Leonardo Da Vinci, the noted Italian artist, painted the Last Supper. It took seven years for him to complete it. The figures representing the twelve Apostles and Christ himself were painted from living persons. The life-model for the painting of the figure of Jesus was chosen first.

When it was decided that Da Vinci would paint this great picture, hundreds and hundreds of young men were carefully viewed in an endeavour to find a face and personality exhibiting innocence and beauty, free from the scars and signs of dissipation caused by sin.

Finally, after weeks of laborious search, a young man nineteen years of age was selected as a model for the portrayal of Christ. For six months Da Vinci worked on the production of this leading character of his famous painting.

During the next six years Da Vinci continued his labours on this sublime work of art. One by one fitting persons were chosen to represent each of the eleven Apostles - with space being left for the painting of the figure representing Judas Iscariot as the final task of this masterpiece.

This was the Apostle, you remember, who betrayed his Lord for thirty pieces of silver. For weeks Da Vinci searched for a man with a hard, callous face, with a countenance marked by scars of avarice, deceit, hypocrisy, and crime. A face that would delineate a character who would betray his best friend.

After many discouraging experiences in searching for the type of person
required to represent Judas, word came to Da Vinci that a man whose appearance fully met his requirements had been found in a dungeon in Rome, sentenced to die for a life of crime and murder. Da Vinci made the trip to Rome at once, and this man was brought out from his imprisonment in the dungeon and led out into the light of the sun. There Da Vinci saw before him a dark, swarthy man his long shaggy and unkempt hair sprawled over his face, which betrayed a character of viciousness and complete ruin. At last the famous painter had found the person he wanted to represent the character of Judas in his painting. By special permission from the king, this prisoner was carried to Milan where the picture was being painted. For months he sat before Da Vinci at appointed hours each day as the gifted artist diligently continued his task of transmitting, to his painting, this base character representing the traitor and betrayer of our Saviour.

As he finished his last stroke, he turned to the guards and said, I have finished. You may take the prisoner away. As the guards were leading their prisoner away, he suddenly broke loose from their control and rushed up to Da Vinci, crying as he did so, "Da Vinci, look at me. Do you not know who I am?" Da Vinci, with the trained eyes of a great character student, carefully scrutinized the man upon whose face he had constantly gazed for six months and replied, "No, I have never seen you in my life until you were brought
before me out of the dungeon in Rome."

Then, lifting his eyes toward heaven, the prisoner said, "Oh God, have I fallen so low?" Then turning his face to the painter he cried, "Leonardo Da Vinci, look at me again for I am the same man you painted just seven years ago as the figure of Christ."

It is believed that this urban legend began when a speaker somewhere intend to paint a vivid picture that we as Christians are supposed to reflect the image of Christ, but we are only a few choice decisions away from reflecting the image of Judas instead.

**Who was Judas Iscariot?**

We don’t know a lot about him. The gospels don’t tell us about how or when he was called to follow Jesus, so we can only assume it was with the same enthusiasm and vigor as the others. I doubt Judas would have begun following Jesus with the plan to betray him. He saw Jesus, he believed, and he followed, like the other disciples.

We do know that the name Judas was a very popular name during that time. Jesus had a brother named Judas, who wrote the book of Jude, and one of the apostles, the man who we normally call Thaddeus, was named Judas as well. We also know that the name Judas means “Jehovah leads.” This is
probably why it was a very popular name at the time. By that name it is probably safe to assume that he was born to parents who believed in God. What we use as his last name, Iscariot, probably wasn’t his surname. “Ish” means man and “Kerioth” is the name of the town that Judas came from (which was just South of Judea). So Judas Iscariot actually means, “Judas, man of Kerioth.” This would be how he would be distinguished from the others. Since he was from Kerioth we know that he was the only apostle who did not come from the area of Galilee. We also know from John 6:71 that his father’s name was Simon, but that is literally all we know about him.

We also know that he was chosen to serve as the treasurer for the disciples, so he must have displayed some positive characteristics. This office is not usually given to someone thought of as greedy and irresponsible. It was a respected position and probably indicates the degree of esteem in which he was held. It also appears very likely that Judas was even sitting in the seat of honor the night of the betrayal. Every indication is that Judas was a good man. He comes from a good family. He has followed Christ and His teachings. He was even trusted enough among the group to be treasurer and given the seat of honor when they sit down to
eat that final meal together. The apostles didn’t expect that he was a thief either. When Jesus makes the comment that someone will betray Him they all begin asking which one will do it. Judas was not suspecting at the time at all. So the question is, “Why did he do it?” There are a lot of lessons we can learn from Judas, but there are 3 in particular that I want to focus on this morning.

1.) **It is possible to be close to Christ and not be fully committed to Him**

Have you ever thought about all the privileges of life Judas was able to enjoy?

- He was numbered among the 12. These 12 men were Jesus’ inner circle. They were his most intimate disciples.
- He saw Jesus walk on the water.
- He saw Jesus raise the dead.
- He was there when Jesus opened the eyes of the blind.
- He heard all the divine wisdom which Jesus had used to silence His critics.
- He walked by Jesus’ side all across Palestine.
- He heard Jesus pray many times and perhaps even praying with Him.
• He saw the love that Jesus had for all people.

• He saw Jesus walk among sinful men for over 3 years yet never saw Him say or do one sinful thing.

• He ate with Jesus.

• He knew Jesus was the Son of God.

• He experienced things that we can only ever dream of experiencing.

Judas is a sobering reminder to us that coming to worship 3 times a week and simply being in God’s presence doesn’t exclude us from turning our backs on Him. Judas spent 3 years with Jesus Christ Himself and turned his back on Him. What’s to say that we won’t do the same?

It’s easy for us to distance ourselves from a character like Judas. We can say that we would never do that, but I believe that anyone, put into the right - or wrong - circumstances, facing the right amount of pressure, is capable of betrayal, even betraying Jesus.

Matthew 26:14-16

If you go online and look around you can find many polls that ask the question, “What would you do for $1 million dollars.” The answers are quite revealing.

• 60% say they would commit adultery
• 53% say would burn the American flag
• 39% say they would have their pet put to sleep
• 34% they would change religions

34% would turn their back on their religious beliefs for one million dollars.

Do you have a price?

Judas is a tragic example of lost opportunity. He is the epitome of wasted privilege. We have every reason to believe that Judas was given the same authority as the other 12 men and that he preached the same message and performed the same miracles. It shows us how close a person can come to Kingdom of God and still be lost.

Matthew 7:21-23

It is possible to be near Christ, to associate with his followers, to even be engaged in ministry and still not be truly committed to God.

2.) **He committed Jesus to his life, but he never committed his life to Jesus.**

A lot of people commit Jesus to their life, but do they commit their lives to Jesus? There is a big difference. Committing Jesus to your life means you are willing to follow Jesus as long as it improves your life, fits you’re your values, fits in with your morals, and fits in with your social and
political views. But, if Jesus has a claim on these things it is amazing how quickly people will opt out.

In Matthew 22 Jesus is asked what the greatest commandment is and he responds, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all of your soul, and with all of your mind.” Have you ever thought how all encompassing that statement is?

- With all your heart – That is all of your affections and desires are to be set upon him.

- Soul – That is your spiritual nature.

- Mind – Intellect (not allowing all the garbage of the world and the false doctrines of evolution, political correctness, and atheism to get in the way)

Every ounce of our entire being is to be squarely set upon loving God. Do you think we would have the dissension among our brethren if everyone’s heart was solely set upon pleasing God? Do you think people would stop worrying about what church can do for them if their minds our solely set upon pleasing God? Folks this isn’t only the root of Judas’ problem, but it really is the root of our spiritual problems as well.

Committing your life to Jesus means that you are no longer leading your life, but Christ is. Committing your life to Jesus means that no matter
what the Bible says, you accept it. **Committing your life to Jesus means that you are letting His word teach you what you believe, not letting your beliefs interpret the Bible for you.** Committing your life to Jesus means that His values and purpose are your values and purpose. Have you committed Jesus to your life or have you committed your life to Jesus? There is a HUGE, monumental difference. Judas committed Jesus to his life, but he had not committed his life to Jesus.

3.) **He never really repented**

When you mention Judas’ name with repentance the first thing people think about is that he went out and hung himself. That he was sorry he got caught, and not sorry for what he had done. I believe that idea is true, but you can go further back in Scripture to see that Judas never repented of His sin.

John 12:1-6

Do you see the contrast taking place among the 2 characters? Mary is so honored that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is in her presence that she takes this extremely expensive perfume, perfume that was worth a year’s wage, and anoints our Lord with it. She is making a beautiful, sacrificial offering to the Lord. While Mary is doing that, Judas is thinking in his heart that he could have taken that perfume, sold it, and reaped the rewards. What
was given as a beautiful sacrifice by one person is seen as an opportunity for greed to another.

Judas heard Jesus teach and preach every day about doing the right thing and he continued to steal from Christ, and the disciples, right under their noses. That greed, that love for money, overtook him to the point that he was willing to literally sell Christ out for only 30 pieces of silver (the price of a slave).

I am convinced that when Judas started stealing money from the moneybag he never intended that it would come to the point that it did. But because he refused to let go of his sin and grew and grew and grew till it caused him to make the grave mistake of betraying Jesus Christ.

James 1:13-15

Each and every one of us is put in the exact same position as Judas. We are all tempted and we all have weaknesses, but if we refuse to repent, if we refuse to give up the immoral things in our lives, they will grow until there is no turning back. That is what happened to Judas. He is a sad example of what happens when you refuse to repent.

Ultimately, Judas had a choice to make. Even though he went so far as to betray Christ, I have no doubt that Jesus would have forgiven him. All of Christ’s disciples fled in his hour of need. Peter denied him 3 times after
proclaiming boldly that he would die by Christ’s side. The difference between Peter and Judas is that Peter repented of his sins and 50 days later was preaching to a crowd of thousands on the day of Pentecost. While Peter was doing that, Judas was rotting in the grave.

Judas is not a popular name now. But such has not always been the case. When Judas’ parents named him, the name was very popular. As I mentioned earlier, it means “Jehovah leads.” Judas’ parents no doubt had high hopes for their son, hoping that he would lead a life that was pleasing to the Lord. Such was not the case. Now his name lives in infamy. Some thesauruses will even list his name as a synonym for traitor.

Matthew 26:20-22

When the Lord announced that one of them would betray him, the disciples began to ask, “Surely, not I?” I think that is the same question that we need to be asking ourselves today, “Surely, not I?” We must be careful that the same thing that happened to Judas doesn’t happen to us. That is the beauty of the Lord’s Supper. We often forget that as they were partaking it they were literally asking the question “Surely, not I?” They were examining ourselves and we should, no doubt, do the same. The same individual that is supposed to reflect the image of Jesus Christ can ultimately reflect the image of Judas. Who are you reflecting?