

# **“Love at the Table of Our Lord”**

**Exodus 12:1-14, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, John 13:1-15**

**Part VIII of X in the Sermon Series  
“The Journey Back to Love”**

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From the Pulpit

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## **“Love at the Table of Our Lord”**

Exodus 12:1-14, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, John 13:1-15

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Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of each one of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our salvation. Amen.

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It was strange that Judas chose to come to dinner that night. After all, everyone knew he had been “hanging out with the enemy” and that he was up to something. Then he allowed Jesus to wash his feet. After that, no one really expected him to stay for the Passover Seder. But, he did. It turned out to be the last supper they would all share together.

Through the years, Judas had been disconsolate at best. He was like your “Crazy Uncle at Thanksgiving.” He had conspiracy theories and ideas about revolution, fears of who was coming for them, how they must join the Zealot movement and much, much more – ideas which his “band of brothers” could not abide.

Although he had served as treasurer for the Jesus movement, they didn't have much money to speak of – so it's not like he had manage the funds. But he always made a big deal about how they spent their money – commenting on what was right and wrong about every expenditure. And that was Judas at his “at best.”

At his worst, Judas was a betrayer. He was a deceiver. He was deceptive. He was a “turncoat.” In the end, he would turn Jesus over to the Roman guard and the leaders of the Temple establishment for certain execution. He did this for “blood money” – for 30 pieces of silver. He seemed certain when he started the venture. Then, in the end, he was overwhelmed with grief and shame.

Scripture tells us that Judas was afflicted by emotional and spiritual conflicts. I believe Judas suffered some form of mental illness. He was haunted by his visions of what Jesus *should say* and *should do* and where the money *should go*, and on the night of betrayal, he tried to force Jesus' hand. But Jesus held tight. He never followed Judas' plan and that brought about the unraveling of Judas.

Within 24 hours of the Seder dinner ending, Jesus and Judas would be dead. Jesus would be executed by crucifixion and Judas would be dead by suicide. Each one would die on a tree – one tied and nailed to a tree in the form of a cross and the other on a limb in a noose at the end of a rope.

But on this night like no other night (as the words of the Passover Seder say), on this night the shadow of death would not pass over them. On this night, the shadow of death hung over the table where Jesus and Judas and 11 of their closest friends gathered. Remembering the Exodus Story, breaking the unleavened bread,

drinking wine and soaking in the last measure of time and space together, they were laughing and singing, eating and drinking, praying and remembering.

Before the night was through, Judas would betray Jesus with a kiss. I have often wondered about that kiss. It must have broken Jesus' heart. When he looked Judas in the eye he said, "you have betrayed me with a kiss." He must have had tears in his eyes. He must have had a quiver in his voice. He must have had a question in the tone of his delivery cause Jesus loved Judas. Jesus died twice on Good Friday – first from a broken heart from betrayal and desertion and then from crucifixion.

But just as Jesus forgives Judas in his own way, we must forgive those who forsake us and turn against us. Moreover, when they then die by suicide, we need to remember them. We need to still speak their names. Their suffering unto death by their own hands doesn't need the additional pain inflicted by our struggles to understand them. We may not understand Judas in this story tonight but we understand that Jesus loved him. Jesus loves all, in spite of the pain and trauma of betrayal, and denial and rejection, and we must love everyone in spite of it, too.

In the end, Jesus asked for his disciples to remember one thing. He asked them to remember that the Bread was his body, and that the wine was his blood. He asked them to remember him, when they were gathered somewhere down the road to break bread and drink wine. He wasn't asking very much at all. In reality, he was asking for everything.

Tonight, I want you to remember. Remember the Bread and the Wine are the body and blood of Christ. Remember that last

suppers often become resurrection feasts. Remember those beautiful moments that you have treasured at dinner tables and picnic tables with loved ones that sometimes precede what becomes a dreadful dawn of a day that comes next. Remember what happened, remember what they said there, and remember what it means to you.

In the aftermath of this night, two of the 13 soon would be dead. All of the remaining company of believers, all of their friends and family and all those who followed Jesus to the cross would be changed forever. Everything changed on this night. Our faith was formed in a new way as a sacrament of life came into being on this night through the institution of the Lord's Supper.

On this night, Jesus gave us this gift, this gift of remembrance.

He offers us the sacrament of life as we are initiated into the sacrament of Holy Communion. And we must remember, this sacrament is never, never private property of the sacred hierarchy. This sacrament is foundational for all of human life. The love and the grace we experience in this Eucharistic celebration is basic to human life.

Daily life is full of sacraments. In the archeology of everyday life, the sacraments thrive. They are known in simple things, in a cup of coffee, in a drink of water, in a beautiful moment shared with family or friends. They're sacraments. They are signs that contain, and exhibit, and recall, and visualize and communicate a whole another reality – a reality different from ourselves, different from themselves as they present themselves to us.

Let us remember – the sacrament of life that is given tonight never tears us away from this world. Not at all. Rather, the sacrament always calls us to look more closely and more deeply into the very heart of the world.

Tonight, as we come to Christ's table of grace, I want us to breathe deeply the meaning of this night.

Tonight, Jesus *takes, and blesses, and breaks, and shares* himself as a sacrament for the life of the world.

Tonight, he offers the sacraments to Judas and Peter; to John and Thomas because the Bread of Life and the Cup of Blessing are for betrayers and deniers; they're for beloved disciples and the doubting disciples.

Tonight, despite everything we have said and we have done, he wants to wash our feet. He wants to be for us a presence of love. He wants us to come join him at the table. He wants us to receive the bread and the wine. He wants us to receive his body and his blood. He just wants us to join him. Amen.