

**The Third Song of the Servant – Isaiah 50: 4 – 9.**

In the third ‘Servant Song’ (which we read in part on Palm Sunday) we hear the Servant himself speaking. He tells of his experience of being equipped by God for his task of comforting the weary. But the response to his work has been opposition: *I offered my back to those who struck me, my cheeks to those who tore at my beard; I did not cover my face against insult and spittle.*

We, too, have been equipped for our task as disciples of Jesus, but sometimes we will meet with hostility, and in these difficult times we’ve seen or heard of public servants being subjected to *insult and spittle*. In these circumstances they and we alike share in the suffering of Jesus – the faithful Servant of God.

But the response of the Servant is not to give up on his task: rather he becomes more determined: *I set my face like flint; I know I shall not be ashamed...The Lord is coming to my help.*

Jesus remained faithful to his task and we are called to follow him

**Matthew 26: 14 – 25.**

A traditional name for today is ‘Spy Wednesday’ – it comes from today’s Gospel Reading in which Judas, having been paid *thirty pieces of silver* by the chief priests, *looked for an opportunity to betray* Jesus, like a spy looking for an opportunity to betray his country.

There’s little point in arguing how much Judas is to be condemned for his action and how much it was pre-ordained by God. Instead we should take two lessons to heart.

First, that, like Judas, we are among those who have been chosen by Jesus to be his disciples, and we have shared in his supper. Let us take care that we do not betray him by the way we treat our fellow Christians or any of our neighbours.

And, secondly, we should take heart from the knowledge that, as out of human failure God brought about the victory of divine love, so there is nothing that we can do which he cannot turn to good.

Let us use some part of this day to recognise our failures, to tell the Lord we are truly sorry, and to rejoice that his love, revealed in the Passion and Death of Jesus, can overcome them all.