

Thirty Pieces of Silver

Judas Iscariot, one Jesus' twelve disciples, sold him out for 30 pieces, or about 12 ounces or 345 grams, of silver. (Matthew 26:14-16). Have you ever wondered what the 30 pieces of silver means?

The price of thirty pieces of silver, points back to Exodus 21:28-32. These verses dealt with the consequences to the owner of a bull that had gored, and caused the death of, another. If the bull had never gored anyone before the death in question, the owner was not held responsible, but the bull was stoned to death and its meat was not eaten. However, if the bull had previously gored someone else, and the bull's owner did not properly pen the beast, both the bull and its owner were put to death. However, the bull's owner could redeem his own life by paying whatever redemption price the victim's family demanded. Exodus 21:32, specifically provided that if the bull's victim was a male or female slave, the owner of the homicidal bull could redeem his life by paying the slave's owner 30 pieces of silver, the value of a slave's life. In ancient Israel, 30 pieces of silver was not considered a great sum of money.

By the bribe offered Judas, the chief priests painted a horrible picture. The amount of the bribe declared that they considered Jesus to be Judas' slave, the lowest life in Jewish society, mere property that belonged to another. This picture included a roadmap of what they were about to do to Jesus. The sum of the bribe also revealed that they planned to gore and kill Jesus. The chief priests had a bull in mind to do the job. The Roman Empire would be the bull that would gore and kill Judas' slave. Judas was entitled to compensation for the loss of his slave. So they counted out the 30 pieces of silver required by the Law of Moses.

Judas took the blood money. Soon, thereafter, he betrayed Jesus with a kiss. Jesus was arrested and tried by the Jewish religious authorities. He was wrongly charged and found guilty of the sin of blasphemy; claiming he was God's Son. Blasphemy was punishable by death. Lacking the power to put Jesus to death, the Jewish authorities appealed to the Roman Empire, who had the power to take a life.

At first, Pontius Pilate, the highest Roman authority in the land, believed Jesus was innocent. Yet he was pressured by the Jewish mob to sentence Jesus to death by crucifixion. Jesus was crucified, died and was placed in the tomb on the first Good Friday and rose from the dead on the first Easter Sunday. God used the treachery exercised by Judas, the chief priests and Rome, for our good and for our salvation.

Holy Scriptures declare that we are slaves. We are slaves to: our own sinful nature, which we inherited from Adam and Eve as a consequence of their fall from grace; the sin we commit; the death we cannot escape; and the wiles and temptations of the Devil. We cannot free ourselves from our own sinful nature, the consequences of our sin, death and the power of the Devil. Our sinful nature, the sin we commit and the temptations of the devil that we give into, are like the horns of a bull that gore us and eventually produce our death and permanent separation from God.

In Jesus, God declared just how much he valued each and every one of us. Jesus became a slave for us. On the cross, for us and for our salvation, Jesus allowed himself to be gored by our original sin, the sin we commit, our temptation that we give into at the hands of the Devil, and Jesus died our death. The Gospel promises that those who believe in Jesus and his innocent suffering and death for our sins and his glorious resurrection, are set free from their slavery to sin, death and the Devil and inherit eternal life. Those set free by their belief in Jesus are no longer slaves. *Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.* (John 1:12-13).

Those who plotted to bring about Jesus' going and death by the Roman soldiers, had Jesus' innocent blood on their hands. The law was clear, they had to pay for their sins. The Good News for them, for those who came to believe, Jesus' death paid the ransom for their sin and set them free. This began with the Roman Centurion in whom faith was quickened at the moment of Jesus' death. (Luke 23:47)

Come hear the Passion of Christ on Maundy Thursday, March 24th at 7:00 PM, Good Friday, March 25th at 10:30 AM, and experience the joy of His salvation on Easter Sunday, March 27th at 8:00 AM at Gellatly Nut Farm (breakfast & egg hunt), and 10:30 AM at Grace Lutheran Church (Holy Communion).

In Christ, Pastor Ed