

Betrayal and Devotion, the Human Paradox, Matthew Ch.26: 1-16

What makes one person express trusting, complete devotion while another, given the same circumstance, replies with betrayal? Fanaticism, good and bad, is a historically validated condition of human nature, leading one devotee to sacrifice and another to betray. What factor separates the two, and when do we know how to judge for ourselves what or who is worthy of devotion?

Closing in on the darkest hour

The plot finds pen and paper, v.1-5

- Jesus again reveals his fate, v.1-2
 - *You know that after two days . . . he had spoken of this approaching hour often.* (Ma. 12:40, 16:21) _____
- The “religious” leaders hatch their plan, v.3-5
 - In unison, feeling their power slipping from them. _____
 - In stealth, and to kill him. _____
 - But not during the festivities. _____

Devotion in the midst of betrayal, v.6-13

- The account of Matthew and Mark (14:3-9)
 - A woman with an alabaster vial of costly perfume, anointed Jesus head. _____
 - The disciples expressed contempt at the “waste.” _____
 - Jesus responded with a rebuke *she has done a good deed to me.* _____
(reflecting the dual nature of the altar sacrifice)
- John’s account, (12:1-8)
 - The woman is identified as Mary, the sister of Lazarus.
 - She anointed his head and feet, wiping his feet with her hair.
 - Judas identified as the lone complainer. _____
- Luke’s account of a similar incident, (7:36-39)
 - In this earlier event, at the house of a Pharisee, the woman was identified simply as a “sinner,” _____
 - She anointed his feet with tears, wiping them with her hair. _____
- The Pharisee’s disgust. _____

Judas descends into the deadly rationale of betrayal, v.14-16

- With the chief priests
 - Those already plotting his arrest and murder. _____
 - *What will you give me?* _____
 - Thirty pieces of silver? _____
- From then he plots in earnest, v.16. _____

The immensity of the plot, its players and its consequences

- The tri-fold plot. It begins in a righteous endeavor, yet morphs into intrigue with the perceived insult of one of the players, whose plan for revenge is supported by financial benefactors, who have their own goal. Behind it all is the dark secret of a much more hideous plan by a master plotter.
- The players
 - Judas: the jealous rejected imposter and former fanatic. _____
 - Pharisees and Priests: political and financial benefactors, co-plotters, and facilitators. _____
 - The devil (mustn’t forget him), for whom the plot offers the most salacious profit. The cosmic destroyer, and true father of the plot. _____
- The consequences
 - For Judas, redress of a perceived insult, yet at the cost of his life and his soul. _____
 - For the Pharisees and Priests, maintenance of the falsely perceived spiritual provenance, yet at the cost of all they hold dear, their temple and its gold. _____
 - For the devil, who, in his delusion, thought he would gain control of creation, an eternity of solitary rage, regret, and suffering. _____
 - For them all: it began with an underlying existential insecurity

From the small to the large, the intimate to the cosmic, the roots of betrayal begin in the seed of bitterness and grow to hideous proportions. God’s former favorite, now the chief of fallen angels, experienced it on a cosmic scale. We humans continue to experience it, despite the millennia of history that expose the disease. The devil said “I am worthy of devotion, after all”, wanting more glory than his created station deserved. Do we humans, perhaps on a smaller scale, do the same thing?