

The False Disciple, Tim Keller

The scripture reading this morning is taken from **John, chapter 13, verses 21 through 30.**

²¹After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit, and testified, "Very truly, I tell you, one of you is going to betray me." ²²His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. ²³One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. ²⁴Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means." ²⁵Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" ²⁶Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. So, Jesus told him, "What you are about to do, do quickly." ²⁸But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. ²⁹Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival or to give something to the poor. ³⁰As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out and it was night.

[00:01:29.630] - Speaker 1

This is the word of the Lord.

[00:01:34.350] - Speaker 2

This very poignant, tragic account of Jesus talking to Judas the night before he dies, is a, if this was a movie, it would be in black and white. It would be noir. Fred McMurray, Barbara Stanwick, and by the way, if you've ever seen Double Indemnity, which is about roughly the same sort of thing, and that is that sin, evil, cruel actions can take you over. Double Indemnity, I recommend it, a great old black and white noir film. And actually, this particular sad, tragic account of what happens to Judas is very instructive for us for this reason. Every culture struggles with the Gospel at some point. The Gospel challenges every culture somewhere. And no culture, it doesn't fit in any culture. Every culture struggles with at some point. So in non-western cultures, shame and honor cultures, what the Bible says, what the Gospel says about free forgiveness and grace and non-retaliation, they struggle with that. But in our western cultures, our relativistic western cultures, what we mainly struggle with is what the Bible says about sin. And this passage tells us quite a bit about that. We're going to learn a lot about,

- first, the nature and enormity of sin
- Secondly, the power of sin
- And thirdly, the only medicine for it

The nature and enormity, the power and the only medicine for it.

So, first of all, the nature and enormity, let's not miss the beginning, which is really important. And it's very easy to go past it, quickly: *After he had said this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and testified, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me."* So, we're told that Jesus Christ is thinking about the fact that one of his disciples is about to betray him to death. And his response is, he says, *troubled in spirit*. And it's a

very strong term that literally means to be torn to pieces. To be torn into pieces. So, Jesus is not speaking in a detached way. He doesn't say, well, you know, this was inevitable. I knew it was going to happen. There's always somebody like this, none of that detachment. He's also not flying off the handle, offended in his dignity, saying, how dare you, you little, after all I've done for you, none of that either. Instead, he's torn up. And what does it mean, he's torn up? This gives us insight into the very nature of sin, which is deeply relational.

[00:04:27.350] - Speaker 2

You see, when you and I think of sin, we tend to think of it as violating a moral law. In other words, violating a rule. And just for the record, when the Bible says, thou shalt not lie and you lie, that's a sin. Okay, everybody, let's get that straight. That is a sin. You've broken a rule, but where does the rule come from? And because we have a tendency to think of sin as strictly just breaking the rule, even though it is, if that's the limit of your concept, you're really not going to be able to understand the enormity of sin in the Bible because, look, I hear people say this to me all the time. They say, "Well, I'm not religious, but I'm a good person. Isn't that what matters? I'm not religious, but I'm a good person. Isn't that what matters?" No. And here's why. Let me give you an illustration. Imagine a poor widow, and she has an only child, an only son, and she teaches him to be good. That is, she teaches him to always tell the truth, always work hard, and always help the poor. She also sacrifices everything to get him through college.

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I mean, she makes no money, and so she spends nothing on herself, and she works incredibly long hours. And so, with incredible self-sacrifice, she gets the money to put him through college, and he gets through college, and he gets a degree, and he gets out and gets a great career. And after he graduates, he virtually never talks to her anymore. Oh, by the way, if you ask him, he will certainly admit the existence of a mother. He says, "Oh, I believe there is a mother. And I know, and also, I send her a Christmas card every year. I send her a Christmas card." But he never goes to see her. He never does face to facetime with her. He doesn't go and honor her and love her and give her all the relationship that he owes her because he owes her everything. So, he says, "Well, no, I never go see my mother or anything like that. But what matters is I'm a good person. I tell the truth, I work hard, and I always help the poor. And surely that's enough, isn't it?" And what are you going to say to him? You're going to punch his lights out?

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If you sit, you're going to sit there and say, "Wait a minute. You are looking to the technical ethicalness of your life when you have done a relational betrayal. You've betrayed her. You owe her everything. You're being ethical, but you're being ethical for yourself. You're working hard and you're telling the truth, but you're doing it for yourself. You've betrayed her. Yeah, that's right." Do you see, primarily, yes, when you sin, you break God's law, but primarily, you're trampling on that relationship. You owe him far more than that young man owes his mother. And therefore, sin is grievous. In Genesis chapter six, background for

Jesus being torn up by the sin he sees is Genesis chapter six, where we're told that God looked on the earth and saw the evil and saw sin. And it said, if you actually find it, almost any translation, it'll say almost the same thing, that God was troubled in his spirit. What it literally says is in the Hebrew is his heart was filled with pain. And the Hebrew word for pain that is used of God in Genesis six, when he looks at sin and evil, that his heart's literally torn up. It's the same word for pain that's used in Genesis three that talks about the result of our sin, that when the human race turned away from God, our toil is painful, childbearing is painful, life is painful now. And here's what it means. God has so bound his heart to us that when he sees us in pain, it causes him pain. Which means when you sin, you don't just break God's law, you break his heart. You're not just breaking an ethical rule, you are trampling on the relationship. And as soon as you begin to see that, the very thing that would make you absolutely offended by a young man who owed everything to his mother, and he goes off and he's living an ethical life, but he ignores her, you would just be offended by that. Well, be offended at yourself, be upset with yourself. Because we owe God every. If there is a God, we owe him everything. If there's a God who created us and sustained us, if you believe that if there is a God, you owe him not just to be ethical, but to do everything for him, everything for him. Do you?

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Do we? No. And it breaks his heart. It tramples on his heart. Now, unless you understand that and see that, you aren't going to be able to, there's three things... ..One is you're not going to understand the enormity of sin. You're going to tend to take it lightly. Number two, when you see it in someone else, you'll not only not take it properly, you won't see it as serious in yourself. But secondly, when you come to somebody else who's done something wrong, how do you respond? Do you respond like Jesus? Not usually. We either are kind of like, indifferent to it. We shrug at it. Jesus would never shrug at sin. He's torn up by it. But on the other hand, we might just denounce it and kind of feel good about denouncing it. I can't believe you're the kind of person who would do something like, you know, we do that more on the Internet than in person, but know Jesus is torn up by it. We don't laugh at it or wink at it. Jesus is torn up by it. We don't just denounce it and just say how stupid you people are. Jesus is torn up by it. Are you? Are you torn up by knowing that the way you live tears up his heart? It violates his glory! Yes, see, the Bible says, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Romans three, romans one. But I have to say that in the same way, frankly, the young man is violating the glory of his mother. What does that mean? He's not giving her the love and honor, that's what glory is, due her. But when you see sin fall short of the glory of God, it seems abstract. It seems like, oh, we're offending God's dignity in some way. Well, we are, but we are trampling on the relationship, and one to whom we owe everything. So anyway, number one, do you see the nature and enormity of sin? Do you see its relational character? You see its sinfulness? Do you see its heinousness, its heinousness? Do you see its grievousness? If you see that, it'll change the way which you look at your own heart and the way in which you regard other people, and you'll be more like Jesus. And we're not, number one. Number two, that's the power, pardon me, the nature and enormity of sin.

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But secondly, Judas in particular, Judas' example shows us the power of sin. Notice at the very end it says as soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out and it was night. Now, those of you who know anything about writing and art know that John is not just simply saying, and by the way, it was nighttime. He's not just telling you, oh, I just want to make sure you know, it's not daytime, it's nighttime. He's not just talking about time. One of the great literary themes of the book of John is darkness and light. And when it says that Judas went out into the night, it's saying as Judas plunged himself into the physical darkness, he was being plunged into spiritual darkness. So, you say, "Well, what do you mean spiritual darkness? What are we talking about here?" Judas was, people constantly talk about the motivation for Judas. There have been every movie, every play, every rock opera, everybody and every story, everybody constantly tries to posit motives for why Judas did what he did. And guess what? It's speculative. And I've actually tried over the years to think about it and I'm not going to speculate because the Bible doesn't give us a look inside.

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What the Bible tells us about sin is this. Sin is the soul curved in on itself to serve itself rather than God or others. Sin makes your own ego and your own needs more real than anything else, so that anything else gets discarded or trampled on or broken in order to meet your needs. Sin is the soul curved in on itself to serve itself and to trample on anything else in order to get its needs met. We don't exactly know the form. There's millions of forms of this. We don't exactly know how the form of this was taking in Judas's heart, but we do know the power of how sin was operating his heart. What do I mean by that? Here's three things we learned from looking at Judas about the power of sin. Number one, the power of sin to remain, to not be uprooted. The power of sin to stay there even when you think you've gotten over something, it's still there. The power of sin to remain. They say that if there is a nuclear holocaust and a huge cloud of radioactive radioactivity, that all human beings die. They say if there is a nuclear holocaust, the only living things left on the earth will be insects.

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And the reason is that evidently insects can take like tens of thousands of times more radiation before they die than we can or animals or anybody else. So, the joke, and it's partly true, is if there is a nuclear holocaust, all that will be left are the cockroaches. Now here's what's interesting. Judas has been getting the biggest blast of love, of glory, of holiness. He's been seeing, no, but listen, no one else is, there's twelve people that Jesus Christ has been training hands on and living with. He's gotten the love of Jesus Christ full blast. He's gotten the holiness of Jesus Christ, the beauty of his life, his teaching, his wisdom. By the way, this is about the best church experience everybody's ever had. And Judas Iscariot has had Jesus Christ, you might say the full shining of the sunlight of his greatness. You might say a blast of unbelievable love and joy and glory. And the cockroach of his sin is still alive. That is to say, he never actually gave Jesus Christ his heart. Over and over the Bible says that even though he had been doing everything and been listening and he's been very, very busy, he'd all been doing it for himself.

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He never said in his heart to Jesus Christ, I want to live for you, I want to do this for you. Instead, he was doing it to help himself, to move himself ahead. He had never given Jesus Christ his heart. Every time you think, oh, if I just try hard, I can get rid of sin, I can uproot this bad habit, I can uproot this thing. This is not good. I can do, I can work at it. I'll take a course, I'll read a book, I'll try really hard. I'll have an accountability partner. Every time you think you've uprooted it, there's more in there. Sin has got the power to remain. You'll never be able in your own power to uproot it. So, number one, sin has the power to remain.

Number two, sin has the power to hide itself. Oh, my goodness, does it! I think one of the most interesting things about this whole passage is this. In verse 21 he says, one of you is going to betray me. In verse 22, the disciples stared at one another at a loss to know which of them he meant. Isn't that interesting? They had no idea who he was talking about. They didn't say, Jesus didn't say, one of you is going to betray me. And they all looked at each other and said, we've been thinking about that. He seems a little shady. Nobody sit there and says, you know what? I've been thinking about that because when we would go out to cast out demons, Judas's demon never came out. And when we would go out to cleanse the lepers, Judas's leper never got healed. And I remember thinking, there's something wrong here. In fact, look carefully at the very end, even though Jesus said, one of you is going to betray me, even though John, or the disciple Jesus loves said, who is it? And Jesus says, the one I give the dip bread to. And he does it in spite of all that. It says, verse 29. Since Judas had charged the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, to give something to the poor. In other words, even after he actually indicates to some of them, this is the one who's going to betray me, it just isn't real. Now, here's what this means. Judas looked like everybody else.

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He had been in ministry. He had been casting out demons. He had been healing the sick. Because all of the disciples went out doing that. There was absolutely no indication that he was less enthusiastic or he was less enjoying the teaching or that he didn't participate in class and raise his hand. He looked like everybody else. And that's the way sin is. How does sin hide? Well, one of the ways it hides, is actually the way it probably hit with Judas, and that is you look at all the good you're doing. I knew a man who was a pretty successful minister that had an affair. He was sleeping with a woman in the congregation rather than his. And he was not telling anybody. And he was, the way he's married. And for quite a long time it went on. And he told me, here's what would happen. He'd start to feel guilty about it. And then he'd preach a great sermon and afterwards people come up with tears in their eyes saying, oh, you just changed my life. And then he would think, I can't be that bad. That's the Judas thing. My demons come out, my lepers are cleansed, I'm helping people. I can't be that bad. Yeah, but I can't be that bad. You hide it from yourself. I'm not a workaholic. I'm very productive. I'm not an alcoholic. I'm the life of the party. I'm not abrasive and mean. I just have high standards. I'm not stingy. I'm just prudent. I'm not a racist. It's just that you really can't trust those people. Sin hides. It hides until it's too late. It hides until you find yourself doing things that you didn't think you were capable of, but you knew you were capable of it, you just wouldn't see. So, the power of sin to hide, the power of sin to remain. But then lastly, there's the power of sin to grow. And unfortunately, we didn't print the entire chapter, chapter 13. But if you

remember, if you've been around in chapter 13, verse two, up in the very top of the chapter, it said Satan put it into Judas's heart to betray Jesus. It's like Satan's out here, and he put it into Judas's heart to betray Jesus. But down here in verse 27, we'll get to this, actually, in a minute. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. That's progression. And what it's really saying in the beginning, sin is sort of outside kind of knocking on your door, and then you can kind of let it in, and next thing you know, it's inside and dominating you. In Genesis, chapter four, God actually does something with Cain. Cain and Abel. God does something with Cain that's very similar to what Jesus is doing with Judas. Cain is getting really upset. The fact that Abel's actually having a more successful life, more good things are happening to Abel. He's becoming a more successful person than Cain. And Cain begins to resent it and begins to get really upset. And God sees what's happening, and God comes to Cain. And in a remarkable point of. I love the fact that God actually comes to Abel. Cain, I keep saying, Abel comes to Cain, he comes to Elijah, he comes to Jonah, and he counsels them. Counselors, go read those places. So, he comes to Cain and he says, sin is crouching at your door. Its desire is to have you, but you must master it. Remarkable. Here's God using a metaphor. Sin is like an animal crouching in the corner, hiding from you.

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The sin in your life always hides from you. You always find a way of justifying. You always find a way of saying, well, look at all the good I'm doing. But it wants to have you, God says. Which means that sin starts as something that you still have control of, and eventually you don't have control of it. Sin is not just something you do. It's something you create. It's a force that, a darkness, that you actually create in yourself. Because every time you do something, every time you think, a selfish thought, an angry thought, a vengeful thought, a prejudiced thought, a dishonest thought, you see, a greedy thought, a proud thought, every time you think and you indulge in that thought, it gets easier to actually do it. And every time you do, it gets easier to do it again and again and again. And eventually it masters you.

My two mentors that knew each other, but I never knew that you all know. Tell you something about this. C. S. Lewis and J. R. Tolkien, my two mentors. C. S. Lewis, in his book *Great Divorce*, tells the story about a woman who started grumbling and became a grumble. And the way he describes it is so frightening to me. He says, you know, in the beginning you grumble and you can see yourself grumbling and you stand apart from the grumble and you can kind of criticize it. You say, I really shouldn't grumble. People say, I grumble too much. I really shouldn't. You criticize it. You still have a certain amount of power over it. But he says, the day will come if you don't stop, when you won't be able to stop, and when you actually just become the grumble, there's really no you left in it. Or another way to put it is this in J. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, somebody once asked him something interesting. They said, "Lord of the Rings is 600,000 words, three volumes." And sometimes people said, "Do you ever reread it yourself?" He was interviewed once and said, "Do you read it?" He says, "Yes, sometimes I reread it." And they said, "Where do you get the most moved?" J. R. Tolkien said, "There's one spot at the end of the second book that he can never read without being moved to tears. It's the most moving part of the whole book."

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You say, "Well, that's interesting. Where is it?" Here's where it is. It's the Judas, it's the John 13 experience. Gollum is a hobbit who over the years, had become a very evil, cruel being, because he'd given into sin and he became something very evil and very cruel. But he gets a new master, Frodo, who loves him. And slowly, because of his kindness and his love, Gollum starts to melt a little bit. And then at a certain point, he sets up a betrayal. He sets up a trap for Sam and for Frodo. And he comes back having set up the trap, having betrayed him. And when he sees Frodo sleeping and looking rather angelic and looking loving, suddenly he's struck, he's smitten. And for a moment, he thinks he needs to repent. For a moment he needs to repent. And then suddenly up comes Sam, accuses him of sneaking around. And in the text, suddenly, Gollum looks up, and the green glint comes back into his eyes, and here's what the text says, *the fleeting moment had passed beyond recall*. Tolkien says, I can never read that without weeping. See the Judas moment, a betrayal, but a chance to repent. But sometime that chance, you're on a precipice, and once the fleeting moment goes by beyond recall, there's just a grumble left. There's just the anger left. There's no you left. Sin is crouching at your door. It's desires to have you, but you must master it. If there's anybody in this room that's been thinking about making a change, thinking about something that's wrong right now in your life, and you say, I really ought to change that, I really need to repent of that. I really need to change that. But you've been putting it off. As you value your life, don't do that. What makes you think you'll be able to repent at will? You don't understand the power of sin!

Which leads us to the last point. And that is, what is the medicine? What is the medicine? What does Jesus offer Judas, which is the only medicine that could possibly cure this powerful, hidden, indelible, deeply rooted thing in our hearts? Well, here's what he does. It says, dipping a piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Now, by the way, what every commentator will tell you is, when you sat at a feast, one of the first things everybody ate was bread which was dipped in a kind of fruit puree, by the way of dates and raisins and wine. It was kind of a dip. And for the host of the feast to dip the bread and give it to somebody was a sign of honor, and it was a sign of affection, and it was a sign of love. And Judas must have been right at Jesus Christ's left hand, which would have been the place of honor. Not the right hand, actually, because you reclined on your right, so you could see the people on your left. And get this, Judas has already heard Jesus say, "One of you is going to betray me." So, Judas knows Jesus knows. But then Jesus hands him the bread. And as clear as could possibly be, the message is Judas hears Jesus saying, "I see you. I see you all the way to the bottom. I know everything, and I still love you, and I still want you. Please come to me." You know what's going on here. This is one last, incredibly hot, bright blast of love into a slowly darkening, freezing heart. And, what is he offering Judas? What is he offering him? Just love? Well, yes, but Miroslav Volf, in his great book, Exclusion and Embrace, takes a good look at the Cain/Abel story, which is very similar here.

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Just like Jesus Christ is trying to get Judas to escape the sin that's enveloping him. God goes to Cain and he's trying to get Cain to escape the sin that's enveloping him. And Miroslav Volf goes back and says, well, it's interesting. He says, "Why was Cain so angry? Why was Cain getting that resentful? Why was Cain becoming capable of murder?" Which, of course, is what he did do, and with a certain amount of speculation, but I think very reasonably so, Miroslav Volf says that probably Cain was really angry when

Abel got successful because Cain had developed an identity, and that identity was based, he says, this happens in an awful lot of families, that identity is based on the fact that Cain felt that I'm the best of the kids, I'm the one the parents consider the most successful, the best one, I'm the best of the children. And his identity was very much based on that. That's the only reason. Why would he be so upset and murderously angry when Abel begins to get more successful? It's because his identity is being threatened, the identity he's chosen. And here's what Volf says. Miroslav says, it says, "Cain's identity was constructed from the start in relationship to Abel. He felt great and worthy because he was better than Abel. When Abel became more successful, Cain was deeply bitter, and either he would have to adjust his identity or eliminate Abel." And then he says, quote, "The power of sin rests less on some insuppressible urge than on the reasoning of the curved-in self which insists on maintaining its own false identity." Let me translate. Everybody in this room has a false identity. Everybody in this room says, my identity is the reason I feel good about myself, is because I make money, or I live in New York, or because I've got children who love me, or I'm involved in this really important political cause or something. Everybody's got an identity. Or I'm the one sibling that my parents love and all the other siblings have disappointed my parents, and I'm the good kid. There's a million versions. They're all false identities. Why? They're fragile identities because they're based on you performing. And if they're based on you performing, then when something jeopardizes that, when it looks like you might fail or somebody's blocking, then you suddenly get furious or you start to melt down. Why?

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Because of a false identity. And it's fascinating for Miroslav to say, and he's right, "The power of sin rests less on some insuppressible urge." Being Cain wasn't just somebody who just had these murderous urges. And Cain people happened to be in the way. The murderous urge was coming because of the false identity that says, this is wrong, he can't be doing this! Jesus Christ is offering every one of us, like Judas, a new identity. I see you to the bottom. I've seen all that's wrong with you. Especially think about Judas. If there's anybody who deserves hell, here's somebody who privileges none of us have ever had. Nobody's ever had except those other eleven disciples, Jesus Christ, the son of God, to love you and to live with you and train you for three years. If there's anybody who deserves hell. But Jesus Christ says, I look all the way to the bottom of your heart, and I still offer unconditional love in spite of what you've done. That means he's offering Judas a new identity. He's offering all of us a new identity. But Judas decides either because he's furious with being made to feel guilty or because he doesn't want to lose control.

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These are all the reasons why we reject it. When he took the bread, we're told that at that point in his heart, he just resolved to go through with it, and he was taken over. Now, you know where this medicine comes from. This is an amazing medicine. Why can Jesus offer us this new identity? Here's why. He says, "What you are about to do, do quickly. What you're about to do, do quickly." Now, until recently, I always thought that he was just saying, "Okay, if you're going to sin, go ahead and sin." That doesn't make sense. It doesn't make any sense at all that Jesus is just saying, "Look, you're going to destroy yourself. Go destroy yourself." That doesn't fit in with anything else we know about Jesus. It fits in with

nothing else he's done in the passage. But here's what he is saying. Have you ever been watching one of those movies where people are coming up with an elaborate plan to do something? And so, they plan and they plan and they plan and they plan, they plan. And finally, the leader says, "Let's do it. Let's do this thing." And they get off and do it.

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That's what Jesus is saying, because, see, when Judas goes out the door, that starts the ball rolling, and within hours he's going to be crucified. He says, "Let's do it." You know why? Why is he so torn up? Here's why Jesus Christ is torn up. Here's why God is torn up, because he's equally good and he's good. In other words, for example, if you were good in the sense of loving, but not good in the sense of perfectly just, or if you were good in the sense of very moral, but not good in the sense of endlessly loving, you wouldn't be torn up when you see somebody sinning, right? In other words, if you love the person and you see somebody sinning, you say, "Oh, well, forget about it" then you're good in the sense of being loving, but you're not good in the sense of being just. Or on the other hand, if you see somebody sinning and you say, "Good riddance, just get out of here. Punish those people, get rid of them." You'd be good in the sense of being just committed to justice, but not good in the sense of being loving.

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But here's the reason why the Son of God and why God is torn up, because he is perfectly good. He is so good, he can't just say, "Oh, it doesn't merely matter that you're sinning." He knows sin needs to be punished. But he's also so perfectly good, he can't just say, "Oh, well, you have to be punished." He says, "I don't want to punish you." Go to Hosea, chapter eleven sometime where God is saying to Israel, "You need to be punished, you deserve punishment, you must be punished." And yet then he actually says in chapter eleven, verse eight of Hosea, he says, "But my heart is torn to pieces. I don't want to punish you. I don't want to give you up." Now, if there's anybody in this room who's ever loved a real fool, you'll know something of this. If you ever loved a foolish son or a foolish parent or a foolish friend, you know something of this. On the one hand, you just want to see them get their comeuppance. That's what they really deserve. That's really what they need. On the other hand, you don't want to see them get their comeuppance.

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And so, you go back and forth and back and forth. But because we are human beings, you're going to have to choose. You're almost always going to have to choose justice over love or love over justice. But God is perfect and both love and justice are equally part of God's goodness. And God does not have to choose because he's God. And both his love and justice will be satisfied. And where on the cross, Jesus says, "Let's do this thing so I can offer this medicine to everybody, so I can offer a true identity to everyone. We have to get this done." And on the cross, God's justice was completely fulfilled because sin was punished and his love was completely fulfilled because anyone who believes in Jesus Christ can be offered unconditional love, no matter how deep your betrayals are. Judas went into the darkness, but on

the cross, darkness came down on him. Right? Matthew 27:45. From the 6th hour to the 9th hour, darkness came over all the land. And the 9th hour, Jesus said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The darkness that sin deserves came down on Jesus so that when you believe in him, he can say, I see you to the bottom. I've seen everything you've ever done. I see stuff in your heart that you can't even admit is there, and I love you anyway."

Three things. Number one, if there's anybody who thinks that you can overcome your problems by working hard, reading a book, taking a course or something like that, forget it. The stuff that is wrong with you is so deeply rooted nothing less than a regeneration of the Holy Spirit, a new identity, a complete surrender to God, that's the only thing that'll work, number one. Number two, if there's anybody here thinking about making any kind of changes to your life because you say, I really ought to repent of that, I really ought to change that, do it now. Don't think you can do it anytime you want. What hubris to think you can do it anytime you want. And lastly, hey, this is the Lord's table. Oh, interesting. We're all at the Lord's table. Jesus is right here. And there's anyone here who's got darkness in their heart, feels unworthy, feels angry. Let the love of Jesus Christ, represented by the poured-out wine and the broken bread, let it melt your heart.

[00:37:39.760] - Speaker 2

"See, I don't care what you've done," Jesus says, "if you repent right now, I don't care how bad things are in your life. If you repent right now, you can eat. Let my love melt your heart and take and eat." Let's pray.

Our father, we thank you that you've given us this great message of the power, the enormity, the seriousness of sin. But the remedy, and it's a powerful remedy. And in some ways, if we take the bread and the cup, and in faith, in repentance, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that remedy is instilled in us now. And things that are in our heart right now will start to be weakened and start to be cast out. So, Lord, give us the remedy. Give us the medicine. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

The False Disciple, Tim Keller

The scripture reading this morning is taken from **John, chapter 13, verses 21 through 30.**

²¹After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit, and testified, "Very truly, I tell you, one of you is going to betray me." ²²His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. ²³One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. ²⁴Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means." ²⁵Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" ²⁶Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. So, Jesus told him, "What you are about to do, do quickly." ²⁸But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. ²⁹Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival or to give something to the poor. ³⁰As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out and it was night.

[00:01:29.630] - Speaker 1

This is the word of the Lord.

[00:01:34.350] - Speaker 2

This very poignant, tragic account of Jesus talking to Judas the night before he dies, is a, if this was a movie, it would be in black and white. It would be noir. Fred McMurray, Barbara Stanwick, and by the way, if you've ever seen Double Indemnity, which is about roughly the same sort of thing, and that is that sin, evil, cruel actions can take you over. Double Indemnity, I recommend it, a great old black and white noir film. And actually, this particular sad, tragic account of what happens to Judas is very instructive for us for this reason. Every culture struggles with the Gospel at some point. The Gospel challenges every culture somewhere. And no culture, it doesn't fit in any culture. Every culture struggles with at some point. So in non-western cultures, shame and honor cultures, what the Bible says, what the Gospel says about free forgiveness and grace and non-retaliation, they struggle with that. But in our western cultures, our relativistic western cultures, what we mainly struggle with is what the Bible says about sin. And this passage tells us quite a bit about that. We're going to learn a lot about,

- first, the nature and enormity of sin
- Secondly, the power of sin
- And thirdly, the only medicine for it

The nature and enormity, the power and the only medicine for it.

So, first of all, the nature and enormity, let's not miss the beginning, which is really important. And it's very easy to go past it, quickly: *After he had said this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and testified, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me."* So, we're told that Jesus Christ is thinking about the fact that one of his disciples is about to betray him to death. And his response is, he says, *troubled in spirit*. And it's a

very strong term that literally means to be torn to pieces. To be torn into pieces. So, Jesus is not speaking in a detached way. He doesn't say, well, you know, this was inevitable. I knew it was going to happen. There's always somebody like this, none of that detachment. He's also not flying off the handle, offended in his dignity, saying, how dare you, you little, after all I've done for you, none of that either. Instead, he's torn up. And what does it mean, he's torn up? This gives us insight into the very nature of sin, which is deeply relational.

[00:04:27.350] - Speaker 2

You see, when you and I think of sin, we tend to think of it as violating a moral law. In other words, violating a rule. And just for the record, when the Bible says, thou shalt not lie and you lie, that's a sin. Okay, everybody, let's get that straight. That is a sin. You've broken a rule, but where does the rule come from? And because we have a tendency to think of sin as strictly just breaking the rule, even though it is, if that's the limit of your concept, you're really not going to be able to understand the enormity of sin in the Bible because, look, I hear people say this to me all the time. They say, "Well, I'm not religious, but I'm a good person. Isn't that what matters? I'm not religious, but I'm a good person. Isn't that what matters?" No. And here's why. Let me give you an illustration. Imagine a poor widow, and she has an only child, an only son, and she teaches him to be good. That is, she teaches him to always tell the truth, always work hard, and always help the poor. She also sacrifices everything to get him through college.

[00:05:38.980] - Speaker 2

I mean, she makes no money, and so she spends nothing on herself, and she works incredibly long hours. And so, with incredible self-sacrifice, she gets the money to put him through college, and he gets through college, and he gets a degree, and he gets out and gets a great career. And after he graduates, he virtually never talks to her anymore. Oh, by the way, if you ask him, he will certainly admit the existence of a mother. He says, "Oh, I believe there is a mother. And I know, and also, I send her a Christmas card every year. I send her a Christmas card." But he never goes to see her. He never does face to facetime with her. He doesn't go and honor her and love her and give her all the relationship that he owes her because he owes her everything. So, he says, "Well, no, I never go see my mother or anything like that. But what matters is I'm a good person. I tell the truth, I work hard, and I always help the poor. And surely that's enough, isn't it?" And what are you going to say to him? You're going to punch his lights out?

[00:06:45.170] - Speaker 2

If you sit, you're going to sit there and say, "Wait a minute. You are looking to the technical ethicalness of your life when you have done a relational betrayal. You've betrayed her. You owe her everything. You're being ethical, but you're being ethical for yourself. You're working hard and you're telling the truth, but you're doing it for yourself. You've betrayed her. Yeah, that's right." Do you see, primarily, yes, when you sin, you break God's law, but primarily, you're trampling on that relationship. You owe him far more than that young man owes his mother. And therefore, sin is grievous. In Genesis chapter six, background for

Jesus being torn up by the sin he sees is Genesis chapter six, where we're told that God looked on the earth and saw the evil and saw sin. And it said, if you actually find it, almost any translation, it'll say almost the same thing, that God was troubled in his spirit. What it literally says is in the Hebrew is his heart was filled with pain. And the Hebrew word for pain that is used of God in Genesis six, when he looks at sin and evil, that his heart's literally torn up. It's the same word for pain that's used in Genesis three that talks about the result of our sin, that when the human race turned away from God, our toil is painful, childbearing is painful, life is painful now. And here's what it means. God has so bound his heart to us that when he sees us in pain, it causes him pain. Which means when you sin, you don't just break God's law, you break his heart. You're not just breaking an ethical rule, you are trampling on the relationship. And as soon as you begin to see that, the very thing that would make you absolutely offended by a young man who owed everything to his mother, and he goes off and he's living an ethical life, but he ignores her, you would just be offended by that. Well, be offended at yourself, be upset with yourself. Because we owe God every. If there is a God, we owe him everything. If there's a God who created us and sustained us, if you believe that if there is a God, you owe him not just to be ethical, but to do everything for him, everything for him. Do you?

[00:09:11.940] - Speaker 2

Do we? No. And it breaks his heart. It tramples on his heart. Now, unless you understand that and see that, you aren't going to be able to, there's three things... One is you're not going to understand the enormity of sin. You're going to tend to take it lightly. Number two, when you see it in someone else, you'll not only not take it properly, you won't see it as serious in yourself. But secondly, when you come to somebody else who's done something wrong, how do you respond? Do you respond like Jesus? Not usually. We either are kind of like, indifferent to it. We shrug at it. Jesus would never shrug at sin. He's torn up by it. But on the other hand, we might just denounce it and kind of feel good about denouncing it. I can't believe you're the kind of person who would do something like, you know, we do that more on the Internet than in person, but know Jesus is torn up by it. We don't laugh at it or wink at it. Jesus is torn up by it. We don't just denounce it and just say how stupid you people are. Jesus is torn up by it. Are you? Are you torn up by knowing that the way you live tears up his heart? It violates his glory! Yes, see, the Bible says, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Romans three, romans one. But I have to say that in the same way, frankly, the young man is violating the glory of his mother. What does that mean? He's not giving her the love and honor, that's what glory is, due her. But when you see sin fall short of the glory of God, it seems abstract. It seems like, oh, we're offending God's dignity in some way. Well, we are, but we are trampling on the relationship, and one to whom we owe everything. So anyway, number one, do you see the nature and enormity of sin? Do you see its relational character? You see its sinfulness? Do you see its heinousness, its heinousness? Do you see its grievousness? If you see that, it'll change the way which you look at your own heart and the way in which you regard other people, and you'll be more like Jesus. And we're not, number one. Number two, that's the power, pardon me, the nature and enormity of sin.

[00:11:32.280] - Speaker 2

But secondly, Judas in particular, Judas' example shows us the power of sin. Notice at the very end it says as soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out and it was night. Now, those of you who know anything about writing and art know that John is not just simply saying, and by the way, it was nighttime. He's not just telling you, oh, I just want to make sure you know, it's not daytime, it's nighttime. He's not just talking about time. One of the great literary themes of the book of John is darkness and light. And when it says that Judas went out into the night, it's saying as Judas plunged himself into the physical darkness, he was being plunged into spiritual darkness. So, you say, "Well, what do you mean spiritual darkness? What are we talking about here?" Judas was, people constantly talk about the motivation for Judas. There have been every movie, every play, every rock opera, everybody and every story, everybody constantly tries to posit motives for why Judas did what he did. And guess what? It's speculative. And I've actually tried over the years to think about it and I'm not going to speculate because the Bible doesn't give us a look inside.

[00:12:57.450] - Speaker 2

What the Bible tells us about sin is this. Sin is the soul curved in on itself to serve itself rather than God or others. Sin makes your own ego and your own needs more real than anything else, so that anything else gets discarded or trampled on or broken in order to meet your needs. Sin is the soul curved in on itself to serve itself and to trample on anything else in order to get its needs met. We don't exactly know the form. There's millions of forms of this. We don't exactly know how the form of this was taking in Judas's heart, but we do know the power of how sin was operating his heart. What do I mean by that? Here's three things we learned from looking at Judas about the power of sin. Number one, the power of sin to remain, to not be uprooted. The power of sin to stay there even when you think you've gotten over something, it's still there. The power of sin to remain. They say that if there is a nuclear holocaust and a huge cloud of radioactive radioactivity, that all human beings die. They say if there is a nuclear holocaust, the only living things left on the earth will be insects.

[00:14:26.720] - Speaker 2

And the reason is that evidently insects can take like tens of thousands of times more radiation before they die than we can or animals or anybody else. So, the joke, and it's partly true, is if there is a nuclear holocaust, all that will be left are the cockroaches. Now here's what's interesting. Judas has been getting the biggest blast of love, of glory, of holiness. He's been seeing, no, but listen, no one else is, there's twelve people that Jesus Christ has been training hands on and living with. He's gotten the love of Jesus Christ full blast. He's gotten the holiness of Jesus Christ, the beauty of his life, his teaching, his wisdom. By the way, this is about the best church experience everybody's ever had. And Judas Iscariot has had Jesus Christ, you might say the full shining of the sunlight of his greatness. You might say a blast of unbelievable love and joy and glory. And the cockroach of his sin is still alive. That is to say, he never actually gave Jesus Christ his heart. Over and over the Bible says that even though he had been doing everything and been listening and he's been very, very busy, he'd all been doing it for himself.

[00:15:46.830] - Speaker 2

He never said in his heart to Jesus Christ, I want to live for you, I want to do this for you. Instead, he was doing it to help himself, to move himself ahead. He had never given Jesus Christ his heart. Every time you think, oh, if I just try hard, I can get rid of sin, I can uproot this bad habit, I can uproot this thing. This is not good. I can do, I can work at it. I'll take a course, I'll read a book, I'll try really hard. I'll have an accountability partner. Every time you think you've uprooted it, there's more in there. Sin has got the power to remain. You'll never be able in your own power to uproot it. So, number one, sin has the power to remain.

Number two, sin has the power to hide itself. Oh, my goodness, does it! I think one of the most interesting things about this whole passage is this. In verse 21 he says, one of you is going to betray me. In verse 22, the disciples stared at one another at a loss to know which of them he meant. Isn't that interesting? They had no idea who he was talking about. They didn't say, Jesus didn't say, one of you is going to betray me. And they all looked at each other and said, we've been thinking about that. He seems a little shady. Nobody sit there and says, you know what? I've been thinking about that because when we would go out to cast out demons, Judas's demon never came out. And when we would go out to cleanse the lepers, Judas's leper never got healed. And I remember thinking, there's something wrong here. In fact, look carefully at the very end, even though Jesus said, one of you is going to betray me, even though John, or the disciple Jesus loves said, who is it? And Jesus says, the one I give the dip bread to. And he does it in spite of all that. It says, verse 29. Since Judas had charged the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, to give something to the poor. In other words, even after he actually indicates to some of them, this is the one who's going to betray me, it just isn't real. Now, here's what this means. Judas looked like everybody else.

[00:18:02.090] - Speaker 2

He had been in ministry. He had been casting out demons. He had been healing the sick. Because all of the disciples went out doing that. There was absolutely no indication that he was less enthusiastic or he was less enjoying the teaching or that he didn't participate in class and raise his hand. He looked like everybody else. And that's the way sin is. How does sin hide? Well, one of the ways it hides, is actually the way it probably hit with Judas, and that is you look at all the good you're doing. I knew a man who was a pretty successful minister that had an affair. He was sleeping with a woman in the congregation rather than his. And he was not telling anybody. And he was, the way he's married. And for quite a long time it went on. And he told me, here's what would happen. He'd start to feel guilty about it. And then he'd preach a great sermon and afterwards people come up with tears in their eyes saying, oh, you just changed my life. And then he would think, I can't be that bad. That's the Judas thing. My demons come out, my lepers are cleansed, I'm helping people. I can't be that bad. Yeah, but I can't be that bad. You hide it from yourself. I'm not a workaholic. I'm very productive. I'm not an alcoholic. I'm the life of the party. I'm not abrasive and mean. I just have high standards. I'm not stingy. I'm just prudent. I'm not a racist. It's just that you really can't trust those people. Sin hides. It hides until it's too late. It hides until you find yourself doing things that you didn't think you were capable of, but you knew you were capable of it, you just wouldn't see. So, the power of sin to hide, the power of sin to remain. But then lastly, there's the power of sin to grow. And unfortunately, we didn't print the entire chapter, chapter 13. But if you

remember, if you've been around in chapter 13, verse two, up in the very top of the chapter, it said Satan put it into Judas's heart to betray Jesus. It's like Satan's out here, and he put it into Judas's heart to betray Jesus. But down here in verse 27, we'll get to this, actually, in a minute. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. That's progression. And what it's really saying in the beginning, sin is sort of outside kind of knocking on your door, and then you can kind of let it in, and next thing you know, it's inside and dominating you. In Genesis, chapter four, God actually does something with Cain. Cain and Abel. God does something with Cain that's very similar to what Jesus is doing with Judas. Cain is getting really upset. The fact that Abel's actually having a more successful life, more good things are happening to Abel. He's becoming a more successful person than Cain. And Cain begins to resent it and begins to get really upset. And God sees what's happening, and God comes to Cain. And in a remarkable point of. I love the fact that God actually comes to Abel. Cain, I keep saying, Abel comes to Cain, he comes to Elijah, he comes to Jonah, and he counsels them. Counselors, go read those places. So, he comes to Cain and he says, sin is crouching at your door. Its desire is to have you, but you must master it. Remarkable. Here's God using a metaphor. Sin is like an animal crouching in the corner, hiding from you.

[00:21:54.560] - Speaker 2

The sin in your life always hides from you. You always find a way of justifying. You always find a way of saying, well, look at all the good I'm doing. But it wants to have you, God says. Which means that sin starts as something that you still have control of, and eventually you don't have control of it. Sin is not just something you do. It's something you create. It's a force that, a darkness, that you actually create in yourself. Because every time you do something, every time you think, a selfish thought, an angry thought, a vengeful thought, a prejudiced thought, a dishonest thought, you see, a greedy thought, a proud thought, every time you think and you indulge in that thought, it gets easier to actually do it. And every time you do, it gets easier to do it again and again and again. And eventually it masters you.

My two mentors that knew each other, but I never knew that you all know. Tell you something about this. C. S. Lewis and J. R. Tolkien, my two mentors. C. S. Lewis, in his book *Great Divorce*, tells the story about a woman who started grumbling and became a grumble. And the way he describes it is so frightening to me. He says, you know, in the beginning you grumble and you can see yourself grumbling and you stand apart from the grumble and you can kind of criticize it. You say, I really shouldn't grumble. People say, I grumble too much. I really shouldn't. You criticize it. You still have a certain amount of power over it. But he says, the day will come if you don't stop, when you won't be able to stop, and when you actually just become the grumble, there's really no you left in it. Or another way to put it is this in J. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, somebody once asked him something interesting. They said, "Lord of the Rings is 600,000 words, three volumes." And sometimes people said, "Do you ever reread it yourself?" He was interviewed once and said, "Do you read it?" He says, "Yes, sometimes I reread it." And they said, "Where do you get the most moved?" J. R. Tolkien said, "There's one spot at the end of the second book that he can never read without being moved to tears. It's the most moving part of the whole book."

[00:24:06.530] - Speaker 2

You say, "Well, that's interesting. Where is it?" Here's where it is. It's the Judas, it's the John 13 experience. Gollum is a hobbit who over the years, had become a very evil, cruel being, because he'd given into sin and he became something very evil and very cruel. But he gets a new master, Frodo, who loves him. And slowly, because of his kindness and his love, Gollum starts to melt a little bit. And then at a certain point, he sets up a betrayal. He sets up a trap for Sam and for Frodo. And he comes back having set up the trap, having betrayed him. And when he sees Frodo sleeping and looking rather angelic and looking loving, suddenly he's struck, he's smitten. And for a moment, he thinks he needs to repent. For a moment he needs to repent. And then suddenly up comes Sam, accuses him of sneaking around. And in the text, suddenly, Gollum looks up, and the green glint comes back into his eyes, and here's what the text says, *the fleeting moment had passed beyond recall*. Tolkien says, I can never read that without weeping. See the Judas moment, a betrayal, but a chance to repent. But sometime that chance, you're on a precipice, and once the fleeting moment goes by beyond recall, there's just a grumble left. There's just the anger left. There's no you left. Sin is crouching at your door. It's desires to have you, but you must master it. If there's anybody in this room that's been thinking about making a change, thinking about something that's wrong right now in your life, and you say, I really ought to change that, I really need to repent of that. I really need to change that. But you've been putting it off. As you value your life, don't do that. What makes you think you'll be able to repent at will? You don't understand the power of sin!

Which leads us to the last point. And that is, what is the medicine? What is the medicine? What does Jesus offer Judas, which is the only medicine that could possibly cure this powerful, hidden, indelible, deeply rooted thing in our hearts? Well, here's what he does. It says, dipping a piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Now, by the way, what every commentator will tell you is, when you sat at a feast, one of the first things everybody ate was bread which was dipped in a kind of fruit puree, by the way of dates and raisins and wine. It was kind of a dip. And for the host of the feast to dip the bread and give it to somebody was a sign of honor, and it was a sign of affection, and it was a sign of love. And Judas must have been right at Jesus Christ's left hand, which would have been the place of honor. Not the right hand, actually, because you reclined on your right, so you could see the people on your left. And get this, Judas has already heard Jesus say, "One of you is going to betray me." So, Judas knows Jesus knows. But then Jesus hands him the bread. And as clear as could possibly be, the message is Judas hears Jesus saying, "I see you. I see you all the way to the bottom. I know everything, and I still love you, and I still want you. Please come to me." You know what's going on here. This is one last, incredibly hot, bright blast of love into a slowly darkening, freezing heart. And, what is he offering Judas? What is he offering him? Just love? Well, yes, but Miroslav Volf, in his great book, Exclusion and Embrace, takes a good look at the Cain/Abel story, which is very similar here.

[00:28:19.870] - Speaker 2

Just like Jesus Christ is trying to get Judas to escape the sin that's enveloping him. God goes to Cain and he's trying to get Cain to escape the sin that's enveloping him. And Miroslav Volf goes back and says, well, it's interesting. He says, "Why was Cain so angry? Why was Cain getting that resentful? Why was Cain becoming capable of murder?" Which, of course, is what he did do, and with a certain amount of speculation, but I think very reasonably so, Miroslav Volf says that probably Cain was really angry when

Abel got successful because Cain had developed an identity, and that identity was based, he says, this happens in an awful lot of families, that identity is based on the fact that Cain felt that I'm the best of the kids, I'm the one the parents consider the most successful, the best one, I'm the best of the children. And his identity was very much based on that. That's the only reason. Why would he be so upset and murderously angry when Abel begins to get more successful? It's because his identity is being threatened, the identity he's chosen. And here's what Volf says. Miroslav says, it says, "Cain's identity was constructed from the start in relationship to Abel. He felt great and worthy because he was better than Abel. When Abel became more successful, Cain was deeply bitter, and either he would have to adjust his identity or eliminate Abel." And then he says, quote, "The power of sin rests less on some insuppressible urge than on the reasoning of the curved-in self which insists on maintaining its own false identity." Let me translate. Everybody in this room has a false identity. Everybody in this room says, my identity is the reason I feel good about myself, is because I make money, or I live in New York, or because I've got children who love me, or I'm involved in this really important political cause or something. Everybody's got an identity. Or I'm the one sibling that my parents love and all the other siblings have disappointed my parents, and I'm the good kid. There's a million versions. They're all false identities. Why? They're fragile identities because they're based on you performing. And if they're based on you performing, then when something jeopardizes that, when it looks like you might fail or somebody's blocking, then you suddenly get furious or you start to melt down. Why?

[00:30:57.240] - Speaker 2

Because of a false identity. And it's fascinating for Miroslav to say, and he's right, "The power of sin rests less on some insuppressible urge." Being Cain wasn't just somebody who just had these murderous urges. And Cain people happened to be in the way. The murderous urge was coming because of the false identity that says, this is wrong, he can't be doing this! Jesus Christ is offering every one of us, like Judas, a new identity. I see you to the bottom. I've seen all that's wrong with you. Especially think about Judas. If there's anybody who deserves hell, here's somebody who privileges none of us have ever had. Nobody's ever had except those other eleven disciples, Jesus Christ, the son of God, to love you and to live with you and train you for three years. If there's anybody who deserves hell. But Jesus Christ says, I look all the way to the bottom of your heart, and I still offer unconditional love in spite of what you've done. That means he's offering Judas a new identity. He's offering all of us a new identity. But Judas decides either because he's furious with being made to feel guilty or because he doesn't want to lose control.

[00:32:12.430] - Speaker 2

These are all the reasons why we reject it. When he took the bread, we're told that at that point in his heart, he just resolved to go through with it, and he was taken over. Now, you know where this medicine comes from. This is an amazing medicine. Why can Jesus offer us this new identity? Here's why. He says, "What you are about to do, do quickly. What you're about to do, do quickly." Now, until recently, I always thought that he was just saying, "Okay, if you're going to sin, go ahead and sin." That doesn't make sense. It doesn't make any sense at all that Jesus is just saying, "Look, you're going to destroy yourself. Go destroy yourself." That doesn't fit in with anything else we know about Jesus. It fits in with

nothing else he's done in the passage. But here's what he is saying. Have you ever been watching one of those movies where people are coming up with an elaborate plan to do something? And so, they plan and they plan and they plan and they plan, they plan. And finally, the leader says, "Let's do it. Let's do this thing." And they get off and do it.

[00:33:14.370] - Speaker 2

That's what Jesus is saying, because, see, when Judas goes out the door, that starts the ball rolling, and within hours he's going to be crucified. He says, "Let's do it." You know why? Why is he so torn up? Here's why Jesus Christ is torn up. Here's why God is torn up, because he's equally good and he's good. In other words, for example, if you were good in the sense of loving, but not good in the sense of perfectly just, or if you were good in the sense of very moral, but not good in the sense of endlessly loving, you wouldn't be torn up when you see somebody sinning, right? In other words, if you love the person and you see somebody sinning, you say, "Oh, well, forget about it" then you're good in the sense of being loving, but you're not good in the sense of being just. Or on the other hand, if you see somebody sinning and you say, "Good riddance, just get out of here. Punish those people, get rid of them." You'd be good in the sense of being just committed to justice, but not good in the sense of being loving.

[00:34:23.640] - Speaker 2

But here's the reason why the Son of God and why God is torn up, because he is perfectly good. He is so good, he can't just say, "Oh, it doesn't merely matter that you're sinning." He knows sin needs to be punished. But he's also so perfectly good, he can't just say, "Oh, well, you have to be punished." He says, "I don't want to punish you." Go to Hosea, chapter eleven sometime where God is saying to Israel, "You need to be punished, you deserve punishment, you must be punished." And yet then he actually says in chapter eleven, verse eight of Hosea, he says, "But my heart is torn to pieces. I don't want to punish you. I don't want to give you up." Now, if there's anybody in this room who's ever loved a real fool, you'll know something of this. If you ever loved a foolish son or a foolish parent or a foolish friend, you know something of this. On the one hand, you just want to see them get their comeuppance. That's what they really deserve. That's really what they need. On the other hand, you don't want to see them get their comeuppance.

[00:35:23.770] - Speaker 2

And so, you go back and forth and back and forth. But because we are human beings, you're going to have to choose. You're almost always going to have to choose justice over love or love over justice. But God is perfect and both love and justice are equally part of God's goodness. And God does not have to choose because he's God. And both his love and justice will be satisfied. And where on the cross, Jesus says, "Let's do this thing so I can offer this medicine to everybody, so I can offer a true identity to everyone. We have to get this done." And on the cross, God's justice was completely fulfilled because sin was punished and his love was completely fulfilled because anyone who believes in Jesus Christ can be offered unconditional love, no matter how deep your betrayals are. Judas went into the darkness, but on

the cross, darkness came down on him. Right? Matthew 27:45. From the 6th hour to the 9th hour, darkness came over all the land. And the 9th hour, Jesus said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The darkness that sin deserves came down on Jesus so that when you believe in him, he can say, I see you to the bottom. I've seen everything you've ever done. I see stuff in your heart that you can't even admit is there, and I love you anyway."

Three things. Number one, if there's anybody who thinks that you can overcome your problems by working hard, reading a book, taking a course or something like that, forget it. The stuff that is wrong with you is so deeply rooted nothing less than a regeneration of the Holy Spirit, a new identity, a complete surrender to God, that's the only thing that'll work, number one. Number two, if there's anybody here thinking about making any kind of changes to your life because you say, I really ought to repent of that, I really ought to change that, do it now. Don't think you can do it anytime you want. What hubris to think you can do it anytime you want. And lastly, hey, this is the Lord's table. Oh, interesting. We're all at the Lord's table. Jesus is right here. And there's anyone here who's got darkness in their heart, feels unworthy, feels angry. Let the love of Jesus Christ, represented by the poured-out wine and the broken bread, let it melt your heart.

[00:37:39.760] - Speaker 2

"See, I don't care what you've done," Jesus says, "if you repent right now, I don't care how bad things are in your life. If you repent right now, you can eat. Let my love melt your heart and take and eat." Let's pray.

Our father, we thank you that you've given us this great message of the power, the enormity, the seriousness of sin. But the remedy, and it's a powerful remedy. And in some ways, if we take the bread and the cup, and in faith, in repentance, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that remedy is instilled in us now. And things that are in our heart right now will start to be weakened and start to be cast out. So, Lord, give us the remedy. Give us the medicine. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.