

A Communion Meditation—March 7, 2021

Matthew 26: 17-30

Jesus nestled in a borrowed cradle at his birth, lay in a borrowed tomb at death, and rode into Jerusalem on a borrowed beast, ate his last meal in a borrowed room.

The divine drama of three closely packed years runs rapidly like flood water to the sea. It's quiet last hour hovers about an upper room where twelve men, wide-eyed, hungry-hearted, caught in the onrush of forces higher and deeper than any similar group had ever before experienced, listen to and watch a strange, winsome person at the center of a long table where food has been prepared for a feast.

Jesus is at the center of the table. For these three years he has been at the center of their lives. They sit there tonight about the long table where the Passover has been eaten. They have shared salt, broken bread, and supped from the common dish and within these walls they have sealed a fellowship that started when the hermit John preached beside the muddy Jordan and pointed to the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

Around the group are the walls of the "Upper Room." Never again shall walls enclose this group. It is broken for all time. These walls and other walls shall fall before His triumphal tread. In a few years the radiant person they have known will burst through all walls, and his will become the name above all names among nations.

Tonight they are sitting down. In the coming years they shall not sit very often. Their watchword shall be: "Go! Go! Go!" Tonight it is quiet. The footfall of the Passover crowds has hushed. The city sleeps. Words drop from the lips of Jesus, that are life-bestowing kisses of an agonizing God of Love. In these words are the sturdy arms of a protecting shepherd who tenderly, constantly, ably, watches the wandering sheep.

They listen. These Upper Room words, printed indelibly upon the memory of John to be pictured on papyri more than a half a century later. They speak of peace, of power, of friends and of future, on ones with God and of a world won, of sweetness and of sorrow, of life that night and of life through every day that shall dawn later.

Judas leaves. The thirteen are now twelve. Jesus looks into the upturned faces, knows their eager questions, knows all the calls the years shall make upon them, and the way they shall respond.

Suppose the walls of the Upper Room were pushed back, and he lets them share his vision of the future, what then? Suppose in that last quiet hour he should address them like this: "I call you friends. You are my friends and I make known to you the will of my Father. You shall go out of this room to suffer, beginning now! For my sake men shall hate you. Those who beat you and kill you shall sincerely believe that in so doing they are rendering service to God.

"Andrew, you will be my witness in the land of the cannibals. You will become the founder of a church at Byzantium which, when it shall have its name changed to Constantinople, shall be the capitol of a great Christian empire for hundreds of years. You shall die a martyr for your faith in me,

and your bones shall rest on the southern coast of the Black Sea. Are you willing to go ahead, knowing the price you shall pay?"

And James, the son of Alphaeus, you shall remain here in Jerusalem. But Jerusalem shall not be an easy place to be true me. The authorities here shall seek by sword and with stone to rid the city of all who follow this "way" and persecution and martyrdom shall at last be your lot.

Thomas, no man shall travel farther than you in your witness for me. You shall go to the land of the rising sun, and when the days of the years of your earthly pilgrimage end, you shall die for your faith on the coast of India, and you shall lie in an unknown grave near where the great city of Bombay shall rise.

Simon, son of Jonah, you who are a rock, you will slip and you will fall and you will return. I have prayed for you, that your faith shall not fail, and it "shall not fail." Your eyes shall be opened to the unity of the human race, and the responsibility God has for not only the Hebrew, but for all people. You shall be called upon to die. Your method of death shall be my method of death.

John, you shall labor for the gospel in Asia Minor. You shall know exile on a lonely island whose crags and bleak heights make every sailor shun its vicinity. You shall be the last of the group to die and when you die it shall be with my name said "lovingly" by your feeble lips.

And so we could go on!! Are "you" willing to go on, or do you wish to slip away in the darkness and hide while there is yet time? When such a question is asked, as we look, on this celebrative communion day, as we look at the broken bits of bread, and at the red wine, what else may we say in response but, Lord Jesus, to whom shall we go? You have the words of life and love eternal, and we believe that in and through you we experience the loving presence of our God and. Your God, of our Father and Your Father——we believe you are "the Christ."

When such a question comes to us: "Are you able to drink of this cup?..." shall we not, whether we can see beyond our walls, dark walls that hem in our future days, shall we not reply with courage and with faith, that love is us afraid, "Jesus, we are able!" We are able because you are the Christ, because you are the manifestation of the LOVE of GOD toward us and all creation, because your life, your ministry, indeed, because of your love for us!! And so we come, we eat and drink, and we GO sharing your love through our love, with all human beings regardless of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or social status. A very difficult challenge, but it is on in this way that we walk in your path.

Pax et Caritas,
Bill Anderson