

Spy Wednesday?

Matthew 26:14-16

¹⁴ Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests ¹⁵ and asked, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?” So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶ From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

John 13:21-32

After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, ‘Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.’ The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him; Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, ‘Lord, who is it?’ Jesus answered, ‘It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.’ So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, ‘Do quickly what you are going to do.’ Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him, ‘Buy what we need for the festival’; or, that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

When he had gone out, Jesus said, ‘Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.’

It was only the end of last week that I heard the phrase “Spy Wednesday”. One of the Church members phoned and spoke about it.

Following Jesus entry into Jerusalem the Sanhedrin gathered and plotted to kill Jesus before the feast of Pesach, Passover. It was through contact with Judas Iscariot and his willingness to betray Jesus, the plot developed on what we see as Holy Wednesday; and so the day has sometimes been called "Spy Wednesday".

The nearest many of us get to a spy is watching James Bond.

Anita and I have just started watching “Spooks” on the “BBCi” player from the beginning of series 1. I only got into the series when first broadcast in about series 7 or 8 so there is plenty of catching up to do. It is a series looking at the work of MI5 in a drama that was very much contextual to what was going on in the country at the time of recording,

The latest book I have just finished was “The Poet” by Michael Connelly. It was about a journalist and the FBI “sharing” in an investigation, and featured the phrase “A fox in the hen-house”.

Is that what Judas was ‘A fox in the hen house’? To understand the mind of Judas has been the pursuit of many for countless generations. There have been theories written and arguments made to try and explain how Judas was trying to help the cause.

At this point of the week what we can learn from this sad part of the story is how wrong it is to ever limit the extent of God’s forgiveness. After the betrayal Judas took his own life; he forgot the central core of the message of Jesus, the message of forgiveness. Was he not listening when Jesus taught how the love of God was so mighty that it would always meet the penitent with pardon?

Knowing as you do what you have learnt, experienced and heard of the forgiveness of God how do you think Jesus would have reacted if Judas had flung himself at the foot of the cross and cried out “Lord Jesus forgive me!” Would not the one who said to the penitent criminal “This day you will be with me in paradise” have shown mercy to Judas?

In this Holy Week, nearing the end of a Lenten journey of reflection, where you may have pondered upon your sins and laid them before God, be all the more aware of the grace of God; put no limit on God’s grace for you and for others.

Gracious God, have mercy upon those who reach out to you in penitence. Assure us of your grace, the cleansing of our sins, not by any merit of our own, but through our faith in Jesus. Amen