

The Ballad of the Judas Tree



In Hell there grew a Judas Tree
Where Judas hanged and died
Because he could not bear to see
His master crucified.
Our Lord descended into Hell
And found his Judas there
For ever hanging on the tree
Grown from his own despair.
So Jesus cut his Judas down
And took him in his arms.
"It was for this I came," he said,
"And not to do you harm.
My Father gave me twelve good men
And all of them I kept,
Though one betrayed and one denied,
Some fled and others slept.
In three days' time I must return
To make the others glad,
But first I had to come to Hell
And share the death you had.
My tree will grow in place of yours.
Its roots lie here as well.
There is no final victory
Without this soul from Hell."
So when we all condemn him
As of every traitor worst,
Remember that, of all his men,
Our Lord forgave him first.

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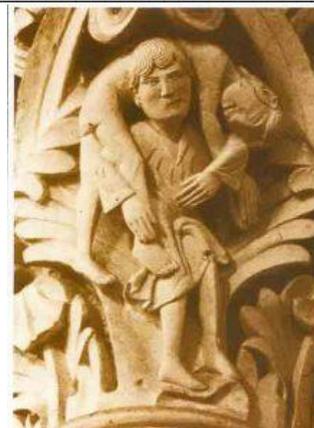
Photos: A capital of a column in the Church of St Mary Magdalene in Vézelay, Burgundy

For reflection

- *I wonder if Jesus did rescue Judas from hell?*
- *I wonder how this poem makes you feel?*
- *I wonder who else we might find in heaven?*
- *I wonder if Judas' betrayal was really worse than the other disciples' actions? Did they all betray Jesus?*
- *I wonder if there are any 'unforgivable' sins?*
- *I wonder **why** Judas betrayed Jesus? Did he know what he was doing? (Remember Jesus' words from the cross, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." Could this apply to Judas, too?)*

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you who were betrayed by the kiss of a friend, be with those who are betrayed, slandered and falsely accused. You knew the experience of having your love thrown back in your face for mere silver: be with families which are torn apart by mistrust or temptation. We believe that you forgave Judas, as you forgave Peter and the other disciples who deserted you in your hour of greatest need. Forgive us our sins, and help us to forgive those who sin against us. To you, Jesus, who offered your face to your betrayer, be honour and glory, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.



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