

**Enews for 3/6/2024**  
**Spy Wednesday**

*Just by Chance*

Holy Week is a physically and emotionally exhausting time for pastors as they work hard to prepare additional services for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Sunrise. They do this while also praying for something new to say about the miracle of the resurrection that will uplift the faithful and bring those visitors back next Sunday! It is a time when we wear our hearts on our sleeves as we delve deeply into the depth of Jesus' love for his disciples (including us), the depth of pain that he suffered because of this love, and the sheer joy of signing "Alleluia!" on Easter morning as the sin, and darkness, and betrayal are washed away. More than once, I've pushed back tears from the sheer emotional wonder and weight of it all while leading Holy Week services. I've always been amazed at Jesus' composure during the terrors of this week. Even on the cross he cries out, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing" instead of doing what his tormentors propose and come down from the cross and exact vengeance on them (Luke 23:32-28). Perhaps that is because I've done far worse in response to far less. During Holy Week I've been short with my wife and son, snapped at the kids misbehaving in the Maundy Thursday communion class, and rolled my eyes at the church member who complained that we didn't sing his favorite Easter song this year. Indeed, while I try to follow Jesus, I am afraid that I have too often emulated Judas instead.

On the Holy Week calendar, today is Spy Wednesday—the day that Judas agreed to betray Jesus. I've long been intrigued by Judas. For years I helped run a retreat where for one of the worship services different pastors did a first-person interpretation of someone from the Gospels who met Jesus. I got the part of Judas which helped me dig into the soul of this man who loved Jesus enough to follow him for three years but gradually became disillusioned and betrayed him. Each time I ended with Judas weeping, "I just wanted you to be who I wanted you to be!" Don't we all? That is the root of so much sin—creating God in our own image, trying to manipulate God and people to get what we want. The Good New of this Holy Week is that it doesn't end on with betrayal and death—it ends with grace and resurrection even (and especially) for those of us who have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We know that because of the empty tomb, but we also know that because of what happened on Thursday night. Our communion liturgy begins "On the night that our Lord was betrayed..." That sacred feast that we share always begins with a reminder that around that table were disciples who would abandon, deny, and yes, betray the very Lord who is reaching out his hand offering them bread saying "This is my body, which is given for you..." (Luke 22:19). Which is why when I preside at the table I often say, "On the night that our Lord was betrayed he took bread and broke it and gave it to his friends and at least one enemy..." Because the story of this Holy Week is that Jesus loves sinners: his tormenters, Judas, and me too. Thanks be to God!

May the Peace of Christ be with you,  
Barry

[Want to reflect more on Judas on Spy Wednesday?](#)  
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