

Mark 14: 10-11

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

Meditation: We do not really know why Judas sought to betray Jesus. We can only speculate. We can speculate about his revolutionary zealot leanings which expected more of an armed revolution than Jesus was preaching. We can speculate about his possible setting up an opportunity for confrontation between Jesus and the authorities in order to force Jesus to bring about the kingdom. We can even speculate about his growing disillusionment with Jesus' program, or his interest in monetary gain. But whatever his motives were, Judas turns away from Jesus.

One of the things I've done over the years is read bios of Martin Luther King Jr. In this time of outrage and protest over black racism, people are looking for visionaries who have represented the hopes and dreams of our black siblings for freedom. Like Jesus, there would have been those like Judas who felt King was not revolutionary enough in refusing to allow for violence to achieve more definitive results. But King also understood how any real change had to involve some positive relationship building with white allies, and that non-violence would get greater results in the long-run. Later on, however, King also struggled with some disillusionment. He realized how deeply entrenched racism was. From blacks in city ghettos who were so locked into their poverty and addiction after generations of traumatic oppression passed on, to ongoing police brutality and racist government policies, to the reality that the vast majority of whites who may have supported the cause, lacked the peddle-on-the-gas urgency of blacks living racist oppression every day; change would not come easily or quickly.

Even as Jesus has a clear vision and plan as divine messiah, he will also have his time of fear, doubt and self-questioning. Mark's gospel account is told this way quite deliberately. If Jesus is going to walk the road of humanity at its most difficult points in order to redeem it all, he must endure that kind of experience too. Jesus is black because that's where the suffering and injustice are most acute right now. Will we betray him like Judas?

Prayer: It's happened and happens to us, too, O God. Our hopes and dreams get dashed. We question, we doubt and we fear the gap between what we want to see for our lives and our future, and what we fear may actually come to be. We want to follow Jesus, not betray him in our hearts and lives. Yet, we can lose faith in where he is leading. We can lose faith in his vision that love is the way to peace and to change that truly transforms. We often want change much faster. We want things to get right for us, now. We're willing to step over people and push through situations even as more delicacy, sensitivity and patience is required. We want to control the outcome, not trust what will be and may be we cannot and may not be able to see now. Walk with us, O God. Keep us on this journey following Jesus until the end... Give us hope that the right kind of change is possible if we don't forfeit our souls and our integrity in the process; Amen.