



March Team Ministry

March Team St John, St Mary, St Peter, St Wendreda

Welcome

Tuesday of Holy Week

"Stay in touch, take care, keep safe, continue praying and God bless."

Andrew

We are offering a meditation each day for this very strange and exceptional Holy Week. We continue considering some of the events in the accounts of the Last Supper. After he washed feet, today we come to Jesus talking about those amongst his disciples who would betray and deny him.

A Prayer for this Holy Week

Jesus, our brother,
you followed the necessary path
and were broken on our behalf.

May we neither cling to our pain where it is futile,
nor refuse to embrace the cost when it is required of us:
that in losing our selves for you sake,
we may be brought to new life,

Christ our victim,
whose beauty was disfigured and whose body was torn upon the cross;
open wide your arms to embrace a suffering world,
that we may not turn away our hearts,
but abandon ourselves to your mercy
through Jesus Christ,
the passion of God.
Amen.

Gospel Reading – John 13 v21-38

After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, ‘Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.’ The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him; Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, ‘Lord, who is it?’ Jesus answered, ‘It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.’ So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, ‘Do quickly what you are going to do.’ Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him, ‘Buy what we need for the festival’; or, that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

When he had gone out, Jesus said, ‘Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, “Where I am going, you cannot come.” I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.’

Simon Peter said to him, ‘Lord, where are you going?’ Jesus answered, ‘Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow afterwards.’ Peter said to him, ‘Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.’ Jesus answered, ‘Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times.

Meditation

Jesus, in John's gospel, appears very much to be in control, both in this reading at the last Supper and throughout all the events of Good Friday. Not surprisingly, as he knows how things will unfold, he is troubled in Spirit, and he partially opens up indicating that he will be betrayed by one of those with whom he is dining, one who has shared in his life, one who shares his bread, and now one who will share death with him.

Not surprisingly some of the disciples react to this enigmatic announcement. No disciple wants to draw attention to themselves, with this accusation flying around, lest those who deny the most vigorously is seen as a guilty party. Jesus gives a coded answer that only the beloved disciple and Peter have the key to crack; and the one, Judas, who receives the role. In John's account, it is at Jesus's initiative that after receiving the dipped bread, the Tempter enters Judas; the other gospels have that Judas and the priestly hierarchy have already done a deal for a price of thirty pieces of silver. The other disciples just think Judas is carrying out his normal role at Jesus's behest, providing for them, or for the poor.

At the end of the reading Jesus tells Peter that he will deny Jesus three times that very evening before dawn breaks. John does not record Peter's protest, that he will never deny Jesus, which the other gospels record. Rather it is that Peter wishes to follow Jesus now, and Jesus has just said (enigmatically) that they cannot now follow him. What they can do is love one another, just as he has loved them, and just as the Father loves the Son.

If we follow the story forward, we learn that Peter tries to follow. He tries so hard to be close to Jesus, to see and hear what is going on, that three times when challenged he tries to avoid being removed or arrested. In contrast, the beloved disciple uses his connections to see and hear. He continues to witness the events, so that he is even there when Jesus is on the cross, and can receive Jesus's request to care for, and be cared for by Jesus's mother Mary. For the beloved disciple and Mary this is living out that command to love on another.

We shall return to whether and how the disciples can follow Jesus where he is going, in tomorrow's meditation, but for now we have this mandate, to love one another.(It is where the title comes from Maundy = Mandate.)

In today's language, we speak of a party standing on a Manifesto, and when elected they have a mandate to implement it. A Mandate is the putting into practice ideas and visions. So, at the last Supper Jesus gives us this commission.

Jesus talks about love elsewhere. Jesus quotes his tradition from the Old Testament about love. Jesus extends the challenge of love, not just to those whom it is easy or natural to love, but as far as anyone who can be a neighbour, and those who we regard, or who regard us, as enemies. It is a tall order.

Because the Father's love for the Son is without limit, so is the Son's love for his disciples, so can be their love for one another. Love cascades along, following God's initiative to love for no reason other than his very nature; without any requirement for love back; with an expectation which shatters the connection of reward and punishment.

This narrative is placed in John's gospel to prepare the disciples to understand the cross; they will not witness it; they will be behind locked doors in that same upper room all through the events we know as Good Friday. It is there for us now to give insight as we live once again Holy Week.

And we who in some way are spending this strange, particular and challenging Holy Week behind locked doors, have to ask about how we can show love to those in our household, to those we yearn to meet face to face, to those who are our neighbours, to those who are putting their own lives at risk as healthcare, social care, food provision or in many other ways. And how we can receive love, allowing others to express their love for us.

We may, like Judas, want to run away from the loving presence of God, and the challenge of his mandate to love. We may, like Peter, wish to follow, but find obstacles and have to be patient before we can understand or meet face to face. We may be like the beloved disciple, going further, having new relationships and witnessing the death of a loved one. Or we may have our own distinctive way of following, as had the nine or more other people in that upper room, whose journey through and beyond Holy Week is not recorded, but is just as real.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. Amen.

God bless, Andrew

From our Maundy Thursday Service.

The MANDATE

Minister: Our Lord Jesus Christ said: The first commandment is this:

All: **“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, is the only Lord.**

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,

with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.”

Minister: The second is likewise, namely this:

All: **“love your neighbour as yourself.”**

Minister: There is no other commandment greater than these.

All: **The love of Christ compels us, we are ambassadors for him.**

Minister: This is my commandment, a new commandment, I give to you;

All: **that you love one another as I have loved you.**

Minister: Greater love has no man than this

All: **that a person lay down his life for his friends.**

Minister: You are my friends, as you do what I command you.

All: **this I command you, that you love one another.**

Minister: As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love:

All: **that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be complete.**

Minister: Love your neighbour, as yourself.

All: **Love your enemies, do good to those that hate you.**

CONFESION

Our Lord Jesus Christ says:

“If you love me keep my commandments”

“Unless I wash you, you have no part in me”

Let us confess to God our Father our sins against his love.

**Lord Jesus Christ, we confess we have failed you
as did your first disciples, we ask for your mercy and help.**

Our selfishness betrays you:

Lord forgive us.

Lord, have mercy.

We fail to share the pain of your suffering:

Lord forgive us.

We run away from those who abuse you:

Lord forgive us.

Christ, have mercy.

You faced the crowd who shouted for blood:

we dared not object.

You stood before the ruler who washed his hands:

we accepted his decision.

You were mocked by the faithful

who feared for their power: we denied we ever knew you.

Lord, have mercy.

We are often slow to follow the example of Christ.

We often fail to be known as Christ’s disciples.

We often fail to walk the way of the cross.

Hear now the words of Jesus: “Your sins are forgiven; Go in peace; come and follow me.” Lead us now, O God, to acknowledge your costly generosity by living as forgiven people, until heaven and earth rejoice, and the whole earth cries Glory! Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**