

**Welcome and Introduction** ... tonight we gather around a table, a little like the disciples did with Jesus at the last supper, so help us engage with that evening. It was an intimate setting away from the crowds that Jesus, knowing his time had come to leave this world and go to the Father (Jn.13:1) created that time to share important words with the apostles.

The Gospel writers record the events in different ways, Matthew, Mark and Luke give the shortest summaries: During the meal Judas was released by Jesus to go and do what Satan had put in Judas' heart and Jesus predicted Peter's denial. John includes much more.

He has Jesus washing the disciples' feet; yes, including Judas Iscariot despite knowing 'the devil had already prompted Judas' (Jn.13:2 NIV).

He has a conversation with Thomas, who asks where Jesus is going. Likewise with Philip and then with Judas (not Iscariot).

And John records Jesus' words. Subjects include teaching about the Holy Spirit, of enduring relationship with Jesus but difficult relationship with people of the world.

As we gather around a table tonight, sharing in the supper, we too enter into the story and listen to some of Jesus words. Like the disciples, we too are invited to an enduring relationship with him.

### **Worship Song, Abide with me # 2**

**Words: John 13:8-11**, 'No,' said Peter, 'you shall never wash my feet.'

Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.'

'Then, Lord,' Simon Peter replied, 'not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!'

Jesus answered, 'Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.' For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean. (NIV)

### **On Cleanliness ...**

A previous meal Jesus attended was also interrupted by a washing ceremony. (John has it about a week before the last supper and Luke earlier). Part way through there is a major incident where a woman comes in and pours an expensive perfume over Jesus' feet. When Luke recalls the incident he has Jesus gently chiding his host for not providing water for Jesus to wash his feet when he arrived (Lk.7:44). Perhaps the Hebrews' nomadic tradition for guests to wash the dust off before the meal was not practiced in the city? But both on that occasion and on this, washing does not happen before but interrupts the meal.

Why the interruption? The interruption is integral to the way God works. A person only ever responds to God already being present. Even when someone cries out, 'God if you're there, show yourself to me' is making a response of heart where, deep down, the knowledge and presence of God is rooted, though hidden. Many people think they have to 'clean up their act' or 'put on their best behaviour' to convince God that they are worthy of his attention,

but Jesus shows it differently. He starts the meal, which in this context is not simply about sharing food but of meeting, and then Jesus interrupts proceedings to draw attention to the relationship he has already started.

For Peter the interruption is, at first, unwelcome and he resists but on being told it is necessary, Peter goes all in, wash all of me! And here Jesus reveals the washing had already begun and now only the feet that had got dirty along the way needed to be cleansed. We learn from the interaction that a full ritual of washing was not necessary. The disciples have already received that ritual, through baptism by water, but even with Jesus being right there with them they continued to get dirtied by the dust of life.

The interruption reminds us that Jesus has already begun his work of cleansing, as Paul also told the church at Philippi, 'he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.' (Philippians 1:6 NIV) and what transpires is that Jesus will continue to interrupt his disciples' wanderings so that they be refreshed, reminded of His presence and anointed to go and bear His good news (Rom.10:15/Isa.52:7)

Tonight, we too are interrupted from our normal Thursday evening as we re-enact a meal with Jesus. Like the first disciples, the work of cleansing has already begun in us but we need the cleaning away of the daily dust and so we say together the words Jesus taught the disciples, as recorded by Matthew,

**'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one'**

(Matt.6:9b-13 NIV)

Sadly, shockingly when Jesus told the disciples they needed only their feet washing for they were already clean, he ended his sentence with the words, 'though not every one of you' (verse 10). This is revealed in the next words of Jesus,

**Words: John 13:21-26,** 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.'

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.'

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

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. (NIV)

We enter into the shock of this moment by sharing the bread together, though not like Judas Iscariot who ran away and betrayed Jesus. We share it in the way the other disciples did, as

participating in Jesus' life with a reminder that his body was about to be broken but that breaking was the breaking of the bondage of sin.

As we share, we are reminded that the word sin symbolises the running away from Jesus and denial of his presence rooted in us through our being made in God's image. The cleansing that we have already heard about ensures our feet run toward Jesus, not away, and so let us share together...

< **Sharing the bread** >

**Words: John 13:33 & 36-38**, 'My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: where I am going, you cannot come.'

Simon Peter asked him, 'Lord, where are you going?'

Jesus replied, 'Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.'

Peter asked, 'Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.'

Then Jesus answered, 'Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the cock crows, you will disown me three times!'

**On Denial (Judas & Peter)**

These words remind us all too quickly that we want to follow Jesus, but we struggle for there are none who are strong enough to stay on the path of good news without Jesus' cleansing and anointing. As Jesus predicted, Peter the brave failed at his first attempt, discovering that when his life was at risk his heart failed him, and he denied Jesus three times. Suddenly, he finds himself doing a similar thing to Judas Iscariot, though Peter's betrayal was of Jesus' trust and a loss of confidence in Jesus' presence within, not of who Jesus was and is as the Christ, Messiah.

It is a humbling moment, though even here a seed of hope was laid, for Jesus knew what Peter would do and in Luke's account we have the words of Jesus saying, 'Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.' (Luke 22:31-32 NIV)

It stands as a stark reminder that each and every disciple needs the company of Jesus and the other disciples.

**Worship Song, Broken Vessels (All these pieces ... amazing grace) #2721**

**Words: John 14:1-2, 5-7**, 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?'

Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?'

Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.' (NIV)

### **Comfort Offered ...**

Jesus offers comfort both for today and tomorrow. The comfort for tomorrow is that Jesus goes to prepare a place for his followers with the good news that there is room for them all. It is Thomas this time who voices a reaction with a pragmatic, but linear observation - we need to know both the destination and the way there.

Jesus' reply, 'I am the way and the truth and the life' (verse 6) does answer Thomas' enquiry by showing him that there is only one path to the Father's house, and that path is Jesus himself. There is no other way.

Perhaps Thomas was a good navigator? Maybe he would have had the skill in today's world of developing directions for Google maps? Had he done that, however, we would not be given alternative routes, one marked with '5 mins slower' or another 'this avoids the accident'. There is only one way, and it is not hidden but is present in Jesus the Christ.

Jesus' answer also roots the comfort he gives in who the Father is. The Father's house is not pictured as a far-flung destination belonging to a stranger but as a home that Jesus will bring his disciples into where they too have personal connection and identity in the Father.

After this Philip joins the conversation too because he cannot figure out how knowing Jesus automatically means knowing the Father. Jesus' replies to Philip saying, 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me' (Jn.14:11 NIV).

This supper around the table is greater than the disciples gathered with Jesus, for the Father is there in Jesus. Our horizon is widened and deepened as we discover that to be a disciple of Jesus is to enter into the story of creation and re-creation. And not to enter that world merely as an observer, but as someone invited and welcomed into the Father's house.

**Words: John 14:15-16, 21, 26-28,** 'If you love me, keep my commands. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you for ever.

Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.'

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. <sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

<sup>28</sup> 'You heard me say, "I am going away and I am coming back to you." If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

### **Promise of the Holy Spirit ...**

If the cleansing and anointing, sharing and comfort offered so far in the supper were not enough, Jesus offers still more. Again, he says, 'do not let your hearts be troubled' (verse 27) for all those that go the way of Jesus, being loyal to his Word will be gifted an advocate, someone who encourages and supports with authority and confidence, because he too is Part of God. As Jesus describes Him, we can imagine that it is He, the Holy Spirit who will continue the tradition of washing the disciples' feet and anointing them with the Words of God to go share the good news of Jesus.

However, for that to happen, Jesus must first complete his mission and that means leaving them for a time as he returns to the Father.

### **Worship Song Behold the Lamb #1724**

**The Vine, John 15:5 & 12-17,** 'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

My command is this: love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last – and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: love each other.

< **Sharing the Wine** > which is to commit into the fruitful relationship of love and obedience described by Jesus...

### **Words: John 17:1-5,**

After Jesus said this, he looked towards heaven and prayed:

'Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. <sup>2</sup> For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. <sup>3</sup> Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. <sup>4</sup> I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup> And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

### **Worship Song, From Heaven You Came #120**

### **Blessing: Jesus' prayer, John 17:20-23**

'My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, <sup>21</sup> that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one – <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me – so that they may be brought to complete unity.

Maundy Thursday, Gathering Around the Words of Jesus

Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. ***Amen***

**Youth Team : Holy Forever**

**... Refreshments**