

Mark 14: 43-52

43 Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. ⁴⁴Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.' ⁴⁵So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, 'Rabbi!' and kissed him. ⁴⁶Then they laid hands on him and arrested him. ⁴⁷But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. ⁴⁸Then Jesus said to them, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? ⁴⁹Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled.' ⁵⁰All of them deserted him and fled. A certain young man was following him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, ⁵²but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked.

Meditation: Even as Jesus is speaking to his disciples, his accusers come to arrest him. They are led by Judas whose betrayal comes in the form of leading Jesus' enemies to him in secret, at night, outside public view. Jesus does not misunderstand them, but he also takes a moment to comment: 'Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled.' Even though their intent is murderous, God's will for Jesus overrides their purposes. And then something else happens that Jesus had also predicted. His disciples desert him. They flee the scene. One of them even runs away naked in order to get away. Jesus will face this last trial of his life alone.

There are times of life where we don't want to see something or we're not ready to accept it. Truth is hard to face sometimes and we prefer to deny it and even betray it with lies if we're desperate enough and fearful enough of its implications for what we must do. Jesus has pushed his followers with a hard truth about what he must do and the implications of his actions on them. They're just not ready to go there. And so, they betray, they lash out or they run.

Where do you betray, where do you lash out and how have you been running away?

Prayer: Life can be hard, O God... even as we may be coasting in this pandemic time, just riding it out... even as we are troubled by the racism around us and the troubles of our world, feeling helpless in some ways to do much about it or hope for definitive change. It's hard not to be cynical. It's hard to get motivated. It's hard to face truth when we're not clear what we must do or really ready to get serious about change. Meet us where we are, O God. Provoke us. Don't let us off the hook if you care for us. May your grace toward us not come too easily or cheaply. May we re-discover that we can never experience a motivating fullness of love if we're not prepared to give it amply with some risk and cost to our comfort and convenience; Amen.