

****Today's reflections were put together by my brother and friend in the ministry, Rev Obusitswe Tiroyabone. He is an ordained minister in the MCSA currently on Study Leave at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge. He has been following our reflections on friendship with God during lent and now enjoys being part of our online friendship circle. May be blessed by his thoughts and reflections. ****

Rev. T

2020 Holy Week Reflections

Spending the last week of Lent together with our friend

Wednesday 08 April 2020

Theme: The betrayal of a friend

Focus Reading: John 13: 21 – 32

Introduction

Greetings to you all fellow Methodists in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is with great thanks to my friend and sister for the gracious invitation that I reflect on this text in this Holy week. The lectionary reading last night took us to an invitation to walk the streets of Jerusalem with our friend as John painted a scene for us of some Greek men seeking to see Jesus. It was important to note that the hour has come to walk the last mile with our friend Jesus. Today, the Gospel writer takes us to a dining table where Jesus has supper with his friends. The passage comes within a broader picture of Jesus spending his last hours on earth with his friends: his disciples. But also the broader picture is that of servitude between friends. Jesus is the Messiah and so he is the master of the table. He asked one of the disciples to go and secure the house that has been prepared for them to enjoy the dinner. He is also the one who has invited the disciples to join him in the dinner. That makes him the master of the table. Yet, Jesus in action shows his disciples that he is not just their master, he is their friend. He does what the master of the table does not usually do: he washes his disciples' feet. Then after that he sits with his friends on the dinner table and to relinquish his power as the master of the table, he sits in the middle and assumes equality with the disciples. Friends should be equal, shouldn't they?

Reflections on the betrayal of a friend

It is at the table, after washing the disciples' feet that Jesus confides in his friends: "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me". Betrayal is a very painful thing to experience. When a person has been betrayed or is being betrayed and they know about it, it brings them great anxiety and pain. A feeling of betrayal can lead you to great anger that you could even do things you would regret. When betrayal comes from a friend it is even more painful, in fact one would say it damages the soul of a person. Jesus confides in the friends who one could possibly describe as "besties" or "bff's" that one of them will betray him. Jesus says after he has just washed all of their feet and kissed them as was Jewish tradition over the Passover meal. The betrayal of a friend causes immeasurable pain. But now when such betrayal leads to your own death and you know it is your friend causing your own death, how do you react? Listen to our friend Jesus as the disciples begin to ask "is it me?"; "who is it?" Our friend says

“it is the one to whom I give bread to dip in the bowl”. Wow! Not only does Jesus say the betrayer is here at my table, but he also has in his hand bread from me and he will dip it in the same bowl as me! But even so Jesus does not condemn the betraying friend, but he says to him: “Hurry and do what you are going to do”. Jesus accepts that it is in Judas’ nature to betray and sell his own friend out, but he already shows a heart of compassion and forgiveness and says to him: even though you are going to sell me; even though your betrayal will cause my painful death on a cross, go on and do it! There are times in our lives when we get betrayed by the people we love and hold dear in our hearts. There come times in our lives when our friends turn against us do things that we never thought them capable of. When those times come, remember that our great friend Jesus has sat down and washed the feet of the very person who would guarantee his death. If we are to be Christ-like, let us also dip bread in the same bowl as the friend who betrays us.

Points to note for reflection

- Betrayal can come from any direction, even from the people closest to us
- Betrayal is not a reflection of our inadequacies or weaknesses, but a reflection of the unfaithful world we live in
- The devil enters the hearts of even our friends and if their faith is not steadfast they might fall into weakness
- All friends are worth of love even though they are fallible. All people are fallible

Questions for personal reflection

- Have I been a good, reliable and faithful friend?
- Have I knowingly or unknowingly betrayed a friend or loved one?
- How does Jesus’ friendship help me become a better friend to others?

A prayer for health care workers and other essential services workers

Lord Jesus, often the guest and not the host, walking among the crowds and teaching in the marketplaces, friend of the lonely and rejected, we pray for all health care workers: all the doctors; nurses; psychologists; physiotherapists; social workers and laboratory technicians and all other essential services workers who are guests in their workplaces and who are called to walk among the people, giving care to your people who are at this time suffering under the scourge of Covid19. May you strengthen them in their work and encourage them in their witness, and may you be discovered in each of their loving encounters. Amen.