judas’s eyes who would be the means for the over-throwal of the Romans and the establishment of the kingdom of Israel in the land again. And in the establishment of the kingdom of Israel in the land again, it would mean that those who were his lieutenants, his apostles, would have important places in that kingdom and also have access to large sums of money.

Now that must have been in Judas’s mind and that is why the Lord Jesus gives us a little inkling of the nature of Judas when he says, two years after he had been chosen as an apostle, that one of them was a devil. Now it is striking that if you’ll look at the chapters that describe those years of ministry, you will not find one instance anywhere of Judas seeking the face of God. There is no indication that this man who was one of the apostles had any spiritual desires at all. The crime of Judas of stealing money is specifically declared by John in the 12th chapter of his gospel. Remember that incident when Mary came out and poured the ointment of spikenard over the Lord Jesus, very precious, and the apostles objected? It was Judas who spoke up and said, “Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?”

Now John adds he didn’t really say that out of any desire that this really take place, except that it might be a means of adding to his own funds, because John goes on to say – it was something he learned afterwards – that all the time Judas who was the treasurer of the Twelve was pilfering money from the common purse.

Now that gives us I think another insight into Judas. He evidently was a very well educated man. It is the consensus of the opinion of New Testament students that he was the only Judaeon among this Galilean band, so he was probably the best educated of the Twelve, probably the most learned, probably the most cultured, because Jerusalem, well, Jerusalem was like going to Charleston in [laughter] the United States. It was the place of culture and the place of the leaders of the land.

Well Judas was that kind of a person and in that incident it is specifically stated by John. Incidentally, the very fact that Judas said that why was not this ointment give sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor, and the others became very indignant and agreed with him, was evidence of his influence over the Twelve. So we must not think of Judas as a leering, sneering, sinister-looking Mephistopheles kind of a man. He was not that kind of person at all. He was the kind of person who would come into a local church, and you would have the tendency to want to have him as an elder in the church; a distinguished man, a man of intelligence, a man probably of standing in the community, a man of influence, a man who spoke the language in the way that it should be spoken. And this man had influence among them.

Now Judas was rebuked by the Lord Jesus then, and it was shortly after this rebuke that he went out and made his compact with the Jewish leaders to betray our Lord Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. He met with the apostles at the last Passover and the first Lord’s supper. And remember at the last Passover and the first Lord’s supper by the work of our Lord Jesus, it was made evident that Judas was the betrayer. John ends his account of Judas’s last chance, when our Lord gave him every opportunity to turn from his purpose, John adds that when Judas went out, he went out into the night. John adds, and it was night. Yes it was night outside, and it was night in the heart of Judas as he left the presence of the Lord Jesus.

But now was Judas saved at last, because we read here that he repented? Well unfortunately, in the Authorized Version this word, translated repented here, is not the

same word as the word that is commonly translated repented. There is another word which means to regret, generally speaking, *metanaeo*, the word that is translated "to repent" normally in the New Testament means to, well essentially, *meta* is a preposition that means "after" and *-naeo* means "to think," so that *metanaeo* means "to have an afterthought." And since an afterthought is usually a different thought, *metanaeo* comes to mean "to change the mind."

Now that is the word that is ordinarily translated, repent, in the New Testament. When John the Baptist said, repent for the kingdom of the heavens at is at hand, he used the term *metanaeo*. When the Lord Jesus used the same message, the same word is used, but the word that is used here is not that word. It is a word that sometimes has the same meaning, but more often than not, the word translated here, repent, is a word that means "to regret." It is the word *metamelomai*. So the idea is not so much repentance in the sense of a true change of mind, but rather of regret.

It was what someone has said, mere pain of mind and not change of mind. It is change of purpose but not change of heart. It is regret for results that happen to oneself, but not repentance for the wrong that was done. I think the best illustration of this is a parent's dealing with a child. I can still remember many, many years ago now when I used to have to exercise a little discipline with the members of my family, and particularly with my son. I can still remember the times when as a little boy I would have to take him in and get out the brush and apply the brush.

Now someone has said we learn a lot when the board of education is applied to the seat of learning, and we do. And I noticed though, that regardless of what had happened, when I began to use the brush, immediately the words of confession poured out. I'm sorry Daddy, I'm sorry Daddy, I'm sorry Daddy. But I got the distinct impression that it was not so much sorrow for what he had done as it was sorrow for what was happening to him at the present moment [laughter], and so it was not until the particular note to, I'm sorry Daddy, had that other little note to it that I began to stop.

Now I think that is exactly what is meant here when we read, then Judas who had betrayed him when he saw that he was condemned regretted and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the scribes. He was not sorry for what he had done; there is no evidence whatsoever that he got down upon his knees and confessed his sin to the Lord. There is no evidence whatsoever that he spoke to the Lord Jesus about his repentance. It was the kind of remorse that leads to despair and ultimately to suicide, but it is a far cry from the biblical doctrine of repentance.

Well does not Judas, though, confess his sin? He says in verse 4 saying, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood.” But again, will you note that this confession is a confession that is given belatedly and it is given to the Sanhedrin. It is not given to the Lord Jesus. It is not given to God. He does not fall down upon his knees and confess his sin to the person or persons against whom he has truly sinned. In the Old Testament, there is one of the best known characters of it that says more than once: I have sinned. It is Pharaoh, the man whose heart the Lord hardened. More than once he confessed his sin, but it was evident that the confession that he made was not of true repentance, but only remorse for the things that happened.

A. B. Bruce one of the students of the New Testament said, “It is bad enough to do the deed he was bad enough to do the deed of infamy, and he was good enough to be unable to bear the burden of guilt.” Judas is one of those unfortunate individuals who was evil enough to betray the Lord Jesus, but then he could not stand to bear the burden of the guilt that truly belonged to him.

My New Testament professor has written a little article on Judas, and speaking about Judas’s exoneration of the Lord Jesus and saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood, he said, “The power of Satan is not sufficient to prevent his own servant from confessing the moral glory of the Son of God; I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.” And so even the tongue of this man is controlled by the

Holy Spirit, as he confesses in the midst of this false expression of guilt and remorse, the beauty of the nature of our Lord Jesus. That blood was innocent blood.

And then we read he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed and went and hanged himself. Hanging or suicide is an act of defiance. It’s a supreme expression of despairing unbelief. Origen, one of the early church fathers from Egypt said, “Judas rushed to commit suicide in order to meet Jesus in Hades and confess his sin and beg forgiveness.” That’s pure imagination. There is not a thing of that here. It’s an evidence of the fact that we as human beings do not like to face the fact of the divine judgment for human sin.

Judas was so unhappy so filled with remorse – but not repentance – that he thought by committing suicide rebelling against the Lord he would somehow ease the burden of the guilt that was upon his heart and conscience. But you know, when you separate yourself from Jesus Christ, you separate yourself from all true society of men who are good. And all throughout eternity, Judas is the man who is separated from other men. Suicide is no help. Death is no help. There is no fellowship in hell. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Judas is a man who lost his soul. He went out and he hanged himself.

The remainder of this paragraph, verses 6 through 10 records the purchase of the potter’s field. Let me read the verses, “And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It’s not lawful to put them into the treasury, because it’s the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter’s field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, the field of blood, unto this day.” The priests obviously are unimpressed by the confession of Judas. We read in the 4th verse they said, “What’s that to us? See thou to that.” They didn’t think it was so genuine. They are unimpressed by Judas’s confession, and they give us a beautiful lesson in religious hypocrisy. These are the men who have put to death the Messianic king; these are men who even if we do

not acknowledge that he was the Messianic king would have to admit that there was no fault in this man other than that claim that he was the Messiah and the Son of God.

But nevertheless they are willing to put him to death and at the same time be meticulous about their own Mosaic law and the other traditions which had grown up through the years. They say it's not lawful to put money into the treasury because it's the price of blood. They themselves have made compact with Judas to have the Lord Jesus betrayed and then stand on certain meticulous interpretations of their own law, and therefore refuse to put the money that they had given back into the common treasury.

Well Matthew sees in this the fulfillment of Scripture. He says in verse 9, "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeramiah the Prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me." There has been a great deal of discussion of these verses. It is not of course the proper time to discuss all of the points that one might discuss in connection with this. One of the most obvious things is that when you read the Old Testament, the first time you read verse 9, you're inclined to think that the passage really is a quotation from Zechariah rather than Jeremiah. And in the light of this, it has been suggested that Matthew made a simple inadvertent mistake, that he really intended to say, then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Zechariah the Prophet, because it's in Zechariah that we have mention of the thirty pieces of silver. Now that of course, we would have to grant, is a possibility if we believe that the Scriptures were errant in other places.

Then there are some who have said well you'll notice the word is spoken in verse 9: "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the Prophet." And since we all know that it is common for the prophets the later prophets to cite from passages in the earlier prophets, it would be understandable that the passage in Zechariah is a passage which had ben carried down to him as words that originally came from the mouth of

Jeremiah, so it is possible that the text was actually spoken by Jeremiah but cited in the writings of Zechariah.

It is also possible that there was a typographical or a critical mistake in the transmission of the text in an early stage. John Calvin contended that it was probably a simple mistake: a scribe copying one of the early copies of the Gospel of Matthew inserted the word Jeremiah, which if written in abbreviated form, would differ from Zechariah by only one letter, and that that mistake came to be in the great mass of the copies of the New Testament, and so it was nothing more than a simple copyists error.

Incidentally, we do have an error like that in the Authorized Version. Back in chapter 23 and verse 24 in a rather familiar verse, we read, “Ye blind guides, who strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.” Now most of the Authorized Version texts written later on have “strain at,” but it obviously should be “strain out,” and so a common an error was made in the English text way back in the transmission of the Authorized Version, and we’ve had it in almost all of the editions of the Authorized Version, in fact all of them that any of us would be familiar with, they read, strain at a gnat rather than strain out a gnat and swallow a camel. It is possible for scribes to make simple errors.

On the other hand I think that probably the easiest explanation of it is that this passage actually does contain words from Jeremiah chapter 19, and it was the intention of Matthew to point to that passage because it’s in that Jeremiah 19 passage that apostasy and judgment is spoken about, and it is that that he is particularly concerned about in connection with Judas. And so he refers to that passage because it is Judas’s apostasy from privilege, and it is the judgment that came to him that he sees paralleled in the experience of Israel in Jeremiah chapter 19 which also is a passage of apostasy and divine judgment.

Well let me conclude. You can, easily I think, understand now or at least more easily these denunciatory words that the psalmist wrote in Psalm 109. Judas’s name incidentally comes from the Hebrew word which means “to praise.” His name is really

something like Mr. Praise. So I think you can understand now why the psalmist would speak about Mr. Praise as he did. He was the man who, in his own heart as Satan entered in, covenanted with Satan and with the Jewish leaders to betray the Son of God.

Judas’s story is a warning of the neglect of the claims of the Lord Jesus. His problem was the love of money. In 1 Timothy chapter 6, and verse 6 through verse 10 the Apostle Paul speaks of the love of money, and evidently uses Judas as an illustration. He says, “Godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us therewith be content for they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” Judas was evidently in his mind as he wrote those words.

Judas then is a warning of the neglect of the claims of Christ for particular problems. Ours may not be the love of money. Ours may be position. It may be prestige. It may be simply be indifference, or it may even be religion. And I think also, when we remember that our privileges are even greater than Judas’s today—Judas didn’t have a Bible. True he had personal fellowship with the Lord Jesus, but we may have the same through holy Scripture. The dangers are greater for us today who are acquainted with the word of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Students of the Revolutionary War may remember that the first victory that the revolutionaries won was the victory at Saratoga, and also it was probably in the minds of some at least, one of the most significant victories that they ever won. On the battlefield of Saratoga today, there stands a towering obelisk which commemorates that decisive struggle in the Revolutionary War, and at the base of this towering obelisk there are four niches, and in each of the niches but one there is a little monument of one of the four generals that commanded the forces of the United States that morning.

In the first stands Horatio Gates, and in the second stands Schuyler, and in the third Morgan and then in the fourth there is no niche, but underneath you can still see the words of the general who won some significant battles for the United States and fought brilliantly but who later apostatized from the faith. Underneath you can read the words, Benedict Arnold.

He was the soldier who should have had his name in honor and held in honor down through the history of the United States, but he forfeited his right to be remembered. Benedict Arnold fell from the fairest heights of glory to the deepest gulfs of infamy and shame, and forever afterwards Benedict Arnold in the United States has come to stand for fallen manhood; for power prostituted; for genius soiled; for faithlessness to a sacred trust.

You know, when we get to heaven, and we enter the holy city the new Jerusalem, one of the characteristic things about the holy city the New Jerusalem is that it has twelve foundations, and those twelve foundations are monuments to the twelve apostles, and you'll see their names. There'll be, Peter and Andrew and James and John and Matthew and Philip and Thomas and Bartholomew and James the son of Alphaeus and Thaddeus and Simon the Canaanite. But there will be one apostle's name that you will not see, and it is the name of Judas, for Judas is a man who fell from high position and privilege.

That one name missing is the name of Judas Iscariot, the Scriptures so frequently add, who also betrayed him. We sometimes think that Judas is the kind of message that you ought to give to the world. No, Judas is a message for the insiders. Judas is a message for the so-called faithful. Judas is a message for people who enter into the waters of baptism and confess their faith in the Lord Jesus and who meet with the saints. Judas is a message for the saints who gather round the Lord's table, for Judas was there at that last Passover.

Judas is the kind of message that should always be directed toward those who've made their confession of faith in the Lord Jesus. You may be here this morning and you

may be thinking back and saying, well, Judas does not apply to me because I belong to the Christian church. Well do you realize that a message like Judas' is just the very message that we who are in the midst of the company of the saints should most take to heart, and I do not think that it is really wrong to have the attitude that the apostles had when the Lord Jesus announced in that little company, one of you shall betray me, and they each went around, Is it I, Lord? Is it I, Lord? It was a confession of the fact that they knew that deep down within their own heart there was sufficient wickedness there to do the vilest of deeds.

And finally when it came around to Judas he said, is it I, Master? No man calls Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul says. No man truly calls Jesus Lord in the true sense that he bows before him as Lord and Master and Redeemer who has died for him who has not been first of all wrought upon by the Holy Spirit to be brought into the faith that means life indeed. But it is very possible for individuals to make outward confessions to meet with the saints, to sit at the Lord's table, to be baptized in water, to be a member of a Christian church and to sit in a congregation such as this, for Sundays for months and years and not really know our Lord Jesus.

So I call upon you this Christmas morning, as we think about the birth of our Lord and ultimately his death and resurrection to make your own confession of faith in the Lord Jesus. And if you have confessed your faith in the Lord Jesus, it's always a worthwhile spiritual experience to renew it in case the vitality is somewhat gone. May we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful for the message concerning Judas Iscariot who also betrayed him. O God, deliver us from falling away from him. Give us, Lord, the faithfulness that enables us to honor his name and to truly worship and praise and serve him to the end of our earthly days.

And Lord if there should be someone here this morning who has not yet truly come to him whom to know is life eternal, O God, may at this very moment within their

own individual hearts there be the expression of faith and trust in the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus who shed his blood for sinners.

We thank Thee Lord for this time of expression of praise and thanksgiving on Christmas morning. We thank Thee for all that is implied in the birth of the Son of God, and we pray, O God, that Thou wilt be with us throughout the remainder of this day, and may it be a happy day in which we truly honor Thy name. May, O God, the joy of the Holy Spirit be ours.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.