SO NEAR, YET SO FAR AWAY
(A Message on Judas Iscariot)

John 13:18-30 (NKJV)

Please turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of John, chapter thirteen. And let's read verses 18-30.

18 “I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.’

19 Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He.

20 Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.”

21 When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.”

22 Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke.

23 Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.

24 Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask who it was of whom He spoke.

25 Then, leaning back on Jesus’ breast, he said to Him, “Lord, who is it?”

26 Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it.” And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.

27 Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, “What you do, do quickly.”

28 But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him.
29 For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, “Buy those things we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor.

30 Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

The pages of History are filled with the NAMES of some notoriously evil people.

AHAB and JEZEBEL
PONTIOUS PILATE
HEROD
NERO
GHINGUS KAHN
JOHN WILKES BOOTH
BENEDICT ARNOLD
ADOLPH HITLER

And in more recent history, SADDAM HUSSEIN and OSAMA BIN LADEN. All of these people shared one thing in common and that is their hearts were filled with pride and wickedness to the core.

But without a doubt, the most notorious name in all of history is that of JUDAS ISCARIOT.

At one time, the name JUDAS was an honorable name.

- About 160 years before the birth of Christ a man by the name of JUDAS MACCABEUS led a revolt against the Selucid Empire and re-established Jewish worship in the Temple in Jerusalem.
Matthew 13:55 tells us the name of one of Jesus' four half-brothers was JUDAS

But JUDAS ISCARIOT forever tarnished that once honorable name. What mother, godly or ungodly, would ever think of naming her son, JUDAS?

Matthew and Mark both refer to Judas Iscariot as “the betrayer.” Luke calls him “the traitor.” And John calls him “a devil” and “the son of perdition.” Perdition means “condemnation” or “eternal death.”

In John 6:70 (NKJV) Jesus said, “Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is the devil?"

To make absolutely certain there was no misunderstanding about who Jesus was talking about, John goes on to tell us in verse 71, He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.

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It is very interesting to note that each time the names of the twelve apostles appears in the Gospels, the name of Simon Peter is always mentioned first, and the name of Judas Iscariot is always mentioned last.

PETER denied Jesus three times.
JUDAS ISCARIOT betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

Both Peter and Judas were guilty of despicable sins against JESUS, and yet there was a noteable difference. PETER repented of his sins and found grace, mercy and forgiveness. While JUDAS, though remorseful, never repented and wound up committing suicide, and he will spend the rest of eternity in the torments of hell.
Any time we think about JUDAS ISCARIOT the most obvious question is always: **WHY DID JESUS EVER CHOOSE HIM TO BE AN APOSTLE?**

If Jesus knew he was a **devil and a traitor who would sell Him out to the enemy for a lousy $16.50**, why would He ever choose Him to be one of the twelve? Why not choose someone who would be loyal and trustworthy.

Jesus chose Judas to fulfill Old Testament prophecy.

*Psalm 41:9* (NKJV)  Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against Me.

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**Judas Was the Only Judaean**

When you do a careful study of the life of Judas an interesting detail emerges. Judas was the only one of the twelve apostles who was not a native of Galilee. He was from the Judean town of Kerioth. Some historians note that Judas was related to a band of Jewish assassins called the Sicarii.

**Judas Chosen to Be the Treasurer**

Something else that is interesting is that not only did JESUS choose Judas to be one of His apostles, He chose him to be the treasurer of the apostle's money.

Now if Jesus knew Judas was “**a devil**” and “**His future betrayer**” why would Jesus entrust him with the apostle's money? Why not **Matthew** who had lots of dealings with money as a “**tax collector**?”
Most Bible scholars agree, JUDAS had likely been a businessman prior to becoming an apostle. And perhaps his financial skills even surpassed those of Matthew.

I believe the LORD saw something good in JUDAS. He saw a positive in the midst of his terrible negatives. He saw a strength in the midst of all his terrible weaknesses. And so He entrusted Judas with a special responsibility.

Jesus was giving Judas the opportunity to be honorable and trustworthy. But by his own “choice” Judas broke that trust. In *John chapter twelve* we read the account where Mary annointed the feet of Jesus with a very expensive aromatic oil called “spikenard.” Judas got real upset and said, “Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?”

Now listen carefully to what *John 12:6* says, “This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box, and he used to take what was put in it.”

You see, even when Jesus gave Judas every chance to prove himself to be a honorable and upright man, Judas willfully chose to sin.

And this is very critical to understanding why Judas would betray Jesus.

Some have suggested that Judas was born for the sole purpose of becoming “the betrayer” of Jesus and he never had a choice in the matter.

That idea doesn't “mesh” with anything else the scriptures teach us about man's “free will.” When God created Adam and Eve, He gave them the “free will” to choose right over wrong and good over evil. And they chose to sin.
And God has made it crystal clear in His word that "**He is not willing that any man should perish, but that all men come to repentance.**"

Why would GOD create every man and woman with a “free will” and deprive one solitary human being of that “free will?” And if God is not willing that any man should perish, why would He create one solitary man who was destined to hell before he ever even drew his first breath?

It just doesn’t mesh with the scriptures does it?

I submit to you that Judas Iscariot had the same “free will” you and I have. I believe he had the freedom to choose between right and wrong and good and evil.

I believe JESUS chose JUDAS with the divine foreknowledge that when given the choice to betray Him or not to betray Him, Judas would choose to betray Him.

You see, Judas wasn't some helpless “pawn” in a providential chess match. He had a “choice” and he chose to commit the most despicable act in human history!

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For three years, Judas walked the dusty roads of Israel with Jesus.

-JUDAS was right there with the others when JESUS taught the great truths about the Kingdom of Heaven.

-JUDAS was an eyewitness to the wonderful miracles of Jesus just like the others.
When Jesus fed the 5,000 and later the 4,000, Judas was there.

When Jesus calmed the stormy sea, Judas was right there in the boat with all the others.

When Jesus drove the DEMONS out of the Gadarene demoniac JUDAS was there.

JUDAS saw Jesus give sight to blind Bartimaeus.

JUDAS saw Jesus bring life back into the dead body of that widow's son in Nain.

JUDAS saw Jesus heal that paralytic lowered through the roof in Capernaum.

How could Judas have seemingly been so close to Jesus and yet so far, far away?

What was true of JUDAS ISCARIOT is true of many in our Churches today.

How many people have walked down the aisle and made that great confession of faith, “I believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God” and were baptized for the remission of their sins..........AND YET THEY HAVE NEVER TRULY DRAWN CLOSE TO JESUS CHRIST?
My friend, I suggest to you this evening, that it is very possible for someone to *go through all the outward motions of Christianity and never truly be close to JESUS CHRIST.*

-It is possible for one to attend Sunday School and morning and evening worship each week...........AND NOT TRULY BE CLOSE TO JESUS.

-It is possible for one to go to Wednesday Night Bible Study and Prayer Meeting, and NOT TRULY BE CLOSE TO JESUS.

-It is possible for one to put money in the offering plate every week and NOT TRULY BE CLOSE TO JESUS.

-It is possible for one to PARTAKE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER every Lord's Day, and NOT TRULY BE CLOSE TO JESUS.

In every Church there are those who are “near to Jesus” by all outward appearances, but inwardly their hearts are as “stone cold” towards Jesus as the heart of Judas Iscariot.

In *Matthew 15:8 (NKJV)* Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees with this harsh words:

> "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

Could that be said of you or me? Do we just honor Jesus with our lips to impress others, while down in the depths of our heart our love for Christ is “lukewarm” at best?
CONCLUSION

As we close, let's turn our thoughts back to Judas for just a moment.

In Matthew 27:3-5 (NKJV) we read:

3 Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

4 saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” And they said, “What is that to us? You see to it!”

5 Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.

Would JESUS have forgiven Judas? You bet He would have!

- He forgave PETER for denying Him, didn’t He?
- He forgave THE SOLDIERS who beat Him and crucified Him didn’t He?
- He forgave THE ANGRY MOB that had shouted “Crucify Him!” didn’t He?

Had Judas swallowed his pride and humbled himself and come back to Jesus in genuine repentance, JESUS would have welcomed Him with open, loving arms.

But Judas couldn’t get past his pride. He chose NOT to come to Jesus with a repentant heart, and now he will spend all eternity in regret and sorrow.
NEAR TO THE HEART OF GOD

There is a place of quiet rest,
Near to the heart of God;
A place where sin cannot molest,
Near to the heart of God.

There is a place of comfort sweet,
Near to the heart of God;
A place where we our Savior meet,
Near to the heart of God.

There is a place of full release,
Near to the heart of God;
A place where all is joy and peace,
Near to the heart of God.

O Jesus, blest Redeemer, sent from the heart of God;
Hold us, who wait before Thee, Near to the heart of God.