

Maundy Thursday 2022

I wonder if this was the last straw for Judas?

After all, it's bad enough that Jesus keeps rejecting violence against the powers that be.

It's bad enough that he hangs out with the riff-raff of the day, especially with those hated tax collectors.

It's bad enough he praises the woman who blew a year's salary on that expensive perfume that she poured on his feet.

Not to mention curing the Roman centurion's servant and that gentile woman's daughter!

But now, when he gets on his knees and does something even slaves aren't expected to do, when he washes their feet, I wonder if that is what finally did it for Judas?

Like Barabbas on Palm Sunday, Judas is a stand in.

He's a stand in for nearly all of us.

He's a stand in for me.

When I hear of war and rumors of war, my first instinct is to fight.

When I hear of violence, especially against the innocent, my blood boils for revenge, recompense, and in-kind justice.

Yet here is Jesus, beckoning us all down a different path.

This seemingly insane path of non-violence.

Non-retribution.

Non-revenge.

It's no wonder that so many Christians today spend so much of their time with the Older Testament, because at least there we can find some support for "an eye for an eye."

At least there, we can hear the purported word of God commend revenge and retaliation and strict punishment.

Yet, as Christians, if we are to be Christian, everything we see and think and believe must be encountered through the eyes of Jesus.

And today, Jesus brings his years of words and deeds into stark relief.

He demonstrates, in word and deed, the path which leads to the Kingdom, and he beckons us, not to admire, but to follow.

As one remarkable mystic puts it:

"And he left us a method for practicing this path ourselves.

The method he himself models to perfection.

When surrounded by fear, contradiction, even betrayal; when the 'fight or flight' alarm bells are going off in your head and everything inside you wants to strike back and defend, the only unfailing way to free yourself, to reclaim your home in God's gentle kingdom, is simply to release whatever you're holding onto.

The job.

The relationship.

The reputation.

And if it comes to it, life itself.

What Jesus lives out, what Jesus demonstrates for us, what Jesus invites us to imitate, is that surrender reconnects us — instantly — to the wellspring of life.

Surrender is not the way TO the wellspring.

Surrender IS the wellspring.

The most daring gamble of Jesus' life, pouring himself out in love, is meant to show us that self-emptying is not a step toward something else.

Self-emptying IS the very portal through which 'a new creation' is born." C. Bourgeault, [Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening](#) 86-87, modified.

Which is the life we are invited to live.

Yet, as with Barabbas, so with Judas.

Whose way shall we choose to follow?

Whose way leads to life?

+amen