

# A Meditation For Wednesday Of Holy Week

📖 Read: John 13.21-32

The Gospel reading is for today a scene from the Last Supper. Indeed more specifically it's the scene where Judas leaves to betray Jesus....



*After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, “Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.” 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, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus 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. After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “Do quickly what you are going to do.” 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 is a fascinating character. There are so many questions that I want to ask and aren't answered.

Why did he do it?

Was it really for money?

Why is Judas portrayed as such a betrayer when Zacchaeus, a quisling, viciously prepared to rob people as a Tax Collector is redeemed?

Why when Peter betrays Jesus and denies Him is, he forgiven and restored while Judas is cast off into the outer darkness?

So many questions...

In art he is portrayed in certain ways to let us know that he is evil. He is often portrayed as wearing yellow, red hair, Jewish features, demonic features. *Joan de Joanes ‘Last Supper’ (at the top of this page)* painted in the 16th Century shows Judas (on the right of the painting) with yellow robe, red hair, money bag in hand, no halo.

Other pictures show him with a demon on his shoulder.

The portrayal of Judas also helped to stoke the heretical abomination of antisemitism.

Judas almost comes to be the archetypal “other” on whom we can place all our hurt and anger and frustration. All the feelings of betrayal.

But hold on...

Isn't that Jesus' role?

Isn't Jesus the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world?

Isn't Jesus the one on whom all the sins – personal and structural – falls?

Rather I think that Judas is not a figure of hate, or of repulsion. He is lost.

**Rembrandt** shows him trying desperately to return the 30 pieces of silver – and failing.

The problem is what he does with his failure.

Jesus is into failure.

Jesus has no problem with our failure.

The problem is not that Jesus couldn't deal with the failure and betrayal of Judas.

It's that Judas won't allow Jesus deal with his betrayal and failure.



Zacchaeus comes and seeks forgiveness. Peter recognises his betrayal and receives the forgiveness of Jesus.

Judas takes himself off into his own hell.

He can't come and receive the forgiveness of Jesus.

Judas is not a figure of evil – he strikes me as a sad figure because he doesn't recognise his need of Jesus.



Maybe the picture by *Nikolaj Ge* called '**Judas' Conscience**' gets it better.

Left alone in the darkness with Jesus being arrested and taken off bathed in light.

Maybe we need to realise that walking in the light means that we need to recognise that all too often we take ourselves into a place of darkness and won't let Jesus shine His love into our lives.

*All powerful and ever-living God,  
cast out from our hearts the darkness of sin and bring us to the light of your truth.  
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you  
and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*