

Meditation for Wednesday of Holy Week – Judas Iscariot

John 13:21-30

21 After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, 'Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.' 22The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. 23One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him; 24Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. 25So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, 'Lord, who is it?' 26Jesus answered, 'It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.' So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. 27After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, 'Do quickly what you are going to do.' 28Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. 29Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him, 'Buy what we need for the festival'; or, that he should give something to the poor. 30So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

They say history is written by the winners. The gift of hindsight gives everyone perfect judgment. So I wonder what they will make of me? Will it be that I was cold, calculating and evil? Will I be seen as unstable, irrational and unpredictable? Misguided, foolish and reckless? Time will tell and I won't be there to see it.

You know, the biggest surprise was that he asked me to follow him. Simon the Zealot and I both had a bit of a reputation. Simon was very much one of the Zealots. I don't know if he ever went out on a raid, but they actually do fighting with the Romans. Ambushes, assassinations, and that sort of thing. Terrorists the Romans call them. We call them freedom fighters. I guess it all depends from which side you're looking at it. And I was known to have some sympathy with that – tired of this Roman occupation.

Anyway he just said 'follow me', and we did. We were fed up with the Romans ruling it over us, and we were sickened by the Jewish authorities and their two-faced attitude. Half the time they're muttering and complaining about the Romans, until they're handing out jobs, titles and cash and then it all goes silent. Funny that.

But Jesus wasn't in the pocket of the Romans and he said some hard-hitting things about the scribes and Pharisees. He had integrity, and seemed a bit dangerous, and I liked that.

He wasn't afraid of confronting the authorities; it was almost as if he looked for the opportunity. But he preached love and peace, and truthfulness. He talked about God as his father and told stories that showed up hypocrisy and stood up for the poor and the excluded. Sometimes he went further than I would with all that.

But I was getting frustrated. When would the revolution start? We had 5,000 men in a field, literally eating out of his hand – that's an army. The Sermon on the Mount – they were ready to go. But no, there was no call to take what is rightfully ours.

It was when he entered Jerusalem that I cracked. Riding in was fine. The donkey was a nice touch – a conquering king coming in peace. And he turned over the tables. That's more like it. Now, strike, I thought. Then he says render what is Caesar's, render to God what is God's. Looked like compromise to me.

I decided to force his hand. So I went to the authorities, took their stinking money and arranged to bring them to him at the crucial moment. I thought then he would finally get it and yell fight. But at the meal, he knew. He could see right through me, although the others hadn't a clue. He shared bread with me – we dipped it in the same bowl, and he just told me to do what I had to do.

In the end I couldn't take it, so I left early, brought the guards to him when he was praying, and they arrested him. "Put down your sword" he said to Peter. No bloodshed even then.

So here I am, with it all falling apart around me. I just wanted to make something happen, but not this. I threw the silver back at them, but it didn't ease my conscience. Not that the other cowards are any better – Peter even lied about not knowing Jesus, at least I didn't.

They say he'll be crucified tomorrow. I don't want to live to see that – I've made arrangements. What still rings in my ears is the last thing he said to me; the last thing he called me. Of all the words he could have used, only this one could pierce my heart. He said "friend".