

Texts of the devotions on Invocavit (the first Sunday of Lent) February 21, 2021

Text for the sermon *(read by Heribert Kolosko):*

After Jesus had said these things, he was deeply troubled and told his disciples, “I tell you for certain that one of you will betray me.” They were confused about what he meant. And they just stared at each other.

Jesus' favourite disciple was sitting next to him at the meal, and Simon motioned for that disciple to find out which one Jesus meant. So the disciple leaned toward Jesus and asked, “Lord, which one of us are you talking about?”

Jesus answered, “I will dip this piece of bread in the sauce and give it to the one I was talking about.”

Then Jesus dipped the bread and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Right then Satan took control of Judas.

Jesus said, “Judas, go quickly and do what you have to do.” No one at the meal understood what Jesus meant. But because Judas was in charge of the money, some of them thought that Jesus had told him to buy something they needed for the festival. Others thought that Jesus had told him to give some money to the poor. Judas took the piece of bread and went out.

It was already night.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+13&version=CEV>

Sermon *(Predicant Michael Basmer)*

“Today is the first Sunday in Lent, and the text suggested for the sermon contains a deeply moving picture that puts us into the right mood. I would like to head today's devotions with the words, “known, yet loved”. Jesus knew his disciples; he knew that Peter would deny him three times, and Judas would betray him for thirty pieces of silver, and that at the end of his being taken prisoner they would all take to their heels, and yet he is sitting – or lying, according to the custom of his time, on cushions taking their last meal together. Before that he had washed their feet – of every single one of them – a gesture used to honour close and intimate friends.

From the first day that he had chosen them to be his followers, up to the last communion here in the text on which this sermon is based, Jesus has not lessened his affection and love for his disciples. Sometimes he laments their doubts and lack of faith, for example in the storm on the lake, when they were in a boat and waves towered high, and they cried in despair, “Master, help us, we are ruined”. Often enough he could have said, “You are simply no good”. But he did not. He threatened the wind and the waves, and the storm died down. Jesus' disciples were not superhuman. They were human beings like you and me – and as such he loved them.

And this was to continue. In the first verse of this chapter of John's Gospel it says, ‘And just as he loved the ones in this world, he loved them unto the end.’ ‘Love never ends’, Paul writes in the 13th chapter of the 1st epistle to the Corinthians. God's love through Jesus Christ is boundless. How often does human love come up against limiting factors! You may often read or hear: She – or he – declares that their love is at an end. The love of Jesus Christ for those who follow him is endless. Even for his enemies he prays, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”. If that isn't love! He appeals to those who call themselves Christians, “Love your enemies, do well unto those who hate you! Bless those who curse you.”

He feeds Judas with a piece of dipped bread. In those days you would only do this if you deeply respected the other person. Judas feels convicted right there at the table. What may go on inside him? ‘He knows’, he may think. ‘He knows that I am going to betray him, but still he loves me and offers me a piece of bread.’ Is Jesus trying to make his disciple change course? For he is about to

burden himself with great guilt. But Judas has made his decision. He cannot break free from the evil force that is taking possession of him. 'He went out, and it was night', it says. *Night* here does not refer to the time of day, but symbolizes darkness, something sinister. Here nothing can be glossed over.

Jesus Christ says, "I am the light of the world, and those who follow me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life". As Christians we are the light of the world, as Jesus himself says. We are messengers, as it were, of God's love, and we are to bring the light of love into the world, in word and deed. That is what he needs us for in this world. God loves small ones and big ones, the young, teenagers, people of middle and of old age – all humans are important to him, and he knows them all, and he loves them. Known, yet loved. Christ knows me, with my rough edges, idiosyncrasies, faults. He knows where I failed, yet loves me. In the same way we as his Church are to love one another the way we are, so that the world may realize that we are his disciples. But he also knows about our love, our service and devotion, he knows all the pains we take to make his kingdom grow here. Is there a better message for anyone who may be searching for the meaning of life and love? 'God loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten son, so that all those who believe in him will not be lost, but live in eternity.' This is no *Message in a bottle*, but the Gospel of the Bible. Perhaps someone will hear this Gospel in word, song, music, and prayer, someone who had not heard the words 'I love you' for a long time? Today God is saying through the Gospel, "I love you. I know you. I have become human in Jesus Christ. I have died for your sins and risen again and live – and you are to live, too."

Dear sisters and brothers! In this time of Passion and Lent, which is rather different than we are used to, let us be overwhelmed by God's love. It is stronger than any virus, mutant or not. Perhaps we have noticed that recent weeks, when we could not be near each other physically, have made us feel closer to each other inwardly. This is because of the power of his love! He knows and loves us – known, yet loved. I wish you a blessed Passion time and hope that we may soon meet again in real life services in our church. Let us pray as Christians to God that these present times will be over soon. 'Call upon me when in need; I will save you, and you shall praise me', it says in the Bible. Yes, we shall praise and honour and celebrate our God in our services to come. Stay well protected and safe – and in good health. Amen."

Lyrics of the song *(sung by Maria Jerosch, piano: Ulrike Jerosch)*

Wherever I am, you're already there.
When I flee, you're near to me.
Whatever I think, you already know.
Whatever I feel, you will understand.

And I thank you that you know me and love me still,
that you call me by name and pardon all my sins.
Lord, you help me get up again, and you lift me up to you.
Yes, I thank you that you know me and love me still.

You know my heart, the yearning in me.
True God and human you have been here.
Completely like us, yet without guilt.
You're full of mercy, patient with us.

And I thank you that you know me and love me still,
that you call me by name and pardon all my sins.
Lord, you help me get up again, and you lift me up to you.
Yes, I thank you that you know me and love me still.

The Lord's Prayer

Vater unser im Himmel.	Our Father in heaven.
Geheiligt werde dein Name.	Hallowed be your name.
Dein Reich komme.	Your kingdom come.
Dein Wille geschehe,	Your will be done,
wie im Himmel, so auf Erden.	as in heaven, so on earth.
Unser tägliches Brot gib uns heute.	Give us today our daily bread.
Und vergib uns unsere Schuld,	And forgive us our sins,
wie auch wir vergeben unsern Schuldigern.	as we forgive those who sin against us.
Und führe uns nicht in Versuchung,	Lead us not into temptation,
sondern erlöse uns von dem Bösen.	but deliver us from evil.
Denn dein ist das Reich und die Kraft	For the kingdom, the power
und die Herrlichkeit in Ewigkeit.	and the glory are yours now and forever.
Amen.	Amen.