



It would be easier in some ways, perhaps most. It would be easier to believe that Jesus was unaware, that Jesus didn't know.

The stage tomorrow on Good Friday is global and universal, with Christ dying and offering himself for the sins of all humanity, past present and future. That's as big as it gets. The stage today is much more intimate and smaller, Jesus gathering with his disciples in the Upper Room on the night before his Passion unfolds. Jesus has gathered not with the world at large, but with his closest friends, with those who have given up all to follow him and be with him. They are people like us, for we too have given ourselves to follow him. It would be easier to believe that Jesus was unsuspecting and shocked, that poor valiant trusting Jesus continued to have faith in their loyalty until the bitter end revealed the truth. This is the stuff of a Hollywood script, or three.

The Gospels do not allow us hold on to such a belief. They tell us of a Jesus who is fully aware of what is inside their hearts — the hearts not of the sinful masses out in the world, but in the hearts of those who believed in and have followed him. Jesus knew Judas would betray him and hand him over to the authorities, yet Judas too was included in the Feast. Jesus knew that Peter would deny him, yet he called Peter "clean". Jesus knew the others would flee, yet he prayed for them earnestly and blessed them. And with all of them, he shared a Covenant meal — a Passover meal that he transformed into a meal of the New Covenant "in my blood, shed for you".

It is somehow easier to believe that Jesus isn't aware of the fickleness and fear and failure that dominates the hearts of his followers, of people like us. We are only fooling ourselves if we think he doesn't know who we are. The terrible and tremendous thing is: knowing all, he invites us to come; knowing all he dies for us and not just for the whole world. Like Peter, he calls us clean even though we are far from it. We are clean only because he has made us so.

And the most troubling part is this — knowing all, Jesus gives us the command, the *mandate* from which Maundy Thursday derives its name. He commands us to love others, people who are as weak and hopeless as we know ourselves to be, Jesus commands us to love as He has loved us.

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