

Judas....

Matthew 26:20-22, 25 - When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me." They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely not I, Lord?" Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" Jesus answered, "Yes, it is you."

Matthew 26:14-16 - Then one of the Twelve--the one called Judas Iscariot--went to the chief priests and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

Who was this man who would betray Jesus? What weaknesses led him to that decision? Judas was the disciples' treasurer. He oversaw the group's money. He must have had strong influence among the disciples. He had joined up with Jesus for selfish reasons. He believed Jesus was going to establish a powerful kingdom on this earth and once he did, it was highly likely that he (Judas) would have an important position. Early in Jesus' ministry Jesus seemed to be fulfilling Judas' expectations of one who would set up an earthly kingdom. Great crowds followed him everywhere he went. He healed the sick and preached powerful, moving sermons. And the religious leaders, although they were in opposition to him, seemed powerless to stop him. I think those early years pleased Judas very much.

But then things changed. Jesus spent most of his time with the least influential members of society and made it clear that his kingdom was not earthly but heavenly. He began to talk about his approaching death. And Judas must have become increasingly bitter over the fact that Christ was not going to help him achieve popularity, financial fortune, fame and security. Instead, Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me."

And I wonder, how often do we follow Jesus selfishly, wondering what we can get from him instead of seeking to serve with him? Are there not times when we, like Judas, feel disappointed that Jesus doesn't make us rich, healed, famous and happy!

Join me this week as we seek to understand our feelings of disappointment, frustration, and selfishness; as we seek to discover what kind of "kingdom" we are looking for in Jesus.

Prayer: Gracious and loving God, it is so easy for us to say that we cannot understand Judas' betrayal of Jesus and yet we can recall seemingly unanswered prayer and the emotions and disappointment that we felt. Grant us insight, wisdom, guidance and direction as we seek to be your servants and to serve you. For your grace, your love, and your constant forgiveness, we give you thanks this day. Amen