



MORNING PRAYER DEVOTIONAL

MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2020

Readings: Exodus 30:1-3, 7-33; Matthew 26:1-30; Psalms 56-67

"The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been-born" (Matthew 26:24).

The verse (above) takes place in the midst of the Last Supper, where Jesus has an exchange with Judas Iscariot. It is a sad and telling statement, and somewhat befuddling: Jesus, the Son of Man, is about to meet His destiny, a destiny planned by His Father, for the redemption of sinners. That destiny would be triggered by the selfish and senseless betrayal of one of His followers.

Here we find the intersection of Divine sovereignty and human responsibility. To the ancient mind, this interplay was a natural part of the created order. Paul has a similar understanding of the world when he exhorted the Philippians: "... Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12b-13).

The modern mind recoils at this seeming contradiction. How can God be "in control" and we still make our own choices? Perhaps the only choices that have meaning are those that are connected with the sovereign Creator of the universe. There is no place we can run and hide from God and his authority. Our responsibility is not *in spite* of God's rule, but *because* of it. Moreover, our choices are therefore meaningful and not in a vacuum, because they are choices made in relationship to a sovereign God.

Judas is therefore guilty and his future is frighteningly grim. And the Passion of our Lord is no surprise, but the very means by which our salvation is secured, a plan set from the beginning of time...

I went early to Kroger today in hopes of finding the Holy Grail: toilet paper. Alas, the shelves are still empty, though I did find a three-pack of disinfecting wipes. Simple trips like this remind me of two things: God is in charge, and I am responsible. There is no need to panic, to push and shove, to cut people off or not to make eye contact. God is in charge. This troubling time, as unsettling as it is, does not overthrow His good plans for His children. There is a peace that is ours that the world cannot give, due to His sovereign grace. And because of His gracious rule, we can be generous, calm, forgiving and helpful to others. We need not panic, selling our Faith away for thirty pieces of silver, driven by fear and distracted by the doom-and-gloom reports thrown in our faces every day.

Remember, let us not *look at* this situation, but *see through* it. When we look at the situation, we ask questions based on *expectations*: Where is the toilet paper? When will the stock market go back up? Am I, or one of my loved ones going to get sick? *What am I going to do?* When we see through our situation, we ask questions based on expectancy: God, what are you teaching me? Where do I see Your hand at work around me? How can I be an ambassador for Christ in these days? God, *what are You going to do?*

Be blessed by the Sovereign Lord. Forget not the poor. Pray for the sick. Make no peace with oppression. And love one another, seeing through these days and not merely staring at them.

- Fr. Marc



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but *see through* it."