

Jesus, His So-Called Friends, and the Dramas We Find Ourselves In

Ken Wilson 4.21.19

We use “**drama**” to describe situations that involve some conflict, people taking sides
I've got a drama going at work...back home... a drama playing out in our country right now, etc.

Dramas can get ugly. Making sense while events unfold isn't easy.

Is this why **binge on Netflix dramas**—to refine our ability to navigate dramas around us?
[**Cast Away**...made sense of a period when I went thru a major disruption, one of leads is volleyball...]

During communion, we are presented with a vexing drama that often pops up around us and may involve us.

Original setting is dramatic: Last Supper of Jesus as his betrayal is underway: ***The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, broke it and said, “This bread is my body, given for you”***

This re-presented drama shines light on perplexing turn of events: weird dynamics when a group threatened by escalating conflicts organizes around an innocent victim thought to be guilty...if enough people join accusing mob or are silent while it is forming, the unlucky one is expelled, generating a false peace for majority.

Last Supper is preceded by a Next-to-Last Supper. The scapegoat mechanism is gaining energy like a tropical storm organizing into a hurricane. Jesus is in West Bank, on way to Jerusalem.

There, in Bethany he is **celebrity dinner guest** of a prominent leader, but also under growing suspicion/scrutiny by guests. In middle of dinner, an **uninvited woman** enters to anoint him with expensive perfume...**scrutiny of group** turns on her as some accuse woman of wasting what could have been sold and given to poor...she is now focus of group's spreading hostility-anger.

Sense of threat...you're **covering a political rally for GR Press**. A politician is whipping up crowd against immigrants and the lying-fake news media (bad people) and there you are in the press corps pen, your skin darker than white crowd, wearing a Hijab in deference to your Muslim grandmother. Dicey situation.

Jesus intervenes: **“Leave her be! Why do you subject her to abuse? She has done me a beautiful deed, and wherever my gospel is taught, what she has done will be remembered!**

Duly noted! The gospel (message of Jesus) is about not going along with group when it turns its hostility on a vulnerable person. The gospel is about aligning with God who aligns with potential scapegoats: like **woman did for Jesus**, and **Jesus did for woman**.

Next scene: Last Supper, original setting of communion rite.

Jesus celebrating Passover meal with his disciples. All have pledged their loyalty to Jesus. But **confused**, don't know what's happening. **Worried**, because powerful forces are organizing against Jesus, not least of which Roman occupiers threatened by any Jewish leaders who can gather a crowd like Jesus can

None of them shows the understanding of what's going on or the courage of the West Bank woman who anointed Jesus in Bethany

Oh it's a painful scene! You have **Jesus** under death threats—he's danger to Empire, to priestly class aligned with Rome, religious accusations swirling (he's a blasphemer). And you have his **so-called friends**, pledging loyalty, but not ready to pay price of loyalty. Afraid for themselves...pulled by gravity of growing mob

Any minority person could identify with Jesus in this drama in a heartbeat. **Lived your entire life under scrutiny-suspicion...wondering if your majority friends**, when push comes to shove, will stand up for you if it means risking their own necks.

A woman in a male dominated work space can identify. You speak up with **conviction** in a staff meeting. A male colleague brushes you off saying, “We don't have to get emotional!” Will anyone state obvious on your behalf and speak up? **“Why is it passion when a man says it, and it carries the day, but when a woman says, it's emotion, and its dismissed?”**

If gay in a family with religious objections to your marriage, you know crazy-making when relatives who **privately claim to support you**, won't stand up for you if it costs them anything. Won't insist, ***of course their partner is welcome for Easter dinner...and if not, then I won't come.***

In so many dramas we face, we are either in position of Jesus—under threat/accusation by a group—or in the position of his so-called friends, wanting to support him, but waffling over the cost.

Of all different kinds of dramas we find ourselves in, these are psychological quicksand. If we **capegoats**, we can mirror the accusations of the mob and make them our own, internalize the guilt...If we are **bystanders**, we mirror the mob and **assume the guilt** of the suspect people...or we **dimly recognize their innocence**, but fear losing our standing with mob and keep quiet.

In the middle of our contemporary scapegoat dramas, what's really going on can feel so murky, opaque, confusing...but here, replayed in communion, it's clear

You know how in a good movie, you may see your own life more clearly? Things confusing about your own life come clear?

What wasn't clear to those disciples because they were in the psychological quicksand, because the **scapegoat fog machine** was clouding their perceptions, scrambling their brains...**is presented in bold relief now to us, in the light of the resurrection...**

Thousands of Jewish men before him were lynched by Rome and forgotten. His death is only remembered, his Last Supper recalled, **because rumors of his resurrection were not stamped out.**

These rumors of resurrection jolt us into seeing what we have so often missed--that the **scapegoats surrounded by so-called friends** who are sucked into the confusion of the mob, are **innocent!** Maybe we should **wake up** and say so!

Gathered around communion table, we see it: Jesus was subjected **false accusations---** some of which **he may have internalized**, being human (at one point on cross he felt abandoned by God)

We see he was betrayed-abandoned by so-called friends...some-times **we are the so-called friends of people treated as he was**

“This cup,” he says, “is my blood, poured out for you and for the many, for the forgiveness of sins—do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me”

Who are “the many”? The many who get pulled unwittingly into scapegoating mobs, assuming the guilt of innocent victims...the many who stand by mute when they should speak up. Us.

“The many” are also the many victims of scapegoat events, from Abel to Jeremiah and Zechariah and so many others thought to be guilty...who will be vindicated by God and by history. Us.

The mob is **ignorant** of its **collective guilt** and scapegoated people are often **ignorant** of their **actual innocence**. But the drama of the Last Supper clarifies this...reveals what’s going on

Now the nature of the **Spirit** Jesus offers us is clear. The gospels speak of **two spiritual forces**—one manifest sometimes when humans gather in groups/crowds, *satan* (accusation)...other is from God to counter this spirit... *Paraclete*, defender of accused

Invite you to get comfortable, close your eyes...and picture the Spirit of Jesus

This spirit comes to Jesus at his baptism in form of a dove alighting on him as he stands in the water...picture that dove as white or black or rainbow colors, the record leaves it open, picture your dove hovering over Jesus as he stands in Jordan river ...

By that Spirit, defender of accused, Jesus does his works of compassion and advocacy—seeking out the least, last, lost to include them...picture Spirit as a dove following Jesus around

On the cross Jesus entrusts his Spirit into the loving care of his Abba-Father, **“Into your hands I commit my spirit, and he breathed his last”**... picture spirit disappearing into dark sky

Now picture the Spirit near the empty tomb of Jesus while Mary is talking to someone she thinks is gardener...then she realizes who it really is and cries Rabboni, and he says her name, Mary.

Now picture the Spirit as a dove near you there where you are sitting...could be hovering over your head, at your feet, perched on your knee...now hear the words of Jesus

“Receive the Spirit, use it to forgive, and don’t be afraid”