

*P Christ is risen!*  
*C He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the risen Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

For those who may be thinking to yourselves as you listened to the appointed Gospel lesson being read today, didn't we just hear this? You would be correct...we did just hear this passage from John's Gospel. Today's Gospel lesson is the closing to the Gospel lesson that is always appointed for Maundy Thursday where Jesus gets up from the table, after the last supper with his disciples and washes their feet. It is this setting that Judas is outed as the one who will betray Jesus and Judas is the one that goes out into the darkness. So, the opening line in our Gospel lesson is referring to Judas as the one who had gone out...and not Jesus.

Looking then at this passage without this background information, it leaves us with the notion that someone has left the presence of Jesus. If we add the name of Judas, it becomes betrayal, but if we leave it ambiguous, it simply says someone has turned their back on the presence of Jesus. Is there intention by the framers of the lectionary for this line to be part of the reading today? The more I think about this, the more it convinces me to believe that there is intention. Without the mention of Judas, this line seems to say to me that betrayal or turning one's back on Jesus is not exclusive to Judas, it could be anybody.

The other day I was coming from a home visit where I had just shared communion with a member of our congregation. When I do this in a home, I usually read the Gospel from the prior Sunday and talk about the reading in the middle of celebrating the Eucharist. The conversation touched on this passage that is before us today and we were talking about how we show our faith in the world and not just within the walls of the church. But, as I was driving in my car from the visit, I was listening to a live recording of Bruce Cockburn, a very fine guitar player that I really enjoy listening to and his song entitled, "Soul of a Man" began to play. The song opens with a question that got me thinking about our Gospel lesson for today. The song opens with this question:

I'm going to ask the question  
Please answer if you can  
Is there anybody's children can tell me  
Tell me what is the soul of a man?<sup>1</sup>

What is the soul of a person? I think it is very interesting that Bruce is asking if there are anybody's children that can answer this question for him. He seems to be seeking an answer that is unfiltered and uncorrupted by age, by cynicism, by false teaching, and by the prejudice and hatred that age brings about, an answer that is purely from the heart, innocent, and honest...but I think it is in that question itself that we find the very soul of a person.

The soul is defined as the spiritual or immaterial part of a human being, regarded as immortal or a person's moral or emotional nature or sense of identity. For me, the soul of a person is the very

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<sup>1</sup> "Soul of a Man" Cockburn, Bruce, Copyright 2009, Bruce Cockburn Entertainment under exclusive license to High Romance Music Inc., *Slice O' Life -Solo Live*, CD, Disc 1 track12.

essence of life, the very essence of our faith, it is, as defined for us, our moral nature or sense of identity. St. Paul points this out to the church in Corinth in his second letter:

<sup>4:1</sup> Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart.

<sup>5</sup> For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup> For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. (2 Corinthians 4:1, 5-7)

We see from Paul the very thing that Luke is saying in our first lesson, that God gave us this gift of faith that has been poured into our very souls, our very being. Do we betray this, deny this, or abandon this, or do we glorify this? I guess Judas decided to abandon this...but what do we do? How then is this gift glorified or how is it revealed? How do we proclaim Jesus Christ in the world...out there, NOT in here?

At the opening of our Gospel we hear the word, "glorify" or "glorified" five times. The tense of this verb "glorify" varies and is somewhat ambiguous because it shifts from past tense to future tense and even present tense. This confusion is intentional to show us that the "glorification" of God and Jesus is a reality that happened back then, is underway today as we read it, and will continue to happen in the future. Jesus, by the very definition of glorify, is, was, and will forever be, acknowledging and revealing the majesty and splendor of God through the love given to each one of us. In this lesson, glorify or glorified means to reveal or make clearer the glory, in this case, to reveal or make clearer the glory of God by one's actions. Listen again to the opening of the lesson *this way*,

Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been *revealed*, and God has been *revealed* in him.

<sup>32</sup> If God has been *revealed* in him, God will also *reveal* him in himself and will *reveal* him at once. (John 13:31-32)

The Greek understanding of glorify or glorified is the approval of the multitudes,<sup>2</sup> or they understand glorify or glorified as the way we worship here in this place or see it in our form of worship that exalts God and Jesus through ritual and with our reverence and praise during worship. But this is NOT what is being said to us today in this Gospel lesson. Jesus is telling us that in this glorification, God is revealed when we exist for one another.

In the opening of this Gospel lesson, Jesus is telling of a relationship between God and Jesus, and in it, there is mutuality and reciprocity in the glorification and we become part of that through the very gift of faith poured into our souls.

What is the soul of a person? The soul of a person is the mutuality or the reciprocity of the relationship we have with God through Jesus Christ and with each other. This is NOT some deep cerebral notion or some cosmological reality about God. Listen to what St. John reminds us

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<sup>2</sup> Joel C. Elowsky, Editor, Thomas C. Oden, General Editor. *Ancient Christian Commentary of Scripture, New Testament IVb, John 11-21*. Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2007. Section, John 13:31-32, "The Glory Of The Son Of Man", "Glory As Participation In The Divine", Origen, page 109.

in our second lesson from the Revelation of God:

See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; (Revelation 21:3b)

In other words, the glory or the revelation of God is here among us through the relationship we have with God, through Jesus Christ, and with each other. But our love is returned to God or our love is glorified or it is reciprocated in the love we have for one another. This is the soul of who we are as Christians, as children of God.

What the songwriter is asking when he asks what is the soul of a person, St. John answers that in his First Epistle when he writes:

<sup>18</sup> Little children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth. (1 John 3:18)

Later in the Gospel of John within his Farewell Discourse, Jesus will remind his followers that our fellowship with Christ is dependent on this reciprocal, this mutual love. Jesus says this:

<sup>15:1</sup> 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. <sup>4</sup> Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

<sup>5</sup> I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

<sup>8</sup> My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. <sup>9</sup> As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup> I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup> 'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. (John 15:1, 4-5, 8-12)

The love given to each and every one of us is certainly Good News, but there is nothing easy about this. This love is not only the very essence of our very souls, it is the very essence of discipleship showing us that faith is not something we do by ourselves, it is done in communion with one another, it is done in community with one another. However, this love and discipleship are unrelentingly placed into the context of betrayal, denial, doubt, fear, and even death.<sup>3</sup>

From the very first line today we hear that Judas has gone out and betrayed this relationship, he has turned his back on it, showing us no glory, showing us there is no mutuality or reciprocity, no relationship. Despite our behavior, our betrayal, God loves for us is made manifest in Jesus Christ and that love will receive its fullest and final expression in his death on the cross.

The glory of God's love for us, the revelation of God's love for us, is Jesus Christ who does for us what none of us are prepared to do for each other and that is, he loves us unconditionally. What is the soul of a person? It is the true glory or the true revelation of God's love for us in Jesus Christ...a love that will free us from the reality of our sin and death and that glory is revealed to all in the love that is taken from here and shared as freely as it has been given to us all.

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

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<sup>3</sup> *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Editors: Raymond E. Brown, S.S., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J. (emeritus), Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm. (emeritus). Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990. 61 The Gospel According to John, page 974.