

Lent Reflection Wednesday 31st March 2021 John 12:21-32 The betrayal of Judas

21 After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.”

22 His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. 23 One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. 24 Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, “Ask him which one he means.”

25 Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?”

26 Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. 27 As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

So Jesus told him, “What you are about to do, do quickly.” 28 But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. 29 Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor. 30 As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.

31 When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. 32 If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Tomorrow, is Maundy Thursday, where we consider the same Passover event in the Upper Room but focus on the humble foot washing of Jesus.

Today, we consider the story of Judas, son of Simon Iscariot. This is another familiar passage, but it is bursting with meaning and challenge.

You see Judas had far more first-hand knowledge about Jesus than we have ever had. He was a close disciple for several years. He saw the miracles, heard the teaching. He knew Jesus and yet, knowing him still didn't prevent his heart from hardening. It still didn't prevent him betraying Jesus and ultimately losing his life and soul for eternity.

We can miss the shock of Judas' betrayal through familiarity with this story, but we must remember that none of the Eleven even suspected. They never suspected that Judas was helping himself to money that was gathered for the poor – as recorded in John 12:4-6.

When he got angry with Mary for “wasting” her perfume on Jesus' feet, the synoptic gospel writers, tell us that the other disciples took his side and defended him.

Most startlingly, John tells us in our passage that when Jesus disclosed that one of the Twelve would betray him, no one suspected Judas even when Jesus made it perfectly obvious. V 25-26 John asked ‘Lord who is it? And Jesus answered It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread...’ And then gave it to Judas. How much plainer could he have made it without specifically naming him?

The disciples had no idea! You see they knew Judas, he had a good reputation, came from a good family; he was their friend. He couldn't possibly be working for the evil one. Humankind has a remarkable ability to present one thing on the outside whilst hiding something completely different on the inside and that's without the devil's help.

Judas looked like a believer on the outside, but on the inside he hadn't changed. He failed to live the life Jesus was calling him to. He still thought he could serve both God and money; have Jesus as an additional extra rather than Lord of his life. And he was blind to where such a double-minded journey would end.

Jesus appeals to him by humbly washing his feet. You see Jesus loves him as much as the other disciples.

Jesus pleads with him by quoting Psalm 41 in verse 18 *"Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread has lifted up his heel against me"* Judas would know that Jesus knew his intentions.

And again, Jesus gives him a final opportunity to repent. He could have refused the bread dipped in the sauce, a sauce used in the Passover meal that would have had a bitter taste to represent the slavery in Egypt. Poignantly here representing Judas's slavery to sin.

Tragically, Judas takes the bread and as he does, so Satan enters him. Satan had clearly already been at work, but at this moment, Judas made the choice between following God's ways or choosing to do what Satan asked of him. The passage says, he went out and it was night – Judas chose the dark.

Now, of course we don't get such a stark decision moment like this. We don't have Jesus standing in front of us giving bread dipped in the bitter herbs of enslavement saying – you choose.

But have we really left our old ways behind? Do we just enjoy the benefits of being part of the church, but fail to let go of pride, power, greed, anger, bitterness, addiction, ?

Jesus stands in front of us now and offers us a choice. Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching' ... Come and share in my glory.

Will you take the bread dipped in bitter sauce which leads to destruction or will you take the bread dipped in the blood of Jesus and come in loving obedience to the way of life?

Let us pray,

Jesus, we come to you in repentance.

Help us turn from our old ways and follow you.

Help us do the things of the light and let go of the things of the dark.

We praise you and thank you for dying for us, for offering us freedom and eternal life.

Today, I choose to come in obedient love.

Show me your ways and help me walk in them this day and for ever

In the name of Jesus

Amen.