

Matthew 27:1-10

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[0:00] I'm live? I am, oh, I'm very live. Oh my goodness. Okay, so I invite you to turn with me to Matthew chapter 27.!

And as you do that, I'd just like to talk about what we're doing when we open the Bible. We believe that God has spoken, that He has given us His, the very Word. And so we give our attention to the whole Bible.

And at Shoreline, we think the best way to do that is to read things in context. And so what that means is we have been walking through the book of Matthew, walking alongside our Lord in His earthly ministry.

And that brings us to passages that confuse and confound us sometimes. And so we come to texts that I wouldn't have picked. And I don't want, I'm not saying here that I'm like apologizing for this text. It's an unusual text. It's strange.

But what I'm saying is that we affirm that God's Word is in fact God's Word. And so we are going to give attention to it, even when it's a story about someone's suicide.

[1:23] And in particular, the texts that make us uncomfortable might be the ones that show us the most and push us the farthest. So won't you come to God's Word with me?

And let's read Matthew chapter 27, verses 1 through 10. When the morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death. And they bound Him and led Him away and delivered Him over to Pilate, the governor.

Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, and he changed his mind and brought back the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.

They said, What is that to us? See to it yourself. And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed. And he went and hanged himself.

But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money. So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field as a burial place for strangers.

[2:42] Therefore, that field has been called the field of blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, And they took the 30 pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel.

And they gave them for the potter's field as the Lord directed me. We tend to see what we want to see.

In 2018, some psychologists ran an experiment. They showed study participants a video of a protest.

Now, they carefully edited the video so that you couldn't tell what was being protested. You couldn't see the signs. And what they did was they divided the group up. The researchers told people what was going on in the video differently.

For those people who were told that the protests were in support of something they themselves supported, they evaluated the protest as peaceful.

[3:55] But for those who saw the exact same video, and were told that the protest was against a cause they supported, They were much more likely to report that the protesters obstructed and threatened pedestrians and police.

We tend to see what we want to see. Just think about some of the things going on in our nation right now. Why do people look at the same Civil War statue?

And some see monuments to valor and gallantry. And others see symbols of oppression. We have primed ourselves to look at them in a certain way.

Why do people look at the same exact COVID data? And some see a health catastrophe. And others see an overblown, sensationalized flu.

You can probably look at people's other affiliations, and probably guess where they land on that one. The same monuments, the same data. How can we come to such different conclusions?

[5:14] Well, it's because data needs to be interpreted. And we, the interpreters, we are not neutral. We see what we want to see.

And by the way, I'm not trying to say that, like, two sides are equal, or valid, whatever, on those issues. That's not the point of this sermon. What I'm trying to get across, and what I'm trying to help us see in this passage, is what C.S. Lewis explained in *The Magician's Nephew*.

He said, what you see and what you hear depends a great deal on where you are standing. It also depends on what sort of person you are.

And that's what we're going to see in today's passage. We'll see it in the people in the text, Judas and the priests.

And if we have the eyes to see it, we might see it in ourselves. So let's pray to the Lord, and let's come to His text. Our great God and Father, would you humble us as we come to your scriptures?

[6:34] Would you help us to see what you have to show us in them? Would you help us to see Christ, our great Savior, in whose name we pray.

Amen. Judas had seen what he wanted to see until it was too light. He had betrayed Jesus into his enemy's hands for an insultingly small price.

What did he see? He saw this as a good plan. That's why you do stuff, right? You do the things you think are wise and good. He saw this as a good idea when he formed the plan.

Regardless of Jesus' innocence or his friendship with him. He saw this as a good idea when Jesus warned him, I know what your plan is. And you will face ruin.

He saw this as a good idea even as he went to get those who would take Jesus away. He saw this as a good idea even as he betrayed Jesus with a kiss.

[7:50] Until he saw the results. This is that turning point. Chapter 27. As Jesus was taken away and put on a sham trial and Judas knew where this was going to end, the death of an innocent man, the only truly innocent man, and he knew that the scriptures were clear.

Deuteronomy chapter 27 says, curse it, be anyone who takes a bribe to shed innocent blood and that's exactly what he had just done. And so Judas went to the priests and shouted, verse 4, I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.

I feel like this can be our story. Can't it? Just like Judas, how often do we see our sin as desirable up to a point?

That sin you're contemplating, it looks desirable when we're tempted towards it. We see it as a good idea as we plot it out or make arrangements.

We see it as a good idea as we do it. As he was committing the act of betrayal, right? Until we've already done it. And we see what we've wrought.

[9:15] Until it's too late. We can't take it back. And now it was too late. The priests say, what is that to us? See, do it yourself.

Removing themselves, washing their hands of the situation just as Pilate will in a few hours. in desperation, Judas throws back the coins.

He sees what he first saw as his profit, the coins, right? The money. What he first saw as profit, he now sees as a beacon of his guilt.

in the end, he realizes he can't take back what he's done. He can't fix what's happening. He can't remove his guilt, but he wants to be divested of this thing that marks him as guilty.

He saw what he wanted to see until he witnessed what he had wrought. I've heard it said that desire often draws a flawed map.

[10:26] How true that is. And it leads Judas to despair and destruction at his own hands. And so I can't preach a text like this without mentioning suicide.

Especially in a moment like today. Right? This is a time of great stress for so many. And great fear and great isolation.

Right? And that's just the surface stuff. All of those things have ripple effects and secondary problems in people's lives. And so underneath that surface strain can lurk more pressure that your friends and your family may not see.

And so you might be here today or watching online and today, you know, we're talking about clouded judgment, right? seeing what you want to see.

Right? Perhaps hardship and impossibility and pain is all you can see. And if that's where you are, right, if in your mind stopping that pressure by any means, if you're considering suicide, if stress and pressure and no way out is all you can see, then friends, see this.

[11:43] Christ is being led away to the cross verses 1 and 2 because he cares for you. Last week, he said that the armies of heaven are his to command.

He wasn't going to the cross as a helpless victim, right, even though he didn't want to or something like that. No, he was going to the cross because he wanted to. It was for this reason that he was born into the world, which means he's going to the cross to preserve you, to give you new life, which means Jesus cares about your life.

See that. So ask for help. Right? At Shoreline, you will not hear what the priests say to Judas, you know, what is that to us?

No. If you need help, if you are in despair, please talk to someone. Talk to me, one of the other elders, community group leaders, somebody. And we will walk with you, and if you need professional help, we will help you get that.

But please don't walk that path alone. See that you're king cares for your life. That's Judas.

[13:16] Where Judas had suddenly come to the realization that he had been seeing wrong this whole time, the priests were watching them still be blinded by what they want.

Seeing what they want to see. What did they want to see? Well, they saw Jesus as a threat to their position and their prominence in the land.

In fact, he was the savior come into the world to give them the very blessings that they seek. But they saw things differently. They saw him not as a blessing, but as a curse to them.

So they walked as they could see and had been opposing Jesus at least since chapter 9. They had said, you know, he casts out demons by the prince of demons.

They demanded signs from him. They tried to trap him in his words. They accused him of breaking the Sabbath, of breaking the customs of the elders. As early as chapter 12, we read, the Pharisees went out and conspired against him how to destroy him.

[14:28] And it developed by the time we got to Matthew chapter 26, which is as he got this last week of his life into the city of Jerusalem. The chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest whose name was Caiaphas and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him.

they saw what they wanted to see and they are right, literally, they're right in the middle of that plan today, right, verses 1 and 2.

They're going through that process of arresting and taking Jesus away. They're shipping him off to the Roman governor who has the authority now to execute him. Right?

They have not yet reached the point that Judas has. He has seen the outcome of his sin and now regrets it. They are still in the midst of seeing what they want to see.

And what we see them doing is that it is obscuring their vision still. When Judas comes to them, they seem not to realize that in their response, in turning him away, that they're condemning themselves.

[15:42] They actually condemn themselves in this passage and they do it twice. First, they can no longer ignore the fact that they just presided over a trial built on false testimony.

There's no more plausible deniability for them. One of the many verses about how the Lord hates unjust courts comes from Deuteronomy 16. You shall not pervert justice, you shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the

cause of the righteous.

Justice, and only justice, you shall follow. And so when Judas comes and confesses that he has betrayed an innocent man, it's like a key witness recanting, and then the judge refusing to retry the case.

In the pursuit of following the path that they wish to see, they condemn themselves in the eyes of God and men, by knowingly presiding over a false case, a false trial.

That's the first way they condemn themselves, without even seeing it, because they only see what they want to see. The second way they condemn themselves is they acknowledge that this is blood money. Verse 6, the chief priest, taking the pieces of silver, said it is not lawful to put them in the treasury, since it is blood money.

[17:15] What they don't seem to connect the dots to, what they don't want to see, is where did Judas get that blood money? It's their blood money!

They're the ones who gave it to him. But they seem not to recognize that. they are culpable here. I love how one writer put it.

The priests acknowledge that the money is in fact blood money, and thus that they have paid for the murder of an innocent man. But they just tell Judas, yeah, that's your problem.

And they pretend like their own blood guilt, they're just holding it at arm's length. Yeah, that's blood money, but it's Judas' blood money. Where did he get it? He got it from you!

And they keep up this fiction in their own minds, that they are in the clear. Because you see what you want to see. And when you don't want to see your guilt, you won't.

[18:18] And that is a dangerous place to be. Because every human being will one day stand before the judgment seat of God, and there will be a reckoning for all of our guilt.

guilt. And if you refuse to even see your guilt, you'll never run to a Savior. And the priests, well, they're not running to the Savior, they're denouncing him, sending him away.

Oh, that we would not be like that. those are the people in the text, Judas and the priests.

I want to shift our eyes a little bit to us, to how people in the world today look at a text like this.

See, this passage affords us a really interesting opportunity to examine how we come to the scriptures, how anyone comes to the scriptures, really.

[19:29] What are we looking to see? Your Bible, if it has notes in it, like study notes, or if it has cross references, it might point to Acts chapter 1.

Acts chapter 1 is really interesting, because in Acts chapter 1, Luke records also the death of Judas. And it's a famous Bible difficulty.

These two passages don't seem to say the same thing. Here's Acts chapter 1, verses 18 and 19.

Now this man, that's Judas, acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness.

And here's how Luke describes his death. And falling headlong, he burst open in the middle, and all his bowels gushed out, and it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

So the field was called in their own language, Akedama, that is, field of blood. So did he fall headlong, or did he hang himself?

[20:37] You approach that question, reveal something about you, and what it is that you want to see. Because we tend to see what we want to.

If you don't want the Bible to be authoritative in your life, you can say, see, the Bible's full of contradictions, and then you can ignore it safely.

But if that desire isn't distracting or directing your gaze, you might ask, can both be true?

In fact, there are at least three ways that these accounts can be the same account. And the point of this sermon is not actually, I'm not going to reconcile them right now for you.

I'm not going to talk about the three options. If you want to talk about that later, come talk to me. I'll talk to you about it. The point that I really want to get across to is how do we approach Scripture?

[21:43] Now, I don't think that many of you came here today, drove out here, sitting in the sun, to hear the preaching of the Word because you're not interested in sitting under the preaching of the Word, eager to find fault with the Bible.

So I'm not going to address you as if you're in that first category saying, see, the Bible is full of contradictions because you don't want it to have sway in your life. I don't think that's why many of

you are here.

If you are here for that reason, I'd be interested in talking with you, though, and seeing what brought you here today. But for the rest of us, those who are here to sit under the preaching of the Word, and consider it authoritative in our life, we can read the Bible and see what we want to see, too. Because, well, you often see what you want to. So if an unbeliever doesn't want to hear what Scripture has to say, they might leap at the opportunity, you know, of a supposed contradiction like this, to dismiss the whole thing outright.

And we who affirm the Scriptures might also leap at the opportunity, because, again, we, too, tend to see what we want to, to wiggle out from underneath this or that principle or command or truth that we don't really like.

[23:16] Love my neighbor? Well, this is my neighbor. I'm busy loving this neighbor, so I'm not going to love that neighbor. right? Wait in line, right? Let your speech always be gracious, says the Scriptures.

Yeah, I'll do that when I'm not so stressed out. Love my spouse as myself as soon as they show me some appreciation.

We tend to see what we want to see, and when we want to see a way out. Oh, we just so happen to see one.

Which kind of brings us to the end of the passage where Matthew says that this fulfills what's going on in Jeremiah. Now, I'm not going to take us back to the book of Jeremiah because it's really sunny and I love you guys.

I'm going to read to you from a commentary that kind of explains what's going on with this citation. And then draw a couple ideas out of that and then we'll conclude.

[24:34] In its original context, the prophecy referred to how cheaply Israel had valued their shepherd, the prophet and God himself, and how he would therefore give them foolish shepherds so that they might learn by contrast how benevolent the prophet and God the shepherd had been to them.

So what that means, in the original context, God was saying, you see what you want to see, you value your way over God's way, and so you're dismissing my prophet. So I'm going to show you what it looks like with a foolish shepherd now.

So you'll see how good God is. That's what's going on with that. In other words, the answer to seeing what you want to see is to humble ourselves before God or God might do it for us.

So the answer to all of this, seeing falsely because we see what we want to see, is to humble ourselves before the Lord. how?

Well, certainly that looks like a lot of things. There are a few. It looks like reading the scriptures. That's what we're doing today, and actually coming to them in an attitude of reverence and knowing that the Lord is speaking.

[26:02] And the way he sees things is better and clearer than the way I see them. And that's what Matthew is actually confronting us with as he quotes Jeremiah verses 9 and 10.

It looks like praying. And I'm not just talking about praying for humility, which do that, but also the act of praying humbles us.

It must. You can't come to the throne of the universe and think you're hot stuff. That just doesn't happen. You can't come to the Lord praising him, asking him for his help, and not be humbled. It's just not possible. And then consider Christ. The cross is the testimony that we don't see rightly. What leads us into sin? False desire. We don't see clearly until it's too late. sin. And that's why Jesus had to go to the cross.

[27:13] Because we value, see things as valuable, right, above God. That's idolatry. And therefore, we desire and we do things contrary to him.

Sin. But praise be to God. And let this humble us, right? Let the cross humble us. Christ chose to submit himself to this betrayal, this false condemnation, so that he might go to the cross and make an end of all our guilt and purchase for us everlasting life with him and give us new life in him that we might see clearly through the sight of the spirit and through the lamp of his word.

God, oh, and one other thing. Now the tomb is empty.

