

April 16, 2025

Daily Reflections

Journeying through Lent



Center for Spiritual Development

"YOU HAVE SAID SO"

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Today's Gospel

One of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver, and from that time on he looked for an opportunity to hand him over.

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples approached Jesus and said, "Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?" He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The teacher says, "My appointed time draws near; in your house I shall celebrate the Passover with my disciples."'" The disciples then did as Jesus had ordered and prepared the Passover.

When it was evening, he reclined at table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, he said, "Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me." Deeply distressed at this, they began to say to him one after another, "Surely it is not

*I, Lord?" He said in reply, "He who has dipped his hand into the dish with me is the one who will betray me. The Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had never been born." Then Judas, his betrayer, said in reply, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" He answered, "**You have said so.**"*

MATTHEW 26:14-25

Reflection

During Holy Week the scriptures recount the last days of Jesus and highlight the role of a follower of Jesus. Today is Wednesday and Judas Iscariot is given to us for reflection. In one breath, Judas Iscariot and Betrayer are synonymous. Judas Iscariot is alive in countless ordinary people with closely held views. And in me, too.

As I read the familiar story this year, I tried to be compassionate in considering Judas Iscariot and his place in history. I found myself wondering if he was framed, given a bad rap, or a victim of self-righteous judgement? In considering his possible motivations, I was struck by the reality that Judas Iscariot is like countless believers who seem to be sure how things "should" be accomplished. Then I recall our God of Love, the mercy and compassion that Jesus taught and lived to the end.

Judas was a proud man, perhaps from the most radical Jewish group, the Zealots. We know little other than what the Gospels tell us. Most likely Judas was learned in the Hebrew Scriptures and quoted the verses promising the Messiah. He passionately desired the Messiah and would have participated in the debates about who the Messiah would be and how he would save the people.

As a Zealot, Judas Iscariot joined with others seeking to overthrow oppressive Roman occupation. Judas was certain that the Messiah would lead the way to revolution and establish Israel's reign forever. He was staunchly committed to his own political agenda.

As a follower of Jesus, Judas seemed perplexed by Jesus's manner, style, words, and actions. Still, Judas was confident that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah. His faith in Jesus flowed from his own desire for who he thought Jesus should be. He lacked the receptivity to understand Jesus himself. Even so, in the end Judas' betrayal served a purpose or significance in Jesus' ministry and mission.

Perhaps Judas' motive for selling out Jesus to the Temple authorities was greed, what he could get out of it. Maybe he acted from his Zealot motivations for a kingly Messiah -- so focused on the political agenda, Judas missed the intent and spiritual mission of Jesus.

Judas was very attracted to Jesus as the Messiah, but was mystified in so gentle a soul, who served all people, and cared deeply for those who suffered. Jesus taught God's ways of love, compassion, mercy and forgiveness. For Judas, however, this was not how the Messiah was to come into power and save! Just maybe, Judas wanted to force Jesus' hand to be as Judas envisioned the Messiah! His narrow vision and stubborn pride cost Jesus everything. And in the end, Judas did not seek forgiveness for his false assumptions that sold Jesus out. He also seemed to have lost sight of the mercy and forgiveness of God for himself.



For Pondering

- What does Judas Iscariot teach me about desire in relationship to God?
 - What does Judas Iscariot teach me about light and darkness, hope and despair, sorrow, and forgiveness?
 - How am I aware of my motives?
 - How do I form God in my own image, beliefs, desires?
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For Prayer

*As I sit with Jesus, in the silence of my own soul,
I ponder my own experience of who Jesus is for me.
You call me, Jesus, to come close to you
and seek to put on your mind, heart, and will so I may truly know you
and embrace your ways that have the power
to influence my life entire life and choices.
Please be my help so I might strengthen my relationship with you.
Open my mind and heart to enter a deeper relationship with the Father,
as you witnessed in your own life.
This is what Judas never understood:
he was lost in his own vision of how things should and could be.
He could see no other way for a Messiah to be.
Please keep my mind open to your designs rather than my own.
Make my heart like your own,
one of compassion, mercy, and loving kindness.
Help me move beyond simple faith so I might go deep
and grasp the fullness of who you are, Jesus.
I am grateful that there is always room for mercy.
Amen.*

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