

The Potter's Field
(Final our series, *Jesus Everywhere*)

Matthew 27:3-10; Acts 1:15-25*

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**All scriptures are ESV unless otherwise noted.*

Opening and Prayer

I think this is the last sermon in a 9-month mini-series entitled *Jesus Everywhere*.

St. Paul wrote that Jesus *"descended and ascended that He might fill all things."* Wow! Even this?

Clip from *The Passion of the Christ*

[Judas is sitting alone in a field below the city walls of Jerusalem. He looks up to the sky as if looking for God. He looks down again, and he sees a decaying donkey being eaten by worms with flies buzzing around. There is a rope around the donkey's mouth. The next scene shows Judas securing that rope around a tree and hanging himself.]

So, Lord God, in the name of Jesus, under the authority of His blood, we take authority over any spirit of suicide that would tempt us to disobey you. We bind it in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit and command it to leave. And Lord God, now I pray that you would minister to those that are tempted to suicide. I pray that you would minister to those that are in bondage to a suicide in the past. I pray Lord God that you would speak your mercy into all of us and help us to trust you in even the worst of all places. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Sermon

Matthew chapter 27, verse 3:

³When Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. ⁴He said, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." ⁵Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and he went and hanged himself.

"He hanged himself." But did you catch that line in verse 3 – *"Judas repented."* Immediately prior to this Peter repented. Peter hears the cock crow and Jesus looks at Peter and Peter goes out and weeps bitterly.

Judas hears that Jesus is condemned and Judas looks to the Priests saying, *"I've sinned"* and they say, *"Take care of it yourself."* And Judas does.

Peter was repented and he wept; Judas repented and hung himself.

So before Jesus is hung on a tree (a *skulon*) outside the city walls, Judas hangs himself on a tree, outside the city walls. In other words, before Judas can see the Judgment of God, Judas judges himself.

Judas is full of himself and so tries to judge himself and so destroys himself.

In Hebrew we read that Adam is made of Adomah (that's dust or clay) and Scripture testifies that each of us is an "earthen vessel;" but an "earthen vessel" full of earth (full of itself) is just a pile of dirt.

- Peter was full of himself but Peter was emptied by grace through tears.
- Judas repented and issued his own judgment. He emptied himself with himself, which is only more self.
- Luke records that Judas went to, quote "his own place." He trapped himself in a prison of self, making himself a stranger and foreigner to the Kingdom of God – the New Jerusalem.

I think the chief problem with suicide is that it doesn't work. You can't kill yourself with yourself – it's only more self. And thus, you trap yourself in your "own place" – the outer darkness where men weep and gnash their teeth.

Matthew 27:5 *"He went out and hanged himself."*

In Acts 1:18-19 (NRSV), Luke elaborates:

¹⁸Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. ¹⁹This became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their language Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

He "acquired a field." He must've hung himself there and falling "his bowels gushed out." "He acquired a field," but how did he acquire this field?

Back to Matthew 27:5-10 (NRSV)

⁵Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and he went and hanged himself. ⁶But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury since they are blood money." ⁷After conferring together, they used them to buy the potter's field as a place to bury foreigners. ["xenos" strangers – that is people who don't belong] ⁸For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. ⁹Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one on whom a price had been set, on whom some of the people of Israel had set a price ¹⁰and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me."

This is a picture I took of the Potter's Field. The Kidron Valley is on the left and the Potter's Field is at the base of the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom on the right.

[Image of Potter's Field]

I'm standing on the south side of Jerusalem above that valley. Jesus, and the residents of Jerusalem in His day, referred to this valley as "Gehenna."

- In ancient times, the valley served as a waste dump for Jerusalem.
- In Jeremiah's day, Israel sacrificed children to foreign gods in this spot.
- It was a place of death and consuming fire which contained a field of clay ...

the Potter's Field and the Potter's House in the Valley of "Gehenna."
"Gehenna" is often translated Hell in English Bibles. So Judas hung himself on a tree in Hell ... and that's terrifying.

Judas is terrifying. He is called "the son of Perdition" which means "son of waste" or "son of the lost."

It's the title that Paul gives to the Anti-Christ.

He is also called a "devil."

And at the Last Supper, Satan entered him as he went to betray Jesus.

But you may remember that Satan also spoke through Peter. And Judas isn't the only one that's lost. In fact Judas looks an awful lot like everyone else.

After 3 years together, when Jesus reveals that "one will betray Him," all the Disciples ask "Who is it? Is it me?" See? Judas didn't have 666 tattooed on his forehead. In fact, it was just the opposite – Judas was more like the model of a good Jew.

The name Judas comes from the word Judah, as does the word Jew. All the Disciples were called Jews. However Judas may have been the only one from Judea and the one with the closest tie to the priests and the Temple. Judas represented the Jews and the Jews represent Israel. At the destruction of the temple in Jeremiah's day and in 70 A.D., countless Jews were buried in Gehenna – like Judas.

Judas represents the Jews and in case you're feeling anti-Semitic, let me remind you Jesus represents the Jews – He is "the Lion of the Tribe of Judah."

See? This is wild – but no one may have looked more like Jesus than Judas. And yet no one may have been as Anti-Jesus (Anti-Christ) as Judas.

So get this – it's not as if Judas didn't really admire Jesus. (He repented when he saw that Jesus was being condemned.) It appears he really admired Jesus and so he was trying to use Jesus to serve a cause that he had judged to be good.

Do you ever try to use Jesus to obtain what you have judged to be good?

... well maybe Jesus is the Good ...

I'm just saying Judas betrayed Jesus but we all betray Jesus (especially us religious types). The word translated "betray" is "*paradosis*" (that's the noun) or "*paradidomai*" (the verb). It's normally translated "*deliver*" or "*hand over*."

St. Paul wrote *"For I received from the Lord what I also delivered (paradidomai) to you. That on the night Jesus was betrayed (paradidomai) He took bread – saying 'Take. Eat.'"*

Just by delivering the Word to the Corinthians – Paul does what Judas did.

And isn't it your sins that deliver or hand over Jesus for crucifixion?

Maybe we have more in common with Judas than we ever imagined.

For 2,000 years, Christians have made Judas a scapegoat and sometimes we've made Jews a scapegoat. Sometimes we make suicides a scapegoat.

But Judas really was a terror. Anthropologists define "scapegoat" as someone, on which other people place all their sin to feel better about themselves.

Judas really was a terror. Judas killed the Christ with his unfaithfulness (his sin). Then Judas killed himself – judged himself last and least; judged himself a stranger.

Jesus said *“I was a stranger. Whatever you did to the last and least, you did to me.”*

So Judas murdered the Christ and when Judas murdered himself, he murdered the Christ again. Judas really was “Chief of Sinners. [What does God do with the Chief of Sinners?]

In *Dante’s Inferno* (from the 14th century), Judas is relegated to the lowest level of Hell where Satan continually gnaws on the body of 3 traitors – Cassius, Brutus and Judas.

Judas in Hell – what a picture.

Jesus chose Judas, Satan possessed (or at least inspired) Judas and Judas betrayed Jesus ...

All in fulfillment of prophecy – according to God’s Almighty Plan

God’s Judgment

And that’s terrifying!!!

So here’s the question – can we trust God’s Judgment?

Can we trust God’s Judgment or should we seize Judgment and make our own judgments ... like Judas?

This is a picture of my Aunt Joyce.



I never met her, but she looks just like my sister Rachel. Struggled with depression and became an alcoholic. A counselor said she needed to live alone. So my Dad did not insist Joyce come live with him. He really loved her. One night she took a whole bunch of sleeping pills and never woke up.

My Dad was the best picture of Jesus I’ve ever had and yet he had a really hard time speaking hard truths to people he loved. He used to say, *“But Peter, I can’t say that to him or hear – ‘What if she kills herself?’”*

Many of us are terrified to speak truth to those we love, for we’re terrified of the Potter’s Field. Terrified to speak truth and Jesus is the Truth. Hebrews 2:15 tells us it’s *“through the fear of Death (Fear of the Potter’s Field) that Satan keeps us in life-long bondage.”*

This is a picture of some of my Youth Group kids in Los Angeles about 1986.



Billy Baldrige is in the lower right hand corner. I judged myself a success 'cause of Billy. No kidding - Billy was like the poster child for Peter Hiett Ministries.

About 16 years ago I got a call and a man told me Bill went for a walk, sat down in a garden, pulled a gun from a paper bag and shot himself dead – in the heart.

When I heard that, I judged myself a failure. I felt terror for Bill and terror for me. And I desperately wanted to quit – quit preaching the Gospel – quit ministering – quit loving – I wanted to die.

This is a picture of Tim Brewer.



I met Tim in High School. I always wanted to be like Tim so I judged myself with Tim. And so I really admired Tim but I didn't really love Tim – for I competed with Tim in my heart which means I fed on Tim – so any weakness in Tim fed my ego.

Tim was the Youth Director in California before I took his position. Then he was the Senior Pastor at Central Pres. EPC in St. Louis. Awesome preacher, tons of fun, a great guy, a wife and small kids.

Several years ago he went home alone, wrote some letters – then went to car in the garage, ran a hose from the exhaust to the inside of the car and asphyxiated himself.

In his suicide letter to the church, he wrote *“Out of the countless sins I have committed in this life, it is my own wretched weakness of which I am most ashamed.”*

Now I don't know all that was going on with Tim. Yet I think he was being emptied like an earthen vessel, but he didn't surrender the emptiness ...

he despised the emptying and broke the earthen vessel ...

like Judas in the Potter's Field – he judged himself.

“It is my own wretched weakness of which I'm most ashamed.”

Yet Paul wrote *"I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses that the power of Christ may rest on me" ...*

"that God might fill me with grace like red wine in a clay jar."

But Tim was terrified of the emptiness and I probably contributed to the terror 'cause I feel the same terror – It's the fear of being empty.

This is astounding but its true ...

Some people are so afraid of death – they kill themselves; so afraid of surrendering control – they seize control and take their life – rather than surrender life.

Someone said *"Suicide is just saying to God, 'You can't fire me, I quit.'"*

But if Scripture is correct, one day, everything will be fired by God, even if you did "quit." God is Fire and God is Love – Love is Fire. And I suspect it was that Fire, in Jesus' eyes, that emptied Peter.

God's Judgment is Grace and it empties us of our Judgment – our ego.

Peter wept. But Judas hung himself on a tree in Hell

as he was destined to do

as if he was chosen to choose Hell

as if he was "consigned to disobedience"

and that's terrifying

The Potter's Field is terrifying.

Because of the Potter's Field, we're terrified to speak Truth; too terrified to preach Gospel; too terrified to die and too terrified to live.

And terrified of Hell - we're already stuck in Hell, or Hell is stuck in us. Maybe Hell is my own judgment. So how can I trust God's Judgment if I'm stuck there? How can I judge God's Judgment Good? It would take a miracle.

Well, there are some things we know ,and some things we know that we don't know well.

Things We Know that We Don't Know Very Well:

1. Freedom and Sovereignty

We know that we don't know these things well – Freedom and Sovereignty. We think Freedom is a random choice between 2 things – like Dr. Pepper and Sprite.

But in Scripture, Freedom is choosing the Good and choosing the God without deliberation. If my good choice is hindered by a bad choice – it's not a free choice.

According to Scripture, we're all slaves of Sin (that is, Bad Judgment). Slaves of Sin until Christ makes us free (and He is Good Judgment). And hey – here's a fascinating question: "Who's more free?" – Judas or Jesus?

Judas chose to make Jesus his enemy. (That's Bad Judgment.)

Jesus chose to make Judas His friend ... remember Jesus called Judas "friend."

"Greater love has no man than this that he lay his life down for his friends."

Well anyway, who gets His Will, His Choice, His Judgment in the end –

Judas or Jesus – who is called the End?

Judas chose to get lost and Jesus chose *"to seek and save the lost."*

Who gets His Will? Judas or Jesus – Jesus, the Word of the Creator.

What if the Creator freely wills that Judas would freely will the Creator's Will, in His own image (the image of Love)?

Does the Creator get His Will?

Well #1, we don't know Freedom and Sovereignty very well. Number 2, we don't know Time very well.

Things We Know that We Don't Know Very Well:

1. Freedom and Sovereignty
2. Time and Eternity

Scripture tells us, and now Science also tells us, we really don't know time – or the times. In Greek, "*aion*" is a great noun meaning "*ever*" or "*age*" or "*eon*." "*Aionios*" is a great adjective that is often translated "*eternal*" and refers to another age or God's Age or God's Time.

Beginning — Time — End

In Scripture, our time – "*chronos*" – chronological time – has a beginning and an end.

In the Revelation, the great angel says, "*Chronos will be no more.*" That is, there will be a last day in time which means, forever has a beginning and an end. And Scripture says that Jesus is the beginning and the end.

So forever is all of time and yet forever comes to an end, in Jesus. Forever is this time line.

Eternity

Beginning — Time — End

Eternity

But before, after, below and above time is Eternity. That is no Time or the fullness of Time, God's Time ... but not simply chronological time.

So if something is forever destroyed – it means that it appears on this line and then disappears from the line – destroyed for the rest of time.

But how could something be eternally destroyed? For time exists in Eternity ... So if something is eternally destroyed, it means it never existed. You only thought it existed – like a shadow or a lie (a kingdom of lies).

If something is eternally destroyed, it either never truly existed or is eternally transformed – like darkness filled with light or lies filled with truth; nothingness filled with somethingness – Evil flooded with Good – Sin transformed by Grace or Death transformed by Eternal Life.

Maybe temporal things can be destroyed by eternal things, but only if the temporal things are really no things OR if the temporal things are transformed into eternal things.

Now that's a crazy thing to think about, but in Scripture lots of temporal things get destroyed by eternal things and then show up Eternal.

- Like Sodom destroyed by Eternal Fire and restored in Eternity (Ezekiel 16).
- Like Jerusalem destroyed but coming down Eternal from the heavens.
- Like Israel and Judah – in the Prophets, God gives them up to destruction. And yet, *"All Israel will be saved."* (Romans 11:26) *"All the dry bones will live."* (Ezekiel 37:11)

Although they were *"rejected, cut off and enemies of God"* (Romans 11:26), they are *"beloved because of election."* (Romans 11:28)

So in the very place they were called "not my people," they will be called "my people." Romans 9:26)

Like Sodom ... like Jerusalem ... like you ... *"for this perishable body must put on the imperishable"* ... *"this mortal body must put on immortality"* and *"Death shall have no victory."* (1 Corinthians 15)

I'm just saying we don't understand Time and Eternity and #3, we don't understand Empty and Full.

Things We Know that We Don't Know Very Well:

1. Freedom and Sovereignty
2. Time and Eternity
3. Empty and Full

According to Scripture and now according to even some physicists, what seems full is empty and what seems empty may be very full.

We think matter is full and spirit is empty.

We think the earth is full and the heavens are empty

Put in other diagram

but according to Scripture, the Heavens are full and the earth is empty.



Like light is full and dirt is empty.

Under the Earth are the graves and the tombs.

Under the Earth is Death instead of Life

Darkness instead of Light

Lies instead of Truth

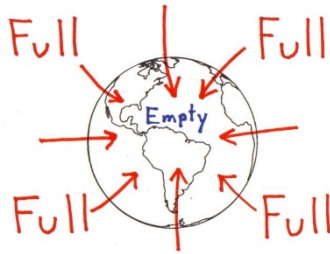
Shame instead of Glory

Under the Earth is Hades – often translated Hell.

And check this out, Hades exists on the timeline and is destroyed by Eternity.

At the end of the Revelation, Death and Hades are thrown into the Lake of Eternal Fire.

And according to Scripture, at the end of Time, this earth is to be flooded with that fire. Eternal life ... light and truth filling death, darkness and lies -

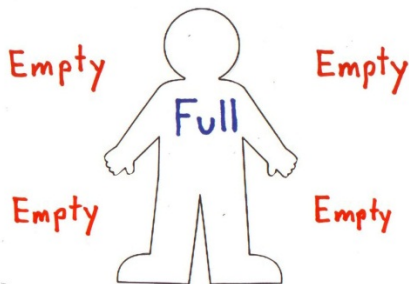


transforming this old empty world into the "New Heaven and New Earth."

Now remember Adam is made of earth. Adam is made of Adamah – clay. Adam reminds me of this earth.

We think Adam is full.

We think we are full and the air around us is empty.



In Biblical language: We think Flesh availeth much and Spirit availeth little, but Scripture teaches Spririt availeth much and Flesh little. Like this



See?

We are empty and *"the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand all around us."* According to Scripture, we are empty and yet *"in God we live and move and have our being."*

I could say we are empty or I could say we are full of ourselves. We are like earthen vessels full of Earth. That is earthen vessels full of our own judgments and our judgments are darkness, lies, and death –

Our Judgments are Sin.

So #4, we don't understand Hell

Things We Know that We Don't Know Very Well:

1. **Freedom and Sovereignty**
2. **Time and Eternity**
3. **Empty and Full**
4. **Hell**

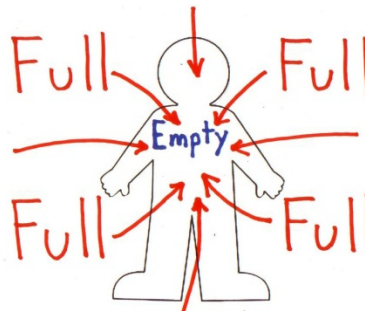
And #5, we don't understand Sin – which means we don't understand ourselves.

Things We Know that We Don't Know Very Well:

1. Freedom and Sovereignty
2. Time and Eternity
3. Empty and Full
4. Hell
5. Ourselves

Sin is Hades taking root in the earthen vessel we call ourselves; such that we become an earthen vessel full of earth, that is, full of ourselves. That is full of our judgments, rather than God's Judgment, and our judgments are illusions – they are Death, Darkness and Lies. God is Life, Light, and Truth. Life, Light, and Truth burns Death, Darkness, and Lies.

And so our old self experiences God as Wrath. We are all vessels of Wrath until we're emptied of our empty judgments and filled with God's Good Judgment. And God's Good Judgment is Grace.



When God bursts our bubble and fills us with His Judgment, which is His Choice in us – it is Faith, Hope, and Love in us; then we are “finished” in the Image of God. And that happens at the Cross and it's a miracle – God empties us of us and fills us with Himself.

“Jesus Christ and Him crucified” is the Judgment of God.

Now, check this out: Hades is on this timeline.



And I am on this timeline – “Me.”



Hades comes to an end at the Final Judgment.



And I come to an end when the end comes to me at the Cross. I come to an end and receive Eternal Life and then the Second Death can't hurt me for



My heart, My *"splagna,"* My bowels have already passed from Death to Life. And so I don't hate God's Judgment – I delight in God's Judgment; in other words, I have faith in Grace – God's Judgment. I am a vessel of Mercy.

But what if ... like Judas, I never see God's Judgment. And so I never believe God's Judgment and so I judge myself and trap myself in my own judgment: My place – that is Hell?

Or what if I reject God's Judgment for all my life – die in my sins – and thus die in my judgments, trapped in my judgments in the Potter's Field in the Valley of Gehenna. What if I make myself a ghost imprisoned in Death, Darkness, and Lies?

What if I ... what if you, do that? Well then I guess you have no Hope, for you got your wish. You have "your own place" and God is your enemy.

You have No Hope.

But that doesn't mean that God has No Hope ... for you.

We don't understand Hell, #4, and #5, we don't know ourselves and we don't know who God truly is. God is the Potter and we are the clay.

Things We Know that We Don't Know Very Well:

1. Freedom and Sovereignty
2. Time and Eternity
3. Empty and Full
4. Hell
5. Ourselves
6. God

Matthew says that all these things fulfilled what was prophesied by Jeremiah and by mentioning Jeremiah, he probably means all the Prophets as well.

But in chapter 18 of Jeremiah, God tells Jeremiah to go watch the potter at the wheel. As he watching the potter, the pot is spoiled in his hand on the wheel and the potter remakes it and God says, *"Oh Israel. Can I not do that with you? Repent."*

In chapter 19, God commands Jeremiah to take an earthen vessel; go to the Valley of Hinnom, Gehenna, and publically smash it in the Potter's Field saying, *"So will I break this people and this city as one breaks a potter's vessel, so that it can never be mended?"*

Yet, then in Jeremiah 31, Jeremiah prophesied a New Covenant and a New City with New Boundaries

Boundaries that include the Valley of Dead Bodies – for it will be *"Holy"* – *"Gehenna will be Holy"* writes Jeremiah and *"never overthrown again."*

Then as Jerusalem is besieged by Babylonians, God instructs Jeremiah to buy a field – for He has the "Right of Redemption." The field is a sign that Jerusalem ...

though it is to be forever destroyed (so it cannot be mended)

will be rebuilt so that it cannot be destroyed because *"Nothing is too hard for God."*

The Bible ends with a vision. St. John writes,

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth ...
And I saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, adorned as a
Bride for her new Husband. She needs no light and has no temple for the Lord is her light and she
herself in His temple – she's a Vessel of Glory ... the Glory is God.*

That's the New Jerusalem. And yet the old Jerusalem was utterly destroyed in 70 A.D. and the bodies were buried in Gehenna.

Well Zechariah (who prophesied after Jeremiah) was commanded to shepherd that flock ... *"the flock doomed to slaughter."* The High Priests paid Zechariah 30 pieces of silver for his labor. Now Judas throws the 30 pieces of silver into the House of the Lord and Matthew quotes Zechariah almost word for word:

"The Lord said to me," writes Zechariah, 'Throw it to the potter, the price they set on me,' says the Lord."

Zechariah 11:13 –

"So I took the 30 pieces of silver and threw them into the House of the Lord – to the Potter."

See? God is the Potter.

In Romans 9, where Paul quotes the Prophets and talks about Vessels of Wrath and Vessels of Mercy, he asks, *"Is there injustice on God's part?"* Paul answers by asking, *"Has the Potter no right over the clay?"*

We don't understand the Potter and we can't comprehend all His Judgments (Scripture says so). #7 We can't comprehend all His Judgments.

Things We Know that We Don't Know Very Well:

1. Freedom and Sovereignty
2. Time and Eternity
3. Empty and Full
4. Hell
5. Ourselves
6. God
7. All His Judgments

But we can know His Judgment because His Judgment has known us. What can we know?

Things We Know:

1. Jesus. God's Judgment is Jesus.

Jesus is God's Judgment – His Will, His Word, His Choice. Jesus is God's Judgment on all our judgments.

Our judgment was to break His earthen vessel (His body) on the Tree and when we did – Life, Light, Truth poured out. Love poured out. He is a vessel of Mercy – which is God's Judgment.

Jesus was crucified at the northern end of the Hinnom Valley drainage and so His blood flowed into Gehenna and down to the Potter's Field. Nothing is as powerful as His blood. It is unquenchable Love and Fire.

He is God's Judgment – God's Will – God's Word – How God gets things done.

He fulfills the Moral Law and He fulfills the Sacrificial Law.

He has *"born our griefs and carried our iniquities."*

He is our scapegoat.

Judas is not your scapegoat; Jews are not your scapegoat. Arabs, terrorists, Atheists are not your scapegoat. If you're looking for a scapegoat, Jesus says, *"Look, I'm your damned scapegoat – you need no other."*

Jesus fulfills the Moral Law, the Sacrificial Law, and even the little details of the Ceremonial Law and even through Judas (whom He called His friend).

- Judas goes to the temple declaring that Jesus is innocent just as the Priest was to declare the spotless lamb spotless on Passover and this is Passover.
- Judas casts the money into the temple. Money for the temple treasury was to be used for temple construction and this blood money was used for temple construction.
- Through Judas' bad judgment, God worked His Good Judgment.
- Through Judas and the Priests, the Potter purchased the Potter's Field in which were buried strangers.

The Potter builds the New Jerusalem with strangers redeemed by His Blood.

Well there are many things we know that we can't know well. But know this:

1. God's Judgment is Jesus.
2. God's Judgment is Good.
3. The Potter's Field does not belong to Satan.

This is huge – The Potter's Field does not belong to Satan.

But think about this. Thirty pieces of silver – the designated price of a slave. (God made himself a slave in Jesus.)

- Judas throws it into the temple, to the Potter; then hung himself alone on a skulon (a tree) in a field; then fell headlong – bursting open (like a clay pot that cannot be mended).
- He fell into Gehenna – a field in Gehenna. But that very day, that field was purchased. Purchased by the one who had the right of redemption. Purchased by the Potter for 30 pieces of silver – Blood Money.

Who's blood? Jesus' blood – it's the Field of Blood – God's Blood.

The Potter's Field purchased by God with the Blood of Christ. Judas fell into that field. Gehenna does not belong to Satan – it belongs to the Potter and God is the Potter.

You know, if clay is wet it can be reformed on the wheel. It happens to us all the time as God forms that empty place inside of us in order to fill those empty places with Himself. It happened to Peter.

If the clay dries – the pot must be broken if it is ever to be remade – *"broken so it cannot be mended"* – but shattered, it turns back to clay and then the Potter can make a new pot. Maybe that happens to Judas.

Even if the clay is fired in a kiln (Potters use Fire and Gehenna is a place where Hades meets the Fire.) and then shattered, in the presence of water, the ceramics will eventually turn back to clay. It just takes eons.

Perhaps Judas is still trapped in Hades in this eon. But if Judas judged himself a stranger, didn't he also judge Jesus a stranger? So perhaps Jesus is with him as a fellow stranger – in other words – a friend.

"If I make my bed in Hell, even there, your right hand will hold me," wrote David.

OR

Perhaps Judas is forever destroyed in this eon, but that doesn't mean that the Potter can't make him eternally new in the next eon.

OR

Perhaps Judas was not lost for an eon, but only a few hours. For only a few hours after Judas hung himself on the tree and descended into Hell, Jesus hung on a tree and descended into Hell. Yet, Jesus ascended leading a *"host of captives free."* Maybe one was named Judas.

In 1 Corinthians 15:4, Paul writes that Christ *"was buried and raised and that He appeared to Peter and then the 12 and then the 500."*

He appeared to the 12 - (Jesus made a lot of promises to the 12) and Judas is standing there.

He appeared to the 12 before Judas was replaced by Matthias and after Judas was hung on the tree.

It sounds like Jesus appeared to Judas in the Potter's Field.

We don't know exactly what all this means. But what does God do with "the Chief of Sinners?" You know that St. Paul called himself "the Chief of Sinners" and said Jesus appeared to him as "one untimely born."

Karl Barth makes a brilliant argument that Matthias was not God's choice to fill the vacated office of the 12th Apostle. It was Saul – who we know as St. Paul.

We don't know exactly what that means for the historical Judas; but God turns Judases into St. Pauls. I don't know exactly what all of that means for Aunt Joyce, Billy Baldrige, and Tim Brewer. But I do expect to see them again 'cause I know:

1. God's Judgment is Jesus and
2. God's Judgment is Good and
3. God has purchased the Potter's Field with the Blood of Jesus and
4. Jesus says *"Behold I make all things new."*

Things We Know:

1. Jesus. God's Judgment is Jesus.
2. God's Judgment is Good.
3. God has purchased the Potter's Field with the blood of Jesus.
4. Jesus says, *"Behold I make all things new."*

And so

5. We must no longer fear the Potter's Field

Things We Know:

1. Jesus. God's Judgment is Jesus.
2. God's Judgment is Good.
3. God has purchased the Potter's Field with the blood of Jesus.
4. Jesus says, *"Behold I make all things new."*
5. We must not fear the Potter's Field.

So all you Dan Hietts out there – speak the truth (and not in doubt, but faith).

And all you Peter Hietts – preach the Gospel (and not constrained by fear, but love).
And all you Tim Brewers – surrender your weakness (not in shame, but in hope) – unafraid to die and so unafraid to live.

All you children of Adam made of Adomah, God is the Potter and you are clay. So surrender your judgments to His judgment. You can't judge yourself with yourself – it's just more self.

Suicide won't work – it will only make it worse.

You can't kill yourself with yourself – it's only a prison of self.

So, if you want to truly Die – So that you can truly Live – only the Potter can do it.

And He empties you with Grace ...

And fills you with Grace – that's His Judgment.

He empties you and He fills you at this table.

[Peter walks up to the Communion Table.] You see? We've all been a Judas. We've all been a vessel of Wrath. But the Potter is shaping us into Vessels of Mercy.

This is you – this chalice is an earthen vessel and this is what you were made for [Peter pours the wine into the cup].

Communion

And so I deliver to you what was delivered to me – that on the night Jesus was delivered up to the hands of men, He took bread and He broke it saying, *"This is My body given to you. Take and eat and do it in remembrance of me."* And in the same way, after supper, He took the cup and He said, *"This cup is the New Covenant, in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins."*

In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel. Amen.

Benediction and Prayer

Say, how many of you have ever seen a potter make a piece of pottery? Raise your hand. When I was a kid, they put me in pottery class or something. And it was kind of amazing to me because, you know, the potter takes the clay and the first thing they do is they like beat the clay – they just beat it. [Video of potter working with the clay is playing on the screen] Smashing it down and punching it and everything and then the potter takes it and puts it over a wire thing and cuts it and they chop it up. And they put it back together and they beat it some more and if you were watching that, you would think to yourself, *"The potter hates that clay. Why is he so mad at that clay? Why does he hate that clay?"*

Disclaimer: The author has not edited this document. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio or video version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.

Appendix

The Handy Dandy Final Judgment Scorecard ©

Present your scorecard on the Day of Judgment to enter Heaven.

(Suggested clothing: Fire retardant jumpsuit)

Method A:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have given a hungry person food. | <input type="checkbox"/> I neglected to feed a hungry person. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have given a thirsty person drink. | <input type="checkbox"/> I neglected to give a thirsty person drink. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have welcomed a stranger. | <input type="checkbox"/> I neglected to welcome a stranger. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have clothed someone. | <input type="checkbox"/> I neglected to clothe someone. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have visited a sick person. | <input type="checkbox"/> I have neglected to visit a sick person. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I went to visit someone in prison. | <input type="checkbox"/> I neglected to visit an imprisoned person. |

If you have checked any of the above boxes, move to the side of the building labeled SHEEP.

If you have checked any of the above boxes, move to the side of the building labeled GOATS.

Auxiliary Method B (In case Method A is inconclusive):

1. Calculate the number of times you have done each deed (D), and the number of times you have neglected to do each deed (D¹).

$$\frac{D}{D+D^1} = \text{Your Universal Righteousness Percentage (URP)}$$

2. Compare your percentage to others in case God grades on a curve. (According to some, there are 144,000 rooms prepared in Heaven [Revelation 7:4]. If they're not filled up by those who score 100%, perhaps you can still get in.)
3. If you score higher than your neighbor, you are first, and they are last.
4. You just judged them as "last" and "least"
which appears to mean ...
you just judged the judge as "last" and "least,"
but no matter what ...
"The first will be last and the last first."

PLEASE NOTE:

If you were "aware" of doing any good deeds for Jesus, religious reasons, or to score points, The Handy Dandy Final Judgment Scorecard is inaccurate and rendered null and void. If this is a problem, you may see the Complaint Department in the Valley of Gehenna.