Judas

I’m Judas. I am considered one of the greatest betrayers in history. I even rank higher than Brutus does for his betrayal of Julius Caesar.

When I first heard that the religious leaders were offering a reward to anyone who would turn Jesus over to them, I rejected the offer. I wouldn’t hurt my Teacher Jesus. Yet, the more I watched him stall rather than gathering his army to free us from bondage to Rome, the more impatient I got. However, if the Romans threatened to execute Him, he’d have to lead that army to save Himself. So I decided to betray Jesus and force His hand.

Jesus claims to know each of our hearts. Yet, He’s invited me to eat the Passover meal with Him. He must know that I’m going to betray Him, or does He? He still washes my feet. He still invites me to Table with Him and the others. We break bread together, and we drink from the cup just like a family.

Peter

I am Peter. I love Jesus with all my heart and am honored to be part of His inner circle. I know that He is the Son of God, the Messiah.

I am impetuous and sometimes speak without thinking. I also am sometimes afraid. But I mean well.

When Jesus told me that I would deny Him three times, I didn’t believe it. I love Jesus too much to do that. But I did deny Him three times because I was afraid.

Jesus knew I would deny Him, but He still invited me to be one of the three with Him in the Garden that night when He was arrested. He also asked me to eat the Passover meal with Him and all the others. We all broke bread together and shared the cup just like a family.

Nathaniel

I am Nathaniel, also called Bartholomew. Although you don’t hear as much about me as you do about some of the others, I am one of Jesus’s disciples. Jesus called me when He saw my heart when I sat under a fig tree one day.

I have believed that he was the Messiah since the very day He called me and was the first disciple to believe. But I struggle with fears of what our captor Rome will do to me. So, when Jesus is arrested, I joined most of the other disciples in deserting Him.

Jesus knows everything about me. He made that clear when He saw me under the fig tree. So, he knows on Thursday that I and most of the others will desert Him. But He eats the Passover meal with all of us. He washes our feet. We all share the cup and bread together like a family.

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Jesus eats the Passover meal with all the disciples even though all except John will either betray Him, deny Him, or desert Him within a few hours of the meal. He eats the Passover meal, but He institutes with them a meal that is like no other. Jesus makes these unworthy people recipients of His grace and love poured out for them. Jesus asks them to be the first to remember His acts of love toward them through Table fellowship.

Sharing Table fellowship is something unique to humans. No other creature eats its food together at a table. It’s a place of connection. It’s a place where we share blessings together in common. Jesus showed us that we are to share Table fellowship with people even if they have betrayed us, deserted us, or denied us.

The Eucharistic Table is where we gather to share God’s grace among us—to share the connection we all have with God and with each other through God. When we come to that Table, we do so not only with those who physically come to the same Table. But we do so with all those who come to this Table in any church or who have ever come to this Table before or who will ever come to the Table in the future. We come to the Table with those who’ve hurt us, who disagree with us, who have mistreated us. When we come to the Table with them, we do so having forgiven them – with an attitude of serving them – of doing for them whatever they need. Fellowship around the Eucharistic Table works as it should when our hearts are pure when we’ve forgiven others who share that Table with us of whatever they may have done to us. When we forgive others and come to the Table with a heart willing to serve them, we become fully open to receiving all the nourishing grace Jesus has for us here.

Most of us will never experience a friend turning us over to authorities who will torture us to death. We won’t share our closest friends denying us on our deathbed to save themselves. Yet, we do experience hurts from each other. We are called to forgive these hurts and maintain our connection with them and God each time we come to God’s Table. When we do that, we share not only the bread and wine with them, but we share God’s grace with them. Just as Jesus did with His disciples. Just like Jesus does with us.

Grace nourishes us around God’s Table. The more we share that grace, the more we become open to it. The more we share grace, the more we also prepare our hearts for the day when all will share that meal eternally. At that moment, all the brokenness is gone. This meal like no other, becomes unimaginably rich in its extravagance.

Around God’s Table, forgiveness reigns. Jesus welcomes all of us – betrayers, deserters, and deniers. And He calls us to truly open our hearts to love and embrace them, too.