

Surely, It Is Not I...

by Carl McMurray

The title phrase is found in Mathew 16:25 (NASV) where Jesus is eating his final Passover with the apostles and has just informed them that one of them was a betrayer. Judas is the one who speaks, apparently in a show of innocence. Just a few hours later (Matthew 26:49) Judas rejoins the group in Gethsemane and continues his performance by greeting the Lord with a kiss. The Greek work for “kiss” here is “kataphileo” and is defined as a fervent kiss, a great show of affection rather than an ordinary kiss of salutation. Judas was putting on a show for someone, either himself or the other disciples. We would like to think that the spirit of Judas and his performing arts ended sadly at the end of a rope, but I wonder if it doesn’t sometimes still live today. Don’t be too quick to say, “Surely, it is not I...”

What about when we put on a great show of affection for our brethren at the times we assemble—big smiles, warm handshakes, and inquiries into how their life is. Then during the week we have no time for association, no visiting, no hospitality, no helping. Would this fervent show of affection parallel the spirit of Judas?

Here’s another example. Good men disagree on the interpretation and/or application of Scripture. We make a production in our letters of calling one another “brother” and pointing out past areas where we have admired them, especially in letters that we may plan on making public someday. Then upon this show of tender affection, we proceed to judge their heart, condemn their motives, ridicule their reasoning, ascribe to their positions on the issue they would not take, and repeat our misunderstanding of their position to others as if these men had stated it themselves. We try and vilify one another with guilt by association tactics and some have even gone out of their way to get meetings cancelled and pass files of information around. I’m wondering if the spirit of Judas is here also.

I’m thinking that when we talk about love, study passages on love, define the Greek words for love and then don’t love—that’s a show. When we claim to be a New Testament church, hold others to the New Testament pattern, and then don’t rebuke error or discipline those who walk disorderly, that’s a performance, either for the sake of outsiders or ourselves. When we sing “Tell Me The Story of Jesus” and aren’t willing to help tell that story to others, that’s the spirit of Judas.

John 3:16 is a biblical definition of love. God so loved the world that “He gave...” I know this may sound confusing to some today, but love is giving, not kissing. Sometimes the kiss is just a show. Surely, it is not I?

