

Wednesday Holy Week  
MT 26:14-25

Parts of this morning's gospel is what scripture scholars call "M material:" material found only in Matthew; it's not found in Mark and it's not found in Luke.

1. While Mark and Luke read that Judas approached the chief priests to betray Jesus, only Matthew added that Judas was looking for money: "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?"
2. At the Last Supper, only Matthew added Judas specifically asking Jesus, if it was he (Judas) who was his betrayer, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" And Jesus answered, "You have said so."
3. And finally, only Matthew records the hanging of Judas: "Flinging the money into the temple, Judas departed and went off and hanged himself."

I chose these three verses of scripture as they pertain to the person of Judas, obviously a key figure to the Passion, whose motive and role is often questioned, partly because of God's foreknowledge:

1. as evidenced by his laying out in perfect detail how they will find the donkey and the questions that will be asked, when they enter the town,

2. as evidenced by the instructions Jesus gave His disciples in preparing the Upper Room for the Last Supper.

The question has been asked, "If Jesus had foreknowledge, and Jesus knew Judas was going to betray, was not Judas caught in a "catch 22" with his fate sealed?"

The dilemma of Judas was debated in the sixteenth century by the Dominicans and the Jesuits. The Dominicans held that God's will knows one's future choices, but the choice is free. The Jesuits held that God knows what a person will do in a certain situation, so on this much, the Dominicans and the Jesuits agreed. However, the Jesuits held that what a person chooses may or may not be God's will, even though God knows what the choice will be. I'm going to choke over these words, but I have to agree with the Jesuits. God knew that Judas would choose to betray Jesus, but Judas' betrayal was not the will of God, because God can only will what is good.

Regarding Judas' motive, the opinions vary:

1. Matthew said Judas motive was money.
2. Luke puts the blame on the Devil. “Then Satan entered into Judas Iscariot.”
3. Some theologians hold Judas had at heart the nation of Israel, and their need to get out from underneath the Roman persecution, and Judas felt Jesus was the man to do it. Judas got so caught up in the Palm Sunday event and saw how the people treated him like a king, Judas pushed the envelope, if you will, putting Jesus before the political powers.

It is hard to say what Judas’ motives were because nine times out of ten there’s more to the story than meets the eye.

However, what was the greater sin for Judas was a sin of omission. Beyond Judas betraying Our Blessed Lord, his greater sin was not asking for forgiveness. For three years, Jesus preached parable after parable about forgiveness, and He forgave sins left and right.

It is interesting to make a comparison between Judas and the good thief, who was crucified with our Blessed Lord. The good thief did not travel in the same circles as the apostles, yet he knew to ask for forgiveness. Judas had to know forgiveness was an option, but he did not

take that option. Perhaps Judas did not think all the teaching of our Blessed Lord about forgiveness applied to him. Judas didn't realize that with Jesus and forgiveness, that was the whole story. All he had to do was confess.

It is just as interesting to make a comparison between Judas and Peter. Our Blessed Lord warned both that they would fail, and they both failed. They both betrayed or denied Our Blessed Lord. They both repented. But the difference in the word repent is that Judas repented until himself and while Peter repented unto the Lord. They were the same up to that point. St. Paul, therefore, says there were two kinds of sorrow, the sorrow of the world and the sorrow of true faith. Judas no longer had any hope, having refused to return to the Savior. He took a rope and went out to some rocky ground, we know not where. And he hanged himself. And as the Acts of the Apostles tells us, "His bowels burst asunder." And he went to his own place. And that was it. It is what it is.

Regarding the coronavirus, there are those who are responsible. I need not name them. We know who is

responsible. I wonder how many could forgive those who are responsible.

I remember my older brother Rob graduating from college and he got his first job. He was still living at home, and I remember one night he was on the phone with colleagues from Japan. Japan. And my mother said, "If his grandparents knew their grandson was on the phone with Japan . . ." My grandparent's generation, who gave birth to the greatest generation, hated Japan for bombing Pearl Harbor, when the US was already up to their necks with the world war in Europe. They were hated the same way most hate those responsible for the coronavirus cover up. Will we ever forgive them?

Judas could have been one of the greatest saints of our Church, had he only confessed, had he only asked for forgiveness, had he only confessed.

Had he only made it to the courtyard as did Peter;

Or maybe get to the prison cell window with his hands on the bars and whispered to our Blessed Lord;

Had he only made it to the foot of the Cross as did John, he would have been forgiven right along with Dismas the good thief;

Had he only waited just a few days more until the Resurrection and he would have been forgiven.

And every great artist from Michaelangelo to DiVinci would have masterfully portrayed the scene between Christ the Confessor and St. Judas the Penitent. But Judas despaired. He hung himself because he judged himself unworthy of forgiveness.

Learn a lesson from Judas. When it comes to Jesus and forgiveness, ten times out of ten, that's the whole story.