

THE KINGDOM BUILDER



STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

...For Money

Recently I attended a conference and one of the main speakers made a passing comment in his presentation that froze me in that moment. He said, “Judas betrayed Jesus for money.” I have known all my life that Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, but for some reason it wasn’t until that very moment that I connected that thirty pieces of silver to money – where I have spent most of my professional life. As soon as he made that statement, “Judas betrayed Jesus for money,” a mirror appeared before me and I found my own reflection in it and for the first time in my entire life I found myself painfully identifying with Judas.

Over my life I have often related to Peter, too bold and carelessly impetuous, and to Samson, with his great strength, but lack of self-control, and even to King Saul, who “played the fool.” But never before have I ever seen myself in Judas, the betrayer – until that moment.

The idea continued to nag at me. When I got home I began to study the events surrounding Judas’ betrayal. I wanted to know what the word “betray” really meant. It means to “turn someone over to another,” the way a police officer would turn over a convict to a prison warden. Has my life or my behavior ever turned Jesus over to be mocked and ridiculed by another because of my hypocritical and self-centered life? Remember Judas didn’t kill Jesus, he only set Him up to be killed by others. Have I ever set Jesus up to be “crucified” by others?

I found that Luke (6:16) called Judas a “traitor” – meaning “someone who is false to a duty or an obligation.” I was feeling even more uncomfortable at this point. Have I ever been inconsistent in my duty and my obligation to Christ because His will and my will didn’t align? Have I abandoned His

“ship” for my own because my “ship” looked more profitable? Have I ever been guilty of dereliction of duty to him in my financial dealings?

Okay, maybe I have betrayed Jesus and been a traitor to him on some occasions in my life. But surely I’ve not been as exceedingly disloyal as Judas was. Judas had his price? In today’s dollars, what was Judas’ price to sell out Jesus? My study revealed that thirty shekels (pieces) of silver was the standard price of an adult slave (Exodus 21:32). A slave, when bought, would be bound for six years to his owner and then he was to be set free (Exodus 21:2). So, when a man bought a slave, he was in effect prepaying for six years of slave labor. If we assume the current minimum wage as our version of modern day “slave labor” and multiply that by six years of full time work (40 hours x 52 weeks) then in today’s dollars Judas sold Jesus out for about \$75,000.

I moaned - \$75,000? The Lord brought to my mind times when I had indeed been His traitor and betrayer in some of my past financial dealings and sadly it was for a whole lot less than Judas’

\$75,000. I have been guilty of betraying Jesus for money.

Think about it, have you ever “embellished” your deductions on a tax return in order to pay less in taxes? Have you ever intentionally failed to fully disclose all the pertinent information so as to not lose a sale? Have you ever done a cash transaction and not reported the income? Have you overcharged someone or been undercharged and not corrected the financial error that was in your favor? Have you ever padded your expense account? Have you ever found yourself calculating ways to give less to the Lord by using some creative financial gymnastics to come up with your giving amount? Have you ever skipped worship to work and make more money?

I could go on and eventually hit some nerve in all of us, but I will let the Holy Spirit bring to your mind how you have betrayed Jesus and played the traitor for money just as He has reminded me of my betrayals. I hope you will give Him time to bring those situations to your mind by meditating on this matter for a while.

One final interesting detail in this story; the only Gospel writer that records the actually price of Judas’ betrayal is Matthew – the man whose previous career was the patently dishonest financial business of tax collecting. He was well acquainted with lying, stealing and cheating to get more money. Apparently, Matthew wanted us to know all the sordid financial details of Judas’ traitorous deed. Maybe he records these details to warn those of us who may have a similar sinful inclination not to fall prey to the same devastating temptation and delusion that Judas did.

Please do not misunderstand what I am saying. I am not suggesting that any of us are some kind of modern day Judas. But when we see even the faintest likeness of Judas’ moral and spiritual depravity in us, I think we all should be appropriately humbled and sincerely repentant when we see his pathetic likeness appearing in our personal or professional lives.

What is most sad about the story of Judas and for us when we emulate him is that Judas didn’t really betray Jesus for money; Judas betrayed himself for money. And in the end, he lost his money, he lost his life and he lost his eternity. It was an entirely bad deal for him and it will likewise be a bad deal for us too whenever we, even in the smallest ways, choose to betray Jesus for money.



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