

A thought for Wednesday in Holy Week

by Alison Ball

Reading: *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.



Reflection



- Take a look at the picture.
- What do you see?
- What do you think is going on?
- Jot down your thoughts.



The picture is called *The 30 Pieces of Silver* and was painted by Janos Pentelei Molnar in 1909.

Now that you know the title, does that alter how you see it?

Judas: I can't help wondering if, like Jesus, he also felt troubled in spirit. Jesus knows that he, Judas, is going to betray him; and Judas is aware that Jesus knows what lies on his heart. I suspect that Judas must have felt conflicted—betraying his best friend and yet feeling that things weren't working out as he had hoped. None of us know what tipped his mind into selling Jesus into the ready hands of the Chief Priests and the Pharisees. Judas agreed, for the sum of 30 silver pieces, to deliver Jesus over to them, the Jewish authorities.



I have wondered how they arrived at the sum of 30 silver pieces. Why not 10 silver pieces, or 50? Just how did they decide what Jesus was worth?

Perhaps the Jewish leaders were remembering their scriptures: If the ox gores a male or female slave, the owner shall pay to the slave owner thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned [*Exodus 21:32*]. Jesus not worth much to them, no better than a slave, they just wanted to shut him up—he was causing them too much trouble, pressing too hard as he challenged them, making them feel uncomfortable, and he was verging on blasphemy. It's a reasonable amount of money and if Judas is happy....

So Judas went out and it was night.



Eventually he found a time and a place to betray Jesus and Jesus was sent to trial and execution. A dark time for all.

And here we are—also in troubled times—facing questions about who is valuable and how much people are worth.

There has been much in the press about keyworkers and there are many people who feature on this list, for example those involved in health and social care: doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers; care workers; other front-line health and social care staff including volunteers; support and specialist staff; producers and distributors of medicine and equipment. But it also includes teachers, cleaners, bin men and women, members of the emergency services. The Queen rightly praised them in her recent broadcast. All of these people work hard, are often underpaid, and are not always highly regarded.

Those that we regard as crucial to the country being able to function in these strange times in the presence of coronavirus are not those frequently on our screens and in our news. They are not the footballers, pop stars, film stars... who are so highly paid and talked about. Suddenly we realise that our keyworkers are much more valuable than we ever knew! They are worth so much. Sad that it has taken a global crisis for this to be understood.

It is as if society has been turned on its head—but then, that is what Jesus came to do. It made



people uncomfortable then and perhaps it is making people uncomfortable now. For Jesus, everyone was valuable and his concerns were most often with the poor, the needy, those in distress and not the dignitaries of the time. St Paul talked about this in his letter to the Corinthians in relation to the body of Christ:

1 Corinthians 12:22-26

On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it

I wonder, when the pandemic is over, whether we will have discussions about how much people are worth or whether we will just go back to the same old ways.



This realisation of people's worth, whilst challenging some people, is nothing in comparison with another, much more difficult evaluation of people's worth. An ethical dilemma that I would hate to have to be a part of. With so many people falling seriously ill, decisions are having to be made about who should receive some forms of health care when there are not enough resources to go around:

Who is to have a ventilator when all the ventilators are in use in a hospital?

When supplies of oxygen are running out, who should be allowed to receive it and who will be refused?

Should resources be allocated to someone young with their life still in front of them; to an elderly but otherwise fit person; or to a middle-aged person but with considerable health needs; or should they be given to whoever is next-in-line?

- **I wonder what your thoughts are.**
- **I wonder how you would reach your decision.**
- **I wonder if you would have a different viewpoint if the person in need was someone in your family.**

Undoubtedly wisdom is needed when these hard questions are being faced. A deep wisdom beyond our individual capacity.



If you would like, perhaps you could use this prayer:

A Prayer for Wisdom

Father God, your word says that if anyone lacks wisdom, they should ask, and you will give to them generously.

Today, some people are having to make huge decisions about other people's lives. It must be hard for them to know how to go about it.

We ask you for wisdom. Lead them in the way that they should go that they may be able to bring glory to your holy name. In Jesus' name. Amen

What is a Person Worth?

In God's eyes, we are all of inestimable worth. All loved, all precious and valuable in his sight. He knows all our thoughts, our deepest worries. He is with us wherever we are, whatever we are facing. Perhaps you would like to read this psalm as you finish this evening's reflection:



Psalm 139

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

**You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.**

**You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.**

**Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.**

**You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.**

**Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.**

**Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?**

**If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.**

**If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.**

**If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night,"
even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.**

**For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.**



I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.

My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.

In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.

How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!

I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
I come to the end—I am still with you.

O that you would kill the wicked, O God,
and that the bloodthirsty would depart from me—
those who speak of you maliciously,
and lift themselves up against you for evil!

Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord?
And do I not loathe those who rise up against
you?

I hate them with perfect hatred;
I count them my enemies.

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts.

See if there is any wicked way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

