

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Mar 31st 2015

“The truth is that our finest moments are most likely to occur when we are feeling deeply uncomfortable, unhappy, or unfulfilled. For it is only in such moments, propelled by our discomfort, that we are likely to step out of our ruts and start searching for different ways or truer answers.” - M Scott Peck

He cannot contain himself in this informal setting amongst his closest friends any longer. Jesus is “deeply troubled,” he leans back, and then he gets what is weighing on his mind out on the table: “One of you will betray me.” Jesus knows he is about to be distressingly disappointed and wounded by one of his closest friends.

Is there a more hated man in all of history than Judas? Is there another historical figure at whom more fingers have been pointed or a man more securely envisioned behind the gates of hell? This demonization of Judas has always made me uncomfortable and seemed unfair despite the fact the text tells us “after Judas took the morsel, Satan entered him.”

The fact that Jesus was deeply troubled appears to be the catalyst for the revelation of impending betrayal and request for swift action. The only other place in the Gospels that Jesus is described as “deeply troubled” is when he stands with Lazarus’ family outside the grave where he has lain dead for four days. The sight and the feel of this family in so much pain for their loss troubles Jesus “deeply” and he can no longer contain himself and he swiftly restores Lazarus to his family.

The Son of God likes to fix things, it seems. The agony and death of his friends troubles Jesus more than he can bear passively. He cannot contain himself. He has to say something and he has to do something because he cares deeply.

Think about some of the other things we know troubled Jesus and inspired his swift action: a woman who could not stand up straight for 18 years, a man who cannot see, a man involuntarily controlled by demons, a woman about to be stoned for her infidelity, a man who by law cannot be healed on the Sabbath, and a man who must announce his uncleanness everywhere he goes and live in isolation because of his leprosy.

Jesus appears to be in favor of healthy and robust lives filled with second chances and wonderful

surprises and hate the stench of death in all its forms. Death, both slow and quick, and the associated anguish that goes along with it troubles Jesus deeply and it is everywhere around him.

Jesus Himself invited Judas into his select inner circle, and surely he saw the rich potential for who Judas might have been. Perhaps, then, Jesus is deeply troubled because the Judas he sees before him is but a shadow of the man he might have been. Perhaps Jesus is deeply troubled largely because Judas is so frustratingly blind and deaf to everything Jesus has been trying to tell and show him. Judas has the privilege of intimate friendship with the very best friend on earth, and yet he doesn't seem to recognize that at all and is willing to sell Jesus out for almost nothing and to men who are not his friends. Perhaps Jesus is deeply troubled because Judas can only think in terms of power and authority and does not understand that the very best things in life are often the most common and ordinary and there are alternative ways to be greater than anything Judas has yet known. Perhaps Jesus is deeply troubled because he knows Judas so well and he could easily guess how hard Judas would take his misjudgment when he realizes his mistake.

With Jesus, it is always about relationship and not about religion. Jesus loved Judas.

Perhaps Judas' betrayal of Jesus was the straw that broke the camel's back, but not the straw that handed the power over Jesus' future to Satan and to Judas. Perhaps Judas' betrayal came at the culmination of Jesus' frustration with his inability to clearly and sustainably enough convey his message to his followers, his neighbors, his family, his church, the general public and even those closest to him. Perhaps Jesus was deeply troubled because he realized that although he had given all he had to give with his life and his miracles and his compassion and his courage, it was not enough.

Something has to change. Something has to be done differently. It's not working. No one is catching on the way they need to be. Whatever it is Jesus is doing in life, and however wonderful, it is not enough. All great leaders know that it doesn't matter what you say; it only matters what people hear, and the majority of the message was falling on deaf ears.

"What you are going to do, do quickly," Jesus tells Judas. Let's get this over with. When we look at the story through this lens, Judas is not the villain. He is only the catalyst and Jesus is still very much in control of the situation.

The Son of God likes to fix things, it seems. And fix them he does:

“My children, I will be with you only a little while longer.
You will look for me, and as I told the Jews,
‘Where I go you cannot come’.”

And this time, Jesus will be traveling alone.

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