

BaptistWay Bible Series for February 17: Not Me

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Not Me

- Mark 14:10-31

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There is high drama throughout Mark's fourteenth chapter. At the Last Supper, Jesus again speaks candidly about what will happen, telling the disciples that he would be betrayed by one of his closest friends. At the beginning of this passage, the reader is told Judas already made arrangements for Jesus to be arrested. Judas becomes the chief informant in the plot to destroy Jesus.

Imagine the serious mood of this moment during the meal. By the time Jesus breaks the bad news to his friends around the table that one of them would betray him, the wine glasses are empty. The candles are barely burning. The only leftovers are the bread crumbs that have collected on the table; the way a table is supposed to look after a meal shared among friends. However, Judas seems not himself. He has hardly made eye contact with anyone the whole night. His head is low. His demeanor is quiet. The tension could have been cut with a butter knife.



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Mark's Gospel delays the betrayal longer than John's Gospel. In John, Jesus breaks off another piece of bread, dips it in the little bit of wine left and tells Judas to leave. Judas slides his clean feet into his sandals and walks out the door into the dark night; down the dirty trail of betrayal.

Here in Mark, Judas stays until dinner is over and then apparently makes a quiet exit. The next time we see Judas is when he arrives at Gethsemane with a crowd carrying clubs and swords.

After all they had been through together, Jesus must have felt Judas bury a metaphorical knife in his back before he ever felt the crown of thorns buried in his head. Jesus had trusted Judas as a friend and disciple. John's Gospel says Jesus washed the feet of his disciples after sharing the Passover meal. Jesus had washed Judas' feet, too. Jesus loved Judas anyway, even though Judas was going to walk out on him.

Country superstar Martina McBride sings a song titled, Anyway. The song in its own way depicts the spirit of freedom that comes with Jesus' way of loving. Her lyrics say it like this:

God is great, but sometimes life ain't good

And when I pray it doesn't always turn out like I think it should

But I do it anyway, I do it anyway.

You can love someone with all your heart, for all the right reasons, and in a moment they can choose to walk away. Love 'em anyway.

Jesus' love doesn't stop just because someone doesn't act or feel the same way he does. He loves because he can't help himself; it's his nature to love. If Jesus only loved the ones who loved him back, he would have hardly been God become flesh. Love is as love does.

Jesus practiced the love he professed even toward somebody who would not return his love. Jesus wills to love Judas and thus practices the new commandment he passes down to his disciples: "that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another."

In Christian worship, beyond preaching or praying or singing, we see this kind of love most clearly expressed in the celebration of Communion. It is through this sacred meal that we remember Jesus offered thanks over the bread and wine before passing it among his disciples, of whom one had betrayed him, one would deny him, and all would desert him. Still he offered thanks, saying grace by offering up both words and his very life. Jesus managed to grace the dreadful night of his betrayal with gratitude.

So when you and I gather around Christ's table, we remember his last supper and participate as disciples who have betrayed, denied, and deserted the one who offered up his life for us. But we also look forward to a future meal in the coming kingdom of God; in a time beyond time at which all those God has loved beyond our failures will gather together to celebrate the sacred feast of God's joy.

In speaking of Jesus' command to "Do this in remembrance of me," Dom Gregory Dix in *The Shape of the Liturgy* asks:

Was ever another command so obeyed? For century after century . . . men have found no better thing than this to do for kings at their crowning and for criminals going to the scaffold; for armies in triumph or for a bride and bridegroom in a little country church; for the proclamation of a dogma or for a good crop of wheat; for the wisdom of the Parliament of a mighty

nation or for a sick old woman afraid to die; for a schoolboy sitting an examination or for Columbus setting out to discover America).

God invites people of all cultures and languages and experiences to enjoy the feast of God that we can never repay but only receive as a gift. This is what we express in the celebration of Communion or the Lord's Supper. We celebrate that we are no longer strangers. We are friends. In that sacred moment, there is juice and bread and a friendly host, who is Christ himself.

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