

Jesus and Judas

Taken from "Come Holy Spirit "

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Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said, What are ye willing to give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they weighed unto him thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to deliver him unto them.—Matthew 26:14-16

"Man is something that must be overcome." In these words of Frederick Nietzsche one could gather up the whole truth about our existence which Jesus uttered and which he, while he lived a man among men, brought to light. Certainly Jesus did not come solely to proclaim this truth. He did not come to announce the ruin of mankind. He came to reveal God and to save men. But even so, only He can reveal God who has thrown down and conquered man. For our humanity itself is the wall of partition which separates us from God, the layer of fog which must first be penetrated before God's light can clearly shine again. To be saved? Man can be saved only by God through man's complete ruin. That is why the Cross stands in the center of the life of Jesus. At the cross is where God was revealed and where we were saved, for there man and all that is human was conquered, sacrificed, given unto death. The new, the saved man, the man who stands beyond the Cross, the man of the resurrection is different, wholly and absolutely different, and more than the "old man" merely improved. There is no bridge of progress or evolution from the old into the really new life. The Cross, death, stand between the two. The old human must disappear in the face of the divine new. Between the two stands the truth that "man is something that must be overcome."

"Man is something that must be overcome." Man! Nor only the bad, the godless, the unbelieving, the immoral man, but man in every form, man as such, man as he is, irrespective of his evils, or of his noble, helpful, good characteristics and high aspirations righteous and unrighteous, godless and pious man. There is a place within us which

is situated beyond all these differences, beyond good and evil, beyond piety and impiety. In this place, at the deepest, the most hidden, the most inward part in us, an ultimate bastille, so to speak, an unconquerable citadel, a mighty fortress lifts its walls. That is the throne of the original human in us. In this fortress we are ourselves, without any good or evil additions here we are alone with ourselves. Behind this wall, in this fortress, dwells our "I." Thence it goes forth, to it retreats. There it hides itself, there it sighs and suffers, there it defies and triumphs. This wall must be shaken, this fortified city must be overcome, must be stormed and broken down. Before that, man is not conquered. Many battles are fought out in our lives, but the final, the decisive crisis is not in these conflicts, even though they may wage fiercely. That final conflict results only when the fight for the inner citadel takes place. All other are preliminary skirmishes in the van, not the skirmish before the real inner position.

For field fighting is the method by which we ordinarily fight evil. All of us have a lot of evil about us. Sometimes it rises up in awful power. I think of physical suffering or the greed for money. It takes possession of the length and breadth of our lives and breaks forth either unbridled, or in mere bad conduct, in our thought, speech and behavior. We protect ourselves against evil. We battle against. Perhaps we succeed in controlling it or suppressing it until the dam breaks and it emerges anew! And so the battle wages without success, back and forth. For, is it not true that the evil in us will not permit itself to be overthrown, annihilated or decisively defeated? It always rises up again, it always returns. For evil would long ago have been defeated and destroyed, it would have been easy to be through it is, if, yes, if, it did not always have a strong place to flee to in that fortress, if it did not receive its power of opposition from the "I" of man behind that wall so deep within us. That is why it never is completely driven from the field. What would money be, or sensuality, alcohol, or the sword of might, if MAN would no longer allow himself with them, if he would not secretly consent to them? For it is only out of this alliance with man, only out of this demoniacal yes of man that these powers so such their life-blood and their life-sap. If this inner retreat should collapse, then evil would be powerless. Therefore "Man is something that must be overcome," if evil is to be overcome.

And it is no different with the good for which all of us wish to fight. We all have so much good about us, so many selfless motives,

so much loveliness, childlikeness, joyousness. But why do men generally feel so little of it? Why does it not penetrate through? Why does it not radiate victoriously from us? Why is not the good king of the world? For this reason--because it possesses only the fore field. It does not possess the central, inner place, There, in the inner place something else, the defiant, crafty "I" of man reigns, which has not yet fully surrendered itself, which still remains for itself, which still wants to be something by itself, not fully good nor fully bad. As long as this "I" sits in this fortress, all this busy chasing and running after the good is futile. ***This fortress must be stormed, this human place must finally surrender, must allow itself to be over come.*** Before that happens, the good will never be king on earth.

Here is the key to the enigmatical and disturbing fact that in spite of all the sincerity and zeal expressed by Christian believers there does not issue from our Christendom, our faith, our religion, the decisive power there ought. Or are we not aware of the evident weakness and impotence of our faith and of church-life? We repeatedly assure ourselves that we have God, we stand in the power of his Spirit, we boast about our salvation. But--"these Christians must show to me that they are redeemed before I will believe in their Redeemer," shouts Frederick Nietzsche, who spoke that remarkable profound word about the conquest of man. And there are others who side with him, even convinced Christian disciples such as the great Dan, Kierkegaard, and utter similar statements. And we must admit their truth. We, too, feel it is true that a certain ultimate, mighty, secret line of defense in, and is as yet unbroken. It is not even broken within that realm we call Christianity. All our churches and chapels with exception are situated outside the zone of this inner fortress, even outside this last bastilles, behind which the "I" of man has his last and strongest position, they are still in the fore field. And that is the reason why practically all that is thought, spoken or heard about God and his redemption with the churches and chapels, earnest and zealous as it may seem, is always so remarkable impotent.

That is why our Christianity is not taken seriously. The world knows well enough that our Christianity as a whole does not take hold of this central place of man in earnest. It knows that even the lives of convinced Christians without exception do not root up and conquer the "I" of man. It knows that we Christians, while we contribute much, yes, the most, yes, we give and offer even the last thing we have, yet

that last thing we will not give--ourselves--not *all* of us. For that reason the world does not fear us very much at present. One condition we persist in laying down, perhaps unwittingly, even to God, even in our praying the pious living--and this condition is ourselves, we, the human, our "I." We will not let ourselves be conquered. On the contrary, we assert ourselves! We defend ourselves. We appear to be strong. Whatever we think, do and say, should be attended to only one misfortune could happen to us in our estimation, and that would be that we, the human, the man, should weaken, become afraid or fall. With tooth and nail we defend ourselves against such a pass. That is the central thought which rules us. We fear and avoid the evil, not because it is evil but because it might endanger us; and should we allow ourselves to be enmeshed in it too deeply, through its fettering power, it might make our human life precarious. Likewise, we consent to the good, not because it is good but because it assists us in the establishment and the fortification of the "I." "A good conscience is a peaceful pillow." Yes, and more, we seek God, not for His sake, but for our own sakes; we seek Him, because we are strengthened by Him, comforted, and hope to be saved. We seek Him, so that we might use Him for a mighty retreat for ourselves.

That is our religion. That is our morality, our ethics. Practically all our disciplines of thought make this their premise. Into the heathen-worldly and churchly-Christian philosophies of life are interchangeable and similar. The mode of expression may not be the same but the goal, the purpose is the same; man, the human, who will not allow himself to be conquered; man who seeks himself and desires to assert himself. Here is the point at which all differences, whether of classes or religions, much stand back in favor of the one, common reflection and tendency. And in that place stands Judas Iscariot, who betrayed the Lord. He is different from all others only in that he is conscious of standing at this point; he knows what he is doing and he is holding this place and defending it against the one, the only One who does not stand in this place, but who, on the contrary, seeks to take possession of it. He stands over against this One, this only One, who does not want to be the sort of man who asserts himself, but rather, that sort of man who surrenders himself, that man who dies, that man who sacrifices himself, the wounded, the suffering, the one despised by all, the broken, humbled, crucified Man.

For that is Jesus. That is the decisive thing about Him. He desires this, and this alone--to stride against and to collapse this inner will and citadel of man. He was not concerned about the things in the fore field, whether good or bad. He began where we leave off. He opened and fought His way through, beyond those things which we think important, beyond our minor battles and play-struggles to the battle against the innermost and the ultimate.

It has often struck us how little weight Jesus put upon the differences in men, whether they were moral or immoral, pious or worldly. Undoubtedly he saw these differences better than we, but He looked beyond them as though He saw the enemy with whom He had basically to deal, the enemy who stood behind these other little enemies with which we often engage. He saw the good and the virtuous in good people and He did not lightly regard it. But at the same time He saw that behind all these goodly virtues there arose this absolutely unbroken line of defense which continually hinders and good from gaining a complete victory. And He, indeed, saw the darkness and the unrighteousness of the ungodly and worldly and He certainly did not call them good. But at the same time He saw, behind all their evils and ungodliness, the last strong hold which make it indeed possible for their evil and ungodliness to continue to maintain itself. And above all, he saw that this last inner stronghold is most unbroken in the pious and believing people whose piety serves to establish more firmly the *defiant, crafty "I"* of man. Continually Jesus realized that this inner position must be stormed. God must be captain of this strong bulwark of man. Everything else is futile. And so Jesus never took any part in the attempts to make the world better, or in the attempts to make good triumph over evil, or to bring about the destruction of evil which is often undertaken without touching this last ultimate premise, without overcoming men, without making God first of all absolute and only king.

Jesus made short shrift of all the ideals and religious and patriotic endeavors of His time. He quickly passes by the whole fore field of life. But He had one point to which He hurried and that was the last wall beyond which it is impossible to go without attacking man himself. This is what Jesus attempted to do. He possessed the profound insight that man must be overcome. A sacrifice must be made; no, not just a sacrifice, but the sacrifice, the sacrifice of man. And he made it Himself. He forfeited everything, everything wherein

He was humanly great, good, virtuous, everything which men could have understood and admired and imitated without needing to acknowledge or make this last sacrifice, which was of the utmost importance to Him. He allowed Himself to be humiliated; He gave Himself wholly to the end that once for all there might be a place in this world of humanity where God might come into His complete glory.

It was not an easy path. In this way it was shown just how strong the inner position is. He had to experience what it meant for one of his own, who could have understood what it was all about, to betray Him to death. How resistant man is especially when he realizes that his last strong bastille must be crashed in--a bastille which is so cruel, cold, calculating, crafty, defiant cynical. It might be well for us not to turn away too quickly from Judas, with a feeling of abhorrence. He is nearer to us than we imagine. He did nothing else that to hold this last, inner position of man against God in a critical moment and with obstinacy. He profoundly perceived that with Jesus and himself it was either He or "I," and he decided for the "I." But in the night when Jesus sat with his own, not one of the disciples was entirely certain whether he might not decide for this he or "I." This should give us food for thought. We call ourselves Christians, but we do not seem to understand clearly what sort of a decision that demands. It is not at all certain that we would remain Christians, if the time should come when we hear the call before our own wall and door: "Man, you must surrender yourself, you *must allow yourself to be overcome!*" For as there can be no absolute certainty that we would not in such an instance defend ourselves to the utmost with every means and strategy.

Another thing. To conquer man and all that is human means that even the last gable in the attic must be surrendered in which man sought protection and hiding. It means the renunciation of those arms and weapons with which we ordinarily, in human fashion, have cut our way through the world by fair means or foul. It means that we hand over as spoils all these mortal and religious advantages to which we continually love to appeal in support of ourselves. It means that we shall no longer prop ourselves, defend ourselves; no longer shall we assert ourselves upon such a respectable, indulgent, or refined basis. It means that we shall no longer prop ourselves, defend ourselves; no longer shall we assert ourselves upon such a respectable, indulgent, or refined basis. It means that we shall not make any demands upon God

nor in the favorite modern fashion, attempt to prove the righteousness of God by those emergencies in the course of the world that seem to favor us and bring us joy. It means to realize that the righteousness of God means that no man is righteous before Him, that no human can expect any special patronage or special consideration from Him. And this is the case precisely because men always weaken the good and strengthen the evil, especially when they seek to establish the good and to fight against the evil.

Therefore; the man who has allowed himself to be overcome is one who makes no demands, has no surety, no rampart upon which he can depend, no wall behind which he can defend himself; he is driven out of every human position, without any human support, into an exposed spot in the midst of the profound circumstances and enigmas of life; he is hounded about, disturbed, stormed, shaken, humbled, the opposite of an assured man who has an answer for every question. Indeed, this is the man who has allowed himself to be overcome. The nearest similarity and picture of such a man is the suffering and be number Job, the publican in the temple, the prodigal son, the thief on the cross. This besieged, abased, and shaken man is the one well pleasing unto God. For he is the man who no longer asserts himself, the man who see himself in the wrong in the face of God, himself and life, and he stands before his judge like a debtor awaiting his judgment. If the word of pardon follows his waiting, it appears to him as a deed of inconceivable liberality and mercy towards him. When a man stands thus before God, then he is again giving God the glory. The "I" is overcome. Then all is plead in the impenetrable will of God. There is where Jesus stood. he was this one, humbled, defeated, sacrificed man. For he desired nothing but that the "I" of man should be overcome and that all things should be placed in God's hands.

To this place Judas would not accompany Jesus. For, did it not mean that he would lose all ground beneath his feet and plunge into a chasm? Man defends himself against this plight as he would against an unheard of demand which contradicts reason. Jesus may tread that way, but I shall not. Rather shall I set myself upon the side of darkness which will master this defenseless man, than that I shall allow myself to be unarmed. I shall not let myself be crowded out into the fore field, where He is, where I must surrender myself and where I shall face nothing but death. I shall not engage in combat with that mysterious God who demands my surrender. I should rather turn to

the company of betrayers of the old faith, to the Pharisees and Scribes. There, at least, I can grasp hold of something as tangible and secure as thirty pieces of silver. That is Judas. That is man as he stands immediately in front of the place where the human must and will be humbled--the human who imagines he can defend himself with the defiance and the vigor of one who fights for his life. To feel the hand which waves powerfully over us and all our positions, and yet not to let it have its way, not at any price! That is Judas, that is man, the man as such, the human who must be overcome, the human for whose sake Jesus endured death.

The betrayal by Judas proved to be a terrible illusion. Judas wanted to defend the secure foundation under his feet, but he did not see that where this very foundation is completely given up, *there only man really stands upon firm foundation*. He saw that Jesus really brings about the destruction of man, but he did not perceive that this destruction becomes man's salvation. He heard the demand to resign all and to surrender life, but he heard it with the fearful ears of the "old man" who will not and cannot understand that "whosoever loses his life saves it." He had high hopes, great resolves, but down deep he was a coward like all betrayers. He lacked the great resolve, that final high hope which is necessary if man would throw himself into the hands of God only. He saw the Cross only, only the blood which must needs be shed; he saw the No only, only the suffering, the great enemy death. He did not see the resurrection, the victory; he did not see the Yes, the life, the reconciliation, the kingdom, the power, the glory of God which illuminate us at just that place where all our little lights are extinguished. It was quickly, terrible, and clearly indicated in Judas, how precarious is the strength of man's foundation when he softens the reality of the Cross, when he would rather reckon with the so-called realities of life than to plunge into the night and reckon with God alone.

Judas' attempts did not escape the mighty shake-up of his own fall which he had hoped to avoid. He had to become a witness to the fact that Jesus is right, when He holds that a man is something which must be overcome. God is much too real, too great, that a man can hope to hide from Him and swell in his own security. God is much too real, too great, that a man can hope to hide from Him and swell in his own security. God surrounds him upon all sides. He drives us into a corner so that He may force us to meet Him. Jesus has made every

position of man quite easy to storm by means of his death and resurrection, so that it is impossible to hold it by deliberate defense.

**All things pass, God alone stands with vacillation. His thoughts,
word and will have eternal foundation.**

There comes a time, sooner or later, when this truth shall be evident. Sometime an hour of terrible upheaval and ruin will come to us. This no one can escape. Against it no betrayal can avail. The only question is whether we shall, like Judas, defend ourselves against it to the utmost, only to have to encounter it finally with despair. Or, perhaps, the Cross has given us a presumption that this terrible, this impossible way, this way into very death with all of us must travel, is perhaps a way, yes, the way, which leads beyond death; a presumption that precisely there where everything about us comes to an end, there, on the other side, all things really begin; a presumption that if we but endure to the end, even out of the end, the judgment, the ruin, there might break forth the victory, the redemption. The question is whether we see some of the imperceptible light of the resurrection in which the Cross (as Rembrandt has painted it) stands. Oh, that we might see it, so that in the midst of our fears we would not fear, that we might dare to "Yes,"--even against ourselves, to God. For that is the reason why Jesus endured death.

This "I" in mankind that must be overcome is an independent-self correctly understood as a Satan/ I. Satan walls us up in self defense, and binding us up tight in ourselves so that he can keep this last self place to manifest himself through. We, out of ignorance hold tight to the only self we know. It is up to God to break down this citadel and fortress and set us free. Jesus did it at the cross, and he will manifest it once more in the truly broken places of our lives.