

April 2, 2021
Good Friday

Today's service is written by Bob Mercer.

It appeared in *Gathering*, Lent/Easter/Pentecost 2008, pages 55-57, and is used with permission.

Notes:

- In ancient Greek, *paradidomi* means to hand over. Bill Klassen, in his book, *Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?* (SCM Press) shows that later copies of the gospels knowingly mistranslated this word as "betray," perhaps to make Judas appear more evil.
- *Rabbouni* is Aramaic for "rabbi" or spiritual leader.
- Mary Magdalene's hometown was Magdala from whence her last name appears in the Bible. It was not a family surname.

Prelude: Were You There? Spiritual. Arr. by Cindy Berry

Hymn: "Ride On, Ride On, the Time Is Right" VU 126

- 1 Ride on, ride on, the time is right:
 the roadside crowds scream with delight;
 palm branches mark the pilgrim way
 where beggars squat and children play.
- 2 Ride on, ride on, your critics wait,
 intrigue and rumour circulate;
 new lies abound in word and jest,
 and truth becomes a suspect guest.
- 3 Ride on, ride on, while well aware
 that those who shout and wave and stare
 are mortals who, with common breath,
 can crave for life and lust for death.
- 4 Ride on, ride on, though blind with tears,
 though voiceless now and deaf to jeers.
 Your path is clear, though few can tell
 their garments pave the road to hell.
- 5 Ride on, ride on, God's love demands.
 Justice and peace lie in your hands.
 Evil and angel voices rhyme:
 you are the man and this the time.

Judas: It wasn't supposed to happen like this. This is not what I'd pictured happening. You have to believe me! I loved Jesus. I didn't hate him. I would never have turned him over to Caiaphas and the other Jewish leaders if, for one minute, I had thought they'd double-cross me. Yes, that's right. I said they double-crossed me. I gave up my rabbi, my friend, so that he could hurry up and bring about this new kingdom of God he was always saying would come. That's why I led them to him, so he could take on those pompous Pharisees in open court and trounce them soundly. They've been hounding Jesus and us, his followers, for so long now, always making veiled threats and baseless accusations. Well, I'd had enough! And I wasn't the only one either... James and John, the Sons of Thunder, felt the same way. This new kingdom of Jesus' was taking too long to come about, so I took it upon myself to hurry things up. I honestly thought that if Jesus were to take the stand in court and verbally spar with the Pharisees, he'd make mincemeat out of them. Then all who witnessed Jesus' triumph would come and join him, and the new kingdom could be begun on the ashes of the Pharisees' disgrace. But they double-crossed me and made a deal of their own to hand Jesus over to the Roman authorities. I had nothing to do with that. I'm innocent, I tell you. I'm as much a victim as Jesus is.

Reading: Luke 23:32-34

Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots to divide his clothing.

Judas: Oh, I knew what I was doing all right, but of course, no-one believes me. No... they want to think the worst of me, that I'd betrayed Jesus. I did no such thing. I handed him over, that's all: *paradidomi*. If anyone, it was Caiaphas who betrayed Jesus; he went back on our deal and gave him over to those Roman thugs. Jesus, I hope God can forgive those men for doing what they're doing to you, because they're the ones who don't realize the severity of their actions.

Hymn: "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" VU 149

- 1 When I survey the wondrous cross
 on which the Prince of glory died,
 my richest gain I count but loss,
 and pour contempt on all my pride.
- 2 Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
 save in the death of Christ, my God:
all the vain things that charm me most,
 I sacrifice them to his blood.
- 3 See from his head, his hands, his feet,
 sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
 or thorns compose so rich a crown?
- 4 Were the whole realm of nature mine,
 that were a present far too small:
 love so amazing, so divine,
 demands my soul, my life, my all.

Reading: John 19:25-27

And that is what the soldiers did. Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

Mary: None of this seems real. I'm standing here, and Jesus, my master, my teacher, my love... is hanging from a cross. Just yesterday he was with us, sharing some stories before going off in private for a meal with his 12 most trusted disciples. That was less than 24 hours ago. Now he's been arrested, tried, convicted, and is being executed. This sort of speed is unheard of. Surely there must be a larger plot behind all this. Oh, my dear sweet Jesus... how I wish I could help you as you have helped me so much in the past. You exorcised my demons, made me whole once more, and gave me a life worth living. I owe my everything to you. I love you.

Hymn: "When the Son of God Was Dying" VU 153 verses 1-3

- 1 When the Son of God was dying, long ago,
 some played dice and some knelt crying, lost and low.
 Cynics sneered and wagged their tongues,
 mockers mimicked funeral songs:
 this, while God's own Son was dying, long ago.
- 2 Crowds which once had cried, 'Hosanna!', lost their voice:
 hell had grinned to hear Barrabas was their choice;
 Judas hung himself for blame;
 Peter hung his head in shame,
 while the crowds which cried, 'Hosanna!', lost their voice.
- 3 Horror, hurt and pain found home in Mary's breast
 watching torture's toll and hearing soldiers jest:
 where was God to hear her cry?
 Why should her own Jesus die?
 Grief and agony found home in Mary's breast.

Reading: Luke 23:39-43

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Judas: Why doesn't he come down? He can do it. Just a little show of power, that's all. That'll put the proper fear of the one true God into those Pharisees and Roman murderers. C'mon Jesus... save yourself!

Mary: What! Are you still around? Vulture! Waiting to see the result of your handiwork, your betrayal of your friend?

Judas: I did not betray him! *Paradidomi*... I handed him over!

Mary: I saw you receive money from Caiaphas. What, did you think no-one would see you in the dark of night? You took their blood money, didn't you? Call it whatever you like; in my mind and in many others' it all adds up to the same thing: betrayal! I hope the money buys you peace of mind.

Judas: I don't want their silver, not if it comes at the price of my friend's life. I renounce this blood money!

Hymn: "They Crucified My Lord" VU 141 verses 1-4

1 They crucified my Lord,
and he never said a mumbalin' word;
 they crucified my Lord,
and he never said a mumbalin' word.
Not a word, not a word, not a word.

2 They nailed him to a tree,
and he never said a mumbalin' word;
 they nailed him to the tree,
and he never said a mumbalin' word.
Not a word, not a word, not a word.

3 They pierced him in the side,
and he never said a mumbalin' word;
 they pierced him in the side,
and he never said a mumbalin' word.
Not a word, not a word, not a word.

Reading: Matthew 27:45-46

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Mary: Oh Jesus, you haven't been forsaken. If God loves you even just one fraction of how much you loved me, then you'll be all right.

Judas: This darkness.... it blots out the sun and chills me down to my very soul. Does it remind you of how cold your soul was Mary, when your body housed those seven demons? I still don't know what Jesus ever saw in you, a rich woman of loose morals.

Mary: I was not rich, nor was I a harlot. My town, Magdala, is a fishing village, and those demons inside me prevented me from having a normal life with a husband and children. I was unclean, forsaken, yet Jesus stayed with me and exorcised all the demons from me. He made me clean and gave me a fresh start. Our love went beyond the strictly physical, if you must know. Since he wouldn't forsake me, then I am 100 percent positive God will not forsake God's only son.

Hymn: "Why Has God Forsaken Me" VU 154

1 'Why has God forsaken me?'
cried out Jesus from the cross,
 as he shared the loneliness
of our deepest grief and loss.

2 At the tomb of Lazarus
 Jesus wept with open grief:
grant us, God, the tears which heal
 all our pain and unbelief.

3 Jesus, as his life expired,
 placed himself within God's care:
 at our dying, Christ, may we
 trust the love which conquers fear.

4 Mystery shrouds our life and death
 but we need not be afraid,
 for the mystery's heart is Love,
God's great love which Christ displayed.

Reading: John 19:28-29

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), "I am thirsty." A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth.

Hymn: "There Is a Green Hill Far Away" VU 152

1 There is a green hill far away,
 outside a city wall,
where the dear Lord was crucified,
 who died to save us all.

2 We may not know, we cannot tell,
 what pains he had to bear;
 but we believe it was for us
 he hung and suffered there.

3 There was no other good enough
 to pay the price of sin;
his death has opened wide the gate
 of heaven, to let us in.

4 O dearly, dearly has he loved,
 and we must love him too,
and trust in his redeeming blood,
 and try his works to do.

Reading: John 19:30

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Mary: Nooooo! It can't end like this. It can't.

Judas: Is this how it is to end? It can't, it can't.....

