

**Is It I, Lord? Mark 14:12-26. Pastor Fritz Wiese (w credit to Pastor Erskine White. Edited.) Maundy Thursday**

"Is it I, Lord; is it I?" That's the haunting question the disciples asked on that Maundy Thursday night so long ago which still pierces our hearts this evening. Jesus said to them, "One of you will betray Me," and immediately the room was filled with the sound of excited voices talking all at once: "Is it I, Lord; is it I?"

Theologian Phillips Brooks remarked that the disciples showed real virtue in asking that question. Perhaps, we'd expect them to blame each other as their first move, right? That's what we do. Who left the kitchen so messy? Who's responsible for the VISA bill being so high this month? Was it you? 3x. But no. Peter didn't ask, "Is it Phillip?" Andrew didn't ask, "Is it Matthew?" No one asked, "Is it Judas?" When Jesus said that one of his disciples would be a traitor, they first looked at themselves and not at their neighbor: "Is it I, Lord; is it I?"

Indeed, maybe they all asked about themselves because they all suspected that deep down, any one of them might stumble that way. Any one of them could have been the eventual Judas.

It might have been James or John, the sons of Zebedee. They had asked to be the greatest disciples and Jesus had given them a lesson in humility. "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus had said, and "Whoever would be greatest among you must be your servant" (cf. Matthew 20:20-28). So maybe James and John said, "Is it I, Lord?" because Maybe they felt the potential in their hearts. After all, if they had missed the point about greatness and betrayed Jesus' teachings so badly back then, maybe they would misunderstand and betray Jesus again, perhaps without knowing it.

How about Simon, the Zealot? Couldn't he also have been the one? Simon was a committed revolutionary and a fierce patriot who might have had a political motive for betraying Jesus. Perhaps he would force the Messiah's hand, force Jesus to free Himself from captivity and lead Israel to victory against the hated Romans.

And what about Peter? Jesus would soon say that Peter would deny knowing Him. When the pressure was on and the moment of truth had come, couldn't Peter have betrayed his Lord in order to save his own skin?

The disciples asked, "Is it I, Lord?" because it could have been any one of them. Any one of the twelve could have been "the Judas."

And any one of **us**, too, right? If the disciples were able to say, "Is it I, Lord?" - disciples who had given so much to follow Jesus - if the disciples weren't too proud to ask that question about themselves, shouldn't we be able to ask it tonight? "Is it I, Lord; is it I?"

In just three weeks after Easter, we will be celebrating as several of our 8<sup>th</sup> graders will confirm their faith—and affirm afresh their baptisms. That will be a big day, since it's the first day of our 3 Sunday COS services in 2 different sanctuaries merging into 2 services both in the Fellowship Hall. But also because these kids CONFIRM they want to keep following Jesus. But we've been telling these kids that every single day, we confirm or deny Jesus. Every single day, we can betray Jesus or stand up for him and who we say he is in our lives.

*Invite when I point to you, to say the line of the disciples: **Is it I, Lord; is it I?** Let's practice*

For instance, there is a danger of being lukewarm Christians, as Revelation 3.15 indicates. Not ice cold, but not hot either. We can decide Jesus was a bit too extreme in certain respects, that ideas like loving one's enemies and living for God instead of money are not terribly useful in the "real world." We can decide that Jesus' words must be kept in perspective; after all, one does have to be practical in a world which doesn't tolerate dreamers very well. We can be committed to not taking this religion business too seriously, to not letting it disrupt our everyday values and convictions. Say let's get comfortable to saying YES to Jesus on some issues, but we should feel OK saying NO when not convenient. "One of you will betray Me." Jesus warns. **Is it I, Lord; is it I?**

Secondly, I'm in danger of fooling myself that I can guide my life without Jesus' help. How many face loss and grief and the tragedies of life without the faith which Jesus Christ can give. They insist on trying to face their trials alone. We reject the promises that Jesus' cup of forgiveness is truly for all people including me. We turn away from Christ at the very moment we should be seeking him. "One of you will betray Me." **Is it I, Lord; is it I?**

Sometimes, am I one of the Jesus followers who betrays Jesus in my relationships? Do I not forgive those who have wronged me, nor bless

those who hurt me? Do I feed old grudges and feast on old resentments. Do I argue and even gossip at points, instead of following Jesus' modeling of washing feet and pouring upon others the love of God in Jesus Christ. "One of you will betray Me." **Is it I, Lord; is it I?**

Sometimes, do people of faith betray Jesus by ignoring or justifying injustice? Some are rich and rarely take steps to help those who starve and struggle. Can we pray for God's will to be done, but still hate our enemies and despise the things and the people that make for peace. Are there periods where our consciences are hardly stirred by the plight of our world-wide neighbors of which we hear on the evening news? "One of you will betray me." **Is it I, Lord; is it I?**

In less than a month, when life at COS gets a little crazy as we say goodbye to Pastor Miriam and all start sharing one worship space for a few hectic months, who among us will allow our frustration to bubble up into unkind words, unleashing anxiety into the system? **Is it I, Lord; is it I?** And who will model a gracious sense of flexibility, encouraging all of us, trusting God will lead us well into our future? **Is it I, Lord; is it I?**

At COS and in our homes, who points and grumbles aloud? **Is it I, Lord; is it I?** Or who steps up to help solve a problem and achieve an opportunity? **Is it I, Lord; is it I?**

No, tonight, despite remembering what Jesus does at supper and what awaits him later in the evening, we don't need to worry about Jesus tonight. He is strong and true. Even tonight, Jesus will sing a hymn as he leaves the Upper Room and heads to the Garden to pray, and tomorrow, he will forgive those who put Him to death.

No, tonight, instead, let us take a moment, having been fed in the meal and with clean Jesus-washed feet, to consider our response to Jesus' challenge. Can we lean into the question those very first disciples asked themselves long ago. For life, like tonight, is full of shadows. And a little soul searching is healthy. "One of you will betray me." **Is it I, Lord; is it I?**

Help us with our answer, dearest Jesus. Forgive us when we fail you. Strengthen us to trust and follow and grow. In Jesus' name, Amen