

Sermon for 2nd Wednesday in Lent—3/7/2001—Lord of Life

Title: *Selling Your Soul*

Text: Mark 8: 34-38

Introduction: *Illus.: Pursuit of Happiness*

Theme: When our fulfillment and purpose is found in Jesus, we will not have to look to and seel our soul for the passing happiness of this life but rather we will find that Jesus actually gives us back our soul and does not exact a price.

All that glitters is not gold (or silver)?

- Judas found out after the fact that the silver he gained was not worth the Savior he lost
 1. He wanted Jesus to fit his plan, let Satan use disappointment to do the big switch, and in pride couldn't let go of it and took his own life
 2. **ILLUS.: JUDAS, THE SCARIEST**
 3. Judas could have been forgiven, if only he was willing to let go of the world treasure in his grasp
- What we sell our soul to and for often—tragically—disappoints us
 1. We want Jesus to fit into the neat little plans of our life—marriage, education, career, portfolio/acquisition, retirement and we sell out our soul to get these when it is not really ours to sell but truly ours to lose
 2. When it seems too late and our pride over “losing face” is at risk, it is not too late to get back what we “really” lost
- There is one treasure which we can't afford to buy or lose
 1. **ILLUS.: HOME DESTROYED—PRICELESS/IRREPLACEABLE MEMORIES LOST**
 2. *“No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him--the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough.” Psalm 49:7-8*
 3. Jesus has come that you might have life—real life—full of peace, contentment, a future, a hope—you can't buy it but you can lose it—tonight he calls you to revalue your life and what is it that you posses that is worth really keeping
 4. **ILLUS.: PAYING ATTENTION TO WHAT REALLY MATTERS**

What is really “worth” your long term affection and what does it take to keep it?

- To keep our most valuable possession, we must be willing to loose it all
 1. Judas wanted to hang-on to the “world” and to Jesus but realized that he couldn't do both
 2. *“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.” Matthew 6:24*
 3. Jesus says that when he comes with his “full life” it is **all or nothing**—we have so much to gain and so much to loose
 4. **ILLUS.: RISKY CHOICE**
 5. Jesus said, *“If anyone would follow me, he must deny himself. . .for what does it benefit to gain the whole world and to forfeit his soul.” (Vs. 34, 36)*
- To keep our most valuable possession we must be willing to die for it
 1. When Jesus called Judas to follow him, he called him to die to himself to start living in Jesus. (*take up his cross*)
 2. We don't like the fact that Jesus had to be crucified, but we sure don't want to have to do the same
 3. *“May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” Galatians 6:14*
- To keep our most valuable possession we must follow the ONE who can help us to keep it
 1. Judas felt like HE could not do what Jesus was asking him to do so he took his life
 2. When we become discouraged of life, its tarnished promises, and our inept failure of where we stand in faith, we need to remember that it is not up to us to keep the treasure which Jesus has won for us on the cross
 3. *“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory.” Ephes. 1:13-14*

Pursuit of Happiness

In *Dangers, Toils & Snares*, John Ortberg writes:

When we take our children to the shrine of the Golden Arches, they always lust for the meal that comes with a cheap little prize, a combination christened, in a moment of marketing genius, the Happy Meal. You're not just buying fries, McNuggets, and a dinosaur stamp; you're buying happiness. Their advertisements have convinced my children they have a little McDonald-shaped vacuum in their souls: "Our hearts are restless till they find their rest in a happy meal."

I try to buy off the kids sometimes. I tell them to order only the food and I'll give them a quarter to buy a little toy on their own. But the cry goes up, "I want a Happy Meal." All over the restaurant, people crane their necks to look at the tight-fisted, penny-pinching cheapskate of a parent who would deny a child the meal of great joy.

The problem with the Happy Meal is that the happy wears off, and they need a new fix. No child discovers lasting happiness in just one: "Remember that Happy Meal? What great joy I found there!"

Happy Meals bring happiness only to McDonalds. You ever wonder why Ronald McDonald wears that grin? Twenty billion Happy Meals, that's why.

When you get older, you don't get any smarter; your happy meals just get more expensive.

Judas the Scariest

Last summer, I taught a vacation Bible school class on Judas' betrayal of Jesus. After the lesson, I went over the review questions and asked, "Who betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver?" Without hesitating, my 7-year-old son, Kenny, replied, "I know! It was 'Judas the Scariest!'"

Paying attention to what really matters

The phone call came early on a Friday morning: "Hello. David Noel?" "Yes." "This is your neighbor, Mrs. Waldron." "Who?" "Mrs. Waldron, your neighbor." Not wanting to embarrass myself, I mentally tried to place a Mrs. Waldron somewhere in my neighborhood. She continued, "There's a fire out in back of your house by the fence, close to the gas tanks." I don't have a fence, nor are there any gas tanks anywhere near my home. However, I immediately went out back to see if there was indeed a fire. Returning to the phone, I said, "Ma'am, I think you have the wrong David Noel." "Aren't you the David Noel that lives on Avery?" "No Ma'am." "I'm very sorry," she said. "That's quite all right," I said. I hung up the phone with a smile—and with one more glance at the back yard. A few minutes later, as I was sitting at the table, I found myself looking out in the back yard again. The stakes were too high to let a little embarrassment or confusion keep me from making sure. The Scriptural teachings on hell present stakes even higher. No one ought to ignore those teachings without serious investigation into the claims of Jesus Christ

Risky Choice

A man named Fred inherited a huge land grant, but the will provided that he could choose land in either Chile or Brazil. He chose Brazil. Unhappily, if he had chosen Chile, he would have received his inheritance in land on which they had recently discovered uranium, gold and silver. But he chose Brazil. **When he arrived in Brazil he had to choose between receiving his inheritance in a coffee plantation or land with Brazil nut trees. He chose the nut trees, and immediately the bottom fell out of the nut market, but coffee futures went up two dollars a pound. The government took control of the nut farm for back taxes, and Fred was left destitute.** Fred pawned his Rolex watch for the money he needed to fly either to New York or Boston. He chose Boston. When the plane for New York taxied up, he noticed it was a brand new super Concorde with red carpets. After several hours delay, the plane for Boston arrived. It was a 1928 twin engine plane held together with bailing wire, and it was filled with cigar smokers and unattended crying babies. **Over the mountains one of the engines fell off, and Fred, frightened by his earlier bad choices and fearing for his life, asked for two parachutes. He jumped. As he fell through the air, he tried to make up his mind which ripcord to pull. He pulled the cord on the left, but nothing happened. He pulled the cord on his right, but it broke.** In desperation the poor fellow cried out, "God, send an angel to save me!" A great hand from heaven reached down, seized him by the wrist, and left him dangling in mid-air. Then a gentle but inquisitive voice asked, "Michael or Gabriel?"

Mark 8:34-38

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: **"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.**"³⁵ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.³⁶ What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?³⁷ Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."