

See to It for Yourself

Matthew 27:1-10

(Edited Transcript of a Radio Message)

This morning's message is entitled, "See to It for Yourself." Matthew Chapter 27, beginning at verse one, we read this story:

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.

Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the 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. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. (Matthew 27:1-7)

Of all the sad stories ever told, the story of Judas must be among the saddest. He was a member of the Covenant people of that day - the Jewish nation. He had the advantage of the prophets, of the worship of the temple, of the promise of Messiah or Christ. He had the hope of Christ, and he knew the true and living God. He had a good name. The name Judas is just a Greek version of the name, "Judah." This is the name of the tribe from which our Lord came - the tribe of Judah. Judah means praise, and it is the tribal name from which the ethnic term "Jew" is derived. When we say, "Jew," we're just sounding out the first syllable of the name Judah.

Judas had the glorious privilege of being chosen and called to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was one of only 12 whom the Lord chose to be within the inner circle of

his teaching and of his work. Judas was good in his outward conduct, so good in fact, that the only one who knew what a monster he was, was the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself. Not even Judas realized what a scoundrel he was, even though he stole out of the treasury of the disciples. I'm sure he justified himself in doing it, saying, "I do all the things the other disciples do, plus, I do the work of managing the money, so it makes sense that I get paid a little more than the others do." Only the Lord knew that, inside, Judas was a devil.

Yes, Judas had all these great privileges yet notice how his life turns out as described by Peter in Acts chapter one, beginning with verse 18, Peter says:

Now this man (that is, Judas) purchased a field with the reward of iniquity and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

Now the two accounts of Judas' death - the one we read in Matthew and the one we read in Acts - seem contradictory. But, really, they are just describing different aspects or different parts of the same story. If you put them all together, here's what happened:

Judas agreed to betray the Lord for 30 pieces of silver. Once he had done that evil deed, then saw that it was going to bring Christ into condemnation and crucifixion, he felt great remorse for his evil deed, and he went back to the people who had hired him in the first place and tried to undo what he had done. But they said to him, "What is that to us? You go see to it for yourself." So Judas did just that; he took care of the matter himself. He went out and hanged himself. He threw those 30 pieces of silver back in the temple and went out and hanged himself. The priests took that money - that is, Judas's money - and they took it and bought a field. Later on, they must have noticed that he had hanged himself. Evidently, he had been hanging there long enough that his body had begun to decay. I'm sure they wouldn't touch his dead body, so they hired somebody to take down his body, dig a grave in the field they had bought with Judas's money, and bury him in it. Since his body was already so far rotten, when it hit the bottom of his grave, it burst apart like the rotting carcass that it was.

So, in just a few days, Judas goes from a very privileged and blessed man to a pile of rotting flesh in the bottom of a grave.

Now the point I want to focus on this morning is the response of the chief priests and the elders to Judas's attempt at repentance. Even though the men Judas spoke to were as wicked as he was, they stood as symbols of God's law, so they show us how the law responds to our attempts at repentance and amending our ways.

The law has a twofold message for every sinner that approaches God through the law on the basis of his sorrow over sin. The law says to every such sinner, "What is that to me? You go see to it for yourself."

"What is that to me?" This may surprise some of you, but the law has no interest in your repentance. The law notes only two things - perfect obedience or disobedience. Those are the only two things. The law notices and blesses perfect obedience with eternal life and punishes the smallest infraction with eternal death. Therefore, repentance means nothing to the law. You see, repentance doesn't put away sin. Repentance does not undo what has been done. When Judas went back to the men who had paid him to betray Jesus, he was actually trying to undo his sin in the presence of these men. They had given him money; he tried to give it back. Those thirty pieces of silver stood as a symbol of his great evil, and you can imagine how awful they felt in his hands. So, he threw them away from himself, trying to separate himself from his sin. But he couldn't, could he? Why? Because even though Matthew says it was the chief priests who bought that field, that just meant they went out like real estate agents and used Judas's money to buy the field. You see, no matter what Judas did with the money, he could not make it to be not his money. No matter what he did, he could not separate his sin from himself.

A lot of us try to do the same thing, don't we? We try to cast our sin away from ourselves. We hear that our sin has separated us from our God, so we try to separate ourselves from our sin, hoping by that to draw near to God. That's what Judas was doing. But you see, even though Judas threw that money into the temple and the priests were the ones who made the transaction, the book of Acts says it was Judas who bought that field. Judas was already dead when the field was bought. How in the world could Judas buy a field? He's dead. That money, no matter how much he tried to cast it away, was still his money. And brethren, your sin - no matter how hard you try to cast it away from yourself - it's still your

sin, and it will do for you only what Judas's money did for him: it will buy you a grave. You know it was said of Judas - there in Acts chapter one, verse 18 - it says that this man (that is, Judas) with the wages of unrighteousness bought a field, fell headlong, and his bowels gushed out. The wages of sin, of unrighteousness, is death, isn't it? And that's exactly what Judas got for his thirty pieces of silver - death. It's exactly what he got for his supposed repentance.

There are many who think that God the Judge of All is impressed with demonstrations of guilt, sorrow, tears, misery, and grief. You know, when we speak of coming before the law, we really mean coming before **God** through the law. And many people think that a protracted period of grief and misery over sin coupled with a hearty effort at reforming one's life is at least partially responsible for gaining God's mercy. But you see, the law has no mercy. Now, understand that! The law has no mercy. The law says "He that does these things will live by them," not the one who tries to do them, not the one who thinks it would be a good idea if he could do them, but the one who actually does them. And that's all that the law takes note of - actually doing what the law says. All that your sorrows, tears, misery, and attempts at reformation do is prove your guilt. But God already knows you're guilty, so all those things mean nothing to Him if you come in your tears and your misery thinking your tears and misery are going to move Him. The old hymn-writer, Augustus Toplady, in his hymn, "Rock of Ages," wrote this:

Not the labor of my hands,
Could fulfill thy law's demands.
Could my tears forever flow,
Could my zeal no respite know,
These for sin could not atone.
Thou must save and Thou alone.

So, the law says, "What is that to us?" Our repentance, our tears, our sorrow, means nothing to God. If we come to him through the law, the law says, "See to it for yourself." The chief priests and the elders rightly said that it was Judas's responsibility, not theirs. He must make atonement. He must see to satisfying God's justice for his sin. He must bear the curse. It was all on him. And Judas did what he was told. He took matters into his own

hands. He saw to his own execution and made himself a curse, for it is written, "Cursed is everyone that is hanged upon a tree. Judas's sin - his attempt to undo his sin - did nothing more than buy him a grave, for the wages of sin is death.

Please listen carefully to this. Satan lays traps wherever he can in order to trip us up, and one of the traps that has damned the soul of many a religious person is the belief that his sadness over sin and his efforts to stop sinning are pleasing to God and move God to show him mercy. God has said that He will by no means clear the guilty, and tears over sin do not remove our guilt.

When Judas was stricken with remorse over his sin, he came to a crossroads. One way was a broad road with many people on it. It was the way that seemed right to him and to many others, but the end was death and destruction. The other way was a narrow, winding path. Few find it, few walk on it. There is nothing about it to attract the flesh, but it leads to life. Judas chose the broad road - the road of doing things for yourself. He tried to get rid of his sin. He tried to offer his own sacrifice, and all that got him was cursed, dead, rotted and damned.

Here is the hallmark of this broad road that leads to destruction - on this broad road, you are told, "See to it for yourself." Any religion that puts you on the path of taking care of things for yourself is a broad road that leads to destruction.

Now rewind with me 2000 years before the events of Judas's life. There's very old man - over 100 years old - and his son climbing a mountain. They're going to worship God. The son understands what's needed for worship, so he says to his father, "Father, I have wood and you have fire. Where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And the father says, "God will provide for himself a lamb for the burnt offering." Now that word "provide" means to see to it. The "pro" part means "to" and the "vid" part means "see." We get our word "video" from that "vid" part. What Abraham actually told his son was, "God will see to it."

And this is what the Gospel tells us. The law says, "You see to it for yourself." In the gospel God says, "I will see to it."

You realize that you are a sinner. Ah, go before God and tell him that's what you are and that you need righteousness. And he will say, "I'll see to it." Tell him that you are a criminal against Him and that you need a sacrifice, and he will say, "I'll see to it." Tell him that you're dead in trespasses and sins, and that you need new life, and He will tell you, "I'll see to it." And over and over, let him know - not how good you are, not how sorrowful you are about your sin – let Him know how wretched you are and how worthy of condemnation you are, and in his mercy He will say, "I'll see to it."

When you're all done with your prayer and when God is all done telling you by the gospel that He'll see to everything, He will turn to his Son and say, "See to it." And that's exactly what the Lord Jesus did. He came and saw to everything necessary for the salvation of God's people.

In your approaches to God, what are you hearing? Are you hearing the law say, "See to it for yourself"? Then, my friend, you're on the wrong road. But if you are hearing the wonderful words of the gospel in which God says, "I'll see to it, I'll provide everything," then you're on the road that leads to life.

God grant you that grace.