

THE BETRAYAL of JESUS

¹⁰ Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. ¹¹ When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him

Mark 14 v10-11

“After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, ‘Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.’

⁶ 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.^{*} ²⁷ After he received the piece of bread,^{*} Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, ‘Do quickly what you are going to do.’ ²⁸ Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night”³

John 13.v21 and v22-30

Text: Oremus Bible Browser

In the C4-C6th pilgrims who travelled to the Holy Land did so, to try and live the environment that Jesus lived in, as well as re-imagining themselves beside Jesus in the events he encountered. They became fully engaged in the actuality that the gospels and other stories described. This is quite different to many modern pilgrimages even ones to the Holy Land. How then did these early pilgrims see Judas and the betrayal of Jesus?

Today it is very easy to see Judas, who betrayed Jesus with a kiss, as simply a person in history. He was simply one of the Hebrew disciples who just went wrong and then ended up being mentioned in each of the gospels. Clearly then it was a ‘big event’ when he betrayed Jesus, but it still is always someone else. It is never us!



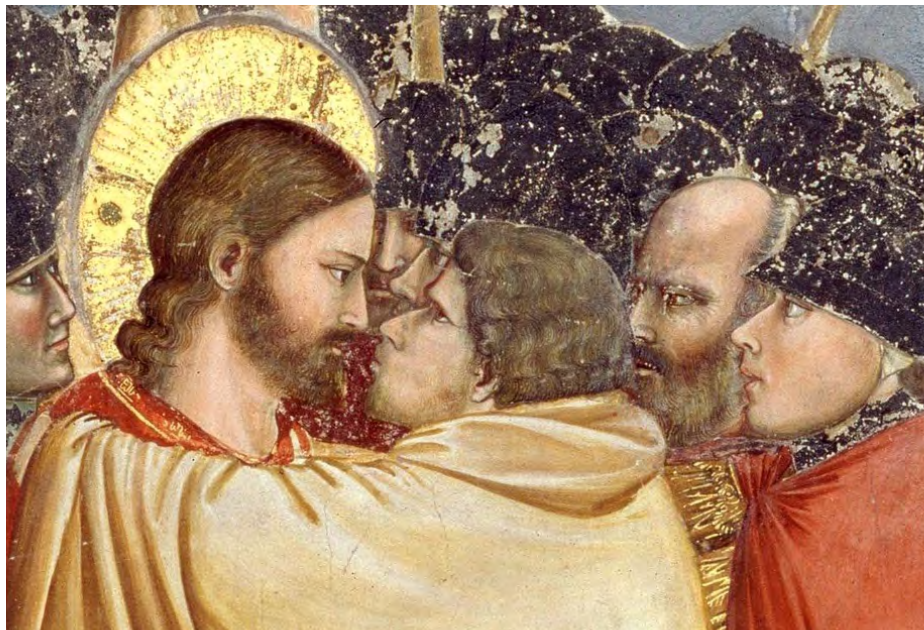
© Giotto Bondoni c1267- 1337, 'Kiss of Judas' or 'the Arrest of Christ' (1304-6) painting 16 (1993 Electa index) from the Life of Christ cycle. South Wall. Schrovegni Chapel. Padua. Italy

Both Judas and his acts as well as his very name, means he is reviled for what he did and of course no one likes to be thought that they may be like him. None of us seek to be reviled or even hated. We don't really know why Judas betrays Jesus, true he accepted payment, but was that what he was seeking? It has been suggested that Judas saw in Jesus a man to bring about change, but perhaps only political change and not a change in how we relate to one another and to God. If that is the case, we don't know whether that was a gradual change or something he felt from the start. So maybe Judas erred

from the radical approach that Jesus was teaching and maybe he saw revolution as the only way forward. Whereas Jesus might bring about a change he might also upset the conservative religious framework and so in Judas' eyes no hope of real significant change.

All this is of course pure speculation but the bottom line is that he feigned friendliness and closeness with Jesus in order to identify him to those who were ordered to arrest Jesus. By doing this he accepted a sum of money to carry out this act and so Jesus death helped line Judas' pockets.

That sense that Judas could though be 'us' is perhaps found in the work of Giotto in his painting cycles inside the Schrovegni chapel in Padua. Schrovegni was a rich banker a profession not always looked upon with favour by the church as it often exploited peoples weakness. However programmes of paintings like these were often traditional rather than being used to always



Detail from the image by Giotto's 'Arrest of Christ' seen above

point a finger at a patron. Giotto was an important painter who may have been a Third Order Franciscan who introduced a new sense of humanity into painting that until then had been dominated by a byzantine formality. He did this through the both pose of the people he depicts and the importance of the eyes looking at one another rather than out at us

If you look carefully at the painting of the betrayal event by Giotto you will notice that Judas (who is the figure with the broad 'cloak' in the middle of the painting), looks different to those others around him. Judas is pale skinned even though he is a Hebrew just like Jesus as well as the priest standing behind Judas. In addition they are also all wearing heavy beards, Judas is not which may indicate his youth. This is evident in both the Betrayal painting as well as in another painting section on the chapels main east arch.

Again a closer look at Judas shows his eyes are very small compared to Jesus and to others around him. Eyes are often seen as ways of depicting the truth of a person so we say that someone 'looks sly' if they are hiding something and when we are close to someone we often 'gaze into their eyes'.

We also actually fail to look at someone if we are not telling the truth and because Judas is play acting at being close to Jesus, his eyes show very little whites of the eye. He has of course informed the authorities of the whereabouts of Jesus and the kiss or kisses like in many cultures where the kiss is used as a greeting is also apparently excessive. His arms are clasping Jesus drawing him closer like a true friend but the cloak he is wearing covers them both trying to enfold Jesus into the conspiracy that he has set up with the authorities but also hiding Judas' deceit.

Perhaps a clearer image of Judas as being different from the Hebrew authorities can be seen in another painting of where Judas is depicted receiving his bag of money in the painting on the eastern arch of the Chapel. Here he is clearly a redhead with a light wispy beard and light moustache and without the high pronounced forehead. The little black dog-faced figure guiding Judas is of a course a devil or Satan in the biblical text.



© Giotto Bondoni c1267- 1337

Detail of Judas Receiving Payment for his Betrayal (1304-6)

Painting 26 (1993 Electa Index) from the Life of Christ cycle North West side of Arch. Schrovegni Chapel. Padua. Italy

So what is it about Judas that we might share? It could be how we tend to try and 'own' Jesus through our churchmanship or perhaps the moral high ground we might adopt rather than listening to others. It could be how we allow ourselves and /or our Faith to be compromised by personal convenience if not financial gain. In the end though it has to be through our relationships both personal (where we are made in God's image) as well as the gifts that God has given us (both on the environment we live within and the gifts or talents we have developed within ourselves but given to us by God).

But there are also those who carry out decisions sanctified by their line managers and employers. Were you one of those who carried through the destruction or records that caused the heartbreak and death of those in the recent Windrush scandal. Were you the politician that failed to ask questions about how robust was the decision you are making and so caused a scandal. Were you one of the group of people that failed to seek advice or Risk Assess decisions that effect all of us.

Judas did not kill Jesus, or have him tortured, he did not impose heartache for Jesus mother. No he did none of these things but he was the key that opened the political floodgates that had pre-determined the outcome of any trial and sealed Jesus fate.

Judas was apparently unaware of what he was opening and as a result he could no longer live with himself. His solution was radical to say the least but how many of us bury or learn to live with the decisions we all make that contradict God's law.

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