

## Bennochy church 28<sup>th</sup> October 2012

It is appropriate to end our stewardship season with communion, for what better way to reflect and act upon the love shown to us by God in Jesus Christ. *“This is my body, broken for you”*.

The story of the Passover meal in Mathew’s gospel begins with a very different response. I don’t understand Judas. He had lived within the community of Jesus disciples for about 3 years. He had heard firsthand the word of Jesus, had witnessed the miracles, and yet was willing to betray him. What will you give me he asked, and the deed was sealed with 30 silver coins, the average Old Testament compensation for the death of a slave. Jesus is sold cheaply. Was there something in his character that just wanted the money? Did he hold a grudge? Who knows?

We betray Jesus all the time. We can’t help it. We are human. Thank God that he knows what we are like! Did Jesus know what was in the mind of Judas? Yes he did and he did not try to stop him. *“Surely teacher, you don’t mean me?”* Do we ever say that to God? I think if we are honest with ourselves, the answer is yes. So maybe there is more of Judas in us than we would like to admit.

As the situation unfolds Jesus is totally upfront with his disciples. During the Passover meal, he says to his friends who gathered around him. *“I tell you, one of you will betray me”*.

Can you imagine their astonishment as they share together this intimate meal of Passover? They probably looked around at one another. ‘Who is it, Jesus, it’s not me. I wouldn’t do that.’ For after all Jesus accusation was vague, all of them had dipped their bread in the dish with him.

I am sure there are times we have been accused of things and full of indignation we have refuted them. Tap into those kind of emotions and feelings and I think you will get a sense of what is going on in that room. Emotions are rising.

Judas seems to have been the last to respond. Only after Jesus spells out the consequences of betrayal, does he say something. Is he beginning to have second thoughts? It seemed a good idea at the time to take the money. But it is too late. Judas has made his choice. His response to the love of God is betrayal.

After the breaking of bread and the sharing of the wine, they go out to the Mount of Olives. And in response to Jesus’ image of the scattering of the sheep, note, by God himself, symbolises their loss of faith and the bold Peter speaks up. A man of passion, who did not always engage the brain before the mouth! *“I will never leave you, even though all the rest do!”* The disciples were probably still taking in Jesus words, maybe again looking at each other and wondering how to respond. Does he mean me! Will I run away? I am a stronger man than that! Hey wait a minute, what is Peter saying? I am going to run away but he is not!

In the heat of all these words and emotions Jesus brings Peter crashing back down to earth! Brave words, but the reality will be very different. You will also betray me! Soon, this very night.

If we were Peter, in the heat of the moment, I think we might respond in exactly the same way. *“I will never say that, even if I have to die with you!”* The rest joined in. It is now the bravado of the crowd? We know what happened, the cock crowed.

Peter’s motivation was good. Not pieces of silver but to stand in solidarity with his master. But none the less, the betrayal still took place.

It is easy to speak as part of a crowd, but under pressure when it is just us, we can often give in. Our faith is strengthened as part of a community of faith, but sometimes so much more vulnerable and fragile out in the real world.

We gather around the table of bread and wine invited by Jesus. He knows our weaknesses, even our acts of betrayal, yet his love and forgiveness is offered to each one of us. May we share this act together that is might strengthen our faith, and when our brave words sometimes turn to nothing, may we always know the supporting hand of God upon our lives.

Our stewardship is our response to the gifts of God, and none is greater than the giving of his son Jesus Christ, who invites us, *‘to take, eat, this is my body broken for you’*. Amen.