

## **The Ballad of the Judas Tree by Ruth Etchells**

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.

From the Church of Scotland website for Easter Day

Ruth Etchells 1931-2012 was one of the most influential women in the Church of England, a university lecturer, poet and "the best female bishop we never had". She had a rare compassion, intensity and visionary quality balanced by a self deprecating wit. And a depth of intuition which made her a good spiritual director and chaplain.

From the obituary in The Guardian dated 27 Aug 2012.