

A Podcast for North Coventry Group – April 8 2020 (Wednesday of Holy Week)

Hello and welcome to a podcast for and from the North Coventry Group of United Reformed Churches. We are making a pilgrimage through Holy Week, an online one - as we cannot meet in our churches. In each short podcast we begin and end with some music, reflect in a number of ways on Holy Week scripture, and pray. Details of music and sources are in the online transcript. Our scripture is all taken from John's Gospel.

Music* – *No Holly for Miss Quinn*, a piano piece written and performed by Enya.

Scripture†: John 13.21-30

²¹ 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.'

²² 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.'

²⁵ Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, 'Lord, who is it?' ²⁶ 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. ²⁷ As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

So Jesus told him, 'What you are about to do, do quickly.' ²⁸ But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. ²⁹ Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor. ³⁰ As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.

Reflection

If you were asked to recreate the story of Holy Week, episode by episode, then without doubt you would remember how Jesus announces this fore-knowledge of his betrayal, even seems to encourage it. And you would recall how Jesus shows his love for his disciples by washing their feet, despite Peter's protestations.

What sometimes comes as a bit of a shock, when you look at different passages at different times, is that Judas leaves to carry out his betrayal *after* Jesus has washed his feet. And Jesus, of course, has washed the feet even of the one who would betray him. His forgiveness stretched that far.

Some arms of the church have seen Judas as an utterly inescapable part of the story and such a clear collaborator *with* Jesus in bringing about his arrest that he should almost be rehabilitated. For others the crime of unfaithfulness, treachery, can never be excused. The Italian poet Dante places Judas alongside Brutus and other traitors of history in the uttermost depths of Hell. Of course you will find 'judas' in our dictionaries as a synonym for traitor.

The chief priests had put it about that they wanted to find Jesus on his own; they wanted someone to tell them where he could be found. Had there been such things in first-century Palestine, there would have been 'Wanted' posters around the place. Someone was going to find him. Jesus seems remarkably unperturbed, and his concern at this point seems more to try to get the message home to his remaining disciples of who he was and how they ought to view him and his relationship with God his Father. There is so much material in this part of the Gospel that you wonder you could fit it in around a Passover meal and

everything else that is going on. Maybe John the Gospel writer has purposely assembled all of this key teaching in one place, embellished it and amplified it, but then again it seems all too likely that Jesus would be rushing to ram home the message, trying to remind them just one more time while there was time. Though of course they were not all yet fully on board.

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.'

Philip said, 'Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.'

Jesus answered: 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.'

This is a story about real people. People with frailties. People giving in to temptation. People like Peter, faltering and fearful yet a foundation for the Church. People adopting extreme measures to achieve their ends. People who could listen and listen and still not get the point.

In amongst all that there is someone like me, with all my faults. Someone like you. And Jesus loved them all, loves us all, and died – once, and for all.

Prayers, to background music: *Take, O take me as I am* by John Bell

Lord God, just as Jesus knew his disciples' feelings before they spoke, their intentions before they acted and their potential despite their occasional blankness and hesitancy, so you know us.

Help us to cope with the knowledge that you know us inside out and have known us since our birth. You are always encouraging us to know you more.

The disciples of Jesus had all of our frailties and yet we are here, the Church is active in your world because they succeeded in their mission. May we realise we too can take the Church forward through dark days when all the odds seem against us. May we rejoice that you never call us to service we can not cope with, whatever our apprehensions.

Show us what our role is as our world suffers, through a pandemic of disease that does not stop to ask the race, the class, the education or the religious affiliation of its victims.

Be with those who already have a role and, as if learning the lesson of the disciples at Passover, are putting others' good before their own. Bless them and keep them safe. May they know support, and that they are valued and loved.

In the name of Jesus, himself vulnerable and yet overcoming fear to triumph. Amen

Music – *No Holly for Miss Quinn*

* All music included in this podcast is made available for download under the terms of the PRS for Music Limited Online Music Licence number LE-0019067. The Enya piece is from the album *Shepherd Moons*.

† Bible quotations are all taken from the New International Version, Anglicised Edition.