

*The Betrayal of Christ*, by Guercino

Art selection and commentary by [Heidi J. Hornik](#) and [Mikeal C. Parsons](#)

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The Baroque artist Guercino (1591–1666) depicts the moment Judas betrays Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. Judas cowers in the left foreground with a bag of silver as the soldiers lay hands on Jesus. Typically, artists of the scene depict the kiss of Judas. Guercino instead focuses on the emotional exchange between Judas and Christ, as Jesus says, “Friend, do what you are here to do” (Matt. 26:50). Judas watches, horrified, as the soldier to his left drops a rope around Christ’s neck. Only Matthew’s Gospel mentions Judas’s later remorse (27:3–10). “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood,” Judas told the religious authorities. He threw the pieces of silver in the temple, then went and hanged himself. Like Matthew, Guercino portrays Judas’s painful loathing for what he has done. Guercino invites viewers not only to recognize their selfish motivations but to return to the compassionate and forgiving Christ.