

## The Disciples

There were 12 disciples working with Jesus. 13 if you count the replacement for Judas. Mathias was the 12<sup>th</sup> after the death of Judas. \*Andrew, a Brother, Peter, Man of Action, James, Unfulfilled Leader, Philip, The Deliberate, James, the Less, Simon, the Zealot, Nathanael, the Forthright, Matthew the Successful Man, Thomas, Twenty-first-Century Man, Thaddaeus, the Questioner, Judas, the Value of a Dollar, John, Love and Thunder, Matthias, Holy Substitute.\* Lately I have been thinking about Judas as I often do during lent.

One of the things I wonder about when I think of Judas is, if Judas was preordained to betray Jesus, how is it his fault? He was born to do what he did, how could he do otherwise? I have come to put that aside by realizing we all have choices in our lives, and we are responsible for those choices. Perhaps God and Jesus saw the weakness in Judas and knew he was perfect for the job. An elderly patient was crying, and I was attempting to comfort her but was having difficulty finding the words. Her son had been taking cocaine and had been driving fast down a two-lane road. He hit a car with a woman in it and she, a wife and mother, had been killed. The elderly patient's son was put in prison for many years. Never once did the elderly woman show sorrow at what another family was going through. She only talked about the unfairness of her only son going to prison when he only had a small amount of cocaine in his system. She was distraught that she might never see him again. I could see and feel her pain, but my heart went out also to the family of the woman killed. Was it ordained that this would be the fate for all these people who were in sorrow or did it come down to choices. A choice to use drugs and drive. Was it the fault of the drugs or the person who bought the drugs. What about the seller, did they not bear some responsibility. Ultimately it was the fault of the son who chose to buy drugs, drive while taking the drugs and break the speed limit and cause an accident that took an innocent life and broke the hearts of a family. Judas had been skimming the purse he was trusted to keep. He was not happy with the way things were going. Did he think as some suggest, that Christ would call down a miracle and overcome Roman rule? Or did he just in his selfish desire for money sell his leader for 30 pieces of silver? Judas was in sorrow over what he had done. Did Judas receive forgiveness from Jesus as he prepared to hang himself? Jesus would have forgiven even Judas and he would forgive the young man, who chose to do drugs, drive and kill another human being, if he repented and sought the Lord.

Matthew 27:3-5 When Judas who had betrayed him saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "For I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us," they replied, "That's your responsibility." So, Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

Lord be with us this day and in this time of Lent. May we turn towards the cross and remember the sacrifice given for our sins. Be with those who are ill and those who grieve. Give them comfort and healing. Be with those who suffer from disasters and those who suffer from lawlessness in Haiti. Be with those who are homeless and those who are hungry, lead us to help them, to feed them and offer them respite and comfort. Help us to give from our abundance to those who have nothing. Be with our Pastor, bless his ministry, and be with his family. Be with our church, may it be your church, guide us and give us vision and clarity in our mission. Be with our staff and leaders, bless their work, may we be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ here, in this place and may we seek your guidance in our mission. Be with those doing mission work in Florida, bless their work and give them help in their effort and grant them rest and respite in their days off. In Jesus name, Amen

Grace Epperson

\*References to Disciples taken from the book "The Thirteen Disciples" by J. Ellsworth Kalas