

Poem – Judas the Friend of Jesus

Judas is so easy to hate.
The betrayer, the snitch, the bad seed,
his name synonymous with treason.
No one cries when we hear he's hung himself.
We all think, "Finally he gets what he deserves."
Cast into the darkness of disgrace for all time,
who mourns for Judas?

But Judas was there from the beginning,
called like every disciple,
leaving behind everything to follow Jesus.
He was there in the boat, watching Jesus walk on water.
His hands touching the five loaves and two fish
multiplied by Jesus to feed the crowds.
From Samaria to Caesaria, from Galilee to Jerusalem,
Judas walking with Jesus, talking with Jesus,
listening and learning.

Jesus trusted Judas.
Matthew the tax collector was the money man,
but it was not to him that Jesus entrusted the purse.
Did Judas siphon cash away?
Jesus was not worried about this, if he did,
although John in his gospel is scathing
in his condemnation.
When the woman anoints Jesus,
John points the finger at Judas,
saying it was Judas who complained,
Judas who stole money.
In his gospel,
John is eager to further ruin Judas' reputation,
if that is even possible.
After Judas' betrayal of Jesus,
Judas disappears from John's gospel.
John will not spare one more word for him.
He could not care less.

It is in Matthew the tax-collector's gospel

that the story is filled in.
Matthew says all the disciples complained
about the money wasted in the anointing.
In Matthew's gospel we learn that in the garden,
Jesus greets Judas with the word "Friend".
Many years later, as Matthew sits to write,
does he remember that day in the garden?
Does he see the look of love on Jesus' face?
Did it remind him of the relief he felt
the first time he realized that Jesus loved him,
a tax-collector, friendless in Israel?
Matthew's gospel tells us of Judas repenting,
returning the money, naming himself as sinner.

Can we know why Judas did what he did?
What is the motivation for any sinner?
We can only know that Jesus called him friend.
Greater love has no one than this,
than that they lay down their life for their friends.
It's easy to hate Judas.
But joined together in repentance
we are friends forever with Judas
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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