

## **Maundy Thursday: The Betrayal of Love**

The last night of Jesus' life is all about love: a ritual of touch and washing done in love, a meal of love, words of love. A love we are invited into. A love we are challenged to live into with each other. And to take into the world.

But this is no easy comfortable festival of love, no easy feast of sentimentality. This is love in all it's rawness, vulnerability and demanding nature.

Tonight we wash each other's feet as Jesus washed the feet of the disciples. But it is more than just a re-enactment of foot washing or a memorial meal. We re-member in our own flesh – we relive, know as real - the presence, the suffering, the conquering love of the divine made flesh. And our flesh recalls the failure to love as we might of all human flesh. Tonight we remember both grace and betrayal, passion and panic, love and despair.

Tonight we remember that Jesus the Christ loves us more fully and passionately than we can bare. Like Peter we cry out in protest. Like Judas we take what is on offer and run. Like the disciples we don't really get what we are being initiated into. And yet, unready as we are, unworthy though we are, unequipped as we are for the sacred ritual of selfless love, we come. We come to be washed. And we come to wash the feet of our sisters and brothers.

Tonight we remember that we are prone to betray love. Like Peter we have and no doubt will again, deny we know our Lord. Like Judas we are prone to cash in on our faith and so to betray. Like all the disciples we are prone to be missing in action, vanished in the night, when the work of love is to be done.

Tonight we see the terrible truth that in the face of love we fail. We fail to be able to accept love, we fail to live according to that love. And yet love does not grow less because of our failure. Love itself is not made less by our betrayal.

Jesus having told the disciple he loves that the one who will betray him will reveal himself in the eating of bread dipped in the bowl, then takes the bread and the cup after the meal, to give us the greatest symbol of love and source of nourishment. Rather than being defeated love is impassioned and emboldened by our failure. Just when any sane person would despair Jesus digs deeper into his heart and serves his people and prays for them before he is taken away to suffer. When his love was misunderstood and betrayed he gave more. Only a fool. Only a fool for love. Only the foolishness of God, that is wiser than the wisdom of humans, would think to solve the problem of love betrayed by the gift of more love, of even greater love.

And tonight we remember that we are invited to love one another in such a way. To love more than is sensible or deserved or even desired by the other. To love when betrayed. To love when misunderstood. To love even when we don't know how.

And when we fail in that call to be loving, to know that the response of Jesus was and always will be to keep right on loving us.

Even so, come Lord Jesus.