

Communion Service - Thursday 7th March

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Preacher: Rev Roddy Morrison

[0 : 0 0] For a few moments, let us turn together to that passage that we read in chapter 27 of Matthew's Gospel. And we are going to look together at the part that Judas Iscariot played in the death of Jesus.

Verse 3, we read these words, We see to it.

At this time in the history of the Jewish people, they had no authority in taking anybody's life.

They couldn't pass the death sentence on anybody. They had lost that right when the Romans came and invaded their nation and took them captive to themselves.

Long, long ago in Genesis 49 and verse 10, we read of how Jacob on his deathbed prophesied that this was going to happen.

[1 : 3 5] This is what he said, The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh comes.

And that time had come. That prophecy made many, many years before had been fulfilled to the very letter. And the scepter had departed from Judah.

And that meant that they had to get permission from Rome to put to death anyone that they found guilty of being put to death.

The verses that we read there tell us about the part that Judas, one of the apostles, played in the death of Christ.

If anyone at that time who could witness and give evidence against Jesus, it was Judas. Judas had been constantly in the company of Jesus for the last three years or more.

[2 : 4 6] He had been constantly in the company of Jesus. And if Jesus had said anything wrong, if he had done anything wrong, then Judas would not have hesitated in reporting him to the authorities, to the church leaders.

But he didn't, because he knew that in his heart, Jesus was innocent. And that is why he said to the chief priests and the elders, I'm guilty of betraying innocent blood.

As we consider Judas, we do so humbly and with a sad heart. For him, it was a time when he would be leaving this world behind and entering into eternity.

With his hands red, not only with the blood of Jesus, but also with his own blood, having taken his own life.

He was a man who had received many privileges. Like so many of ourselves here tonight, we have received many privileges too.

[4 : 1 0] Many blessings had been given to him. He was a man who could have done something great for God, but he didn't. The first thing that meets us in this story of Judas is a false sorrow.

We meet with a sorrow that is false. In verse 3, we read that Judas, his betrayal, seeing that he had been condemned, was remorseful.

There is an eternity of a difference between remorse and being repentant. There is a difference between a person being remorseful and a person being repentant.

Judas brought back the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders of the Jewish church. He acknowledged openly before them that he was guilty of betraying Jesus.

And that Jesus had done nothing wrong. And that he was innocent. I have sinned, he said. Verse 4, betraying innocent blood.

[5 : 30] But his repentance was not godly sorrow. But the sorrow of this world. The apostle Paul, when he was writing to the Corinthians.

In 2 Corinthians makes that very distinction between the two, which is very useful for us to grasp. He writes this.

For the sorrow of God. For Godly sorrow produces repentance, leading to salvation. Not to be regretted. But the sorrow of this world produces death.

So there is a difference, a vast difference between godly sorrow and the sorrow of this world. How do we recognise godly sorrow?

How do we recognise it so that we will not mistake the sorrow of the world for godly sorrow? We know that it is not godly sorrow when, like Judas, the person is more interested in the consequences of his deeds than he is of the deeds themselves.

[6 : 49] That is one way of recognising godly sorrow and recognising the sorrow of this world. The person who is sorrowful because he has been found out that the consequences of his sins are produced things that he didn't expect to happen.

Then you see that that is the sorrow of this world. That the person who is sorrowing in a godly way is not only sorry for the things that he has done, but also sorry that he has committed sins against God.

Judas was sorry that Christ was condemned to death. He had every hope that Christ would escape from the hands of his captors.

And that he would go on living as he had for the past 33 years. And he would have pocketed the 30 pieces of silver for himself.

Some of the feelings that he had in his heart towards Jesus, who had been so kind to him, came up to the surface.

[8 : 21] His emotions were stirred. He never thought for one moment that Jesus was going to end up on the cross.

He was sure that Jesus would escape that. He would pocket the money for himself. He repented because things didn't turn out the way he wanted and expected.

And that is never, never through repentance. You see, a murderer may cry in his cell as he sees the gallows on the electric chair coming nearer and nearer to him.

And not be at all sorry for the life, the innocent life that he has taken with all the heartbreak involved.

Human law measures sin by its consequences. But that is not the case with God's law. Human law. A mother, an example could be a railway signal man who neglects his duty.

[9 : 37] And the result is, there's a terrible crash and many of the commuters are killed. In the court later on, he is found guilty and sentences passed on him.

but then it has been found out that he has done the very same thing a number of times before that and nothing happened and yet he is just as guilty on those occasions when there was no crash as he was on the time that the crash happened in the same way if we have done wrong and escaped being caught it is just as dark as dark can be in God's sight when we are caught when there is a true genuine repentance the sinner not only is sorry for the consequences of his sins, he is sorry for the sin itself and he sees it as being against God in the first place and the classic example of that is the repentance of King David when Nathan points out to him his sin with Bathsheba and as a result he cries out in prayer to God he had sinned against you, you only have I sinned he had sinned against Uriah he had sinned against Bathsheba he had sinned against the child that was later on born into the world he had sinned against the nation of Israel who had called him to be their king but if that was all he had to be sorry about it would have not been true repentance he would have only been sorry that he had been found out and for the consequences of his actions but David realised something that every one of us must realise if we are going to cruelly repent of our sins he realised that he had let God down he realised that he hurt God more than he hurt anyone else supposing there were no consequences to follow there was enough there itself to be sorry about that he had sinned against God and that is why often deathbed repentance is not true repentance it can be, of course it can but not always the case it's possible in a crisis like death to see your life flash before you and be sorry for all the things that you have done wrong down through the years and yet it is to have no lasting saving influence upon your eternal soul the two thieves hanging on the crosses along with Jesus they were filled with remorse each one of them for the kind of life that they had lived but only one was truly repentant of his sins and was saved the one that

Jesus told would be with him that day itself in paradise see one of the tricks of the devil and I've been thinking about this for a long time now one of the tricks of the devil is to get us to think that we can repent at any time we like that we can just call to God any time we like and then God will answer and we shall be saved but all we have to do is to shout to God as death approaches and then and then all will be well but that is not the case the shorter catechism helpfully states what true repentance is this is what it says repentance into life is a saving grace whereby a sinner out of a true sense of his sin an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ doth with grief and hatred of his sin turn from it unto God with full purpose of heart and full endeavour after new obedience a lot of people think that becoming a Christian is like a person who jumps out of an aeroplane at 10,000 feet with a parachute strapped on his back he's not unduly worried as he hurtles down to the ground at 200 miles an hour he's got the parachute on his back and all he has to do is to pull the cord and the parachute opens above him in splendor and then he lands safely on the ground that may be true about parachutists but it's not true about the spiritual life it's not true about the gospel for a sinner what is true about us is this that we are hurtling hurtling to our lost eternity and to the lake of fire without anything equivalent to a parachute on our back we've got nothing on our back to save us we're as if we are hurtling down into the mouth of an open volcano an active volcano and you've seen on television many a time what that is like the lava there bubbling red and running over the side of the mountain down to the sea and the parachutist is making directly for that open mouth of the active volcano he has nothing to pull that would open a parachute he has no parachute to open and unless some power outside of himself comes and saves him from going down into that molten lather of the volcano then he will be lost forever and ever that is how we are too hurtling down to a lost eternity to hell itself bubbling over with fire and brimstone and unless

God in his mighty power and in his mercy and in his grace comes and saves us before we reach that open mouth of hell we shall be lost in that fiery lake as well so we need God we need God to save us before we come to the end of life's journey in this world we cannot tell tonight how near to that awful place any of those who are unconverted here are they may be nearer to that awful place they seem to think my duty as a minister of the gospel is to warn you I cannot save you I cannot save myself or anybody else but I can tell you of one who is able to save you

God is able to save you God is able to come before you enter into a lost eternity and he can put his arms around you and lift you up and put your feet on safe ground and you say farewell to the fiery lake forever and ever after that it need not frighten you in any way forever more you will see it no more so wherever you are tonight unconverted unsaved cry to God in prayer don't wait don't listen to the devil who says to you well you'll pray when you reach home you'll go up into your bedroom and there you'll pray and God will hear you you might not reach home your life is that uncertain right while you are unconverted soul say this to God

[19 : 44] I'll put the words in your mouth Lord I am a sinner on my way to a lost eternity I believe Jesus died for the likes of me oh God save me tonight and make me a Christian right away and the moment as we were saying in the Gaelic service in the morning the moment you sincerely and truly believe in Jesus and trust in him as your saviour you are forgiven at that very moment not ten years or five years or one year's time God doesn't put you on probation and say well you see let's see how you get on in six month time I will come and I will visit you and see how you get on no it is not like that at all when you make that prayer to

God in sincerity tonight that moment from Jesus a pardon receives the vilest defender who truly believes that moment from Jesus a pardon receives make that prayer tonight just where you are sitting God says to us all now is the accepted time today is the day of salvation tomorrow is not promised today if you hear his voice do not harden your heart don't leave a decision that is so important don't leave it until it is too late a lot of people think that you can't be too late in seeking God and seeking salvation when I came across a verse recently in

Proverbs chapter 1 and verse 28 and this is what it says then they will call on me but I will not answer they will seek me diligently but they will not find me so there comes a time when the sinner will call on God when it is too late too late because the door of mercy and of grace will not stay open forever there is such a thing then as we see in the life of Judas here a false sorrow don't mistake it for godly sorrow and then there is a blighted hope here as well a blighted hope then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple this was his reaction when his former friends said to him when he confessed the mistake he had made in the

Jesus what is that to us you see to it and that would be exactly what the former friends of the prodigal son would have said to him if he had gone to them and said to them look here I've no money now I've spent all the money that my father gave me and I was sharing it with the likes of you as well for many a day but it's run out I've got no money and I'm hungry will you help me they would say to him what is that to us you see to it it's no concern of us and that is what the devil says to us to this night after we have sinned you can turn round and say to the devil devil I listen to you you told me it will be all right in the end but it's not going to be all right

I'm going to be lost forever well what is that to me you will say what's that to do with me that's you look out you sort that out everywhere creature he is. And he is a horrible creature.

[24 : 22] I hope there's nobody in this church tonight who doesn't believe in the devil. The devil is not something you read about in ancient books.

He is as much alive today as he was in the days you read about. In books of history, when he used to roam through Scotland, devouring as many as he could and taking them captive.

The trouble with our generation is that the devil hides himself. In those days, 400, 500 years ago, before the gospel came, with power into our villages and towns, the devil was manifesting himself.

Sometimes in animal form, leading people astray. But in our day, as the gospel influence has taken over, he hides himself.

That is his tact now, to hide himself and pretend he's not there at all. what use was that money to Judas?

[25 : 36] Thirty pieces of silver. He only had them in his hand for about an hour at the most, if he had them for that length of time itself.

During that time, I'm sure they were at weight on his soul and on his heart, that he had sold his master for these wee things that were hardly bigger than a six penny piece of the old six pence we used to have before the currency change.

And throughout eternity, I'm sure he will continue to hear the noise that they made as they danced on the floor, while he threw them. Throughout eternity, he will hear the jingle of those coins, making that noise that they made when he threw them to the floor.

The pleasures of sin only last for a little while. Moses recognised that in his own day, when he turned his back upon the pleasures of Egypt and all that they offered to him down there.

The wages of sin is death, says the word of God. And it is something that the servant of sin cannot refuse.

[27 : 03] He must take his wages of sin. Those who sow to the flesh, says God's word, shall reap of the flesh corruption.

Numbers 22, 23, says, be sure your sin will find you out. Because sin is going to come after you. with this payment, this pay packet in his hand, and he'll find you out wherever you are.

And he will give you that pay packet. This is what you earned, he will see. And when you open it, it will be death. Eternal death.

Forever and ever. With the devil and his angels. Sooner or later, in this life, or in the life to come, sin, that has not been washed away by the blood of Jesus, will catch up with the sinner.

And the sinner will have to pay the price. What an awful reckoning that will be. We speak of the day of reckoning. What a reckoning that will involve.

[28 : 21] Sin is the most unprofitable thing in the whole world to engage in. If you could go to where Judas is tonight, and we know where he is, because Jesus said, I have lost none except the sin of perdition.

So we know that he is in hell tonight. And if you went to him and asked him, Judas, why are you here?

How did you end up here? He will tell you, I made the biggest mistake of my life. But I didn't trust in Jesus and believe in him.

If you went to any of the others that I've recorded in the Bible, Esau, Echan, Gehazi, Ananias, and Sapphira, they would tell you the same thing.

The biggest mistake of our lives was to not give Jesus the first place in our hearts and in our lives.

[29 : 34] if any of your friends or relations have gone to a lost eternity and if they could come back tonight, they would come and say to you, I made the biggest mistake I ever made.

But they'll not come back. And you know why they won't come back and confront you? because we have the Bible. We have God's word.

And as Jesus said to the rich man in hell, he said, Abraham, it was, the rich man in hell, Abraham said to him, they have Moses and the prophets and if they don't believe them, they will not believe, supposing someone rose from the dead.

and you think and maybe I think sometimes that if we saw a vision of somebody who had died years ago and came back to us in a dream or in some other form that we would sit up and that we would listen.

No, we wouldn't. Suppose somebody came from eternity and stood there at that lectern tonight and said, men and women, there is a hell and there is a heaven and I am in hell tonight.

[30 : 56] I was allowed to come out for a wee while just to warn you of the danger of being lost. We would go home frightened maybe.

That was awful tonight in that sense. I don't know if I'll ever go back to that place anymore but we wouldn't be saved. We wouldn't be converted.

We would stay as we were. Frightened maybe for a few days or a few weeks that then back to our old habits as before. A blighted hope then there is a bitter end here as well.

The way we end our lives in this world is of utmost importance. far more important than the way we begin our lives.

With regard to most of us here tonight I'm sure even all of us here tonight we were born into this world with joy and with happiness surrounding us in the home.

[32 : 08] A little boy had been born into the family and the family would be glad. A little girl had been born and parents would be so glad.

Prayers of thanksgiving would go up from the hearts of godly parents and godly grandparents. as you snuggled into your mother's arms there would be those who would be silently saying God thank you for bringing that little one into the world safely and that you spared the mother's life as well.

I'm sure that Judas' birth was something like that too. His parents would be filled with joy. a little boy had been born into the world.

A little boy with all the hopes of future years. But oh how different the sin as he leaves this world and enters into eternity.

I wonder although you came into the world with joy and with happiness surrounding you on every side will you go out of the world with joy and with happiness on every side as well.

[33 : 29] He went here that he threw the silver away and departed and went and hanged himself. What a knowful death to anyone anyone at all let alone an apostle and a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Judas rushes away from the temple gets a rope sees a tree and in his hurry doesn't tie the rope properly perhaps.

We don't know but just suggesting that may or may not be through. It could be that the rope wasn't tied properly and it got loose.

it may be that the branch snapped or that the rope was worn and old and that it broke as well.

We don't know but he fell to his death rupturing his stomach. the bible tells us he burst inside him bursting out.

[34 : 39] Here is the end of a man who had everything going for him. A man who could have been useful in the church in later years.

He could have had the gospel written by him named after his name the same as Matthew and Mark and Luke and John maybe we would have the gospel according to Judas but we don't.

Instead of that he has taken his own life breaking the sixth commandment that says to us you shall not kill. He enters into the presence of God having betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ to his enemies having to answer to God for that.

and he goes into the presence of God with his hands spread with his own blood having taken his own life. No one sins so terribly as the one who sins against the light that he has been given.

And my that man Judas was given a lot of light. three years and more in the company of Jesus being taught by Jesus seeing his miracles hearing his teaching.

[36 : 06] John Bunyan wrote the pilgrim's progress he said this one day none fall so deep into the pit as those who fall into it backwards.

That takes a little thinking about the one who falls into it backwards.

Well there are lessons to be learned here for us all. First lesson is that we can be in the company of Christ and in the company of Christians.

We can use pious language. we can conform to everything expected of us and yet not know Jesus Christ as a person of saviour and lord.

we can be a church member, we can be an elder, we can be a minister, we can be a moderator, we can be a bishop, we can be even a pope and get lost at the end of it all.

[37 : 14] Remember many many years ago in Glasgow in a prayer meeting we were praying a tape about an interview that somebody had with the pope at that time.

And the person asked the pope, are you sure that you're going to heaven after you die? And he said, I am not sure.

I don't know whether I will go to heaven or not. It's not everyone that says to me, Lord, Lord, that you'll enter into the kingdom.

But those who do the will of my father which is in heaven. So if that's the ones that are going into the kingdom of heaven, let us make sure that we are doing the will of the father, that we are doing the will of God, not what anybody else says or does not say.

The other lesson we have here for us is this, that it is possible for us to be sidetracked by some sin away from the gospel.

[38 : 27] And the devil is waiting to lure us away from Christ, to lure us away from following Jesus in this world. For Judas, it was the love of money.

He couldn't get enough of it. He was pilfering from the bag, yes, the treasure of the little group of disciples. And it was a right bonus for him when that day he got 30 pieces of silver to be in his pocket as well as the rest.

For you and for me it could be something very different. And we need to be careful that something quite legitimate, not to mention something sinful can lure us away from Christ.

Make sure that nothing does undermine your service for God in this world. Could I ask you at this very moment is there something in your life that you haven't told anybody and it's eating away, undermining your service for Christ in this world?

It could be your friends, listening to them rather than listening to the gospel. It could be your boyfriend or your girlfriend, your husband or your wife.

[39 : 58] It could be an ambition you have in wanting to get on and to be successful in this world. Are you putting that before Christ in your life?

make sure that it doesn't prevent you from being all that God intends you to be for him. and there is something else too that we learn from this sad story.

We should learn from this sad story that we should never limit God's forgiveness and love and mercy. Judas forgot what Jesus had taught him over the past three years about the love and the mercy and the grace of God.

Judas concluded that God would have nothing to do with him because he had betrayed his son into the hands of his enemies. He could only see one way out of it all and that is to take his own life and end his own life.

But that's not the way out for anyone in any age or generation. now if Judas had gone the next day to Calvary and thrown himself at the foot of the cross saying Lord Jesus I have sinned betraying you.

[41 : 28] Oh Lord forgive me and have mercy upon my soul. I'm sure that if he had done that Jesus would have forgiven him. But he didn't do that and we believe that there is a sense in which he couldn't do that.

Why couldn't he have done that? Because from all eternity Judas had been earmarked for betraying the Son of God. What an awful thing to be true about anyone that from all eternity this was in the plan and in the purpose of God that Judas would betray Jesus.

God is sovereign and God is righteous in all his ways. There were others and they said to Jesus with their dying breath as the thief did on the cross remember me.

Jesus said you'll be with me to this day itself in paradise. As I was thinking about this evening the verse came to mind chapter 10 of John's gospel my sheep hear my voice and they know me and they would follow me.

Judas was not one of the sheep of Jesus and therefore he did not hear the voice of Jesus in all the teachings of the last three years and therefore he didn't come into the category of those that were to be saved.

[43 : 21] God speaks about Pharaoh in the Old Testament in the same kind of way and he said for this reason I have brought you up. For this reason I have made you king in Egypt that you may see my glory and that I may show my glory and my power over you.

This is why you were set upon the throne of Egypt. All we can say is that Judas never asked God for mercy and he never got mercy and we can leave it at that.

As I said before it was in the plan of salvation in the plan of God that he would be part of that plan what an awful part to be given the part to play in betraying the son of God into the hands of sinners and then in remorse take his own life.

A blighted hope, a poor sorrow, a bitter end. God has been speaking to us in these letters tonight. May we listen to what he says.

May we be among those who are the sheep of God. And may we say I heard the voice of my shepherd Jesus Christ speaking to me in that service tonight.

[45 : 03] And I'm going to obey, I'm going to listen, I'm going to follow. I'm going to decide to follow Jesus from this night forward till the end of my life.

May that cry come from some heart here tonight. We ask that in Jesus' name. Bless your word to us, O God, as we come to the end of this service.

May your spirit hover among the congregation, enabling a person here and a person there to stretch out the hand of faith and take a hold of the saviour hand and that from this time forward, those two hands will be grasped by each other until he takes that person home.

O Lord, our God, hear us in our prayers. Bless us as we conclude and forgive our sins. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.