

Coop's Scoops: Wednesday April 8, 2020

Wednesday of Holy Week Scripture and homily

Isaiah 49: 1-7, Psalm 41; 1 Corinthians 1: 18-31, Matthew 26: 14-16; 47-56

A tale of Two Friends

Yesterday we focused on Mary, pouring her expensive perfume onto the feet of Jesus. Her security, likely her dowry, precious to her, but poured out in love. For Mary, all she wanted to do was give. It may have been a thank offering for the life of her brother Lazarus, or a love offering for Jesus on behalf of all those He had healed and touched and changed, including herself. There was no selfish to be found. She just had it, and wanted to give it to Jesus and went ahead and did it. She didn't care what anyone else thought about it. Mary is the first friend of Jesus we remember today. And then...

Judas decided to tell her what he thought anyway. He objected. And Jesus told him to "Leave her alone". Don't be a bully, Judas.

Now Judas was also a friend of Jesus. A trusted friend. The one who was the treasurer. He was one of the disciples Jesus out to do a mission...one whom Jesus rejoiced over when he reported in. He was there to hand out the loaves and fishes; there in the boat when the sea was stilled by Jesus command.

He had never been rebuked by Jesus like James and John were; never heard words like Peter heard..."Get thee behind Me, Satan". The twelve were Jesus' best friends and companions. And yet...unlike Mary who only thought about what she could GIVE to Jesus, Judas came to say "How Much will you give me?" "It was two days before the Passover (therefore

Wednesday, like today) and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The Chief Priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; for they said, “not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people”. (Mark 14: 1,2).

Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot,

went to the chief priests and said

“What will you give me if I betray Him to you?”

They paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he began to look for an opportunity to betray Him..(Matt 26: 14-16) 30 pieces of silver...that was what Jesus was worth to Judas.

Some people believe that Judas merely wanted to nudge Jesus along, make the Kingdom happen NOW, drive out the Romans. In Judas’ way of thinking, the betrayal could be just a catalyst to His greater glory. There are problems with that way of thinking. Judas could have done that, turned Jesus over to the authorities, without asking for personal profit. Greed was underneath what Judas did. He was reported to have stolen from the purse. And really, what did he need? Maybe he wanted the silver as a sort of hedgefund, or retirement or escape money. Who knows.

Just one problem....Judas could have done that, gone and kissed Jesus and turned Him over to the authorities without asking for personal profit. Greed underlay everything he did. And what did he really need? Women and others were already providing for him. “Enough” evidently was not “enough”. Perhaps he wanted the silver as a hedge fund, just in case retirement or escape money. I don’t know. And Judas also is dishonest to boot. He didn’t have to ask “is it I Lord” at the table. He didn’t have to pretend if his motives were pure. He could have just remained silent even. But he didn’t want the others to know what he had done. And that is the legal definition of consciousness of guilt. Judas was indeed a false friend. So although he was a good man in many ways, we cannot conclude that he was merely misguided. He was greedy, scheming, and duplicitous.

Even so, as we will read tomorrow, Jesus washed Judas’s feet. And Judas could have “turned again”, just like Peter did. He could have repented. He could have, in the end, been in the Upper Room when

Jesus returned to comfort His disciples after His resurrection. Judas could have been there with Peter, the Denier and Thomas the disbeliever. Forgiven and with the opportunity to move forward in mission as an Apostle.

Judas never understood grace. When he saw Mary's act of grace toward Jesus, he couldn't stand it. He seemed to think that he had to earn everything or steal it; that nothing good could come of trusting in God's grace toward him; that he alone of all people was unforgiveable. And so, when things didn't work out the way he hoped, he was in utter despair, threw the silver back to the scribes, and took his own life. It did not have to be.

One friend of Jesus shows us that love comes in many forms (including perfume), not all of which everybody likes, and surely costly love is the most difficult to give.

The other friend of Jesus shows us that treachery can come in many different disguises, but treachery at the hand of a friend is indeed the most difficult to bear. Betrayal with a kiss is beyond comprehension.

And Jesus tells us that not even such treachery is unforgiveable. "He that comes to Me, I will in wise cast out". Not Peter, Not Thomas, not you, not me....never cast out, ever, and always welcome to come home and abide in Him, as He abides in us.

On this Wednesday in Holy Week, let us search our hearts, and bring, without any hesitation, any sin whatsoever straight to Jesus, then reset our hearts to be a friend like Mary, to Him, and to each other. Amen.

No big news today....thanks for staying safe, and keeping that social distance for the good of all, and living with hope. I find myself searching for smiles when I do have to go out, or take a walk....and, you know what, there are a lot of them out there. So we are to rejoice with those who rejoice (smile back) and weep with those who weep (showing great compassion to those who are ill and who mourn).

One joke for the day sent in by David Stammer: (Thanks David!)

Squirrels Find Religion

As a band of squirrels had become quite a problem, the Presbyterian church called a meeting to decide what to do about their squirrel infestation. After much prayer and consideration, they concluded that the squirrels were predestined to be there, and they shouldn't interfere with God's divine will.

At the Baptist church the squirrels had taken an interest in the baptistery. The deacons met and decided to put a water-slide on the baptistery and let the squirrels drown themselves. The squirrels liked the slide and unfortunately, knew instinctively how to swim, so twice as many squirrels showed up the following week.

The Lutheran church decided that they were not in a position to harm any of God's creatures. So, they humanely trapped their squirrels and set them free near the Baptist church. Two weeks later the squirrels were back when the Baptists took down the water-slide.

The Anglicans tried a unique path by setting out pans of whiskey

around their church in an effort to kill the squirrels with alcohol.

They sadly learned how much damage a band of drunk squirrels can do.

But the Catholic church came up with a very creative strategy! They baptized all the squirrels and made them members of the church. Now they only see them at Christmas and Easter.

And not much was heard from the Jewish synagogue. They took the first squirrel and circumcised him. They haven't seen a squirrel since.