

I could get to them, and whether they would listen to me if I did get an audience with them.

I know many will say that I was the treasurer of our little group and some had even accused me of stealing some of the very little money we had, so many may want to suggest I did it for the money. But if that had been the case would I have been content with thirty pieces of silver? Was the price of a slave sufficient for this man whom the chief priests and others feared and so desperately wanted to kill?

I knew that they were looking for an opportunity to get hold of him away from the crowds so I am sure that some of you may think I was just an opportunist who saw this as my moment of glory or my opportunity to get ahead with those who had the real power.

Others may want to suggest I did it because I was a little different and this was a way of making my mark with my fellow-disciples, after all I was the only one from the south and many of you know how hard it is to fit in with all of those who are from the north, in my case, of course, it was with all of those from up north in unsophisticated Galilee.

Some had seen me as more of a revolutionary amongst the group who had been attracted to this Jesus in the hope that he truly was the Messiah who would bring us freedom from all of the terrible tyranny of the over lordship of Rome. You can imagine how with such an attitude I had a hard time dealing with Matthew who seemed as if he had sold his soul to the Romans when he had become a tax collector. Maybe I was hoping that this could become the glorious moment for Jesus when if his life was threatened by the chief priests and those in authority he would show his real power and start to lead that revolution for which I longed. After all just a few days earlier when we had entered Jerusalem and people had given him such a great welcome I had seen how popular he still was with so many of the ordinary people.

I must admit that if you want a straight answer I really cannot give you one. If you will think back to the decisions you have made maybe you can sympathize with me. Maybe like me you would have to admit that however good and upright your motives seem to be so often you have to confess that they can be rather mixed and you cannot always see clearly why you made the decisions you made.

Like me, though, I am sure that it has not always been easy to live with the decisions you have made especially as you have to deal with the people who are most directly affected by them in a negative way. I would invite you to think with me how you would have felt if you had been with me in that Upper Room with Jesus and the rest of the disciples. The story as John tells it is found on the sheet.

Jesus Washes the Feet of the Disciples and Judas Leaves to Betray Him

John 13:1-15, 21-30

Leader: Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him,

Men: "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Women: Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

Men: Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet."

Women: Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me."

Men: Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"

Women: Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you."

Leader: For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them,

Women: "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

Leader: After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared,

Women" "Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me."

Leader: The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him; Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So while reclining next to Jesus,

Men: he asked him, "Lord, who is it?"

Women: Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish."

Leader: So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him,

Women: "Do quickly what you are going to do."

Leader: Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some 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. So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

Judas Reflects on having his feet washed by Jesus

How embarrassing it was for me. Every time he touched me feet with that water and then started to wipe them I wanted to cringe. Of course, I had heard Peter's objections and I just wished I had had the courage to try to make him stop myself. It was bad enough that the master of the house had not provided some lowly servant to wash our feet when we had arrived. It was also not good that all of us were just too proud to do this menial task for our fellow disciples. Now to think it was our Lord and Master who was showing us all up by washing our feet. This was bad enough but then to think what I was planning to do to him and he would do this for me. It was just terrible. If what he did was not bad enough his words afterwards just made it worse as he spoke of the way in which he had given us an example of how we should treat one another. Was what I was planning to do the way he would have us to treat one another? As if his words about giving us an example of how we should serve one another in this humble way were not terrible enough his next words really got to me. How terrible it was as I came to realize that he knew all the time what I was planning to do, that even as he had washed my feet and shown his love and concern for me in this humble way he knew I was getting ready to betray him. How amazing he was! I do not think I could treat someone whom I know is getting ready to put a knife in my back in this way.

I appreciate John as he wrote about me later trying to blame the whole thing on Satan and the devil. It sure would be nice if I could just use this as my excuse and my cop-out and say as I have heard many others say, "The devil made me do it." But I know that as I on that day I had accepted the invitation to follow Jesus so I know that if it was the devil who was putting me up to this treasonous action I

still had that choice of whether I was going to cooperate. I am just so glad that John saw that my fellow disciples did not know or understand what I was planning to do. John certainly was right that it was night. This was indeed to become for me the dark night of my soul. As I left that Upper Room I kept thinking about all that Jesus had done and had said and what I was planning to do. I should have gone back and apologized, but now I seemed so caught up in what I was planning to do that there seemed like no way out. As I had seen him go to that Garden of Gethsemane there on the Mount of Olives to pray before I thought that was where he and my fellow disciples would go that night, but then again I was beginning to hope that they might just happen to go somewhere-else on that particular night. As it turned out I was right. Read with me now from the sheet what happened there in that garden.

Judas Betrays Jesus

Matthew 26:47-50

Leader: While Jesus was still speaking to the other disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying,

Men: "The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him."

Leader: At once Judas came up to Jesus kissed him and said,

Men: "Greetings, Rabbi!"

Women: Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you are here to do."

Leader: Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him.

Judas Reflects on His Betrayal of Jesus

A kiss! Why did I chose a kiss as a way to identify him? Sure it seemed like an easy way in the dark for those who did not know him to figure whom it was

they had come to arrest. But a kiss! How much I was devaluing this sign of friendship by using it in this deplorable way. As if what I had done was not bad enough you can imagine how much Jesus rubbed salt into that wound as he called me, "Friend." How bad he made me feel as I recognized how I had devalued our friendship so badly and used it for my own ends. I hope that no one of you have ever been as guilty as I was that night of using your friendship with other people to abuse them and to hurt them and to disappoint them as much as I must have disappointed Jesus that night.

I must admit that as I began to see what was happening I really started to become very disappointed with myself and with what I had done. As Jesus gave in so passively to those who came to arrest him and then refused to make any case in his own defense before Caiaphas and before Pontius Pilate I began to see how much I had misunderstood him. Maybe I had been ready for him to lead that revolution against Rome and was just trying to push his hand to get on with it but now clearly I was wrong. I was coming to recognize how much I had failed to understand him and to appreciate all that he was saying and doing. As I saw the way things were deteriorating so rapidly and how it looked as if he would soon be hung on a cross by my nail of betrayal, what was I to do? What would you have done if you had been in my place?

I do not know whether you would have done the same but I would invite you to read from the sheet what I did.

Judas Commits Suicide

Matthew 27:3-5

Leader: When 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. He said to them,

Men: "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood."

Women: But they said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself."

Leader: Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and he went and hanged himself.

Judas Reflects on His Suicide

I had read all of those advice columns over the years that said when you cannot figure out what to do or you are so depressed with your situation go and talk with a priest. Well I took that advice but I found that they were celebrating so much what had happened as they had gotten rid of Jesus that they had no time to listen to me. As I listened to their celebration, of course, instead of helping me it just made me feel so much worse because I knew how much I had done to make it possible.

What was I to do? I felt so alone. I could not go back and face my fellow-disciples. True they had all fled away when I had come with the soldiers to arrest Jesus and I had even heard that loud mouthed Peter had even denied that he even knew Jesus, but still they would not understand. I had always been so much of an outsider with them and now it would be even worse. No, I could not go back to them. They would not welcome me or have any words that would help me. All they would do would be to condemn me and to criticize me.

How I wish I could see Jesus again. How I wish I could tell him how sorry I was for the way in which things had turned out. How I wish I could apologize to him for misunderstanding him and for being such a traitor, but now it is too late for that. He is dead.

I just could not see that there was anything else I could do. I was at the end of my rope and all I knew to do was to take that rope and to hang myself.

But I was wondering, if you had been there, if I could have come and spoken with you what would you have told me? What advice would you have given in this terrible, life-threatening situation in which I found myself?

Stepping out of this role of Judas I would like to ask each of you think what you would have said to him if you had had the opportunity. What words would you have shared with him in his despair to stop him taking his life?

As you think about what you might have said to Judas if you had had that opportunity let me share with you what one person wrote:

“The misery into which Judas sinks over his action represents his greatest failure, because in his consuming guilt he cannot see that he is already forgiven.

Consider the timing according to the first three Gospels and the order in which things happened. It is not without accident that immediately after Jesus has accused Judas, he turns and offers the disciples – Judas included – the ceremonial meal we now call the Lord’s Supper. What was the meal’s purpose but to assure them all that his body is given for them, and that his blood is shed for them *for the forgiveness of sins*? He is telling them, “Although your thoughts might burrow into the circles of hell, you can be forgiven. Those same thoughts can claw their way into the light of day to emerge again in word and deed, but you can still be forgiven. Betrayal takes many forms, but forgiveness makes no exception. The depth and breadth of the divine promise, the promise that stretches back thousands of years to Abraham and forward infinitely into the future, to generations not yet alive, was to be found that night, in its entirety, in that small crust of bread and that simple cup of wine.

The tragedy is that the message of Jesus at that meal is lost on Judas. His death at his own hand would become the counterpoint to his master’s crucifixion: one bore witness to eternal hope and the other to relentless despair.”

(Were You There by Erik Kolbell, 2005, Westminster-John Knox Press, page 52)

I would like to invite you now not just to think what you might have said to Judas but to think of someone you know, yourself or someone-else, who needs to see the forgiving eyes of Jesus looking at him or her and to be able to claim the

assurance of which Fanny Crosby wrote in her hymn, “The vilest offender who truly believes that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.”

One Minute Prayer for someone in your life to whom you need to look with the eyes of Jesus.

I would invite you now to take just one minute and to pray for that person.

During Lent, we are invited to look at People with the Eyes of Jesus

As we continue this Season of Lent, I would like to invite you to accept the challenge of Lent and for each of us during this week to spend just one minute a day praying for that person who needs to hear those words of forgiveness from Jesus for whatever he or she may have done.

Closing Hymn No. 35 “To God Be The Glory” Stanzas 1 and 2

The Charge and Benediction from the Rev. Dr. Richard C. Halverson,
Presbyterian Pastor and former Chaplain to the United States Senate:

Wherever you go, God is sending you. Wherever you are, God has a purpose for your being there. Christ, who indwells you has something he wants to do through you where you are! Believe it, and go in his grace and peace. Amen.