



Even for Traitors

“Hey! Hey!” Peter gestures at John, tries to get his attention.

“Hey! Ask him which one he means!”

John nods, leans over against Jesus, as everyone else at the table keeps talking. John whispers, “Lord, who is it?”

Jesus sighs and says, “He is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.”

Jesus took the piece of bread, dipped it, and gave it to ...Judas Iscariot?

Judas looked shocked. Looked up at Jesus. “Surely not I, Rabbi?”

Jesus answered, “Yes. It is you. What you are about to do, do quickly.”

Judas got up and left.

John watched him go.

What could this mean? Their treasurer? Judas and Jesus had been so close for such a long time! And what could Judas possibly get for it? Money? How could anyone betray Jesus? After all he'd done?

Washing their feet! John's feet were still clean from Jesus reaching down with that cloth. No dirt, no dust on those feet. Everything Jesus touched, he cleansed, it seemed. What kind of masters served like that?

What kind of discipline would betray a master like that? How could Judas?

And then Jesus had taken the bread and broke it, the crumbs scattering to the table. Jesus said, “This is my body.”

Jesus had reached out in love so much. He had reached out, never abiding sin, but always reaching out in forgiveness. How could Judas reject him?

Jesus had poured out the gurgling wine and blessed the cup. And then he said, “This is my blood, which is poured out for you, for the forgiveness of sins.”

How could Judas say no to him?

No. John shook his head. That wasn't the question.

The question was... how could Jesus?

Jesus had always known what was going to happen. He must have known that Judas would betray him, and yet he reached out. What kind of love – what – what kind of love reaches out to someone you know will betray you? It doesn't make any sense!

Now John didn't know it yet, but Judas would be responsible. He would lead the guards to Jesus. He would hand Jesus over – to death. And yet Jesus reached out to him. Gave him every chance. He offered full forgiveness. How could Jesus do that to a man who would hand him over for just a few clinking coins?

Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself and will glorify him at once. My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me. Just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

John closed his eyes. “As I have loved you,” Jesus said. Even as Jesus loved the one who betrayed him.

Brothers and sisters, as we go into Lent, look at your sin honestly and confess the times that you have betrayed Jesus for a little bit of money. Or a little bit of comfort. Or to make your life a little easier. Confess with the full knowledge that Jesus still reaches out even to you in forgiveness.

And this story is true.

Some material in this story comes from Pastor Ken Cherney.
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