

+WEEKLY SERMON

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Jesus's love for Judas

John 13: 31-35

Today's Gospel reading is taken from Chapter 13 of John's Gospel: The Last Supper.

Our passage begins immediately after Judas walks out of the Upper Room, into the darkness, to betray Jesus.

And yet, what great love Jesus shows towards Judas that very night!

That night, Jesus has been washing the feet of the Judas and the other disciples – a mark of humble service, often performed by servants – so that Peter is scandalised.

More than that, we know from John's Gospel that Jesus singles Judas out that night for honour and affection.

'The beloved disciple' was reclining on Jesus' right during the meal. But Jesus and Judas were able to have a private conversation during the meal, so Judas must have been reclining on Jesus' left – which in that society was the place of highest honour.

Jesus also offers Judas 'a piece of bread dipped in the dish' – again, in Jesus' society, this was a sign of particular affection.

See, then, how Jesus loved Judas! Elsewhere, Jesus tells us to love our enemies. Here, at the Last Supper, he shows us what this looks like.

All of this points us to the next day – to Good Friday and the Cross.

There, at Calvary, Jesus freely chooses to die a death reserved for slaves and subjugated peoples.

There, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21).

There, "while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son" (Romans 5:10).

There, in short, we see most clearly the love of God. And this is why Jesus speaks of his 'glorification' at the Last Supper and at Calvary. His glory is made manifest there because there we see with new clarity his divine love.

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This love is a light which can reach us in our darkest moments.

'It was night.' (*John 13:30*) This is how John describes the scene when Judas goes to betray Jesus. The darkness is closing in. But the light of the glory of God's love was shining. The light was shining in the darkness, and the powers of darkness did all they could to overpower it. But they could not do so (see *John 1:5*).

This is the faith we celebrate in Eastertide. We do so most beautifully when we seek to love others as Jesus has loved us.

Bishop Joe Kennedy, Bishop of Burnley