

Worst Day Ever

Introduction

We are getting to the end of our study of John. We have had an incredible journey through these Holy Scriptures. Today we are going to look at the most incredible day and eventual week in human history. In one day, Judas would betray Jesus....Peter would betray Jesus....Judas would kill himself....Peter would try to kill a man starting with his ear. In the same day Jesus would be betrayed by the Jewish Leaders and be crucified.

During this day they would celebrate the Last Supper and the world would sacrifice the Lamb of God. Peter would face the most difficult weekend of his life and all the disciples were left hiding in a room not knowing what they had seen, what it meant and what would happen in the future.

The human dynamics that play out during this single day reflects the struggle that all human had and will have with Jesus....This day would force a decision...not just for the disciples, but for all mankind. But in order to fully grasp the significance, you have to forget that you know the rest of the story. You have to place yourself in the sandals of these three men.

So for the next 40 minutes or so...or so...I want you to forget that you know that Jesus resurrected....that Peter would be forgiven and restored...that the disciples would successfully begin the foundation of the church of Jesus. I want you to remember that neither Judas or Peter had received the Holy Spirit. They didn't even know what He was, what He would bring to them, and how He would transform their lives.I want you to forget any knowledge of this salvation being offered to the Gentiles.... I want you to forget that Jesus resurrected and taught them everything they needed to know during His time on earth after His resurrection.

Imagine that you only know what these three men knew. Jesus claimed to be God, did only what God could do and told them that He would set up a new kingdom on earth where He reigns and God's law not only established, but obeyed.

You believe that kingdom in only days away. Jesus would defeat the Pharisees and Sadducees...He would remove the Roman oppression and the promised Messiah would save the Jewish people and they would be leaders in the movement. They would be on the new King's cabinet...And all of this was going to happen within the week.

They could see that something really big was about to happen. Jesus kept speaking of ominous things. During these 24 hours, Jesus would desperately pray and they would see His turmoil while they kept falling asleep. Lets go back trying to know only what they knew so that we can best understand their emotions, their fears and their actions.

Lets begin by looking at Judas and Peter. You know that Peter is my favorite because He reminds me of me. We will see this as we go forward.

Two men who were disciples of Jesus. Two men who followed Him for three years and witnessed it all. They were there. They were leaders among the disciples. And yet they had another thing in common....the rejected Jesus and turned against Him at the most critical moment of His life. Both of

these men had the worst day of their lives....on the same day with totally different outcomes. One would find salvation and one would find Hell and in the process they would teach us a very important lesson about following Jesus.

How many of you personally know someone at school, at work, or in your neighborhood who is named Peter? How many of you personally know someone named Judas? How many of you have ever even met someone named Judas? Why is that? Tammy and I never even considered the name Judas for a boy. You want to know what else? The name Judas actually has a great meaning! It means "praised" or "celebrated."

Judas and Peter. Two very different men. When we speak of them, we get very different reactions. We often exalt Peter. We name our kids Peter. We place Peter in heaven. But we often condemn Judas. We name our enemies Judas. We put Judas in the lowest pit in hell. But really, Peter and Judas had a lot in common.

Though it is quite certain that Judas is among the damned, what was the real difference between Peter and Judas that brought about such an awful end for Judas and a blessed end for Peter? And what important lesson can we learn today from the lives of these two apostles?

I mean it just seems weird right? Judas betrayed Jesus and turned Him over for money. But Peter denied Jesus and cursed about it. Not only once but three times. Judas didn't take his sword and do an Ear ectomy.

Both felt horrible about what they had done. Both had genuine regret, genuine sorrow, and would do anything to make up for their mistake.

It is clear from Scripture that they both felt guilt, shame, regret, remorse and true genuine sorrow.

Yet Jesus turns to Peter and says, I am praying for you....that you will resist Satan's temptation. And to Judas Jesus says, go do what you must and it is better if you had never been born.

Seriously...were is the mercy? Where is the forgiveness? What is going on here?

Was Judas' sin that much worse? Was it unforgivable in some way? He felt bad, real bad about what he had done. He even takes the money he was given and tries to return it. He says that he realized he had betrayed innocent blood.

Sounds pretty good to me. What's up Jesus? Why the harsh response? Judas felt so bad about what he had done that he hung himself!

Regret...guilt....shame....remorse for our sins....isn't that what you want from us?

Yet Judas is called a devil and Peter is called a rock. On Peter you said you were going to build your church....yet Judas....one of the disciples you chose...

Acts 1:16–19 (ESV) — 16 "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those

who arrested Jesus. 17 For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry." 18 (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. 19 And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

Peter a rock the foundation of the church and Judas busts a gut and leaves behind a field of blood.

The field would later be called the Valley of Hinnom where children were burned to offer sacrifice to the false god of Molech and a valley that gives us the name Gehenna translated in the bible as hell.

This is a key subplot of this incredibly difficult day. It is critical because it identifies a key focus that either places us in heaven with Jesus or in Hell with Judas.

We are going to learn that it was not only the response to each of their sins that distinguishes their eternal destiny, it is the life that led up to that moment.

Both of these men came to a moment of truth....but their lives up to that moment not only shaped....but defined their response.

Peter and Judas had a lot of similarities

They were both apostles who left everything to follow Jesus. They were both eyewitnesses to everything that Jesus did and said with a few exceptions. They both had respectable positions among the other apostles and were looked up to.

Each on various occasions had to be rebuked or corrected by Jesus. Both were not perfect but no one anticipated that they would both fall the way they did. Jesus warned them both about what they were going to do before they did it.

But they both did it anyway. Both regretted their actions and felt genuine remorse. Both were filled with overwhelming sorrow, shame and guilt. Both experienced serious consequences for their actions.

What was so different about their sins? Judas plotted with the Jewish leaders to hand Jesus over for money. Peter denied that he knew Jesus not once but three times! Is there any difference between betraying Jesus and denying Him? Is there really any difference between betraying Him to get money and denying Him to save your own skin?

In fact, sometimes God's people can do some real whoppers! Like turning in the Lord for money. Or out and out cussin' and hollerin' that you don't know the Man! Betrayal. Denial. Looking out for Number One! That's what Judas and Peter did. They just did it in two different ways. But not just Judas and Peter. You and I do it.

By our sins. By our being ashamed of God's Word and denying our Lord. By always putting ourselves first when it's us or the Lord. Or putting ourselves ahead of our neighbor;

trampling on others to get what we want and what will make us comfortable. Judas' sin, Peter's sin, your sin—there's not any difference.

We need to dig deeper.

Looking a bit deeper at these two

Peter was probably one of Jesus' three closest friends (along with James and John). They often spent time alone with Jesus and witnessed things not seen by the other nine apostles.

No one believed that Peter would eventually claim that he didn't even know Jesus - and that he would do it three times.

Jesus warned him; yet Peter claimed that he would never do such a thing! Jesus told the apostles that they would all abandon him, but none of them believed it.

When asked if he knew Jesus, Peter denied it. He did this three times, the last time very vehemently. Also, the rest of the disciples abandoned Jesus. Let's take a look.

Mark 14:46–50 (ESV) 46 And they laid hands on him and seized him. 47 But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. 48 And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? 49 Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But let the Scriptures be fulfilled." 50 And they all left him and fled.

All of the disciples left him and fled.....Peter and John followed Jesus to the Courtyard...Then Speaking of Peter...

Matthew 26:74–75 (ESV) 74 Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately the rooster crowed. 75 And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

So they all abandoned Him....Why are Peter and Judas the ones who seem to be the failures here?

The first thing that we see is that Judas ran away from fellowship and Peter ran to it. Peter went to the room where the other disciples were....they knew He had sinned...they knew He had sworn to never deny Jesus...and they knew that he had failed Jesus in a very public way.....They didn't know if Peter would ever be forgiven by Jesus or restored to his prior position....they did not know. But they knew their leader and friend was hurting and needed community.

Peter made a horrible mistake but he didn't separate himself from Christian fellowship.

Judas, on the other hand, never experienced forgiveness or the healing of Christian community because when he sinned he ran from them, from Jesus and from his disciples and from the whole mission. It is an important lesson for us...when we sin and

we will, we need to draw near to God and His people, not run from them and allow Satan to destroy us in our isolation, just like he did to Judas.

Peter returned to the remaining apostles, was eventually visited by resurrected Jesus, and was "reinstated" with the task of taking care of Jesus' "sheep."

Jesus forewarned Peter that he would also die on a cross. But Peter did not get preoccupied with thoughts (and anxiety) about what he would eventually suffer. Instead, he accepted it, and then focused on doing things that would be of benefit to others - such as encouraging them in the way of salvation.

He failed Jesus and denied Him while trying to prove his faithfulness, a failure that was the result of fear rather than ulterior motives of disloyalty. His repentance after the fact was genuine, with a mournful weeping of having denied the Lord he loved.

Peter was a man whose heart was right with his Lord, a man whose temporary downfall was caused by taking his eyes off of Jesus and trying to serve God in his own strength.

When we examine Judas's character and lifestyle, we find quite a different story.

Judas was reproved for his complaint regarding the "wastefulness" of the woman, who poured expensive perfume over Jesus' feet

No one knew that Judas was a greedy thief and would even be willing to "sell" someone for money

Jesus told Judas that he knew his intentions.

Even just a few seconds before his betrayal, when Jesus called Judas "friend", he may have been offering Judas a final opportunity to change his mind about what he was going to do. If so, Judas completely ignored it.

Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 silver coins.

When Judas went to betray Jesus, we are told that Satan actually entered into him, and likewise again when he went to lead the hostile group to Jesus

Judas went back to the religious leaders and claimed that Jesus was innocent. He threw down the money and left.

Though Judas eventually threw the money away and then went and hanged himself it was most likely from an overwhelming guilt that God allowed him to experience as the self-inflicted punishment for his crime. The only repentance we see in this action is Judas's recognition that he had sinned by betraying "innocent blood," but there is no evidence of belief in Jesus as the Son of God.

Judas hanged himself.

Judas went to "where he belongs."

Yet Jesus' response to each of them was different.

But we recall that when Jesus said, "One of you will betray me," the disciples said among themselves, "Who is it, Lord? Is it I?" When Judas asked, "Is it I, Rabbi?" Jesus said to him, "You have said so" Jesus' final words to Judas were "What you are going to do, do quickly". And He dismissed him from their presence.

When Jesus prophesied that Peter would deny him, Peter protested profusely. "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away," he said. This brings to mind Paul's admonition, "Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall", because Jesus then turned to Simon and said to him in loving terms, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat"

Sifting wheat is not a laborious task that only the strong can perform. It may take time and it may be tedious, but it's not labor intensive. In using this metaphor, Jesus is cautioning Simon not to rely on his own strength, because it would be an easy thing for Satan to entice him to fall. Satan is stronger than Peter, and would have no trouble overcoming whatever strength Peter thought he had.

Notice, however, that Jesus does not say to Peter, "What you are going to do, do quickly." Our Lord's words to Simon Peter were significantly different from what He said to Judas. He said, "I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers"

Notice what Jesus doesn't say. He doesn't simply hope that Peter will be able to resist Satan, or that he will return, or that he will be able to strengthen the brothers. He expresses certainty that Peter will do these things

There was no doubt in Jesus' mind not only that Peter would fall, and fall abysmally, but also that Peter would be restored. Indeed, history testifies that Peter, in spite of this radical and serious fall, nevertheless endured to the end. He repented, he was forgiven, he was restored, and he endured to the end.

Ok so why are they perceived so differently by us....by the apostles....by Jesus?

Judas and Peter both had sorrow over what they had done. But there was a big difference in the nature of their sorrow: Judas had a sorrow that led only to regret and eventual despair. Peter had a sorrow that went beyond regret - all the way to a changed life.

2 Corinthians 7:8–11 (ESV) — 8 For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it— though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. 9 As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. 10 For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. 11 For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.

Wait a minute. They are two types of grief? Two types of sorrow? Godly sorrow and Wordly Sorrow? One leads to life and the other leads to death?

So it is not the sin or even the severity of our sins...it is our response that matters?

There is a huge difference between remorse and repentance. Almost every person feels remorse for the mistakes that they have made. They feel bad, they feel guilty, they feel shameful- we all understand the feeling of remorse.

We have all seen this right? The person caught in their sin....crying...ashamed....feeling badly....telling us how sorry they are for what they have done...offering to do something for us....to pay us back....to make it right....

That is Worldly Sorrow. That is remorse. That response alone leads to death.

REMORSE - may admit the wrongness of what was done, but does not necessarily imply any kind of change in heart attitude or lifestyle.

Why is Judas in Hell? He only had remorse.

Whenever God hear a confession....I am looking for something much deeper and much more important than remorse....He is looking for evidence of repentance.

REPENTANCE - involves a change in the way we think and act. It results in a change in lifestyle. God requires this change in us. He also makes this change possible.

Repentance requires accepting responsibility without excuses. It means owning our mistakes and agreeing with God about them. It means no excuses and full confession. It is totally unnatural to us and comes from our spirit not our mind. The desire to repent is from God.

Why is this so critical? Repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit. Remorse is the work of our flesh and mind.

But as Christ-followers we are commanded to repent. Remorse can lead us to repentance, but they are completely different responses.

Repentance is evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Both Peter and Judas were remorseful. But only Peter was repentant.

So how did they get to this point? Why did Peter react with Godly sorrow and Judas with worldly sorrow?

Well this shouldn't be a surprise to us. Our lives are rarely defined by a single moment, a single decision, a single day. Usually our response in a moment of truth is based on how we have lived our lives up to that moment.

In other words the key moments in our lives....the key decisions we make.....don't determine our character....they reveal the character that is or is not there.

In order to understand how Peter ended up in Heaven and Judas ended up in Hell, we have to go back and examine their lives prior to these key decisions.

What we learn about Peter from the Bible is that he had a sincere heart for God. His love for Jesus was real. He knew he was a sinner in need of salvation. Though Peter's actions may not have always been wise, the overall pattern of his relationship with Jesus was one of loyalty and faithfulness.

Unlike most of the other apostles, he did not desert Jesus, but instead followed Him, even into the enemy's camp. We must remember that if Peter had not followed in loyalty, he would have most likely never have been in the dangerous position which ended up in a denial of his master.

After Peter followed Jesus into the court of the high priest and was accused of being a follower of Jesus, he began to deny Him, even cursing and swearing. Yet, this denial was most certainly driven by fear. After the denial, Jesus looked upon Peter, who then went out and "wept bitterly" over what he had done.

Perhaps it would have been different if Peter had remained in the company of his compassionate and Christian brother, John.

Peter had to be rebuked and corrected many times, for he was quite impulsive and often did or said things that he later regretted. On one such occasion he received the sternest rebuke recorded in Scripture, given to an apostle by Jesus.

Peter's sincerity and determination to loyally follow Jesus is very apparent. Even though Jesus rebuked him at one point for allowing himself to be used by Satan to tempt Him, it was most likely what Peter mistakenly felt to be best for Jesus at the time.

Peter also felt unworthy to have Jesus wash his feet, and he stubbornly resisted the effort at first. And when Jesus told Peter that he would deny Him, Peter insisted that he was willing to follow Jesus even to prison or death.

After this conversation, it is most probable that Peter was more determined than ever to follow Jesus, regardless of the consequences, hoping to prove his faithfulness. We find the first evidence of this when they came to seize Jesus, for it was Peter who took action and fought, slicing off the ear of the high priest's servant.

Don't miss this. Peter was told by Jesus that he would deny him before the next morning. Peter said it would never happen. So Peter is determined not to back down. In less than a few hours the guards are coming to get Jesus. Peter had a sword, Jesus had told them earlier that they should take a sword...This is Peter's moment to prove he will not deny Jesus...He will attack this man and kill him or even be killed...Just like he had promised Jesus...

Peter would not fail Jesus...so he attacked. His first blow cut off Malchius' ear. He expected praise from Jesus....and yet once again his actions were wrong. Jesus tells him to put the sword away while He puts the man's ear back...

Notice that Jesus' last miracle before His resurrection was to help someone hear. He who has ears...let Him hear.

We can also learn a lot from the way Jesus viewed Peter. It is quite clear from Scripture that Jesus saw within Peter something very special, an inner strength and a sincerity of purpose in following Him and in serving God. At the very beginning of their relationship, Jesus surnamed him Cephas, which means a stone. He also declared that the Church would actually begin its growth through Peter; this was fulfilled when Peter declared the first sermon of the Church where thousands were converted and the Church began its rapid expansion

Of all the apostles, it was Peter who had enough faith that he could walk out on the water to Christ before being distracted by the strong wind around him. Though Christ called him a man of "little faith" after he sank, we must remember that it was highly unlikely that any of the other apostles had enough faith to even begin to walk on the water.

The term "little faith" was used quite often by Jesus for others as well. We almost get the feeling that Jesus expected more out of Peter when He said, "Why did you doubt?" The Hebrew actually translates..you little faither you...

It is this strength and sincerity of purpose that Jesus saw in Peter that may have been the reason Satan wanted to "sift him as wheat," which Jesus responded to by praying for Peter

It was Peter who leapt out of the boat when he learned it was Jesus on the shore after His resurrection. It was during this encounter that Jesus questioned him about how much Peter really loved Him. The emphasis was not on whether Peter loved Him, but to what degree, driving home the point that genuine love is conveyed in sacrifice of self.

But when we examine Judas' life we see something very different.

Judas was the treasurer of the group, the one who held the money. When the woman poured the bottle of expensive ointment over Jesus' feet, it was Judas who complained, declaring that the money could have been used for the poor

Judas's objection was because he was a thief who was stealing from the group's money, and not because he really cared for the poor. Even in this incident, we see no real love or concern about Jesus, and only a false piety about the poor. Judas was more concerned about money than he was about Jesus. We can almost assume that there was absolutely no genuine concern about Jesus whatsoever.

Judas had the privilege of being the group's treasurer. His reputation was good enough that, when Jesus told the apostles that he would be betrayed, and then gave Judas the

bread and told him to leave, nobody thought there was any connection between the two events.

According to the Scriptures, though Jesus often spoke encouraging words to Peter, He never spoke anything positive or encouraging to Judas. Jesus himself said that Judas was "a devil" . He also said that it would have been better if Judas had not even been born

Judas betrayed Jesus because he did not love Him. He only cared about himself and his personal agendas. Judas confessed his sin without repentance. There was no radical change in his mind that resulted in a change from spiritual death to spiritual life through faith in Jesus Christ. True repentance would have turned him to Jesus for forgiveness.

Again, the betrayal itself was led by Judas's selfish desire for money. He betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, the price of a slave. This dishonorable valuation of the Son of God shows Judas's true heart; his desire was for money rather than for Christ.

Unlike the love Jesus had for Peter, there is no such evidence of any like emotion for Judas. This is because Jesus knew that Judas's heart was full of self-interest and ulterior motives.

Why was Judas really following Jesus?

Whatever his thoughts on these matters, it is almost certain that he was following Jesus out of self-interest, with ulterior motives of his own gain in the material world. While Judas desired riches over Christ, his end was death, and even the silver he had received for his betrayal of Jesus was instead spent on a field where strangers could be buried.

Unlike the love of Peter shown toward Christ, we find no such emotion coming from Judas, but rather a heart with a love for money. While Peter was sincere in his relationship with the Son of God, Judas was not.

As Peter struggled to serve and follow Jesus in loyalty and faithfulness, Judas maintained a secret agenda in which Jesus was merely a means to assist in achieving his selfish objectives. The major difference between Peter and Judas was the contrast of hearts that conveyed itself in the actions of the two men. Peter was a genuine disciple and believer in Christ; the faith of Judas was false.

The real tragedy of Judas' life is not his betrayal, but his life ending in despair—his hopelessness that led him to see himself as beyond the realm of God's mercy and forgiveness, as truly abandoned and forsaken and buried in shame.

For Peter, on the other hand, there is true mourning and sorrow, as Peter's eyes meet our Lord's after denying even knowing Jesus three times. Peter—who was full of brash confidence—has now come face to face with his own weakness and inconstancy. And this confrontation with the truth hurts.

But Peter's mourning—while painful—brings him to the truth and ultimately repentance. The key difference between Peter and Judas here is that Peter's mourning includes a glimmer of hope and a sense of God's infinite mercy. And this gives Peter the chance to start over; moved

by God's grace and having come face to face with his own weakness, now he is ready to let God work through him in an even more powerful way.

Peter recognized both his brokenness and God's Mercy. Judas never understood or embraced God's Mercy.

This is the way God sees us: as broken and wounded, and so he longs to heal and transform us; but it is only when we are "poor in spirit"—when we recognize our brokenness in true humility—that we can allow God to engage, heal, and transform us at the very deepest levels of our being. When we think we can "do it ourselves," we hinder God's work in our lives;

This is one of the great lies of the devil, one that keeps many from truly allowing God into their lives; many greatly suffer from the lie that God can't truly love us as we are—that we ought to clean up first and then we'll return to God. But from God's perspective, the reality is actually the reverse: we need to surrender in our brokenness; and as we continue to do that, He cleans up our life from the inside.

There is another difference that we should note. Where did they go once they realized they had sinned?

When Judas betrayed Jesus, was he sorry? Of course he was! When Peter betrayed Jesus, was he sorry? He wept bitterly. But where did Judas go with His burden of guilt and shame? He made a beeline to the Pharisees and High Priest. There Judas cried out His bitter confession: "I can't take this money! I've sinned! I've betrayed innocent blood!" There it is: sorrow over his sins and confession of his sins. But hear the preaching he receives against his sins. "What is that to us? You see to it! That's not our problem. That's your problem. We can't help you. You'd better go and deal with it yourself." And since Judas couldn't save himself, he did the only thing he could: he perished.

Judas receives is the preaching of all the world's religions: "Save yourself." You have to pick yourself back up. If you've sinned, it's on you to work it out and make it right.

Jesus said it would be better if Judas had never been born.

Jesus does NOT say this because Judas' betrayal is an unforgivable sin. Jesus does NOT say this because His death was not for Judas; it was! He says it because He knows how it is going to end: Judas will not embrace the truth that will forgive and save him.

Judas is in hell today because He rejected Jesus as his Savior. Its that simple. He didn't lose his salvation. He never had it.

Peter's sin was no different than Judas'. Our sins are not any different either. But Peter was in the church. He was among the disciples of Jesus. He was there when the announcement was made that the Lord was alive. He was there when Jesus appeared alive on Easter. He was there to hear Christ call him to repentance and three times restore him and send him to feed His sheep. In other words, Peter was where the crucified and risen Jesus was to forgive his sins and comfort him with that Good News of life and salvation.

So it is with you. The Lord has put you in a church where what Jesus did for you is delivered to you. When you look in the mirror of God's Law and see that you are a sinner and you have sorrow over your sins and you confess them, you will not hear that you must work it for yourself and see to it yourself.

Rather, you will hear that all that Jesus did He did for you. You will be reminded in the preaching and teaching of the Gospel that you have NO sin too big that it cannot be taken away by Jesus blood. You are reminded that you have been reborn spiritually and that there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.

You will be guided to confess.....repent....and release it to God

In a Nutshell....Peter ran to God....Fueled by a life in the Spirit....

Judas ran to man...fueled by a life in the flesh.

Everything of the Spirit lives forever with God....Everything of the flesh dies and is separated from God.

So....have you painted yourself into this picture yet?

What we can learn today from Judas is to examine our own lives and our own walk with God. Why are we following Christ? Is our faith sincere? Do we really love Christ? Or do we have ulterior motives advanced by claiming the name of Christ?

Though Judas followed Christ as a means to line his pocket with cash, many today may follow Jesus for other ulterior reasons.

Judas went to hell and the cost of his ticket was 30 pieces of silver. What would you trade for Jesus? Would you betray him for money? Would you betray him for a better job? Would you betray him to keep the job you have? Would you betray him to save your own skin? Would you betray him to advance your career? Would you betray him to get a spouse? Would you betray him for popularity and approval? Would you betray him for fame? Would you betray him to live longer on earth? Would you betray him because he didn't live up to your expectations? Would you betray him because you thought he let you down?

Every believer must know if they are in love with Jesus or in love with what Jesus can provide for them. You must know that you trust Jesus with your eternity.

Do you feel bad about your sin? Do you have regret? Do you feel guilt and shame? Are you trying to make up for what you have done? Are you desperate to make up what you have done to other people and seeking their forgiveness? Are you trusting yourself to set things right? Do you wish you could undo what you have done? Do you feel remorse? Great.....Judas felt all those things....and now is in hell.

This is not about regret and remorse.....it is about repentance.

What we can learn from Peter is very enlightening for all genuine Christians today. Though Peter had a certain degree of true faith, his pattern of failure is seen in reliance upon his own strength, coupled with distraction from the threats around him that resulted in his taking his eyes off of Jesus. Before his denial, we can see Peter losing focus as he did when walking on the water, failing to stay fixed on Christ as the real source of his strength.

Though Peter's intentions were good, his failure to keep his gaze upon Jesus resulted in weakness and failure. Though, in both instances, he started out strong while focused on the Lord he loved, the moment he turned away to his own strength or allowed himself to be distracted by the threats around him, he failed.

What we can take to heart from Peter's life is that, regardless of the degree of our faith in Jesus, we have weaknesses as well. Our real strength comes from Christ, and we need to stay focused on Him no matter what confronts, threatens or tempts us. Nothing in the world is more important than our love for Jesus and His love for us. It is the love in our relationship with Him that really matters.

Though it is unlikely any of us will be walking on water anytime soon, we may someday find ourselves in situations where, as disciples of Christ, we need to stand up and do what is right. Some of us may even find ourselves in the face of death. What we do in that moment will be result of what we have done with all the moments we have been given up to that point. Our genuine faith is revealed in those moments....not created.

There is a clear difference between Peter and Judas.

It's not because one read the Bible and one didn't. They both did. It's not because one prayed and one didn't. They both did. It's not because one was a better person or lived a better life than the other. They both had good and bad. The only difference that affected their eternal destiny was the fact that Peter believed in Jesus for eternal life, and Judas did not. And that has made all the difference.

So, Peter, Judas, and all of us, deserve hell. But Peter believed in Jesus for eternal life and went to heaven. This real question is not what did Peter do or what did Judas do..the only important question for us today is what will you do? Are you ready to replace your remorse with repentance? This was the worst day in human history. Jesus and Peter surrendered to the Father. Judas did not. Peter would soon preach to thousands. When they were convicted of their sin and their standing before God..they asked...

Acts 2:37-38 (ESV) 37 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Let's Pray