

Great Disappointments
(John 12:1-11)

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In that last week of his life, there were many people who were disappointed with Jesus. Why?

The most serious disappointment was that Jesus did not ride into Jerusalem as his followers had expected him to – on a white charger, attacking the Romans – and who hoped for a great battle, even if it meant their hero's death.

Jesus still disappoints today. Primarily, because Jesus did not set out to correct all social ills, which is what we would like him to have done.

Jesus did not go to the cross because he preached social reform, engaged in work on behalf of the poor, healed the sick and tended to the outcast. If he had simply limited his work to those things, he would not only have been a hero, but also would have probably been looked up to by the rabbis.

Jesus did not seek to address social ills; he sought to kill the virus that was at work in causing them: sin.

This was – and still is – a great disappointment to all those who would like to make the message of Jesus a message of political action and to make the Church of our Lord into a political party.

Jesus knew that if the Church made the reformation of the social order its goal, including giving to the poor – and did so not dishonestly as had done but honestly as some today in the Anglican church might do – that the Church would find its energy and resources consumed in the attempt to satisfy all needs.

Giving to the poor is a good thing. Healing the sick is a good thing. Even restoring a body to wholeness through medicine is a good thing.

The politicians and the healers of our world do these and they do well.

But, it is not what Jesus came to do, nor what He empowered His Church to do as their first work. Jesus did not put a band-aid on our need and send us home to get better.

Jesus did not even suggest that his ministry was about bringing the dead back to life, in order that they should, what, never die? Or just die again?

Jesus was born specifically to die, and to die upon a cross to cancel the judgment of sin against us and to give us life. No man or woman could have done that for all men and all women of all time. “He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in.”

Thankfully, this Jesus is not the Jesus of the “Gospel of Judas”. In that Gospel, Judas is thanked for his role in helping Jesus put off this body of flesh and return to the Father. Why? Because this world is a place from which the only thing to do is escape.

While there is some truth in the view that the world is not as it should be, and some times is a place from which we want to escape, Jesus did not seek to escape. His plan to come from Galilee to Jerusalem was not simply to die and be released from this world. But, “having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end”.

It was Judas who sought to save himself, and in doing so, as Jesus himself had warned Judas and all of his other followers, Judas lost everything, including himself.

This must have been a great disappointment to those who saw this world as a wasteland, a hopeless veil of tears, from which the only thing we seek is to be released.

Some still see the world this way today. And they seek to save themselves from this world and its God by isolating themselves from the world by creating a world of their own around them that will insulate them from the rest of the world. And some, when they find that the world is still too much for them, seek to flee this world by killing themselves.

Not Jesus. Jesus accepted the cup that His Father gave Him to drink, and drank it to the end.

Why?

Because He loved us, even the poorest among us, and He loved us much more than simply to help us to prosper in this world and perish in the world to come. He alone could unlock the door of eternal life, and let us in. And He did, even though it cost Him His own life.