

Why Jesus Called Judas "Friend"

Friend, do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?

LUKE 22:48

Written by Bill Perkins

A kiss.

A word.

Two gestures in the Garden
that seem like expressions
of friendship.

But neither means
what it appears to mean.

Judas' kiss
wasn't affection.

It was a signal.

"The one I kiss
is the man"

(Mark 14:44).

A pre-arranged marker
in the dark.

A counterfeit intimacy
used to expose Jesus
to His enemies.

And Jesus' word "friend"
wasn't philos-
beloved friend.

He didn't call Judas
what He called the Eleven
in the Upper Room
(John 15:15).

He used hetairos-
associate, companion,

someone who stands near
but is not truly with Him
(Matthew 26:50).

And why that word?
I suspect
as a mirror.
A way to show Judas
who he'd become-
like the first rooster's crow,
but in the Garden.

Close enough to kiss?
but not close enough
to love.

Finally, what had been hinted
throughout the Lord's ministry
took place.
The first domino fell.

Peter swung his sword
and cut off the ear
of Malchus,
the slave of the high priest-
a crime punishable
by death
(John 18:10; Luke 22:50).

And Jesus spared Peter
that fate
by healing the man's ear-
His last miracle
(Luke 22:51).

And there was still
another gesture
that looked like friendship.

Judas told the guards,
"Take Him away safely"
(Mark 14:44).

It sounded protective.
It sounded loyal.
It sounded like a man
trying to shield
his Teacher
from harm.

But it was all
appearance.

A final performance
of concern
from a heart
no longer his own.
A line delivered
from a script
written by the one
who entered him
in the Upper Room
(John 13:27).

A counterfeit care.
A staged concern.
A last false echo
of friendship
from a soul
already aligned
elsewhere.

The Garden
was full of gestures
that looked like friendship-
a kiss,
a word,
a warning.

All of them hollow.

But standing in the middle
of every false signal
was the only true Friend
any of them ever had.

The One who healed
the man coming to arrest Him.

The One who shielded
the disciple who failed Him.

The One who spoke truth
to the disciple who betrayed Him.

You may not know this about Jesus:
He called Judas “friend” at the moment of betrayal.

Jesus remained
the only true Friend
in a night filled
with counterfeits.

And He invites us
into that friendship-
the kind that doesn't change
when we do.