

TUESDAY
A DISCIPLE AT THE TABLE



(John 13:21-38)

His Love Draws Us Together

I'm not sure what I am doing here, for I have always been a taker. As a tax collector, I have burdened the destitute and cheated the rich. I have gained from others' losses. Now I am at table with a giver like the world has rarely seen. I have sensed this shift coming from the beginning. Perhaps it was kneaded into the bread we shared tonight and into his words: "This is my body, which is given for you." Tonight the Lord will give his all to the world, but at this table he calls us to do the same in his memory. It seems I am a giver now.

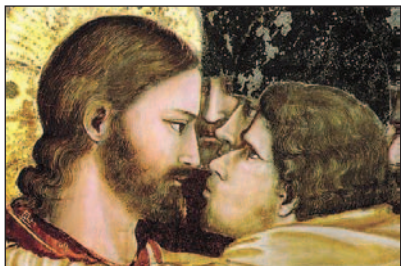
As a tax collector, I have been an outsider,

despised and rejected by others. Now, as a disciple, I am at last on the inside. The Lord said: "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom." Yet, there is something more in his message this night. I hear it in his prayer for unity. He wants a world where there are no more outsiders, no more outcasts. I find myself echoing his prayer. Father, may we be one as you are one.

I see his Father at work in him here, the loving Creator remaking the world into a blessed kingdom without up or down, in or out. That is why he gives us a new commandment. Perhaps loving one another shouldn't be new, but sadly it is. Thankfully, he promises to send the Spirit to help us. We will need an advocate if we are to renew the face of the earth. Come, Spirit of God, and recreate our hearts in love.

Prayer: *Saving Lord, turn my heart inside out through the conversion that welcomes outcasts, forgives sinners, and brings all the lost home.*

WEDNESDAY
JUDAS



(Matthew 26:14-25)
My Darkness Is Growing

I don't know when I decided to betray him. I don't even really know why. Hatred is not a rational thing. It is not so different from knowing why you love someone. In the end, the reason doesn't matter. All that counts is the decision... the act.

I see what he is trying to do, but it is foolish, as dreamers have always been. The world works a certain way and nothing is going to change that, least of all the meek and humble of heart. The system always crushes reformers. That's why the world has seen so few of them.

Someone will bring him down eventually, so it

might as well be me. I have always been ordinary. Even with him, I have been the least and the last. I think that lie about the last being first was meant for me, but I am not so easily duped. This is my chance to matter. After tomorrow, I will be remembered.

I hate him for his pity. That is why I will betray him with a kiss. For once I will teach him a lesson about love, show him what compassion gets you in the end. I wish I could surprise him, see the shock in his eyes, but I know he sees right through me. I despise him for that too.

Thirty pieces of silver is hardly a just wage for snuffing out the light of the world. If he is the world's light, I must be its darkness. Money is a good salve for this dis-ease in me, but I hope it will be enough to heal self-loathing. The darkness in me is growing. Soon it will swallow him up. I pray it doesn't consume me as well.

Prayer: *Lord of light, help me to see the darkness in me so that I may realize my need of your mercy and strive to live in the light.*

HOLY THURSDAY
PETER AT LAST SUPPER



(John 13:1-15)

He Builds in Me with Love

“On this rock I will build my church.” How those words echo in my soul. Sometimes I fear that he is like a fool building his house on sand. Other times I think he could build a thousand churches on me, or even God’s kingdom. I have always been that way, both rock and sand. I wish I knew which one I’ll be once the winds start howling.

He must know, as I do, that a storm is coming. This supper feels like a condemned man’s last meal, but I will never let that happen. I am imagining myself fighting bravely in his defense when he

comes to me with a basin and towel. I am shocked and defiant, but he is unrelenting. This is how it must be. God's way is to defeat the enemy, not with might, but with love.

There is a paradox here that I have not yet grasped. As he bows down, I am lifted up. Now we are no longer servants, but friends. Still, I cling to my unworthiness like a shield. By insisting on being less, I avoid the burden of being more, the responsibility of my gift. He wants me to acknowledge God's grace, to embrace the rock in me. So, I submit to the baptism, offering my hands and my head as well.

Then, just as I start to believe, he insists that I will deny him. At first, I am bewildered by this sudden reversal, but then I see that he wants me to do as he has done. I must embrace brokenness, find strength in weakness, and be a rock amidst the sand. I am not the architect here. God is building a house on me, the holy and broken body of Christ in the world.

Prayer: *Holy Lord, wash me in the baptism that embraces strength and weakness, that confesses grace and sin in order to build your house for all.*

GOOD FRIDAY
JESUS' MOTHER AT THE CROSS



(John 19:14-30)

Let Him See My Eyes of Love

I know what the people are here for. I overheard the talk when Jesus was arrested. There is an odd sense of triumph in their manner, but over whom or what is not clear. I fear for a world where people require so much death to feel alive and so much violence to be at peace. They are your children too, Father, but today they feel like strangers.

I see the people staring at him, but they are

looking with different eyes than mine. All the things that make them gape are the very things that would cause me to turn away. I will not look away, however, for I too know why I am here. I will look into my son's eyes to the very end, though it tears my soul apart to do so. He will not leave this world with the eyes of hate being the last thing he sees. No, in that horrible moment, he will see my eyes. He will see love and hope. For now, I will hide sorrow and despair in some dark corner where not even my son can see them. Father, look at your son through my eyes today.

The people around me think I am weak, that I will faint or flee, but they are wrong. I know a truth that they don't know, that love is stronger than death. The hardest part is the feeling of helplessness. So many times when he was growing up, I could do something. I could dress a wound or calm a dread or wipe away a tear. Here at the cross, all I can do is watch. Today, it must be enough. This is my station and I will keep it to the bitter end.

Prayer: *Redeemer Lord, strengthen my eyes to see the suffering in the world and steady my feet to stand firm in loving compassion.*

HOLY SATURDAY/EASTER SUNDAY
MARY MAGDALENE



(John 20:1-18)

In His Death Is My Life

My brothers told me it was pointless to come here. They insisted that it is over. I see the confusion in their eyes and how it clouds their judgment. Much worse, it clouds their faith. After I found the empty tomb, Peter and John came to look, but they soon went back into hiding. Sorrow and fear have hidden the truth from them. Sometimes mystery itself can be a truth, the mystery of life.

That mystery has drawn me here. Somehow I know that it cannot end like this. Death will not have the last word. Life has a way of coming

around. The winter hardens the earth, but then the rains come, the ground softens, and life returns. I feel its hopeful rhythms in my body too. Like Jesus, we are vessels of life, sent here to give birth. Such miracles don't die easily. I watched the Lord bleed out, but I bleed each month as well, only to become fertile again. Yet, I am called unclean as this sacred cycle begins, much like the Lord's death has been cast as an abomination. We have not yet learned the paradox that endings are beginnings. Like the seed of grain that dies and is buried, the earth has swallowed him up, but it will open and give birth to him once more.

Now I recognize him in the gardener. Indeed, I am not mistaken, for that is what he is. He is a cultivator of souls, a sower of the word, a gardener of the kingdom. How fitting that I should meet him here. Now that he has risen, we too have been restored to life. I praise you, Father, as I again behold how you make all things new.

Prayer: *Risen Lord, let me move with the rhythms of life in nature, in myself, and in the seasons of your Church so that I may rise to live in you.*