

# Matthew 27:1-10

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[ 0 : 00 ] I mean, warning signs are two-edge things, aren't they? Warnings are good things, but they never sound very good.

! So let's say you go to a beach in Australia, you swim on a beach in Australia, and you see the sign, no swimming sharks are there.

No swimming, warning sharks. And you might think, well, that's a really unfriendly sign, I was desperate for a swim, it's a hot day. But it's a good thing, isn't it? It's a good thing that you're warned. Warnings are good things.

And so it is in Matthew's Gospel, it's a good thing that we are warned. And these verses this morning at the start of chapter 27 show us wrong responses.

And Matthew doesn't want you to make those same choices. But the sting in the tale is that these warnings come from people who we might call insiders.

[ 1 : 06 ] Judas Iscariot, do you remember? He had been a follower of the Lord Jesus for three years. He'd been a friend. The chief priests and the elders, one of the religious leaders, right at the centre of religious life.

And it's these two groups of people that are a warning. So two warnings. The first warning is this, the tragedy of a stubborn refusal to accept Jesus.

The tragedy of a stubborn refusal to accept Jesus. And we're going to focus on the chief priests and the elders. Look at verse one. When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.

And they'd come to that decision not because they'd had a look at all the evidence and they thought that is the right verdict. It was because they'd wanted Jesus dead all along. So just turn back to the page before, chapter 26, verses 3 and 4.

And you'll see there, the chief priests and the elders of the people, same group, gathered in the place of the high priest, whose name was Cariphaz. And they plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him.

[ 2 : 23 ] There's the agenda. Turn over page 2, 26, 59. And you'll see there that they are looking, they are searching for false evidence.

The chief priests and the whole council of the elders were seeking false testimony against Jesus so they might put him to death. And then you come to chapter 27, verse 1. And they come to this decision, but they were never going to decide on anything else.

They were never going to do anything else. Other than get Jesus to die. Here are people whose heart is pre-deciding, set in stone rejection of Jesus.

They will not allow Jesus to be their saviour, their lord and their king. And there is a particular reason why this is so tragic. Who are these people?

The chief priests and the elders. Who are they? What were they meant to be? They were meant to be the shepherds of the people. Shepherds who did the people good.

[ 3 : 24 ] Who looked after them. Who cared for them. Who nurtured them like shepherds are supposed to do. But look how they treat people. We'll come back to Judas.

But just look with me at verse 4. Judas has come to them. He is wracked with guilt. It has dawned on him what he has done. And he wants forgiveness.

He wants comfort. But do you see how these shepherds respond? Look at verse 4. Judas says, I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.

And the elders say, they say, what is that to us? That is your responsibility. See to it yourself. The shepherds of God's people, they have no compassion here, do they?

For those who come to them in their need. Ordinarily, you would go to a priest and he would arrange a sacrifice to deal with the sin in some way. But they just say, what is that to us? [ 4 : 27 ] What's it got to do with us? You go and see to it yourself. You sort it out. Some shepherds they are. Someone comes and says, I've stuffed up.

A big time. I've done something which I'm so ashamed of. And they say, you've done it. You deal with it. Just as a aside, if somebody comes to you, and they're crushed by their sin and by their guilt, you never say to them, you.

You say to them, Jesus. These people, they've got no compassion. They've got no consistency. Look again at verse 6. Judas brings the money back.

And verse 5, he throws the money in the temple and he leaves and he tragically hangs himself. And what do they do? Verse 6. Look what it says. The chief priest taking the pieces of silver said, it's not lawful to put them into the treasury since it is blood money.

It's incredibly inconsistent. Where did the money come from in the first place? Presumably from the temple treasury in order to betray Jesus. They take it out in order to frame Jesus.

[ 5 : 43 ] Because it's a bit rich that suddenly they're all so sensitive about how it should be used. They are worried about it being blood money because it's come from Judas.

But they themselves wanted to kill Jesus all along. It was blood money far before it was handed to Judas. The thing about stubborn refusal is it reveals what the people are like who are doing the refusing.

Here are people who are not only rejecting a Messiah, but they are rejecting a Messiah who is perfect and innocent. And Judas knows that, doesn't he? Judas says he is innocent. Next week we'll see that Pilate knew that.

He says Jesus is innocent. And when you stubbornly refuse the one who is clearly innocent, you just reveal that you are clearly guilty.

So we have the second of the three handing overs. Judas handed Jesus over in chapter 26 and verse 14. Next week we'll see Pilate hands Jesus over.

[ 6 : 52 ] And here the Jewish leaders hand him over. This stubborn refusal to accept who he is and that attitude is alive and well today. So you can agree that Jesus' life is spotless.

And Judas understood, didn't he, the concept of death, paying for sin, and yet he stubbornly refused to receive Jesus. And that may be some of you this morning. You've decided, like these chief priests and the elders have, I'm never going to come to Christ.

You can be happy with some of the things that Jesus said. You can be happy with, don't judge. Yeah, we're all okay with that. Love your neighbor. Well, we could all certainly do with a bit of that at the minute.

Or like the chief priests here, we dismiss Jesus without even ever having looked at the evidence properly. I'm not going to be a Christian.

Entrenched stubbornly. Beware that as we reject the one who is innocent, it just shows us where the fault lies. And those who stubbornly reject the innocent one show themselves to be the guilty ones.

[ 8 : 08 ] When you reject Jesus, it just shows more about you than it reveals about him. And Matthew goes on to tell us how tragic it is.

Look at verses 9 and 10. Matthew is saying something about where this leads, and it leads to condemnation. The chief priests, they have this blood money. They buy this field. It's going to be called the field of blood.

And verse 9, do you see what they say? They say, then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah. Saying, and they took the 30 pieces of silver, the price of him on whom the 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. We've seen in Matthew again and again that the Old Testament is all fulfilled in the life and the death of Jesus.

And even the betrayal of Jesus is part of that fulfillment. He's got two passages in mind. One is from Jeremiah and one is from Zechariah. And here he cites the major prophet, Jeremiah.

[ 9 : 11 ] And that should reassure us. It should reassure us that even in this terrible moment of betrayal, it was all part of God's plan.

It was not out of control. And Matthew wants us to understand a little bit more than that. This stubborn refusal meets with utter condemnation. And the reason I say that is that as you look at

what Jeremiah prophesied and as you look at what Zechariah prophesied, it's clear that they were given messages to communicate judgment to the people.

The Old Testament prophets, they were wonderful preachers. They had visual aids to help the people understand. And so Jeremiah had to take a big clay pot and smash the clay pot in front of the people.

And he was to do that in front of the chief priests and the elders. And the pot smashing said condemnation. It said judgment is coming for how you've led and how the people have lived. And Zechariah's visual aid was to be a shepherd for the people. You are to be a good shepherd, he said to the leaders, unlike the people of the time. And I'm going to give you two staff, said Zechariah.

[ 10 : 25 ] And the people hated Zechariah. They dismissed him. They paid him off with 30 pieces of silver. And then Zechariah breaks both the staffs. And he's saying your relationship with God is over, is broken.

It's a very dramatic moment. And it's spelled judgment and condemnation. And so Matthew takes both that incident, the smashing pot and the broken staffs. And he says the same thing is happening here.

God's shepherd, not Zechariah, but Jesus is being treated cheaply. Betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. And it is so serious, it spells condemnation and judgment.

I wonder what your definition of sin is. Or the worst of sins. Racism. Adultery.

Murder. Lying. Let me tell you, there is no greater sin than refusing to accept the innocent King, Jesus, as your Saviour and your Lord.

[ 11 : 35 ] It will never be a headline crime. There will never be protests about it in central London. It will never be in the news headlines.

But it is all around us. And it is all around us amongst religious people. Churchy types. God type people.

Those who think that they're part of things. And it spells condemnation. Because it refuses the innocent King. The tragedy of stubborn refusal.

Secondly, the second tragedy is Judas. And that is the tragedy of mere remorse. Judas. The tragedy of mere remorse. Judas. Judas.

The name. It conjures up for us, doesn't it? Traitor. If you think of football fans. So if you think of the Queen's Park Rangers, the QPR manager.

[ 12 : 32 ] He's Mark Warburton. And he used to be Brentford football club's manager. And so when Brentford played QPR last year, they were chanted from the terrorists. Traitor.

Judas. Judas. Judas. It conjures up, doesn't it? The image of a traitor. It's what we associate the name Judas with. And Judas is tragic here, as we can read.

And Judas is particularly tragic because he's got so much right. Look at verse 4. He's right about himself. He says, do you see it? Verse 4. I have sinned.

Judas knows he's acted wrongly before God. And against God. He is right about himself. And he's right about Jesus. Do you see what he says about Jesus?

He says, I have betrayed, what? Innocent blood. He knows Jesus is innocent. He's right about that. If anybody could have framed Jesus. It would have been Judas.

[ 13 : 35 ] The time that he'd spent with him for three years. He'd heard his teaching. He'd seen his private life. But Judas is able to tell us here in the midst of his guilt.

Judas. That Jesus is an innocent man. He can't pin anything on him. He gets a lot right. Judas does. And maybe he was wishing.

It never got to this. That certainly seems to be the hint of the passage. That this Jesus would somehow have broken free. He never imagined Judas that this would get so serious.

Look at his reaction in verse 3. Judas, the one who betrayed him. When Jesus was condemned. He changed his mind. And brought back the 30 pieces of silver. That's not a great translation. It should be that Judas was filled with remorse.

[ 14 : 29 ] That changing of his mind there. He feels terrible. He is sick with his guilt. He thinks, I never thought it would get this bad.

And we think, well, surely verse 3 is a good reaction, isn't it? To feel bad about your wrong and about your sin.

That is a good thing, isn't it? Well, of course it is. To feel bad when we've done something wrong. But Matthew uses the word remorse. It's not really changing your mind.

It's a deliberately different word from the word repent. Judas feels terrible. But he doesn't turn back to Jesus. The only thing he does is he turns to where?

Where does he turn? He turns back to the high priest. To the chief priest in the temple. And what do they do for him? They do nothing. They say, you really have stuffed up Judas.

[15:35] See to it yourself. And Judas, surely, tragically, in verse 5, throws down the pieces of silver into the temple. He departed and he went and he hung himself. Just as Jesus had said at the supper, isn't it?

Woe to the man that betrays me. It would have been better for him not to have been born. You see, mere remorse will not get you into heaven.

You may think back to Peter last week at the end of chapter 26. That very last line of Peter. There's Peter. He's denied his Lord three times. And he weeps over his sin.

And the Bible teaches us that Peter brought his guilt and his sin to Jesus. And he is restored by Jesus. But Judas never did that.

Peter is guilty of sin just as Judas is guilty. Just as the chief priests are guilty. And the only hope for them and the only hope for you and the only hope for me.

[16:39] is to find one who isn't guilty. The one thing that is clear about the Lord Jesus from chapter 26 and chapter 27 of Matthew is that he is innocent.

He is innocent. And so he is the one that can take our sin and our guilt. Because he is innocent and nothing. And no one else will be able to deal with our sin and guilt.

It is strange, isn't it, sometimes, how you find it easier to tell another human being about your sin than to actually come to Jesus about it. You know how it is.

You can feel so wretched about something. You perhaps tell your spouse or a friend. Maybe you text someone about it or you give someone a ring.

And because you've told them, you feel a little bit better about it. And that's the end of it. And you've never repented. You've never turned to Jesus about it.

[17:42] And just like no other person can deal with your sin and guilt, so no thing can deal with your sin and guilt. Look at Judas in verse 5. He's left with all his silver coins.

But they don't help him. He doesn't think to himself, well, perhaps I can live with the guilt. Perhaps at least I've still got the money. Have you ever said that? Perhaps I can live with the guilt because I've still got dot dot dot my reputation.

No one knows what I've done. My friends don't know. My family doesn't know. So we never get around to actually turning to Jesus. It's so, so tragic.

That you can do so much right and not truly repent. If you're seeing a sign which says, don't swim, there are sharks in the water.

Where are you? Well, you're not in a car park, Ian. And you're not at Bunny Park. You're on the beach.

[18:50] And that's the place where those signs are. And these signs in Matthew's gospel are in a particular place. These warning signs are in a particular place deliberately.

They're placed in the church. Churches like ours. And they are potentially, aren't they, alarming pictures. The chief priests. The elders. Judas, a follower.

But it is as you and I bring our sin and our guilt to the good shepherd. As we heed that warning, then we can know full and free forgiveness.

Judas says to the priest, I've really sinned. And the priest said to him, yeah, that's your problem. But you and I, we bring our sin and our guilt to the good shepherd.

And he says, yes, you have. And I'm going to make it my business to make it my problem.

[19:57] And so I think as we read this passage, as we see these warnings, we are meant to face the wonder of Jesus looking over everything that is sinful in our lives.

Our failures. Our selfishness. Our selfishness. Our guilt. Our pride. And hear Jesus saying to us of those things, by the cross, that's my problem.

No sin is too big. No sin is too old. Some of you may have been sitting on a sin for years. A fierce hatred.

A bitter anger. A bitterness. A hidden lust. A deep, deep pride. And Jesus says that too, via the cross, his problem.

You go anywhere else and you will face the words of the priest. That's your problem. That's your responsibility.

[ 21 : 08 ] You see to it yourself. You go to Jesus. And he says, I'll see to it. I'll see to it for you.

And so the message for you and I is to be aware of the stubborn refusal of Jesus. And to be aware of mere remorse.

That does not turn to him with your sin and guilt. And Jesus will see to it. By his death on the cross. Let's pray. Let's pray.