

## **Holy Tuesday 2017**

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### **Reading**

John 13.21-33, 36-8

When he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now is the Son of man glorified'.

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

It is easy, perhaps especially during Lent, to focus on our sin—our betrayals. But in reality, our sin is really quite boring. It is mundane, ordinary, and just plain boring.

When we read the narratives of Judas's betrayal or Peter's denial of Jesus, it is easy to focus on them and their actions, but this is not at all what the story is about. It is so tempting to point the finger, to see how miserably pathetic they both are to betray their

friend—whether for coin or for self-protection. But this is all, in the end, just like our own sin, really quite boring.

The behaviour of both Peter and Judas was no surprise at all to Jesus. He tells Judas he will betray him. He warns Peter that he will deny him. And already as far back in John 6, Jesus indicated that he knew where Judas was headed. Yet, on this night in the upper room, he still, even so, reaches down to wash Judas's feet; he still, even so, breaks bread with him.

And Jesus tells Peter that while he cannot follow him at that time, he would in the future. The indication being that forgiveness awaits Peter, before he even commits the deed.

'My love cannot be defeated by your betrayal, Judas, or your denial, Peter', Jesus is saying. 'You will not be the end of my love for you'.

This is how we can make sense of Jesus's obscure claim that through the betrayal of Judas he is glorified. It is not just that the betrayal was necessary in order to then lead Jesus to the cross and resurrection and therefore unto glory. This is not merely sequential: first betrayal, then glory.

The glorification is in the expression of pure divine love. The gift of a love without measure, without boundaries, without limitations; an indiscriminate and free love that cannot be overcome: not by betrayal, not by desertion, not even by death.

We know very little about Peter's motives for denying Christ, the text says only that he was afraid. And we know nothing at all about Judas's motives.

Mountains of ink and paper have piled up through the centuries speculating his rationale for betraying his leader and friend: perhaps he was angry that Jesus did not turn out to be the triumphant political figure he expected to deliver the Jews from Roman imperial rule, perhaps he was just greedy and wanted

the pay-off. But the text is silent, it does not wish to indulge our curiosities.

Because the sins of Judas, or Peter, or you, or me, are not the point of the story. The unfathomable, boundless, perfect and glorious love of Jesus is the point of the story—it's always the point of the story.

John's Gospel here notes a seemingly rather insignificant detail, which says quite a lot. It says of Judas, 'So, after receiving the morsel, he immediately went out; and it was night' (13.30).

Judas turns out into the darkness. He turns towards the night. But in the midst of the darkness is the glorified Christ. In the midst of the night, the light of God's perfect love breaks through. John has already told us, remember, 'the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it' (1.5).

So in the midst of our struggle, our fears, our miserably boring sin, the glory we meet this Holy

Week, the glory we meet at this altar, is a love that  
nothing, that no darkness, can ever overcome.