

Holy Wednesday Reflection

Reading: John 13: 21 – 32 (taken from The Good News Bible)

Jesus Predicts His Betrayal

²¹ After Jesus had said this, he was deeply troubled and declared openly, “I am telling you the truth: one of you is going to betray me.” ²² The disciples looked at one another, completely puzzled about whom he meant. ²³ One of the disciples, the one whom Jesus loved, was sitting next to Jesus. ²⁴ Simon Peter motioned to him and said, “Ask him whom he is talking about.” ²⁵ So that disciple moved closer to Jesus' side and asked, “Who is it, Lord?” ²⁶ Jesus answered, “I will dip some bread in the sauce and give it to him; he is the man.” So he took a piece of bread, dipped it, and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷ As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “Hurry and do what you must!” ²⁸ None of the others at the table understood why Jesus said this to him. ²⁹ Since Judas was in charge of the money bag, some of the disciples thought that Jesus had told him to go and buy what they needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor. ³⁰ Judas accepted the bread and went out at once. It was night.

The New Commandment

³¹ After Judas had left, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man's glory is revealed; now God's glory is revealed through him. ³² And if God's glory is revealed through him, then God will reveal the glory of the Son of Man in himself, and he will do so at once.”

Reflection:

I wonder today, when you hear the name ‘Judas’, what is the first word that comes into your mind? I suspect, that for most of us, that word is betrayal. Why? Because Judas is the one who betrayed Jesus. Judas is the one who made a pact with Annas and Caiaphas. You could say that Judas is a ‘sell out’. Judas is the one who *‘accepted the bread and went out at once’*.

If I were to ask you to share the second word that came into your mind, I wonder if it might be ‘relief’. Why? Well the disciples had sat looking at each other *‘completely puzzled’* as to which one of them was the betrayer. I can imagine the sense of relief in the room when Jesus handed the piece of bread to Judas Iscariot.

At some point, in all our lives, we will all have felt that same sense of relief. In a Maths lesson, at Secondary School, the teacher puts a long, difficult equation on the board and you just know that they are going to turn around and ask one of you to solve it in

front of your friends. You sit there, praying under your breath, hoping that someone, anyone else will be picked, as languages is your 'thing'.

Or, at your place of work, the boss calls everyone in to a meeting, there has been an issue, a problem and she begins by saying, "Who knew...?" and everyone looks at the ceiling or the floor, and your mutter to yourself: "don't do it Jim, don't make eye contact with anyone, especially not the boss... oh please ask someone else..." Do you remember that sense of relief filling you, when it was Judas who was picked and not you? You sigh, to yourself, 'wow that was a close call!'

I am sure we have all shared the disciples' sigh of relief at some point. Judas lets us off the hook. We can point an accusing finger at him as a way, a reason, an excuse to not look at ourselves. We refuse to see that there may be more to Judas than his betrayal of Jesus. Why leads me to ponder if that means we 'betray' Judas?

The only time we hear about Judas in the Gospels is when he is in the list of the disciples names at the beginning of the story and then, in great detail, towards the end. 'The end of the story' Judas, the one who betrays Jesus, we know all about him. Yet, what about 'the beginning of the story' Judas? Surely, they go together, these two different aspects of his life. Would we want someone to pick a single event from our life and say that it defines who we are, who we have always been and who we will always be? Yet, that is what has been done to Judas. We do it to people we see on our television screens, to the people in our lives, and sometimes even to ourselves. No one is ever just 'one thing' or 'one moment'. Not Judas. Not you. Not me.

If you look through the four Gospels, you will find Judas' name twenty times. Nine times he is identified as a traitor, the one who betrays Jesus, and nine times he is identified as 'one of the twelve', one of the chosen, a disciple.

Have you ever wondered what Judas felt the day he was chosen as one of the disciples? What did he feel when Jesus called his name? What were his hopes and dreams? What excited him about Jesus? What gifts was he given? What was the promise he sought and followed in Jesus? What did Jesus entrust to him?

He had to have been entrusted with something because some sort of entrustment comes before a betrayal. You cannot betray unless you have something to betray: love, friendship, trust, confidence, responsibility, or a call.

Promise and risk always come together, for every promise made comes with the risk it might be broken or not fulfilled in the way we expect. Every gift is given with the risk that it might not be opened, it might be returned, it might be thrown away. It's not one or the other. It's both and the same.

Before Judas was ever the betrayer, he was an entrusted one. It is the same for each one of us. At some point, we have all been entrusted with something and we all carry

the risk that we might betray that trust. Yes, that is the story of Judas, but is it not our story too? For Judas is an image of ourselves and he holds before us the tension between trust and betrayal. A tension that lives within us, and a tension within which we live.

I wonder, what does that tension look like in your life? Look at the people, the relationships, the opportunities in your life. Look at your values and beliefs, your hopes and dreams. What have you been entrusted with? What gifts and promises have been given to you? In what way is Jesus calling you? What is Jesus asking of you today? How are you responding to Jesus?

Now, I do not want us to make this into a judgement between 'good or bad' or 'right and wrong'. Can we see how the complexities and contradictions that made up Judas' life, can also be found in ours. How can we let them inform and guide how we want to live?

Finally, let's not forget one more thing about Judas. His feet were washed just like the feet of the other disciples. He was loved by Jesus with the same love as the other disciples. With all the complexities and contradictions of his life he had a seat at the table with Jesus and there is a seat, at that same table, for all of us.

A Prayer written by the Rev. John Harvey:

Jesus, as we start once again to follow you on the way of the cross, we are apprehensive. For we are not sure of ourselves. On our journey we have often been afraid, often sought safe options, often fudged the sharp solution.

On our journey we have often tried to hide our real selves from others, from ourselves and from you. We, who dare to say we are following you, know how faltering are our footsteps, how delicate our discipleships, how feeble our faith.

Yet still you call us by name and invite us into your company and onto your road. So give us the courage and the commitment we need: help us to look out for one another on the road; show us how we may share the duty and the joy of discipleship, know that, in the end, it you who have blazed the trail, you who accompany us all the way, you who will meet us on the road, and say our name. Amen.

I want to thank you for taking the time to listen to this podcast today. We will return with a Maundy Thursday Podcast tomorrow. If you would like to find out more about our church, you can look at our website: www.eastwoodparishchurch.org.uk and you can also find us on Facebook at facebook.com/eastwoodparishchurch .

So until tomorrow, may grace, mercy and peace from Father, Son and Spirit be with you and all who you love, this day and forevermore. Amen.