

Judas' Feet

John 13:1-30

Greetings to all of you on this blessed Easter morning. As you know we will be celebrating Communion this morning, so I thought it might be good for us to revisit the very first Communion meal with Jesus and his disciples. But before that, I think a little back story might be helpful.

The Gospels tell the story of Jesus traveling the shores, towns, and countryside of Galilee calling his 12 disciples. The names are familiar to us: Simon (also called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James and John, the sons of Zebedee; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas, Matthew the tax collector; James, son of Alphaeus; Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot. These 12 were Jesus' trusted partners in ministry.

Perhaps one of the most trusted of these men was Judas Iscariot, since he was their treasurer and given responsibility of handling the money for the entire group.

We know that Jesus personally chose Judas because we have this testimony found in John 6:

⁵⁶ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷ Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your

ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”

⁶⁶ From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

⁶⁷ “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve.

⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”

⁷⁰ Then Jesus replied, “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!” ⁷¹ (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)

Each of these men was given great responsibility in ministry. As this story from Matthew 10 explains:

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: ... ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

All 12 disciples were given the authority to heal the sick and raise the dead, including Judas Iscariot. We don’t often think of Judas outside of

his betrayal of Jesus, but there it is! Judas was given authority to heal and raise the dead just like the others.

Other than these two references there is little to tell us about the time Jesus and Judas spent together during Jesus' three-year ministry. One other reference from John's gospel that takes place before the story of Judas' betrayal may show some strain in their relationship:

³Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

⁴But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ⁵“Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages,” ⁶He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

One might wonder why Judas was chosen in the first place and then why he was given a position of such responsibility as that of treasurer. Perhaps it was so that Jesus could model what he meant when he preached:

⁴³“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for

those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5)

From the Gospel stories, we see that Judas' feet trod the same seashores, highways and byways, that Jesus trod. He, like the others, would shake the dust off his feet anywhere that the Word was not welcomed. Judas' feet walked with the crowd shouting Hosanna as Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Then later that same week, Judas' feet would carry him to the Temple courts to betray Jesus. So, when Jesus knelt to wash his disciples' feet at the Passover feast, he set an example for them to follow, for us to follow! Knowing that Judas was set to betray him, Jesus still washed Judas' feet! What an act of divine grace and forgiveness on display!

As we read the story of the Last Supper, we see that the other disciples are surprised to learn that one of their own would betray Jesus. We, like the disciples, like to believe that people who are capable of this kind of betrayal are such horrible human beings that everyone would know and be on guard. This is simply not the case. Only Jesus knew the heart and mind of Judas.

We don't know the motives behind Judas' betrayal, that is something that has been debated for millennia. What we do know is that one of Jesus' trusted allies turned on him and that Jesus still offered him forgiveness. We may struggle with this overwhelming gift of

forgiveness as we confront others who have betrayed us. Or perhaps we believe that we are not worthy of this kind of forgiveness for the times we have betrayed others, even if unintentionally.

As we come to the Lord's table this morning, let us be mindful of the grace and forgiveness present in the bread and cup that is offered to us. May we leave this place filled with the Holy Spirit to allow us to forgive as Jesus forgave and love as Jesus loved.

Come, the table has been prepared for us...

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