

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28

JESUS SHARES A MEAL WITH JUDAS (JOHN 13:21-32)

If you knew that your dinner gathering was going to turn dark and dangerous, would you still host the event? If you knew that one of your closest friends was about to betray you, would you still share a meal with him or her? If you knew that your betrayer was leaving your table in order to have you arrested and killed, would you still allow him or her to leave?

If your enemy were sitting right next to you, would you pass him or her the bread?

Jesus demonstrates his holiness by extending hospitality, grace, and kindness to Judas Iscariot while they are reclining at the dinner table. The tenderness of this holy moment cannot be ignored. At this time of year, we often remember the Last Supper, which is not recorded in John but only in the synoptic gospels. For John, though, Jesus shares his last meal with his soon-to-be betrayer. These two men will never see each other again, except for a moment when Judas returns with soldiers to have Jesus arrested. Both men will be dead by the weekend.

Jesus knows that Judas will betray him! He has predicted this betrayal and his upcoming death on multiple occasions. Jesus could have taken any opportunity to avoid this last encounter with Judas, and perhaps the betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion could have been avoided.

When Jesus was asked which disciple was going to betray him, he could have whispered Judas's name under his breath. He could have made a subtle gesture in Judas's direction. He could have told the disciples to wait a few hours, and they would find out later. Remarkably, Jesus identifies his betrayer – and apparently initiates his betrayal – by taking a piece of bread, dipping it in the dish, and sharing it with Judas.

How many times have you taken a piece of bread, taken a cup of juice or wine, and given thanks for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus? How many times have you experienced the nearness of God in the midst of that holy meal? Perhaps you will have that experience once again on Maundy Thursday or Good Friday. We count it an immense blessing that Jesus chooses to share a meal with us, his disciples, his followers, his friends.

How astounding, then, that Jesus shares his last meal before death with a friend who will betray him before the night is through.

The holiness of Jesus is revealed through his love for all people. His love is marked by incredible hospitality: no one is excluded from the table of the Lord, not even those who would harm him. And his love is also marked by beautiful self-sacrifice: he gives himself away so that others might live.

Our world is so fractured into categories of “good people” and “bad people.” Can you imagine how revolutionary it would be if followers of Jesus sat down at the table with their enemies? Can you picture yourself passing the bread to someone whom you dislike or someone who is out to get you? Can you imagine sharing a meal with someone who has publicly wronged you or has been aggressive toward you or your loved ones? What would holy love, holy fellowship, holy hospitality look like in your community? How can Jesus be present in the midst of your most difficult relationships?