

WHEN YOUR WORLD TURNS AGAINST YOU

Get up, we must go. Here comes the man who has turned against me.”¹ The words were spoken to Judas. But they could have been spoken to anyone. They could have been spoken to John, to Peter, to James, to Thomas, to Andrew, to Nathanael. They could have been spoken to the Roman soldiers, to the Jewish leaders. They could have been spoken to Pilate, to Herod, to Caiaphas. They could have been spoken to every person who praised him last Sunday but abandoned him tonight.

Everyone turned against Jesus that night. Everyone.

Judas did. What was your motive Judas? Why did you do it? Did you want the money? Were you seeking some attention? And why, dear Judas, why did it have to be a kiss? You could have pointed. You could have just called his name. But you put your lips to his cheek and kissed.

The people did. The crowd turned on Jesus. Matthew just says they were people. Regular folks like you and me with bills to pay and kids to raise and jobs to do. Individually they never would have turned on Jesus, but collectively they wanted to kill him.

The disciples did. “All of Jesus’ followers left him and ran away.”² Jesus told them they would scamper. They vowed they wouldn’t. But they did. When the choice came between their skin and their friend they chose to run.

The religious leaders did. Not surprising. They are the spiritual leaders of the nation. Role models for the children. The pastors and Bible teachers of the community. “The leading priests and the whole Jewish council tried to find something false against Jesus so they could kill him.”³

Everyone turned against Jesus.

Though the kiss was planted by Judas, the betrayal was committed by all. Every person took a step, but no one took a stand. As Jesus left the garden he walked alone. The world had turned against him. He was betrayed.

Betrayal ... when your world turns against you.

When betrayal comes, what do you do? Get out? Get angry? Get even? You have to deal with it some way. Let’s see how Jesus dealt with it.

Begin by noticing how Jesus saw Judas. “Jesus answered, ‘Friend, do what you came to do.’”⁴

Of all the names I would have chosen for Judas it would not have been “friend.” What Judas did to Jesus was grossly unfair. He had known what Judas would do, but he treated the betrayer as if he were faithful.

Jesus knew Judas had been seduced by a powerful foe. He was aware of the wiles of Satan’s whispers (he had just heard them himself). He knew how hard it was for Judas to do what was right.

He didn’t justify what Judas did. He didn’t minimize the deed. Nor did he release Judas from his choice. But he did look eye to eye with his betrayer and try to understand.

As long as you hate your enemy, a jail door is closed and a prisoner is taken. But when you try to understand and release your foe from your hatred, then the prisoner is released and that prisoner is you.

Perhaps you don’t like that idea. Perhaps the thought of forgiveness is unrealistic. Perhaps the idea of trying to understand the Judases in our world is simply too gracious.

My response to you then is a question. What do you suggest? Will harboring the anger solve the problem? Will getting even remove the hurt? Does hatred do any good? Again, I’m not minimizing your hurt or justifying their actions. But I am saying that justice won’t come this side of eternity. And demanding that your enemy get his or her share of pain will, in the process, be most painful to you.¹

¹ Matthew 26:46.

² Matthew 26:56.

³ Matthew 26:59.

⁴ Matthew 26:50.

¹ Lucado, M. (1992). *And the angels were silent* (157). Portland, Or.: Multnomah.