

# Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

April 1, 2020 – Maundy Thursday

*Surely, not I?* – Mark 14:19

On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus arranged to celebrate Passover with the ones he had called and loved and taught, praying that they would stand the tests to come. We can't help but notice that there's one disciple who's rather quiet, maybe even nervous. He's not joining in much. It's as though his mind is preoccupied with something outside the room.

Suddenly, Jesus looks around the table and declares that, "One of you will betray me." And the light mood turns suddenly somber. The mood changes from one of peace to one charged with doubt and anxiety. "Is it I?" they asked. "Surely it's not me, Lord." It makes us feel better, I think, when we scapegoat Judas. Judas was the one who left that table and ratted out his Master to the authorities. Judas was the one who told them his exact location in exchange for thirty pieces of silver. The gospel doesn't spell out his motives...which leaves a lot of room for us to consider the many reasons why someone – anyone – would stoop to betrayal.

Later that night, Jesus said to them, "You will ALL fall away; you will ALL become deserters because of me." Of course, they protested, echoing Peter's sentiment that, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." But beneath the surface, we know they had their doubts. "We're behind you, Jesus... far behind." "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me," Jesus declared.

I wish Judas could have really heard the rest of what Jesus said at the table that night. "Drink this, all of you." All of you who are sometimes faithful and sometimes fall away, drink this. All of you who are born of the Spirit, but also of the flesh, drink this. "This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

The only defense we will have against the Tempter's wiles will be a piece of bread. It won't look like much, but it is enough. Enough strength to resist the devil and his empty promises. Enough grace to restore the fallen. Enough love to make the wounded whole. Enough faith to return even straying sheep to the narrow path. All you'll receive this day, when you walk down this aisle is a crumb and a sip. A crumb and a sip and the words, "given for you." But it's enough. Holding the promise of life beyond death, and victory beyond defeat, it is enough. Amen.

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