



## ***St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)***

**Worship Address :** Cerritos High School Auditorium  
12500 E. 183<sup>rd</sup> St., Cerritos, CA 90703  
(Enter at Bloomfield, across Heritage Park)

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**Website :** [www.sp-ecc.org](http://www.sp-ecc.org)

May 24, 2009

**Theme: God Is in Control**

**Text: Matthew 27:1-10**

Matthew wants us to read the story of Judas' sorrow about what he had done alongside Peter's sorrow over what he had done. Judas had handed Jesus over to the authorities. Peter had put himself under oath that he didn't know Jesus. Both appear to have had a deep sorrow over what they had done. In fact, Matthew tells us more about what Judas did than about what Peter did. Why was one forgiven and the other condemned? I am often asked whether it would have been possible for Judas to be forgiven. Apparently, more than a few people feel compassion for him. The answer is that Judas was not because Judas had worldly sorrow which leads to death—in his case he literally committed suicide.

Let's return to Jesus' trial for a moment. Jesus trial had more than one phase. First, he was put on trial at Caiaphas' house with only part of the Sanhedrin present. Then at daybreak the high priest called for a verdict from the whole Sanhedrin. Jesus was found guilty again and then taken to Pilate. But before he tells the story of Jesus' confrontation with Pilate, Matthew tells the story of Judas' sorrow about what he had done. Judas appears to have had a genuine repentance. He admits that he has sinned and he even tries to return the bribe that he had received for handing Jesus over.

Matthew even says that Judas was seized with remorse. But it is interesting that the word that is translated, "seized with remorse," is not the same word that is normally translated, "repent." Matthew wants to make sure that his readers know that Judas did not repent in such a way as to be forgiven. Judas lacks true faith. Matthew wants us to see the difference between a broken heart which Peter had, and a despairing heart which Judas had. What is the difference? Both hearts "hit bottom," as they say. But one heart realizes that it is powerlessness to do anything to make things right—and weeps. The other heart tries to make things right in his own power. Rather than weeping over what he had done, Judas goes out to hang himself.

Judas' suicide raises a couple of questions which are related to each other. First, people often ask: "Was Judas condemned because he committed suicide?" Second, People often ask, "Do people who commit suicide automatically go to hell?" I think that a Biblical answer to both questions is, "No." I think this is the Biblical answer because Jesus taught that there was only one unforgivable sin. He called it "the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit." He taught that all kinds of sin would be forgiven people except for blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Suicide is not that.



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What exactly is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? First of all, the word that is translated, "blasphemy," means to attack someone's character. The Pharisees had come closet to committing the sin when the accused Jesus of driving out demons under the power of the chief demon. However, they would have had to continue to claim this without repenting until the day of their death. For us it means something a little bit different because we were born at a different time in history. For us it means to resist the Spirit's work of calling us to confess Christ as Lord—and we would have to consistently do this until the day of our death or Christ's return, whichever comes first. This is what it would mean for us to blaspheme or "speak against" the Holy Spirit.

At any rate, the chief priests reveal their sinfulness and their hypocrisy by what they do with the coins that Judas has given back to them. They rightly recognize that the money is "blood money." They agree that because it is blood money it would be against the Law of Moses to put the silver coins back into the Temple Treasury. So they buy a useless piece of land which they designate as a cemetery where they can bury Gentiles who might die while visiting Jerusalem.

This is a story that is filled with deceit and hypocrisy of the worst kind. Still, Matthew wants us to know that God is in control. Even this act of hypocrisy and deceit fulfills Scripture. Matthew makes it clear that there is no equality between good and evil. God is good and He always wins the victory over evil in the end. The crucifixion of the innocent Son of God was the most evil act ever committed. Nevertheless, God used it to bring about the salvation of sinful human beings. Judas' betrayal of Jesus was an evil act. Nevertheless, in the end, it fulfilled Scripture. It is impossible to catch God by surprise..