

Good Friday Meditation, April 2017. All Saints Amersfoort.



Jesus had kept one mystery from his disciples until the Last Supper. Although he had not kept them in the dark concerning his path of suffering, and although he had attested three times that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinners, he had not revealed a final mystery. Not until the hour of ultimate community at the holy meal could he tell them that the Son of Man would be delivered into the hands of sinners – through betrayal by one of Twelve. *'I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me.'* (John 13:21)

His enemies cannot gain power over him alone. For that, they need one of his friends, who will deliver him over, a disciple who will betray him. This most horrible thing occurs not from without, but from within. Jesus path to Golgotha begins with Judas' betrayal. Some disciples sleep that incomprehensible sleep in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, one betrays him, and in the end, *'all the disciples deserted him and fled'*, (Matthew 26:56).

Jesus knows what is coming. Firmly and decisively he says *'shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?'* (John 18:11). In the past, his menacing enemies had often had to retreat before him, he had walked freely through their midst, their hands had fallen. At that time his hour had not yet come. Now that hour is here. He goes to it freely.

It is infinitely easier to suffer in obedience to a human order, than in the freedom of one's own personal responsible deed.

It is infinitely easier to suffer in company than alone.

It is infinitely easier to suffer publicly and with honour, than out of the public eye and in disgrace.

It is infinitely easier to suffer through one's physical being alone than through one's soul.

Jesus suffered through
his free choice,
alone,
mostly out of the public eye,
in disgrace,
in body and soul...

'It is finished', (John 19:30). The final cry from the cross.

Peter preached: *'We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree...'* (Acts 10:39).

A fourth century preacher (John Chrysostom a bishop and preacher in Constantinople) wrote:

"Do you see how the devil is defeated by the very weapons of his prior victory? The devil had vanquished Adam by means of a tree. Christ vanquished the devil by means of the tree of the Cross.

The tree sent Adam to hell. The tree of the Cross brought him back from there.

The tree revealed Adam in his weakness, laying prostrate, naked and low.

The tree of the Cross manifested to all the world, the victorious Christ, naked and nailed on high.

Adam's death sentence passed onto all who came after him.

Christ's death gave life to all his children."

Meditation from writings in 1937 and 1942 by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, German pastor and theologian, killed in April 1945. John Chrysostom quotation from writer Shane Claiborne ('Common Prayer: A liturgy for ordinary radicals.')

