

GOOD FRIDAY 2025: BETRAYAL AND DENIAL All Souls' dtw

*Peter will deny me – in just a few hours
Three times will deny me – and that's not all I see
One of you here dining, one of my twelve chosen
Will leave to betray me.*

Cut out the dramatics! You know very well who!

Why don't you go do it?

You want me to do it!

Hurry they're waiting

If you knew why I do it...

I don't care why you do it!

*To think I admired you
Well now I despise you*

You liar, you Judas!

*You wanted me to do it!
What if I just stayed here and ruined your ambition?
Christ you deserve it!*

*Hurry you fool, hurry and go.
Save me your speeches, I don't want to know, GO! GO!*

...some controversial, non-biblical words of heated dialogue sung from the lips of Judas and Jesus in the Rock Opera *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

Some years ago there was quite a bit of hype about a long-lost manuscript called the *Judas Gospel* which portrayed Judas as co-operating with Jesus in his betrayal. Was this new angle or twist as bizarre or as sacrilegious as some people felt? Judas was a weak link in the apostolic chain and Jesus knew it, but how much weaker really than big, bold but gutless, Peter? Judas Iscariot has always been known as the apostle who betrayed Jesus, by Christians and non-Christians alike. We refer to people who dob others in as a 'Judas'. You never hear of people being baptised by that name; just like 'Jezebel'. Judas was the one whom Jesus singles out at the Last Supper; the one who dips his bread in the dish and seals his own fate, then steals out into the night to collect 30 pieces of silver. He then returns to Gethsemane with some soldiers and a kiss - the kiss of death. Unlike Peter, who vehemently denied Jesus, just when Jesus needed him most, Judas couldn't live with himself and committed suicide, another maligned and often misunderstood action that would make Judas the ultimate dark figure of all time, second only to Satan..(There was no *Beyond Blue* or *Life-Line* in his day; no *Black Dog* riders to pick him up) Peter, however, went on to be forgiven,

re-affirmed and re-instated as the great Apostle he would ultimately become. He has Popes, no less, as his successors and millions are baptised with the name of Peter. Pontius Pilate sentenced Jesus – had him put to death after washing his hands ‘in innocence’ of the whole affair. The Coptic Church has Pilate in the calendar of saints. There is a lovely legend about Pilate’s wife - the one who had a bad dream about Jesus, “that just man” and warned her husband to “have nothing to do with” him - that she became a Christian and was responsible for Pilate’s conversion. But Judas’ end was not negotiable – no time for repentance like Peter – no time for conversion like Pilate. That’s the only real difference when you come to think about it. Yes, there had to be a Judas, but as the Rock Opera also suggests, he is “damned for all time”. Or is he?

Betrayal. Denial. Washing one’s hands. On an ascending ‘Immorality Scale’ of 1-10 how would you rate them? Not much in it? Interesting.... Betrayal. Denial. The washing of hands of the whole affair. These occur daily in the workplace, in the bedroom, in politics (in the very halls of Parliament), in religion; even in the sacred Australian cows we call football, cricket and horseracing. Our Church, along with other once respected organisations, has rightly had to suffer the corporate shame of abuse and cover-up which have taken place. Our world is experiencing huge economic and environmental uncertainty, first escalated by *Covid 19* and now a Trump 2.0 trade war, three years of war in Ukraine, nearly two in the Middle East and so many other places. Fear and terror are on every side. We continue to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (a place traditionally on our minds every Good Friday) and justice for Palestinians, knowing full well that the status quo is the name of the game as old conservative leaders get recycled. Heads of State will continue to jump on their jets crying patronising peace when often the real investment is no peace. There is more money in war. Tradeoffs abound, sweetheart deals get stitched up every day that make Judas Iscariot look like a pussy cat.

But Judas stands there in history and for all eternity for a very important reason: He wasn’t there when human sin was nailed to the cross of an innocent victim and defeated for the sheer love of us. And he wasn’t there with the other distraught disciples, trembling in the upper room, thinking that it was all over, only to discover that Life had just begun! Judas is a perpetual reminder that all is never lost, that even at the end of our rope, God is still there. Judas made a noose instead.

Judas is also a warning. Come clean. Get on the level. Or get help. Be as authentic a person as you can be. Good Friday screams: People get Real! This is not a test run, this is IT. Do some serious homework between now and Easter morning if you need to. Make that apology. Cut that unhealthy union. Forgive what you have harboured for way too long. Reach out to someone who may be at the end of *their* rope. Or if *you* are, get help. Next week may be too late.

You and I know that there is at least a little bit of Judas, Peter, and Pontius in all of us. That’s what Good Friday is all about. Bring your whole life to the foot of the cross today, with the stuff only you know you need to leave or nail there, and let Jesus, the Crucified, set you free.