

Maundy Thursday 2010 “Betrayed in the Night”
John 13:1-5, 12-17; Matt. 26:21-24; John 13:22-30.

This chapter tells the story of the Last Supper in the upper room, the betrayal of Judas and the denial of Peter. Contrasting the behavior of the disciples is the humble serving of Jesus as he washes the feet of the disciples. John gives us the most complete account of what happened that night in the upper room but John does not include the familiar words of Jesus which we use in our communion liturgy.

“**In the night in which he was betrayed...**” We hear these words each time we receive holy communion. We tend not to linger on that first phrase, “**in the night in which he was betrayed.**” We jump quickly to the other words...words which tell of Jesus taking the bread, giving thanks, giving it to his disciples and saying, “**this is my body, given for you.**” It is just like us to jump quickly to those words which tell what Jesus did for us. He died for us. He gave his life for us. But before we get to those words tonight we are going to linger for a few moments on those first words, “**In the night in which he was betrayed.**”

Two words describe it all. “Night” and “Betrayed”. It was night. For the gospel writer, John, the night is more than a description of the time of day. “Night” is used to describe the darkness of unbelief. John uses the word “night” or “darkness” many times in his gospel. In Chapter 1 he says, “**The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.**” (John 1:5). Nicodemus came to Jesus at night (Jn. 3:2). John says that Jesus, who was the light, was coming into the world “**but the world loved darkness more than light.** (John 3:19). Jesus said to his disciples, “**We must work while it is day; the night is coming when noone can work.**” (Jn. 9:4). When Judas betrayed Jesus he left the upper room and John records the event by saying, “**And Judas went out and it was night.**” (Jn. 13:30).

The night represents the darkness of this world. The night represents unbelief. The night is in opposition to the day and the light. It was night.

“**In the night in which he was betrayed.**” In the darkness of the night Jesus was betrayed by his own disciple.

It is easy for us to blame Judas for this betrayal but in fact; betrayal is something common to us all. We say in our confession each Sunday

morning, “We have sinned against You in thought word and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone.” Our actions, our words, our deeds or the absence of deeds condemn us. We betray Jesus every day. Perhaps our Sunday worship confession would hit home harder if we said, “We have betrayed you in our thoughts, words and deeds.”

Betrayal is the ultimate human treachery. To betray someone you must be close to someone, and trusted. To betray someone who loves you is the ultimate act of disloyalty. In our sin we betray Jesus...Jesus who loves us, Jesus who gave his life for us. We betray Jesus by our sin, by our lack of belief, by our unwillingness to follow him.

“**In the night when he was betrayed.**” Betrayal happens in the night, in the darkness of unbelief, in the darkness, hidden from the light. We also hide in the darkness of the night. We want to appear to be followers of Jesus, faithful disciples, but then we, like the disciples, find ways to abandon Jesus when the going gets tough. We abandon him because we are afraid of the world, afraid of the cost of discipleship, afraid of going against the values of the world. We betray Jesus in our thoughts, our words, and our deeds. And our betrayal leaves us in the darkness of the night.

But listen carefully.... “**In the night in which he was betrayed, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to his disciples saying, “This is my body, given for you...”** Jesus knows about the night. Jesus knows about our betrayal. And so Jesus gives us something to cling to in the night. He gives us something which even overcomes our betrayal. He gives us himself, his very life, his body and his blood, poured out for us on the cross. Jesus went into that dark night, looking for you. He embraced you in your betrayal. He took your sin on himself and he died for you. His words to you this night are words of love. “**This is my body, given for you.**”

So now, take these words of Jesus with you. Take this bread and wine. For in taking them here and now, in this night, your sins are forgiven and your betrayal is forgotten. Thanks be to God. Amen.

John 13: 1-5, 12-17

Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

¹It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

²The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. ³Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

¹²When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. ¹³"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Matthew 26:21-24

²¹And while they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me."

²²They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely not I, Lord?"

²³Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. ²⁴The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

John 13: 22-30

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

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

²⁶Jesus 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 Iscariot, son of Simon. ²⁷As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

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