



The Reverend Jeff Lee
Matthew 27:1-10

September 14, 2014
English Standard Version

“Remorse or Repentance?”

Introduction: “I Got Caught”

Have you ever been caught doing something you weren't suppose to be doing? Or got caught not doing something that you should have done? And then when called out for your sin, you apologize quickly, not because you truly care, but just because you want to get that person off your back? Well... that was me recently. **(Slide)** One morning when I was leaving for work, I was supposed to gate off one of our stairways so that our dogs wouldn't go upstairs and go to the bathroom on our carpet, but instead of closing and latching the gate, I just slightly closed the gate to make it look like it was latched. Well later that day my beautiful wife came home and

found that the gate was open and that the dogs had gone upstairs. There was evidence on the bedroom floor if you know what I mean. So when I arrived home after work, she graciously brought the gate situation to my attention, because this had happened a few times before... and knowing I was wrong, I quickly apologized... like this, "I'm sorry baby... I was super busy this morning." Yeah... one of those apologies.... And... if you think that was a good enough apology... then you need to listen closely to this next part.

You see the problem was that this situation with the gate had happened a few times before... and I knew for a fact that I was wrong, so I knew I couldn't get out of this one. Because the reality was that I had time in the morning to close the gate and latch it, I just didn't take the time to do it. **I got caught** and I knew I couldn't just give an excuse this time so I thought well I will briefly acknowledge my wrong to get her off my back. That should work (you're a good guy Jeff – pat yourself on the back). I knew I needed at minimum to drop the "I apologize or I'm sorry." So I did... but my heart wasn't in it. **I only had slight remorse for my sin, because I got caught. I was not truly repentant.** I didn't take time to think how I hurt my wife's feelings by not doing the small reasonable things she had been asking me to do over and over. Nor did I take the time to show her that her request was reasonable and that I had simply not made it a

priority.

If I had been truly repentant I would have sat her down and taken the time to put my self in her shoes to see how my actions and responses had wounded her. I would have sincerely apologized and named my specific actions and motivations that were wrong and then I would have come up with a way or plan to make sure that I would honor her request in the future. And then I'd ask her to forgive me.

Do you see the difference between how I responded and how I should have responded? **Remorse is being sorry you got caught. Repentance is being sorry enough to stop what you are doing, changing your behavior, and asking for forgiveness (repeat both definitions).** And with those distinctions, we will go to the Lord in prayer before we dive into our text. For when we look closely at our passage this morning, I'm going to ask you to decipher which one of these responses Judas has. *Let's pray.*

Prayer: *Father, help us to be more humble, teachable, and wise in our dealings with our spouses, neighbors, friends, and co-workers. We live in a culture that feeds on being busy, and our lives often reflect that culture. We don't take much time to truly consider the weightiness and impact of our sins, how they displease you, how they hurt us, and how they hurt others.*

Give us greater depth and insight into our own sinful hearts and minds so that we might turn to You time and time again for forgiveness. Draw us to You. Bring circumstances into our lives that will challenge us to grow deeper in You. Help us to see how great our sin is, so that we will begin to see how awesome, gracious, and merciful you truly are. Change us, shape us, Lord. And the church says, Amen.

Brief Context:

For those of you who might not have been with us, last Sunday we heard about Peter from Rev. Rubino. We heard about how cowardly Peter was when others recognized he was a follower of Jesus. For Peter denied Jesus 3 times, just as Jesus said he would before the rooster would crow. And after the third denial, Jesus and Peter locked eyes from across the high priest's courtyard as Jesus was being taken away. And how did Peter respond? Peter then went from the courtyard and wept bitterly after realizing what he had done, and what would happen to Jesus.

The reason I give this brief context is because our author Matthew wants to draw a contrast between Peter and Judas. And that is why he puts both of these accounts next to each other in chapters 26 and 27. He wants to show that both deny Jesus, but one is remorseful and one is truly repentant.

So with that background in mind, let's take a look at our text this morning. We will be in Matthew 27:1-10 but for our first sermon point, we will be looking at just the first two verses. **(Slide) This is the first point, "Let's Kill Jesus."**

Point 1: Let's Kill Jesus (Matthew 27:1-2)

1 When morning came, all of the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. 2 And they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate the governor.

What we have here is an official trial by the Sanhedrin to accuse Jesus of blasphemy and to sentence Him to death. Who or what is the Sanhedrin you ask? The Sanhedrin was comprised of 70 men, plus the high priest, who served as its president. The 70 members consisted of the chief priests, scribes and elders of Israel.¹

All these men came together on this Friday morning... for one purpose... to make sure Jesus was convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to death. They were unified by this thought, "Let's kill this guy Jesus." This was an official meeting to bring about judicial action against Jesus. **Jesus was brought before these men so that they could legally declare him**

¹ Web Document: Definition of Sanhedrin. www.Christianity.Com.
<http://christianity.about.com/od/glossary/a/Sanhedrin.htm>

guilty. Now Matthew doesn't provide all the details of the council meeting but in the Gospel of Luke, Luke 22 records, *“When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led Jesus away to their council, and they said, ‘If you are the Christ, tell us.’ But Jesus said to them, ‘If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I ask you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.’ So they all said, ‘Are you the Son of God, then?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘You say that I am.’ Then they said, ‘What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips.’ Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate.”*

The highest religious court of the land just conspired to have one man killed! These men in the Sanhedrin were supposed to be the folks who shepherded the people of Israel. Who dealt with the people pastorally and encouraged them spiritually, and they are now in the business of capital punishment? Jesus didn't hurt or kill anybody! This is not right!

Technically the elders, chief priests, and scribes couldn't kill someone themselves because they were under Roman rule... so what did they do to remedy that? They took Jesus to the Romans to do it for them, and that is why the Sanhedrin took Jesus to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor.

The other advantage of the Romans doing the killing for the Sanhedrin, was that Jesus would be crucified in accordance with Roman law, rather than being stoned, in accordance with Mosaic law. And crucifixion (being hung on a tree) biblically implies being cursed by God.² So you see this method of death was beneficial on two fronts. The Sanhedrin wanted Jesus not only to die but to also be discredited in the eyes of the people, and his followers.³ And being crucified, or being hung on a tree served both purposes... **These men were truly sick!** Evil is the only word to describe their heart and actions.

And that is what Matthew wants you to get here in these first two verses. He wants to show you the people responsible for the death of Jesus Christ, their dark hearts, and the fact that this was a judicial action, legally declaring Jesus guilty of blasphemy... But Matthew doesn't stop there only naming the Sanhedrin and Pilate; he goes a step further pointing out another culprit, whose got blood on his hands. Let's see who it is in verses 3-10.

This is the second point titled, "Remorse or Repentance?"

² Deuteronomy 21:23

³ Sermon Manuscript: Ligon Duncan. The Son of Man Must Go. Matthew 26:20-25. October 24, 1999.

Point 2: Remorse or Repentance? (Matthew 27:3-10)

3 Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, 4 saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." 5 And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. 6 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." 7 So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field as a burial place for strangers. 8 Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. 9 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, 10 and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me."

Earlier in the sermon I said that I'd ask you to decipher the response Judas has after Jesus was sentenced, so I'm going keep good on that promise and ask you the obvious question. **Is Judas remorseful or repentant?**

Remember Remorse is being sorry you got caught. And Repentance is being sorry enough to stop what you are doing, changing your behavior,

and asking for forgiveness.⁴ So which response does Judas have? (pause)

Yeah... he's full of remorse. He feels sorry.

What we have before us is quite strange. Judas, the disciple who betrayed Jesus... who sold him out for 30 pieces of silver... now has had a change of feelings! He feels remorse for what he's done... but what Matthew wants us to see is that even though he's remorseful, he's not repentant. For if Judas had been repentant, he would have wept bitterly and done whatever he could to get to Jesus to sincerely apologize and ask for forgiveness. But is that what Judas does? No. Judas instead revels in his despair and looks to himself for a way out of the guilt and shame he's feeling. And he's feeling incredibly guilty because he knows that Jesus is innocent! He even says it to the elders and chief priests! He has lead an innocent man to be tortured and killed!

And instead of doing the hard work of being humble, being truly repentant, and turning to Jesus for forgiveness... he takes the easy way out. He hangs himself... **The reality is that it is easier to check out of this life, rather than live in it with all of its hardships.** It's easier to take your life than to take time to stare directly at your sin in the face, with all of its evil and malice, own it, and humble yourself, to ask for forgiveness from God

⁴ Web Document: Greg Laurie. Harvest Ministries. Daily Devotional: Remorse or Repentance. January 2, 2012.

and from others. That's hard work... and Judas made his choice. Instead of turning to Jesus, he turned to himself, and then to the chief priests and elders for hope.

When Judas went to the chief priests and elders to return the 30 pieces of silver, I imagine him in great anguish throwing the money on the ground and pleading with them to take the money back.⁵ And then the chief priests and elders standing up and saying in response, "Whoa, Whoa! What is this? We can't accept this money! This is on you, not us!" As if they had nothing to do with it.

These are the religions leaders of Judea! What great men these are! What great and wise council they give! And what hope they give to Judas! These are evil, hard-hearted men. They use Judas to do their dirty work and then they cast him aside like a piece of trash... I imagine they respond that way impart because Judas and this money is a reminder of their sin... of their plot to kill and innocent man... I'm sure that's not the only reason they reject him and the money (plausible deniability I'm sure too) but I bet deep down inside they feel something... when their sin is presented to their faces. Because no one likes to be confronted with something that they have done

⁵ Commentary: William Hendricksen. New Testament Commentary: Matthew. Matthew 27:1-10. Pgs. 941-949.

wrong!

But in the end their rejection of Judas doesn't do much because Judas left the money there with the elders and chief priests. And they respond by saying, *"It is not lawful to put them (these pieces of silver) into the treasury, since it is blood money."* ⁷ *So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field as a burial place for strangers.* ⁸ *Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day."*

Isn't this a pitiful picture! These men are debating about what to do with this tainted money! The money was tainted in the first place, so what makes them think its more tainted now? Instead talking about the money they should be repenting! **At least Judas was remorseful.** These guys don't even show remorse. They just squabble about what to do with this money. "We can't put it in the Temple treasury because it's blood money... so what can we do with it? Oh, I have a great idea, let's use the money to do something good! Let's buy a field so that we can have a place to bury foreigners who die here during special feasts or holidays. Yeah that will work. It will also help us look good to our people too..."

These guys are cold... they only care about themselves and how they look to other people!

I'm sure you're thinking the same thing or something similar right! I

mean it is just human nature to be disgusted with this kind of behavior... but if we are honest with ourselves, don't we act like this too? Don't many of us when confronted with our sin, try to sweep it away like nothing happened or like we're not guilty? How many of us rationalize our sin? Or try to do something "morally good" to make up for our sin? How many of us think our sin isn't that bad, it's not that displeasing to holy and righteous God. It's not hurting anyone else... Wrong!

When we are confronted with any sin, the only proper response can be is to repent! Whether that comes by a tickling of your conscious or more directly by someone you've wronged. We are biblically called to take time, think about our sin, how it impacts us, others, how it displeases God, and how we need to ask God for forgiveness and to help us not repeat that sin.

Because simply being remorseful isn't enough. Just feeling sorry doesn't fix or rectify the sin! Look and see... what did only feeling remorse do for Judas? (pause) The only response to sin is to throw yourself before Jesus and to ask for His forgiveness, and if you hurt someone else, you ask for their forgiveness too!

And you all know this as well as I do, or at least you should... we are all sinful people, who sin often, so what that means is that we should be

asking for forgiveness a lot. **Let me ask you, in the past week, when you sinned against your spouse or your children did you ask him or her to forgive you?** In the past month, when you sinned against your friend or family member, did you ask him or her to forgive you? In the past year, when you sinned against a co-worker or neighbor, did you ask him or her to forgive you? **In your lifetime, you've sinned against many people, have you ever asked any of them to forgive you?** If not, what does that say about your pride? To others what does that say about your brand of Christianity? To your family what does that say about who Jesus is to you and what He's done for you? If you don't like some of the answers that you are coming up with, then let me encourage you to think about that this week. Ask the Lord to help teach you how to sincerely look at your own sin and to turn away from it. On the back of your bulletin is a daily devotional about this very thing issue. Look at it tomorrow morning and pray about it.

And if you need a refresher, just go to our website and you can listen to the sermon again because this issue of repentance is a big big deal. It affects your relationship with God, with your family, and with others. **I strongly encourage you to think about your responses, whether they are only remorseful or actually repentant...**

The good news church... is that despite all of our sins, and the sin of

Judas and the Sanhedrin, God is total control. Even though it seems like these last events surrounding Jesus' life are chaotic, they are actually falling perfectly in line with prophecy and God's grand plan to redeem His chosen people. Just look at verses 9 and 10. The act of the elders and chief priests purchasing the Field of Blood was not just a sinful act on their part but it was an act that fulfilled of scripture. *"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, 10 and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me."*

God is literally orchestrating these events. This prophecy of Zechariah and Jeremiah⁶ is happening in real time. This sin of the elders and priests is actually being used to serve a greater purpose! **What seems like a small detail to them is actually another piece of God's puzzle being put in its exact place...** Even though they are working hard to make sure Jesus' flame is extinguished, what actually is happening is that they are throwing gasoline on God's holy fire and they are slowly being consumed...

Why does Matthew tell us all of this? **He wants to show us that Jesus' death is not an accident.** All the events leading to His death are not

⁶ Commentary: Daniel Doriani. Reformed Expository Commentary: Matthew, Vol. 2. Matthew 26:69 – 27:10. Pgs. 466-476.

accidents... nor are they tragedies. Because with each prophecy that's fulfilled... Satan's noose gets a little tighter. These events are victories that will lead to the greatest victory this earth has ever seen. Church that is an omnipotent God at work. That is a God worth following. A God who can use evil for ultimate good...

Conclusion & Application:

So if this is the kind of God that we have why do many of us think our sin is too much for him? Thinking my sin is too great, and that I'm too sinful to be saved? Don't you see... there is no sin, no evil... dark enough that can't be covered by the blood of Jesus. There is no sin too great, that if you truly repent, that God will not save you from. **So why delay coming to Jesus?** Why keep your sins to yourself? Why continue in your futile efforts to rectify your sins on you own?

Turn to Jesus. Because when you do, you will find a God who accepts you as you are. You will find a God who forgives you, and helps you forgive yourself. You will find a God who can turn those sins and evil into good. **Repent and find peace and hope in Jesus because the alternative is to feel only remorse.** Feeling sorry will not bring wholeness, peace, or restitution. **Remorse will lead to death as it did for Judas.** The

Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 7:10, “*For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world (remorse) produces death.*”

Ask the Lord for the courage to see your sin as it truly is. Ask the Lord to soften your heart so that you might take more time to understand how your sin displeases God, how it hurts you and hurts others. Because as you begin to see your sin for what it truly is, and how big it is, you will move from remorse to repentance. You will begin to appreciate how big God is, and how gracious He is. When you understand more clearly how good God is, and how much he loves you and forgives you, you will begin to practice true repentance more often with God and with others.

Jesus endured all of these trials and events that we are reading about at the end of Matthew so that you might be free... truly free from the weight and bondage of the sin that you inherited and incurred on your own. He suffered so that you might not have to suffer through this life on your own. He died so that you wouldn't have to die spiritually. **So come to Him... Come to Him... and find freedom...**

Judas chose remorse and found death... what will you do with your sin? (Pause) *Let's pray.*

Sermon Resources:

- **Sermon Manuscript:** Ligon Duncan. *Judas' Remorse and Suicide*. Matthew 27:1-10. December 26, 1999.
- **Commentary:** Daniel Doriani. *Reformed Expository Commentary: Matthew, Vol. 2*. Matthew 26:69 – 27:10. Pgs. 466-476.
- **Commentary:** William Hendricksen. *New Testament Commentary: Matthew*. Matthew 27:1-10. Pgs. 941-949.
- **Commentary:** Michael Wilkins. *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew*. Matthew 27:1-10. Pgs. 831-837.
- **Web Document:** Greg Laurie. Harvest Ministries. *Daily Devotional: Remorse or Repentance*. January 2, 2012.
<http://www.harvest.org/devotional/archive/devotion/2012-01-03.html>
- **Web Document:** Definition of Sanhedrin. Christianity.Com.
<http://christianity.about.com/od/glossary/a/Sanhedrin.htm>

Benediction: Hebrews 13:20, 21

Now the God of peace, that brought again from
the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the
sheep, through the blood of the everlasting
covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do
his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in
his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for
ever and ever. Amen.