

## **“Do not be like Judas!” Matthew 27:3-10**

**Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” They said, “What is that to us? See to it yourself.” And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, “It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money.” So, they took counsel and bought with them the potter’s field as a burial place for strangers. Therefore, that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, “And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, and they gave them for the potter’s field, as the Lord directed me.”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Do not be like Judas! Probably this wasn’t exactly what you wanted to hear when you came to this service. Don’t be like Judas! That sort of implies that maybe we are like Judas. No! Of course, not! Who would like to be like Judas?!

Don’t rush, don’t rush! We actually are more like Judas than we would like to admit it. It is a mystery why exactly Judas did what he did. But what he did was this – he betrayed His Teacher and His Master for personal gain.

Instead of fearing to endanger their relationships, of loving and trusting in Jesus above all things, Judas obviously loved something else, some personal gains more than Jesus. See, it is not that hard to recognize that we are not that much different.

How often do we love our personal gains, our personal preferences more than our Lord? How often do we care about our often-excessive comfort, material and relational, more than we care about living according to the will of our Lord Jesus?

Think about it... But not too much. The point that I want to make this evening is very different. Do not be like Judas! But in what way? In this way – do not let your shame stand in the way of confession and forgiveness.

Do not let your shame rob you of the wonderful blessings of hearty confession and forgiveness. What do I mean by this? There are two men whose actions are remembered and remembered vividly whenever we think about the last hours of Jesus earthly life. Judas is one and ... the other is Peter.

We actually reflected on what Peter did and didn’t do in our last sermon a few weeks ago. ““Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!” (Mt 26:35) Such good intentions... And then, a few hours later: “I do not know what you mean. I do not know the man. And immediately the rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.” (Mt 26:73-75)

What about Judas? As we heard in our today's reading: "When Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." [...] And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself."

Two handpicked disciples of Jesus. Two different failures. Two different fates. One, Judas, went and hanged himself. Other, Peter, went and proclaimed the Gospel to end of the earth and ... at the end was hanged on the cross, as the Church's traditions tells, upside down, for with incredible courage and humility he had said that he is not worthy to die the same way as his Lord Jesus.

Do not be like Judas! Be more like Peter! But what was the difference? The difference was in what they did with their guilt and shame. Or we could say that the difference was in what they believed how God would react to their betrayal.

Judas realized that he has sinned. Those were his words. He felt terribly guilty. He felt terribly ashamed. He couldn't believe that God could forgive him. And it was this guilt and shame, this lack of trust, that robbed him of his salvation.

What about Peter? He too felt terribly guilty. He too felt terribly ashamed. He had been boasting louder than others, and ... he had failed Jesus. He had abandoned Him. He had denied that he even knew Jesus.

But the difference between Peter and Judas was this – with all his heavy and suffocating guilt and embarrassing shame Peter was looking for forgiveness. And Jesus, His risen Saviour embraced Him and entrusted Peter to care for His sheep.

It was Jesus unconditional and totally unmerited forgiveness that not only restored, but also transformed Peter. That was Jesus' forgiveness that lifted Peter out of his shame and filled him with this burning love and passion to serve his gracious Lord.

Here is an important lesson that we all need to learn. We all sin. If we are honest and self-aware, there is not denying that. But what do we want to do when we sin? What is our reaction? "It wasn't me! It was the woman that you gave me!"

We want to blame others. We want to justify ourselves. I don't know about you, but I fail in this respect regularly. For we want to look good. We want to preserve our image of good people in the eyes of others, but even more, in our own eyes.

With our lips we admit: "I confess that I am a poor miserable sinner...". But like fingers crossed in our hearts we hear different voice: "I am actually pretty good. And if I did something wrong, there was a good reason, others are even worse."

Too often this is our problem. We are so, so concerned how we look in the eyes of others, and in our own eyes. We are so afraid to lose face. We can't show that we have failed. That destroys our self-image as good people. That hurts.

I don't know about you, but I struggle to admit and even more to confess that I have sinned, that I have failed. It is not easy to confess it to the Father, as we Lutheran do it in private confession, it is hard... but it is even harder to confess to our brothers and sisters in Christ, to our loved ones, to our children.

"I have sinned against you. Please, forgive me!" ... These are among the hardest words that we need to push over our lips. They shatter our image. They kill us. But there is a help available. The Gospel that there is forgiveness with our God.

Jesus provides a solution. He gives you a different self-image. He gives you a new identity, a new life. How? Jesus has taken away all your sins. There is no sin that Jesus hasn't already paid for. There is no sin that Jesus' blood cannot wash away. There is no sin that could separate you from the love of God the Father in Jesus.

Which means that there is no sin – past, present or future – that has the power to destroy your image in God's eyes. You are loved and cherished beyond your wildest imagination. That is most certainly true. Your Father sees you in Jesus.

He sees you as His beloved child, radiant in heavenly glory, destined for eternity. Nothing can or will change how your Father sees you. Which means we don't need to worry about our self-image when we fail and sin. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we need to learn to see ourselves as our Father sees us.

What do we want to do when we so love someone? Yes, we want to hug them, to bring closer to our heart, to embrace. This is exactly what the Triune God does – He indwells in you. He embraces you in the most wonderful fellowship with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. No one can snatch you from His embrace!

When the Holy Spirit bring the Gospel to our very hearts and convinces us that all of this is true, then everything changes. Then instead of wanting to hide our sins from our Father and from people in our life, we want to get rid of our sins.

We want to confess and expose to light anything that may stand between us and our Loving Father, or between us and our brothers and sisters in Christ. We don't want our sin, guilt and shame separate us, we want Jesus forgiveness and love to unite us. Then we don't care about our self-made image anymore, we care and long for pure, honest and divine love-filled relationships. Genuine Christian community.

So, do not be like Judas! Don't you ever doubt God's forgiveness! Do not let your shame to push you away from Jesus, or from His family, the Church. Remember, "if we confess our sins, Jesus is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1 John 1:9) ... and so are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Don't be like Judas! Be who you truly are – beloved, adored and loved treasure of the Triune God.

Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit!

Amen!