

Holy Week Chapel 2007 - "Jesus the Betrayer"

you'll see from the previous post that "deny me. betray me. desert me." are the evolving themes of the worship. but i'm trying to flip them - to portray Jesus as the deserter, betrayer and denier.

cheryl told me about an earlier worship idea of hers about the "beloved" and the "betrayer" and steve collins and I used a bit of that when he was here last year. I'm trying to look at the disciples' seeing Jesus as leaving them, betraying their hopes, and denying their allegiance by serving God's purpose.

So.. Jesus as Judas (as the disciples see him) - much as a child sees that a parent is abandoning them if the parent has a larger view of life. still working out all of this, but below is my current attempt.

Thanks to Mark from the [youthmultimedia egroup](#) for the tile idea.

The doors of the chapel had signs saying "house of worship" and "den of thieves". we had a table outside with people selling "jesus junk". a great collection of 'holy crap' that we assembled in a very short time (you'd be amazed what people collect. the best was a stuffed jesus with a beard who looked like Yogi Bear crossed with Obi-Wan-Kenobi!). on the chapel door was the text of Jesus turning over the tables. they all 'got it' but no-one got offended. I was really hoping that someone would kick the table! that was the whole idea. we'll have to be more offensive next time.

- A long table inside the darkened chapel, lots of candles, and dim lights. The "beloved? blessed?" image onscreen (see below), and Peter Gabriel's "Passion" music playing (soundtrack from "The Last Temptation of Christ") - which was used as background for the stations as well

- I was grateful for [roddy hamilton's](#) wonderful writing which I used a few times today (he doesnt know it yet, but I'm going to visit him in late 2008!). this is from roddy ...

Watch! Listen!

There is a waiting
a gathering of darkness
a hand in the shadows

Watch! Listen!

There are soldiers on the road
a High Priest dining
a temple guard pacing

Watch! Listen!

There is a lonely prayer
disciples sleeping
angels struggling, holding back

Watch! Listen!

There is a cup overflowing
a Redeemer willing
and all heaven crumbling

Watch! Listen!

There are footsteps arriving
a betrayer among the trees

a flash of eyes
and a kiss
**God of all who fear and suffer,
may our worship be
a watching and listening
for unexpected grace,
for unquenchable hope
for unreasonable truth
in the face of all that denies abundant life.
We seek You, Suffering Christ.
Amen.**

(that last bit was mine and the next bit.)

*God of mercy
You are beyond our comprehension
- walking behind and before us,
standing beneath and above us
We are confounded by the mystery of you
Who are you -
who shapes such unlikely images of yourself
and then risks all so we might inherit your true likeness?
who are you -
who sends your rebel child to live down our street
and then dares us to reclaim our true childhood through him?
Who is he, this God-Child
who frustrates his parents
hangs around with the wrong crowd
questions the town council
is picked up by the local cops
and through this remains a source
of goodness, compassion and truth?
God of stories and histories,
open the door for us
to re-enter and re-live this 'unholy' week
– full of longing and loss, lies and truth,
shame and indignation, trust and rejection.
This time in which we may both lose ourselves
and find ourselves in the dusty arena of grace.
This will be one crowded hour.
Walk it with us, we pray.
For the sake of Christ. Amen.*

The holy week stations were offered as stations to visit individually as as a group experience. as it evolved I tried to shape it around John's Gospel, but some bits had already been shared out, so it became a good, multi-layered synoptic experience...

- Jesus turning over the tables (see above)
- Palm Sunday - a peace-prayer, candle lighting table

- Anointing - a fantastic reflection of roddy hamilton's with additional stuff and hand lotion, and an [iStock](#) image from the Ivory Coast, West Africa of feet (I was stirred to find this image by [Kester Brewin](#)'s chapter "Dirt" from "[The Complex Christ](#)".)
- Mount of Olives - by the amazing sarah - plants and pillows - asking people to consider what keeps them from watchful, earnest prayer. they were invited to write about those things on a sleep mask as a confession, and then to take a ring of beads (blood or tears) as a reminder of Jesus' prayer in the midst of trial.
- deny me.. betray me... desert me.... images of Jesus on the wall from "The Christ We Share" pack from [CMS UK](#) (beware the website. weird things happening on my browser). People invited to paint on tiles (see details next page)
- denial and betrayal - Judas and Peter - just texts and a mirror - we left it up to them to work on it
- a kneeling prayer thing with a copy of "On a Friday Noon" - art depicting Jesus and the Cross - on it
- the Pilate station that I'd made and used before (it's on my blog - just cant find the link...).

WORSHIP STATION

**You will desert me.
You will deny me.
You will betray me.**

Then Jesus said to them,
“You will all become deserters because of me this night;
for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’”
But after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.”
Matthew 26:31

Jesus denounces his followers before they denounce him.
Not content to let them discover their shallowness and deceit in the moment of denial, he goads them into false promises of allegiance, fickle declarations of love.
Does Jesus hope that his accusations might firm their resolve to remain with him?
Is he bitter about their likely betrayal, foreshadowing his inner struggle in Gethsemane?

Or is the Gospel writer playing to an early church audience whose faith is struggling under suffering, reminding them that they are just like earlier generations of disciples?
“You will all become deserters because of me”

Denial and betrayal. Not because of what is in them, but because of what is in him. He must deny their hopes for him, and in that sense, betray their trust. He will desert them because he goes to a place where they cannot follow. Despite their best intentions, they simply cannot do what he must. In the end, he always reminds them that it all comes down to God - who God was, is and will be.

While the disciples don't yet realise the extent of Jesus resolve or his likely destination, ultimately, it is not courage that they lack, but faith. We too might stay with Jesus if we truly believed that through betrayal, judgement and death lead God holds fast to the threads of life.

But we do not. And surely we cannot without his example which reveals a depth of love and power that are God's alone.

Ultimately, we are not urged to blame the disciples, but to recognise that Christ has done what they cannot without God's power to defeat evil and death.

desert me... betray me... deny me...
which are you more likely to do?

abandon Christ - because staying close to someone broken may rupture your heart
abandon Christ - because speaking up for a vanished cause may lose you credibility
abandon Christ - because stepping into a conflict may crush your spirit

Choose one of these pairs of words – “desert me”, “deny me”, “betray me” – that express your own inner lack of faith or hope. Paint the words onto a tile. Use any colours or design that you wish. Then place the tile on the floor alongside others to begin to form the shape of a cross.

In a silent prayer, ask God to give you faith in this Jesus –
to remain intimately with this broken Healer,
to believe recklessly in this ruling Servant,
and to shout openly of this heretical Teacher.

We called people to the communion table with a video clip. I took the video from Snow Patrol's "Chasing Cars" and combined it with Bernard Fanning's "Wash Me Clean". I slowed down the video and played the song twice. I think it was a stunning combination actually.

We used a Roddy Hamilton litany "This is the belonging place" as a gathering prayer. The communion was based around texts from John's Gospel. The celebrant (Tony) poured water into a bowl, and then we echoed Peter's words, refusing to have our feet washed and then begging to be inundated (we didn't actually do a foot-washing).

Andrew Dutney sang a great song of his "Empty", which led into a great spoken piece (written by Beatrice) - both Peter and Judas speaking about their betrayals of Christ. I hope to post it soon.

We followed this with confession. Then Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit and the gift of peace were spoken, and we passed the peace. We had red grapes on the table. Tony quoted from John 15 about the vine and branches, then passed around grapes and ate them.

The actual communion was pretty straight - I had labelled the wine bottles with the "beloved? betrayer?" image.



*With the company of your followers throughout history
and across our world, we give thanks for the gift of Your Son.
Doubters, deserters and betrayers all -
we, like they, were surprised by grace -
grace that named us and claimed us
grace that called and commissioned us.
Not an abstract doctrine of salvation,
but a living, giving, dying, rising Saviour
with whom and in whom we belong to your New Creation.*

We sang "When I Survey" to the tune of "The Water is Wide" (hey - I am old folky...!) and had a sending out from Roddy H.

Played U2's "Walk On" as people left.

It went very well in many ways, and as usual I learnt a great deal.