



6 April 2023

**Maundy Thursday in the garden - so many questions. (Matthew 26: 14-29 )**

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Judas is a man in turmoil, his guts in knots, he wants to shake Jesus up, get him to act to overthrow those in power. He would love something to happen, and can't stand this passive approach. He betrays himself for love of his community. 'How can I wait any longer?' He sighs. 30 pieces of silver.

What is he thinking, this passionate man, this nationalist, inspired and disappointed? We know him as the Betrayer.

The Iona Community offers these words to make sense of this evening. Perhaps you can hear Judas pondering?

It was on the Thursday.<sup>1</sup>

It was on the Thursday that he became valuable.

He hadn't anything to sell..

not since leaving his hammer and saw three years earlier.

Needless to say,

he could knock together a set of trestles or hang a couple of shelves at the drop of a hat, no bother at all.

But he wasn't into making things.

Not now.

He was into..

well.

.. talking, I suppose.

And listening and healing and forgiving and encouraging ...

all the things for which there's no pay and the job centre has no advertisements.

So his work wasn't worth much.

Nor, indeed, was he.

For, not being well dressed or well heeled or well connected, he wouldn't have attracted many ticket holders had he been put up for raffle.

But he had a novelty value ..

like the elephant man or the fat lady or the midget at the circus.

Put him on a stage and he might be interesting to look at.

Sell him to the circus with the promise of some tricks

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<sup>1</sup> P125 Stages on the Way, Worship resources for Lent, Holy Week and Easter, Wild Goose Worship Group, Willow Connections, Manly Vale, 1998

and there could be a silver penny or two  
Or thirty in it.  
It was on the Thursday  
that he became valuable.

So, here **we** are in the garden in the midst of the unfolding drama.

We who wait for a birth, for exam results, for a diagnosis, for someone to die, to heal. We who wait for a job, for things to change. The waiting this night is pregnant. It has a fullness to it after a ritual Passover meal, all very poignant, harking back to the beginnings of a people leaving slavery in Egypt.

It is a Passover meal with some unexpected elements, like Jesus washing our feet, aware of betrayal and disappointment, and offering bread and wine in his memory, Eucharist we now call it, and replay it often. There is heightened tension, excitement, fear, waiting.

Is it me? Am I the betrayer?

In *To Pause at the Threshold*, Esther de Waal writes that the ability to live with uncertainty requires courage and the need to ask questions more than to find answers.

Malcolm Guite reflects

So many gospel themes find their focus on Maundy Thursday, so many threads of connection flowing to and from this deep source of love and vision, in the foot washing, and in the last supper.

The ancient idea of the four elements of earth, air, water and fire, for it struck me as I contemplated the events of Maundy Thursday, the foot-washing and the first communion, waiting in the garden, that all these elements of the old creation are taken up by Jesus and transformed in the making of the new. Jesus is both the fully human companion cleansing his friends with a gentle touch, sharing his last supper with them, showing the fullness of his love, and he is also the Word, God in God's full creative and shaping power, the One in and through whom everyone in that room, and every element of the world is sustained in the beauty and particularity of its being.

What we witness in the birth of the sacraments is both a human drama and a divine act of new creation. It may be, that if our eyes and ears are open we will sense Christ's all-transforming presence even through the ordinary elements of the place where we are as we wait.<sup>2</sup>

Here, on the island, in the garden, on zoom, we wait, transported, participating in something else, perhaps a taste of heaven, or hell?

Guite speaks in his poem, [Maundy Thursday](#). He says,

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<sup>2</sup> Malcolm Guite, [Sounding the Seasons](#), published by [Canterbury Press](#) in England.

You can hear the poem by clicking on the title or the 'play' button

[maundy-thursday.mp3](#)

[Maundy Thursday](#).

Here is the source of every sacrament,  
The all-transforming presence of the Lord,  
Replenishing our every element  
Remaking us in his creative Word.  
For here the earth herself gives bread and wine,  
The air delights to bear his Spirit's speech,  
The fire dances where the candles shine,  
The waters cleanse us with His gentle touch.  
And here He shows the full extent of love  
To us whose love is always incomplete,  
In vain we search the heavens high above,  
The God of love is kneeling at our feet.  
Though we betray Him, though it is the night.  
He meets us here and loves us into light.

It was on the Thursday  
that he became valuable.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> P125 stages on the way. Iona Community.