

We come, at last, to Judas. His betrayal has been uppermost in our thoughts in these last few days as we know it all takes place just before the Institution of the Eucharist, and so we await with baited breath. He has already been to the chief priests and is looking for a way to betray him. We can, probably, assume that the apostles didn't know what was about to happen – if they did I suspect the apostles would have quickly turned on him rather than let him calmly sneak off (one of them did cut off the slave of the High Priests ear in the garden, remember), and yet despite his secrecy, Jesus knows what is about to happen. And even though he knows what's about to take place Jesus is, we are told, troubled in Spirit.

Jesus was deeply affected by this betrayal and the destructive power of Satan. As he was affected by the abuses taking place in the Temple, Jesus is similarly affected by the desecration of the temples of human lives.

But it is the sheer hypocrisy that is the most disturbing. Judas is still putting on the act of loyalty for Jesus and the others. “Surely, not I Lord” as is recounted in Mark's gospel. All innocent and yet knowing what was to happen. It's the same with us. Outwardly we may deceive others but we can hide nothing from Christ.

Jesus makes appeal after appeal to Judas. He sits him nearby at table – we know that because Jesus is able to speak without the others hearing what was said. In fact, knowing the position of “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (it must have been on his right for him to have been close enough to lean over and speak to Jesus in the fashion of reclining at table which was the norm then) mean that Judas, for Jesus to be able to speak to him must have been on his left. The incredible thing about this is that the place normally reserved for the person (after the host) of the highest honour. Jesus must have asked Judas to sit there – small wonder that in Luke we are told that the disciples were arguing about which of them was the greatest, having seen the thief being given the highest place of honour and then leaving early.

But if offering the best seat to Judas wasn't an appeal, the act of the host offering a special morsel from the dish was a sign of special friendship. Even as he did so, none of the other disciples made particular reference to this fact – clearly it must have been something that it was customary for Jesus to do. It's as if to say that the disciples saw Judas as often being worthy of special praise and affection. We often think of Peter as being Jesus' right hand man, along with James and John, since they were often called in to the special moments of Jesus' life: the Transfiguration, the agony in the garden and so on. They were Jesus' “posse”. But Judas was akin to “teacher's pet”.

There is a great tragedy here. Jesus appealed again and again to Judas and on each occasion Judas remained unmoved. He had his mind set on one goal and one alone. Of betraying Jesus.

The drama continued to be played out, until the moment that Jesus admitted defeat and told Judas to go and do quickly the task he had to do. Jesus can see that there is no point in any further delay. When all the appealing has finished it is better to get it done quickly.

We often face our own trials in life, For a time we may hide from them and try to deny them. We may run. But eventually we realise that the trial has to be faced and so it is better to do so quickly and “get it over with”. Prolonging the agony will just make things worse, so Jesus instructed Judas to get a move on.

And still the disciples couldn't see. Some thought he was going to settle up financially – to make a donation to the poor who could not share the passover feast itself. At the loveliest moment, when the passover food was shared, it became hate's dynamic. Judas, went out.

And it was night.

It was night because it was late in the day, but John is stating that it is also night because the call of evil is being listened to here. It is always night when the light of love is extinguished. It is always night when man turns his back on the light of Christ.

God gives us the chance and the wisdom to choose the light – for in the night, we will always be lost.