



The Story of St. Judas

By Marilyn Power Scott

It could have happened this way:

Jesus knew. It became so clear during those 40 days in the desert, as he saw and understood the direction his life on earth was taking. He saw that for his message of resurrection and eternal life to be delivered, to have the power to carry far and long and wide, his death would have to be memorable and in sharp contrast to his life. Given the tumult that was building around his teachings, he knew that it would come soon, at the height of his vigor; it would have to be public, drawn out, controversial, and terribly painful. Seeing as he did with the eyes of Divinity and of eternity, this was acceptable to him and caused him no turmoil—only grief to leave the richness of embodied life.

The men and women who had been most strongly drawn to his pure and powerful wisdom loved him fiercely and completely. And there was one, the young man from Kerioth, who was so selfless, so strong in character and in love of God and of him, that he rejoiced especially in his presence. Here was one who received his teachings with so little distortion, so few barriers. His name was Judas, Judas Iscariot.

As Jesus knew they would, when he reentered Jerusalem, his teachings were drawing more and more attention, the controversy grew around him, the energy and tension more heated. Jesus watched and waited for the unfolding of the way to the needed climax. He pondered each of his wonderful group, seeing deeply and clearly into each heart and mind and personality. And he understood that Judas was the only one who could help the dark and necessary ordeal cause the least harm to his beloved group.

Jesus talked with Judas. He told him what he saw ahead, of what needed to happen. And he asked Judas if he would render him the terrible and loving service that none of the others had the strength for.

Judas was horrified. He wept, he wept. And he was honored and humble that his Lord would ask of him such a crucial thing. They talked, over a span of days, about what it would mean for Judas, how isolated he would be from the comfort and companionship of the others as soon as he agreed to be the one, how he would be despised and hated for millennia to come. And he of course agreed; he loved fully enough that he would deny Jesus nothing he was capable of doing. Though this would push him to the limit of his courage, he also knew he was strong enough to carry it out. And he asked his beloved master for a service in return.

And so they discussed and settled on a plan. The political rumblings were increasing rapidly—a confrontation was inevitable. It was at the Seder meal, with the whole group gathered, that Jesus quietly let Judas know that the dreaded time had come, for Judas to go to the Pharisees and arrange his arrest by the Roman soldiers. For love of his followers and according to the plan, Jesus drew himself apart from them to pray, a frequent practice of his. He knew that if the soldiers came when he was with them, his people would try to protect him as best they could, at great cost to themselves, an unnecessary cost. They had much work yet to do in his service.

When in that endless night of waiting Judas came at last, the soldiers a careful distance behind him, the kiss he gave Jesus was fervent, one of love and grief, farewell and devotion. Jesus returned this kiss, in love and gratitude. And all was put in motion, as Jesus had known it must be.

As the drama and terror of Jesus's trials and torments proceeded, day by horrendous day, Judas watched, alone, shut off from the love of his master, shunned by the others, and he wept and suffered. He questioned at every turn whether he had done the right thing. And he came back, always, to the firm knowing that he had done what had been asked of him, that he could have done no other.

On the day of the crucifixion, after the long hours of agony, Judas saw the clouds gather; he sensed Jesus's waning strength, his immanent death. With grateful eagerness, he took himself to the place he had chosen, the potter's field, deserted on that day, where there was a good, strong tree and no one to stop him. With his own hand, he tied the noose that would release his soul to accompany Jesus into life after death.

From that moment and forevermore, as Jesus sits in glory at the right hand of his Father, so does St. Judas sit at the right hand of Jesus—the place of high honor for his priceless gift of love and betrayal.