

Betraying Eyes: Judas

JUDAS. Nobody names their kids that. I dare you to find a Judas anywhere. I doubt that it's ever made the list of most popular names for newborns. JUDAS. Forever a name tied tightly to betrayal, surrounded by treachery in the handing over of the innocent Jesus to those who wanted Him dead...and made it so!
JUDAS. His name says it all.

St. Mark writes: ***Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray Him to them*** (14:10).

Yep...you heard that right: ***“one of the twelve.”*** Brazen betrayal by one of the Lord's own chosen ones. ***“One of the twelve.”***

And frankly, Judas had seen it all: the Lord's feeding of 5,000+ hungry people, the curing of lepers and a guy blind from birth, the raising of young and old who had succumbed to death, the bouncing of little children on His lap as the disciples grieved and groaned that the Lord had better things to be doing than playing with kids. And he had heard it all, too: JUDAS had heard His Master's passionate pleas to repent for the kingdom of heaven was near. He had heard words of forgiveness leave the Lord's lips as He addressed a lame man let down before Him from a rooftop. Judas. ***“One of the twelve.”*** One of His own.

For what? For \$\$\$. Just \$\$. Seems the banker and accountant for the disciples felt that the coffers needed to be replenished...or at least, ***his*** coffers. And frankly, it all fit so “hand-in-glove” with the Jewish leaders seeking to get their hands on Jesus...looking for that unobserved time and inconspicuous location to grab Him and whisk Him off for good. \$\$\$ calls the shots for JUDAS. It seems he had an eye for the stuff...

So he put a plan into place, waiting for the preparation for the Passover meal and for the eating itself. And it was actually there—right at table!—that Jesus dropped the bomb on the 12: ***“As they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, ‘Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me, one who is eating with Me.’”***

Picture it: 26 eyeballs looking at Jesus & at each other. By His statement—a prophecy really—Jesus kicked things up a notch...or two. Perhaps there were tears in several of those sets of eyes...“Who could it be?—Who would possibly do such a thing? Mark says then that, ***they began to be sorrowful and to say to one another, “Is it I?”*** Would I do that? Would you?

I wonder what Judas' eyes were doing? Did he look down, maybe in shame? Did he nervously glance around to see if anyone was looking at him...suspiciously...? Did he put on a good show and act like the rest of the guys. And why didn't Jesus call him out? Was He really all that keen on going to His cross/suffering/death? Really?

And we don't hear about Judas again until he shows up with a kiss...in Gethsemane. All that time in between Jesus calling out the betrayer at the table and the late night in the Garden...Judas had time to think this through, to get his head on straight, to back up and back out...but...there he was, with a sign of sincere friendship and love.

By now our fingers are wagging violently at Judas...but, truth is...were you there when Jesus was betrayed...?

In his *St. Matthew's Passion*, Johann Sebastian Bach takes that fateful scene in the Upper Room and sets it to sublime music. When it gets to the section in which Jesus announces that the betrayer is at the table, part of the chorus sings the words of each of the disciples, asking if he is the traitor. The text is in German: "Herr, bin ichs?" (straight out of Luther's German Bible.) Translation: "Lord, is it I?" And then comes these words in the form of a chorale, sung by the entire chorus. It begins: **Ich bin's. "It is I."** Here's the English translation of the chorale verse, addressed (and confessed) to Jesus:

**It is I, I should atone, bound hand and foot in hell.
The scourges and the bonds and what You endured,
my soul has earned.**

"Ich bin's" "It is I." Bach gets the Judas story right, stopping our pointing/incriminating/wagging fingers. Bach tells the story...the whole story. We have all been there and participated in the sin of Judas; we all have committed treason, turning against our Lord; that is precisely what our sin is: betrayal of our King of mercy/grace.

And...if we were to die in our sin, it certainly would have been better for us not to have been born.

But Jesus has more to say here around the Passover table: ***"The Son of Man goes as it is written of Him...The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."***

Of all things! Jesus already knew what was coming...and He walked right into it: willingly because, you see,: ***“The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many”*** (Mk. 10:45).

Deep mysteries these are. Judas was morally responsible for his betrayal of Jesus and justly paid the price for his sin/impenitence, even though the Scriptures had foretold it all. God didn't force Judas to do anything. Judas didn't need—nor want—at this point any of God's “help.” He had all the help he needed...from the Evil Foe.

Yet even this evil was used by the Father in heaven to accomplish His work through His Son: to rescue all of us who with the eyes of Judas have looked upon Jesus and have seen in Him our own, personal “capital gains.” ***“All we like sheep...all we like Judas... Ich bin's. It is I.***

The word for “betray,” means literally, “to hand over/deliver.” That's what Judas did: He handed over His dear friend, and that for a few bucks. And yet, in this treacherous action, it was really God handing over His Son into the very eye of the hurricane—the punishment (wages for our sin), the bitter suffering/death, hell to pay—hell's price we will never have to be faced with. Jesus paid it. All. Full price. Paid in full. For you.

This is handed over to you each/everytime you hear the words of forgiveness (Absolution) from the pastor's lips, and each and every time you gather at the Lord's Table. He is handing Himself over to you. For you. This is precisely what St. Paul was getting at in 1 Cor. 11 when he uses the betraying/handing over/delivering verb. Listen to the Apostle: ***“For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when He was delivered over (“betrayed”) took bread...”***

There's a lot of “handing over” and “delivering” going on in the Jesus story, but the best part of the whole story is still to come: when Jesus hands you over to His Father and says, “Here Father. Here is Your child...dear...forgiven...forever... child. You have called her/him by name. No longer Judas. No — now this one before You, Father, is named by My name...and My name tells this story...

In the holy name of + JESUS +