Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





by Pat Marrin

View Author Profile
patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

April 12, 2022
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint



“What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?” (Matt 26:14).

Wednesday of Holy Week

Is 50:4-9a; *Mt 26:14-25*

Matthew’s Gospel presents the betrayal of Jesus by Judas as a straight-up transaction. He bargains with the chief priests, who offer him 30 pieces of silver.

Matthew is keen to find fulfillment texts, and some scholars link this passage to Exodus 21, which put the value of a slave accidently killed at 30 silver pieces, and chapter 11 of Zechariah, who is paid that amount for herding some sheep to slaughter. The intent was to show how little the high priests thought Jesus was worth.

This adds heightened pathos to the drama of Jesus’ betrayal and death. It also confronts us with the truth that most sins are committed for some benefit. We do unethical and harmful things when we see some good in it for us—a chance to get ahead, prestige, acceptance, money.

Jesus posed the ultimate question in Mark 8:36 when he said, “What does it profit someone to gain the whole world and lose their soul?” What price do we put on our conscience, our reputation and sense of integrity? When these seeming intangibles are compromised, how can we get them back?

Crisis forces us all to examine this transaction. The Passion and death of Jesus confronted his first disciples with the question of where they stood in his regard. There was no middle ground; they were either with him or not. They were either all in or on the sidelines, or like Peter, saying he didn’t even know the man when challenged in the courtyard, or Judas, who sold him out for a handful of silver.

But because Jesus died not just for his friends but for his enemies, conversion is possible. Because Jesus died for all of us when we were still sinners, God’s grace keeps the door open. St Paul, an enemy of the Gospel and the church, met Jesu on his way to persecute his followers, and he would later write that he counted everything as loss in order to have Christ, the only treasure worth living and dying for.

Holy Week and the sacred triduum, which begins with Holy Thursday, invite us to start over, to ask for the grace to know the depth of love in Jesus that holds us up and points the way to greater life. What could possibly profit us more than to embrace this offer and go forward into the mystery that is Easter?

Advertisement