

Maundy Thursday – April 6, 2023
Text: Matt 26:25
Theme: Is it I?

The most frustrating thing human beings do is act like they didn't know what they did was wrong, or they act as though they have no idea why they did it. It starts as little children when the parent or teacher asks "Why did you do that?" and the kid says the three most irritating words known to and adult "I don't know." The movie, "Fast Times at Ridgemont High," was not a work of art that will endure the millennia but it did have a brilliant moment in it when Mr. Hand asks Jeff Spicoli why he is always late for class and Spicoli says, "I don't know." Mr. Hand writes his words on the board and holds forth about the genius of these words, "I don't know." Does Spicoli know why he is late? Of course, he knows! He is late because he does not value history class, or he does not value Mr. Hand, or he values neither, but he most definitely knows why he is late. He just does not have the guts to say what he knows.

Judas found himself sitting at the Passover with his rabbi, the man who he had betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, interestingly, the price of a slave. And Jesus looked right at him and told him what he was about to do. Instead of standing up and explaining what he was going to do and why he was doing it, he looked at Jesus and whined, "Is it I, Rabbi?" If I had been Jesus, I would have clouted

him one right there, but Jesus could resist temptation to sin far better than I. Jesus could calmly look at him and say, "You have said so." Judas knew that he had indicted himself. And then he left and went right ahead and fulfilled his sin.

It is easy to judge Judas for what he did. But, in all honesty, you and I are no better than Judas because we too have betrayed Jesus. We have all chosen to sin. Sometimes we have committed vile and atrocious sins that rival Judas' betrayal and still we have managed to look angelic as we sit in pews and sing praises to the very one whom we have nailed to a cross. That is why the unchurched so often call us hypocrites. They are not right, but I understand their point. They do not understand the difference between hypocrites and sinners. We are sinners seeking forgiveness for what we have done. A hypocrite is someone who pretends to be a believer for some reason known only to him, but he does not really believe. Since a hypocrite doesn't believe in Jesus, he is not seeking forgiveness from one in whom he doesn't believe. If a hypocrite is among us, we probably will never know because true hypocrites are really good at hiding what they do and what they believe. We are not hypocrites, but we are most definitely sinners.

We know what we have done to Jesus, and even though we fail and fail and fail some more, we desperately want forgiveness for what we have done. Like Judas, we have betrayed Christ by our decisions to sin instead of using the power of our baptisms to make holy and righteous choices. Like Judas, we have rarely been forthright and above board about what we have done and the consequences thereof, but unlike Judas, we seek forgiveness for our sin. We have come here tonight to seek forgiveness. We have come to this place, dirty, rotten sinners, who have been given the holy robes of Christ in baptism. Dirty rotten sinners who having been given the King's robes, are now invited to the banquet. Dirty rotten sinners, who know we deserve nothing, kneeling at the Lord God's altar to receive the very body and blood of Jesus, the one we have betrayed. What should Jesus do about us? Jesus does not just speak words of forgiveness to us. Rather, he physically enters into us with His own body and blood, and he heals our souls from the inside out.

"Is it I, Rabbi," Judas asked. But we know who it is. It is us. Yes Lord, it is I. It is I who have come again to your holy altar to be forgiven by your holy body and blood. It is I for whom you died and suffered Hell. It is I Lord. It is I who try my best to believe and still fall into unbelief. It is I who continues to be shaken by doubt

and unbelief. It is I who cling to your promise of forgiveness no matter what. Help me in my unbelief Lord and raise me up to serve you again. It is I.