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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
March 13, 2019
(previously preached o 3-03-93)
2nd Midweek Lent

Passion History: Upper Room III (Institution of Lord's Supper)
Hymns: 156; 144; 141; 552:5-8

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our
Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Matthew 16:14-15

¹⁴ Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to
the chief priests ¹⁵ and said, "What are you willing to give
me if I deliver Him to you?" And they counted out to him
thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶ So from that time he sought
opportunity to betray Him. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is
truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, Who laid down His life for us, fellow
Redeemed:

INTRO: Real money, hard cash - that's what we're talking
about!

So much of the money we have doesn't seem real. Some of
it like bitcoin is even called "crypto currency." It exists
only on the internet, and yet it is perceived as valuable,
and is traded and used as hedge against runaway inflation
in some countries. I don't know, it seems almost imaginary
to me. It's not like real money you can hold in your hand.

Even then if you look at one on your dollar bills you will see that it isn't backed by anything real like silver or gold. It's backed by the name and reputation of the United States. Our coins haven't had any silver in them or for that matter even any copper for many years. Real silver or gold when you hold that in your hand, there is some real value! Some years ago I was handed a one once gold coin. It was imprinted that it was a fifty dollar gold piece. But it was surely worth several times the fifty dollars stamped on its surface. You know it was kind of exciting to hold it, even if only for a minute or two before it had to go back where it belonged. What an appeal the wealth of this world holds for us!

It was this appeal, this allurements that brought about the memento which is at the center of our Lenten meditation this evening.

THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER

This memento brings forward the question --

THEME: What Value do We Place on Jesus, our Savior?

Is it --

I. The Price of a Slave?

We learned something about Judas in the first of our Lenten meditations. He led the objections against Mary's anointing of Jesus because he was a thief who saw a lost opportunity to steal! If that gift had only been given in cash Judas might have been able to pocket some of that money for himself!

It was immediately after that that this lust for money led Judas to approach Jesus' enemies with a plan, a scheme for Judas to make some money, a goodly sum of money. It might even be true that Judas never thought that any real harm would come to Jesus because of his scheme. He had seen Jesus in tight spots before this and Jesus had always managed to walk away unharmed. Perhaps with this

money lust blinding him Judas never thought far enough ahead to contemplate the end result of his actions. The price for which Judas settled seems a paltry sum in retrospect, however it was a sum with great significance.

In the civil law of the Jews given through Moses at Sinai this was the exact amount of money that God had ordained to settle a dispute between neighbors over the life of a slave. We read in -

Exodus 21:32 *“If the ox gores a male or female servant, he shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.”*

It was no accident that the Lord established this amount as the price of a servant. The Lord knew what would take place between Judas and the chief priests down to the last detail. The Lord knew that Judas would throw the money on the temple floor and that ultimately it would be used for the purchase of the potters’ field as a place to bury strangers. Centuries earlier this was revealed both through the Prophets Jeremiah and Zechariah. We read in -

Zechariah 11:12-13 *“Then I said to them, “If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages; and if not, refrain.” So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. ¹³And the Lord said to me, “Throw it to the potter”—that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord for the potter.”*

So Jesus was delivered for the price of a slave! But what a great reminder this is for us of how Jesus did indeed live a lowly and humble life for us. He came down to earth as the Servant of the Lord. Jesus said *“the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”* (Matthew 20:28).

It was not for His benefit that the Son of God came down to earth, but for our benefit. His motive was not that He would thereby lay claim to great wealth or glory. Glory was already His; He possessed glory from before the world began. The Son of God was born into this world to serve, to be the Servant of the Lord fulfilling God's purpose of delivering us from sin and death. He took our load upon Himself. He bore our burden of sin, guilt, and condemnation. Isaiah referred to Jesus repeatedly as the Servant of the Lord, that Servant chosen by God to set us free.

So the price set upon Jesus was the Thirty Pieces of Silver, the price of a slave. And yet what value do we place on Jesus our Savior?

Is it --

II. The Price of Our Worldly Pleasure?

When we look at the folly of Judas' decision to betray the Lord for such a paltry sum as thirty pieces of silver, it boggles our minds! How could Judas have been so short-sighted? Yes, thirty pieces of silver seemed a great sum, but couldn't Judas see that the pleasure of possessing that money, even if it seemed to be a lot of money, that pleasure would be short lived?

But that is the frailty of our sinful human natures! So often we become so adamant in our short-sightedness. The love of money takes possession of hearts so that it becomes an overwhelming power in many lives. Don't we all pursue what is referred to as the American dream? The American dream is to own a nice home and to be successful, the kind of success that is measured by dollars in the bank, and in the investment accounts and in our 401(k)s. The nightly news gives ample evidence to the truth of Paul's words to Timothy:

1 Timothy 6:9-10 *"But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and*

harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Those closing words describe Judas' tragic end so accurately. What Judas gained for himself was nothing more than many, many sorrows. He traded eternal life with the Lord for eternal perdition in hell.

Perhaps in our individual lives the goal is not always money. Perhaps it is some other personal objective that becomes such an obsession for us that we become blind to the spiritual cost. It may be friendship with the world, an illicit romance, a career choice that leads away from the Lord, or the demands of success, or simply fleshly pleasure whenever and however it presents itself to us. Any of these could be our *"Thirty Pieces of Silver."* We may trade in our relationship with the Lord for any of these. Are any of these worth the price one would have to pay?

It would be good for us to always remember these words of our Lord Jesus: *"What profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Matthew 16:26) If we in our foolishness trade away Jesus for the treasures or pleasures of this world, we ought to realize that we also value our souls as worthless, and we indeed may be lost forever!

But what is the value of our Savior?

III. The Priceless Ransom for our Eternal Souls!

Priceless! So much in this world is considered to be priceless, but it is only that a value has not been computed, or arrived at by auction. Most often these "treasures" are ancient artifacts of earlier civilizations already returning to dust, or what society considers a

great work of art. The world cannot realize that all the treasures of this world are insignificant, I say **insignificant** when compared to the value our God finds in our Savior. Consider Jesus' mission, the redemption of our souls. Solomon with all his wealth could not have gathered enough treasure to purchase salvation for even one soul! The psalmist wrote by inspiration:

Psalm 49:6-8 "Those who trust in their wealth
And boast in the multitude of their riches,
⁷ None of *them* can by any means redeem *his* brother,
Nor give to God a ransom for him—
⁸ For the redemption of their souls *is* costly!"

Only one thing is actually priceless so that no value could ever be established for it, and that is the life of Christ our Savior! That was the price that needed to be paid for the salvation of our souls. What the Psalmist wrote is very true indeed, "**The redemption of *our* souls is costly!**" The only acceptable ransom price to secure even one soul is at the same time so precious that it redeemed the souls of all mankind! And so the Apostle Peter explains in his first epistle:

1 Peter 1:18-19 "knowing that you were **not** redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers,
¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

In Him we possess an eternal hope and an eternal glory that cannot be taken away, that will never disappoint us, that will not fade with the passing of time. In Him we have life through the forgiveness of all sins purchased and won for us by Jesus' death on the cross.

How precious is Jesus to you? More precious than Thirty Pieces of Silver? Most certainly more precious than the largest bag of silver! More precious than life itself! And yet it is so easy to overvalue the things of this world, and

undervalue Christ our Redeemer. May this Memento of Thirty Pieces of Silver remind us always that this price of a Servant was the price set on Him who gave His life as the ransom price for our salvation. "Thirty Pieces of Silver" -- a mere memento of a far greater Treasure that is ours forever in Jesus.

AMEN.

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, To receive power and riches and wisdom. (Revelation 5:12) Amen.

(The congregation response is hymn 367:4 printed following the sermon in your bulletin.)

"Worship, honor, power, and blessing Thou art worthy to receive;

Loudest praises, without ceasing, Meet it is for us to give.

Help, ye bright angelic spirits, Bring your sweetest, noblest lays;

Help to sing our Savior's merits, Help to chant Immanuel's praise."