

The Betrayal Kiss

Scripture Reading — Psalm 41; Luke 22:47-53

Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me. — Psalm 41:9

Jesus and his disciples left the security of the upper room and walked outside the city to the Mount of Olives. And there, away from the crowds, he was betrayed. A kiss from Judas, one of his own chosen disciples, one who had learned from Jesus for the past few years, betrayed him to the officials who were seeking to destroy him. Jesus confronted Judas with his treason: *Are you going to use the kiss of friendship to hand me over to the powers of darkness?*

A kiss is not a sign of friendship when the one who delivers it is your enemy. Psalm 41 reminds us that false friendship is an ancient problem, especially among brothers: Cain killed Abel, Jacob deceived Esau, and Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery.

The disciples' reaction is understandable: put the opposition to the sword. But Jesus heals the cut-off ear, salving the wound made by a zealous disciple. In receiving Judas's treasonous kiss, Jesus took on himself all the false friendships that embittered his people. The disloyalty of one who shared his table took him to the cross.

In dark Gethsemane, we see a king we don't expect to see. Instead of a pompous ruler on a throne, we see our suffering Lord, who faces the humiliation of a bitter betrayal.

And we must remember that he suffered all this for you and me so that we might live.

Prayer

Lord, thank you for enduring all this suffering and death for me. I am eternally grateful. Please help me be faithful, Lord. I pray in your name. Amen.

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