



Maundy Thursday

Would you have invited Judas to your dinner party?

Imagine you are in the process of deciding who should be on your guest list for your next dinner party.

You'd love to catch up with friends you haven't seen for a while. You'll be sure to invite friends who are good communicators, so they can be sat next to the non-talkers!

You could invite the couple who recently moved into the neighbourhood, and perhaps your friends from your local club ... and with those people listed, your table is pretty much full.

But, what if the dinner party was your last one – maybe you are leaving to live in another country, and decided to have one last meal with those who are most important to you.

You'd probably invite your family, your closest and dearest friends, those who have stood by you through the darkest times of your life.

There is one kind of person that I don't think would be on any of our guests lists: the person who, you know with absolute certainty, was about to betray you and has been embezzling money from you for the last three years.

Would you have invited Judas to your dinner party?

I'm positive I wouldn't. But that is exactly what Jesus did.

And it is not like Jesus invited Judas in a begrudging way – ensuring he was positioned as far away from Jesus as possible.

Rather Jesus graciously invited Judas, sharing a table, washing his feet, breaking bread with him, and even allocating to him the place of honour – all the while knowing that in just a few hours, his 'so-called' friend would go and sell his friendship to his enemies, the chief priests and pharisees.

Let's go back and have a look at what happened at that final dinner party.

Jesus and his disciples were just settling down in the upper room, about to begin to share their final meal.

Before any had started eating however, Jesus stood up and stripped down to his under garments. He took up a towel and bowl of water and began to wash the feet of each of the disciples.

This behaviour would have been shocking to everyone.

Foot washing was the job performed only by servants.

Yet Jesus went from disciple to disciple washing their grubby, dirty feet.

Now, Peter was so taken aback from having his feet washed that he protested.

So, Jesus explained what he was doing.

"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." (John :14-15)

I wonder what Jesus was thinking as he poured water over all those dirty feet?

Jesus knew that Judas was about to betray him – yet he still washed his feet.

Jesus knew that Peter would deny him three times – yet he still washed his feet.

Jesus knew that all the disciples would soon desert him – yet he still washed their feet.

In other words, Jesus knew that every one of them would fail him – yet he was still prepared to wash their feet and call them his friends.

Doesn't that challenge you?

If we had known, what Jesus knew about Judas, would we have invited Judas to our dinner party?

Would we be prepared to get down on our hands and knees and wash our enemy's feet?

We don't like to think that we have enemies. But really, in this context, anyone who has said hurtful words, criticised us, spoke about us behind our back, could we be regarded as our enemy.

Someone who fits into that category may even be popping in your mind now. Would we be prepared to wash that person's feet?

We'll consider that more in a moment.

But just as the shocking teaching moment ended, and they began to break bread and share Passover meal, Jesus made a startling announcement.

He said, "someone is going to betray me".

The very suggestion horrified all of them. They each had a moment of conviction, inwardly wondering whether they themselves might be the betrayer, as each says, "Surely, not I" (Mark 14:19).

They had no idea who Jesus was speaking about.

Simon Peter, being the kind of guy who thinks with his mouth, asked John (who was reclining near Jesus) to ask Jesus the identity of the betrayer.

Jesus responded to John, saying, *"It is he to whom I shall give this piece of bread when I have dipped it."* Then he gave the bread to Judas Iscariot.

Now that gesture has special significance. Giving a special morsel of bread which you have personally dipped into the sauce, is usually only extended to the one person in the group you deem as your special friend that night.

And if you study the seating arrangements, you'll notice that Judas is seated to the left of Jesus, the place marked for the most honoured guest.

If we had a dinner party, would we sit our enemy – one who was about to betray us – in the place of honour?

I know I wouldn't.

But at this last dinner Jesus showed us how we are to treat not only our Christian brothers and sisters, but also how we are to treat our enemies – those people that we really find it hard to be around.

He told us one way was to wash their feet.

In many ways Jesus was actually practicing what he had preached earlier.

Remember how Jesus instructed us to treat our enemies:

²⁷ "Listen, all of you. Love your *enemies*. Do *good* to those who *hate* you. ²⁸ Pray for the happiness of those who *curse* you; implore God's blessing on those who *hurt* you.

²⁹ "If someone slaps you on one cheek, let him slap the other too! If someone demands your coat, give him your shirt besides. ³⁰ Give what you have to anyone who asks you for it; and when things are taken away from you, don't worry about getting them back. ³¹ Treat others as you want them to treat you.

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³⁵ "Love your *enemies*! Do good to *them*! Lend to *them*! And don't be concerned about the fact that they won't repay. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as sons of God: for he is kind to the *unthankful* and to those who are *very wicked*. (Luke 6:27-35)

But, how are we exactly to follow Jesus' quite explicit command: 'to wash each other's feet'.

I can practically hear what you're thinking – "I don't particularly want anyone washing my feet!"

To give you one idea of how foot washing can be a powerful action that demonstrates humility and grace I'd like to show you how a minister in the past applied Jesus' command.

The year is 1968, and Pastor Chuck Smith knew that his church, Calvary Chapel was slowly dying. While he desired to reach the young, hippie generation, he felt ill equipped knowing the huge generational wall that stood between them.

One day, his daughter gave a ride to a colourful hippie hitchhiker named Lonnie Frisbee, who said he was traveling around and telling people about the ministry of Jesus. Although Pastor Chuck was suspicious of this young Jesus-loving hippie, the Spirit helped soften his heart and he welcomed him and the host of young people that accompanied him to his church and his home.

Well, the existing members of his church are not so happy, as these hippies were causing a major disturbance!

Let's see how Pastor Chuck handled it.



(Note to readers: We'll watch a 3 minute extract from *The Jesus Revolution*.

Now, we may not be called to wash the feet of young hippies.

But we are called to welcome with open arms those whom society calls the outcast, the lonely, the homeless, the different, and those who don't seem to want to wear any label!

And as Jesus showed this same welcome to Judas, we know we are called to offer open arms even to those who we know will betray us and steal from us.

Every one of us finds this difficult.

However, it is the mark of our belonging to Christ.

So, this Easter, let us pray for the Spirit to stir our heart for the lost, empowering us to invite – even our betrayer – to our next dinner party.