

# THE FIRST 15

Wednesday, March 27, 2024

Today is Holy Wednesday, March 27 and each day of Holy Week we journey closer to the cross with Jesus.

## OPENING PRAYER

*Holy and gracious God, I seek you in these moments of morning silence. As I read the account of Jesus' last week on earth, I listen for the particular message you have for me today. Speak to me through the power of your Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.*

## SCRIPTURE

***When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, "As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified." Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and they schemed to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. "But not during the festival," they said, "or there may be a riot among the people." Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over. Matthew 26:1-5,14-16***

## REFLECTION

Everyday during Holy Week we read scripture from the events of the same day of Jesus' last week on earth. The Passover is rapidly approaching and the religious authorities are becoming increasingly frustrated with Jesus. They desire to be rid of him. For the chief priests and elders the death of Jesus is a political necessity. He has challenged their power, captured the imagination of the crowd, and the people are following him. They cannot possibly accept that he is a true prophet, let alone Israel's long awaited Messiah. Jesus is invited to the home of Simon the Leper in Bethany and a woman with an alabaster jar breaks open her treasure and pours the costly perfume on his head while he is reclining and eating at the table. Jesus is not concerned about the expense as his disciples are (particularly Judas). Jesus claims the anointing has prepared him for his burial.

The Passover is only two days away and Jesus knows he will be handed over to be crucified. There are nefarious schemes and plots of betrayal for riches and political gain. The religious authorities assemble and conspire to have Jesus arrested and killed. Judas Iscariot sells out his leader and friend for thirty coins. Jesus is betrayed. The Son of Man is handed over to be crucified for the benefit of a broken world.

He was handed over to be crucified for me. I benefited from this treachery. He knew he was going to the cross to endure the torture of unthinkable punishment and he did this for my soul. I consider who I most associate with in the story. Maybe it is the disciples who are told about the impending crucifixion. Perhaps it is the elders and high priests who make secret plots and

backroom deals. Maybe it is Judas the greedy betrayer. Have I ever turned my back on Jesus? I recall places in my life when I have been betrayed by someone I trusted and other times when I have participated in an act of betrayal. What would I consider to be my thirty pieces of silver?

**Ask:** When have I betrayed someone for my own gain or benefit? When have I felt the pain of betrayal by another?

**Pause and Pray**

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

*Blessed Lord Jesus, the harmful pain of betrayal lingers and the lonely agony of rejection stings. Forgive me for the times I have turned my back on what is right and been enticed to inflict unnecessary harm on others. Heal the brokenness of my soul and repair the grief others have caused by their callous behavior. Bring forgiveness, salvation and healing. May I never betray your steadfast love and willing sacrifice for me. Amen.*