

⁴³ Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. ⁴⁴ Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.” ⁴⁵ Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Rabbi!” and kissed him. ⁴⁶ The men seized Jesus and arrested him. ⁴⁷ Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. ⁴⁸ “Am I leading a rebellion,” said Jesus, “that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? ⁴⁹ Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.” ⁵⁰ Then everyone deserted him and fled. ⁵¹ A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, ⁵² he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

Is there good news buried even in the depths of such a heinous act of betrayal? It is opaque to human understanding, but Jesus gives us a hint that the answer is, “Yes!” In the simple statement, “*But the Scriptures must be fulfilled,*” we find the basis for hope. We tend to concentrate on those parts of Scripture that speak of a suffering Messiah and that Jesus fulfills those prophecies. Yes, Jesus is arrested in fulfillment of what has been written about him, but there is more to the message of Scripture than the prediction of his earthly fate. The overall message is the revelation of God’s sovereign love which, working in conjunction with his just nature, is demonstrated in his mighty acts of redemption. Sin and judgment do not have the final say. Repentance and forgiveness are God’s promises. Even in our darkest moments in this life, Christians are not left with despair but hope.

Judas betrayed Jesus twice. First, he betrayed him physically. Second, he betrayed him spiritually by taking his own life and denying himself access to God’s forgiveness through Jesus. All the disciples betrayed Jesus by abandoning him...even verbally denying him. But, in contrast to Judas, they didn’t give up and came to repent and be forgiven. Every time we sin we betray Jesus. Sin places a road block in our path of obedience. At the barrier we are presented with two detours. To the left is the path of despair that leads to death. To the right is the path of repentance and hope which takes you through the jungle of consequences and returns you to the path of obedience and life. God has provided the way, but the choice to take it is all ours.

Forgive me Father for I have betrayed you in all my sinful ways. As your Spirit convicts me of my sins, may I be receptive to the guiding of the Spirit which brings me to the cross of Jesus; the place of repentance. Help me to acknowledge and live into the hope that is the message of your Word. Make my repentance real and return me to the road of obedience and true worship. Amen.