

Wednesday Holy week

John 13:21-32 (NIVUK)

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.

Reflection

Judas, despicable betrayer, driven by greed or even crucial player in the cosmic drama of salvation? These are just some of the ways in which we have judged Judas Iscariot. The disciples themselves hold different views as to what Judas is up to when he leaves the meal. We understand from the gospels that Judas receives 30 pieces of silver for identifying Jesus in the garden with a kiss and handing him over to the authorities. We hear too that Judas is then overcome by regret or remorse and takes his own life. Elements of the Judas story resonate with

most of us for which of us has not been betrayed or betrayed another or struggled with the love of money or taken decisive action from good or bad or mixed motives only to experience regret or remorse later. It seems strange to me therefore that Judas is so often cast out – put beyond the pale. He obviously found himself in his own inner hell but did that and his actions put him beyond the reach of God’s mercy?

Catherine of Siena in the ‘Dialogues’ tells of how the Lord revealed to her: that mercy was possible even for Judas. Can you go along with such a theology? If mercy for Judas then there is mercy and healing too for those who know his brokenness in their own experience.

In Dorset, in the village of Moreton, is the most amazing parish church of St Nicholas. In 1940 the church was hit by a bomb intended for a local military base. It took ten years to rebuild the church and the windows were replaced by horrible green glass blocks. Laurence Whistler was commissioned for the design of new windows behind the altar. Over the following 30 years window by window he transformed the building into a place filled with light. The windows are clear glass and engraved – the images seem to change with the sun – they are beautiful. One window was given by a young widow in remembrance of her husband who died in his Spitfire in a dogfight. The window shows the pilot’s view of the couple’s home and of Salisbury Cathedral. In the corner of the window is the wreckage of his plane and the dates of the couple’s marriage 1939-40.

One window caused great controversy. The one designed, created and donated by Whistler, the thirteenth window, which he called the ‘Forgiveness window’.

The people of Moreton were divided and decided not to accept the gift – it was too ugly and distasteful. Whistler lent the window to Dorchester museum with the instruction that if the people changed their mind then the window should be installed in the church. That’s what

happened but not until 2014 – 14 years after Whistler died?

Why the dislike of the window? It was of Judas taking his life. Why did Whistler call this the Forgiveness Window? Well, from the hands of the dying Judas coins spill on to the ground and from where they land flowers spring into bloom. The mercy of God, in this picture, extends even to the like of Judas. Even today, however, some can't accept the reach of God's love as shown in Christ – the window cannot be viewed from the inside – it has a stone memorial in front of it. It can only be seen from outside the church and is therefore dark and has to be viewed carefully to see the forgiveness depicted.

On this Wednesday of Holy Week as we hear of Judas' part in the passion and hear echo's of his behaviour and ways on our own living - let us also hear in our heart's again the extensive reach of the mercy and love of God through Christ our Lord.

Prayer

Living God, in this week of weeks help us as we listen again to the stories of your passion to hear the voice of your Spirit guiding us into a deeper awareness of the depth, height, length and breadth of your love for us in Christ.

Forgive us our betrayals and help us to forgive others. Help us put our trust in you and your ways not in things of creation. Move us from regret and remorse to find peace with the decisions and actions of the past.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Hymn there's a wideness in God's mercy STF 416

There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice,
Which is more than liberty.

There is plentiful redemption
In the blood that has been shed;
There is joy for all the members
In the sorrows of the Head.

There is grace enough for thousands
Of new worlds as great as this;
There is room for fresh creations
In that upper home of bliss.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of the mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

But we make his love too narrow
by false limits of our own;
and we magnify his strictness
with a zeal he will not own.

If our love were but more simple,
we should take Him at his word;
and our lives would be illumined
from the presence of the Lord.

~ Frederick W Faber (1814-63)

