

What is Jesus Worth to You? – Matthew 26:14-16

Introduction: Tonight, we come to another portion of Scripture that we're tempted to skip over to get to the section that follows. But in these verses we find some very important things. Here we see where Judas Iscariot sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Not only is this a fulfillment of prophecy, it's also a commentary on how greed, mistrust and false expectations all come together in one man to set in motion the most outlandish case of injustice in history. But primarily, for our study tonight, we're going to see how little Judas really thought of Jesus, and how it challenges us to consider our worth of Jesus. First, we see:

1. The Worth of the Silver

How much was thirty pieces of silver worth? Well, one could purchase a slave for thirty pieces of silver. But not just any slave—this was the price of an injured slave.

Thirty pieces of silver was also the fine that an owner of an ox would have to pay if his ox gored somebody to death. Thirty pieces of silver was a decent sum of money for a public worker, but it was not a fortune. Thirty pieces of silver was not enough to make somebody rich or to set them up for life.

The point is; all Jesus was worth to Judas Iscariot was a measly thirty pieces of silver. That's how important Jesus was to Judas. He certainly didn't think nearly as much as Mary did. Last week we saw that Mary never considered the cost of the alabaster jar of expensive perfume to be too much to lavish upon her Lord. Mary thought so much of Jesus that she freely and extravagantly broke open a treasured family heirloom just so she could worship her Lord and show Him how much He was worth to her.

But Judas sold His master out for a measly thirty pieces of silver. For Judas, it was more about what he could get. It was all about greed and selfish ambition and unmet expectations.

There are several theories as to why Judas betrayed Jesus. Some say that Judas was an over-zealous political revolutionary and was upset that Jesus did not amass an army of zealots and overthrow the Romans. This theory claims that Judas wanted to get rid of Jesus because He was not a political revolutionary.

Another theory says that it was more about frustration than anger and disappointment. Rather than wanting to get rid of Jesus, Judas was hoping that by having Jesus arrested, Jesus would rise up and defend Himself, and then begin the overthrow. This was how Judas thought the Messiah ought to act.

Now either scenario may have some truth to them, but the fact is; the Bible tells us exactly why Judas did what he did. He did it for the money. Look at vs. 15. It says that when Judas went to the chief priests, the first thing he asked them was, *“What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?”* He didn't discuss any overthrow. He didn't want to know what their plans were. His only thought was money. How much could he get for Him? So he went to the chief priests and haggled the best deal he could get. In fact, as I mentioned earlier, this was prophesied in the Old Testament by the prophet Zechariah: *“I told them, ‘If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it.’ So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said to me, ‘Throw it to the*

potter'--the handsome price at which they priced me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD to the potter." **Zechariah 11:12-13 (NIV)**

You see, Judas had a problem with money. It wasn't always the case because at some point Judas was trusted enough to be appointed the treasurer of the group of disciples. He looked after the money and paid the bills. But John tells us that he used to help himself to some of the money by skimming some off the top and keeping it for himself. It got so bad that as we saw last week, when Mary anointed Jesus with the expensive perfume, the first thing that Judas thought about was the cost. The love of money gradually overtook him until he reached the point where he would sell out his master for a little silver.

But there were others whom Jesus had encountered who had sold Jesus out as well. Let's look at some of them.

2. The Walk of the Superficial

A. The Wealthy. Another person who seemed sincere when he first met Jesus was the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18-30). This young man came to Jesus, asking Him what he had to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus told him about keeping the commandments, and after claiming to have kept them all, Jesus told him that there was one thing he lacked. He said, "*Sell everything you have and give it to the poor, and then you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.*" **(Luke 18:22 NIV)**. When the young man heard this, the Bible says "*he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth.*" **(Luke 18:12 NIV)**. He would not follow him because it would have meant giving up his wealth. Like Judas this young man valued money more highly than he did Jesus.

B. The Wavering. On what we call Palm Sunday, as Jesus entered Jerusalem, a throng of people lined the streets of the city and cheered Jesus on. They waved palm branches in the air and threw their cloaks down on the ground in front of Him. They were crying out, "*Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord*" By their words and actions that day they were saying, "*We're with you Jesus. We're behind you all the way!*" They were aligning themselves with Him.

But where was the throng just a few days later when Jesus was arrested? They were still there, but by then, their cheers had turned to jeers. By then, instead of blessing Him, they were cursing Him. And what were they saying and doing as He was dragging the cross through the streets on His way to be crucified? They were hurling insults at Him; spitting in His face, and taunting Him. One day they were saying Jesus was special but the next, in fear of their own personal safety and popularity, they turned on Jesus. They cheered him when it was fashionable to cheer him, they supported him when it was good for their reputations, but when they thought it would endanger their safety and comfort and their careers they showed what they valued the most, and turned on Him and wished Him dead.

This crowd was typical of others who had initially followed Jesus in the early days of His ministry but wavered in the end. As Jesus went around performing miracles and gathering disciples, many people were

attracted to Him. Throngs of people would gather to hear Him teach and watch in amazement as He healed lepers and gave sight to the blind and caused the lame to walk again. They would “*ooh and ahh*” as He fed thousands of people with a sack lunch or cast out demons from raving lunatics.

But when Jesus began to teach and preach things like “*Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.*” **Matthew 8:20 (NIV)**, and “*Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.*” **Luke 9:60 (NIV)**, and “*No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.*” **Luke 9:62 (NIV)**, some of the early followers got uncomfortable. They began to re-evaluate their priorities and many left Him because they valued their comfort more than Jesus.

Jesus knew this would happen. That’s the point of the story He told about the farmer who sowed some seeds in his field. Some of the seeds started out well and grew rapidly, but then they were choked out by weeds. This symbolized people who heard His word and obeyed, but valued other things more, so that when persecution or ridicule came as a result of them following Jesus, they left Him.

C. The Worldly. Today, there are many others who claim to genuinely love Jesus and believe He is who He says He is, but their lifestyles and the choices they make say something else. They try to follow Jesus a little bit and to do their own things a little bit. They may come to church and get involved in the activities, but all the time they are out in the world, engaging in worldly activities. They are drinking and doing drugs and committing adultery and sleeping around and cussing like a sailor during the week, and then they come to church and try to make everyone believe they are saints. But they have no remorse and no intention of repentance. These folks think that everything is all right. Jesus encountered a group like this and He quoted the Prophet Isaiah, when He said, “*These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.*” **Matthew 15:8 (NIV).**

The worldly value their own lifestyles more than they value Jesus. So that when a choice between life-style and Jesus or their favorite sins and Jesus has to be made they don’t choose Jesus, they choose what is more valuable to them.

Conclusion: In this message, Jesus challenges us to look inside our hearts and see just how much we really think of Him. If there is something there that we value more than Him, then He calls us to change our lifestyles to conform to His will. He calls us to separate ourselves from our favorite little sins and cling to Him. He demands that we value Him above everything else above our comfort, above our popularity, above our reputation, above our selfish expectations, and certainly above our money.

Fortunately, the rest of the disciples accepted this challenge and made Jesus and His mission their life. Their lives proved their worth of Jesus as they all literally gave their lives in service and devotion to their Master.

That is how much Jesus expects us to value Him - more than anything else. But it's something we have to decide for ourselves. It's not just a question of whether or not we believe that He is who He says He is, of whether or not we believe that He died for our sins. It's not a question of what we say, or what we tell other people, or what we sing. It's a question of worth. When crunch time comes and there has to be a choice made between Jesus and all these other things that hold value in our lives, what will we choose? Judas valued Jesus at thirty pieces of silver. How much do you value Him?