

**On the way to Calvary - Hilary McDowell
Week
Friday - With Me**



When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me."

They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely you don't mean me?"

"It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

Mark 14:17-21 (NIV)

It was a difficult task for the traveller to watch Judas enter that room with the other disciples and take his place at the table. If the dream she had previously experienced had taught her anything, it had reinforced for her the certainty that nothing she could do would change this time-line or assist Jesus in his journey. She longed to be able to cry out to him, to unmask the traitor in their midst, to alert the disciples to the danger. It was especially frustrating to watch Jesus reach over and offer Judas the opportunity to dip his bread into the tasty bowl with Jesus, a privilege normally reserved for a specially chosen friend by the chief guest at a banquet. Yet the gesture was taken by them as one of privilege, not of warning, despite a pretty large hint from the Lord himself.

Was the position of Judas so powerful, so established, so secure that none dared challenge his credibility? Or were the others so wrapped up in protesting their own irrefutability that they could not protect Jesus from the danger in their midst? She wondered. Then, as she gazed around those relaxed disciples, each protesting their undying loyalty in their own way, she remembered how each one had fallen short of even their own standards of discipleship before Calvary's destination was reached. Perhaps Jesus could not, would not, have exposed Judas for many reasons - not least being the fact that he knew all his team, except John, would desert him in his dying.

WHO WAS TRULY 'WITH HIM' BUT HIS DIVINE Father? Who deserved to sit at that table in sinless perfection but Jesus? Would anyone be worthy of such a meal, of such a promise, of such an eternity?

'Not yet,' she whispered aloud and mainly to herself. 'Not yet, Lord, until you have first undertaken to 'Passover'. She realised that only when his journey was over and his task completed in the Father's will could this table become no more a place of privilege or status, no more merely a religious duty or obedience to the law, no more a cosy gathering of like-minded members of a religious 'club', but what it was intended to be - a memorial, a cleansing of unworthiness, and enactment of future promise.

She slipped to her knees at the foot of the table where a space had been left for the house servant and, although she knew she could not be seen she felt a part of this gathering. Unworthy, like them; confused, like them; ignorant of what her future held, as the disciples were ignorant of what lay up ahead for them. Wanting desperately to follow where the Master led, like them, and scared to imagine the worst. But like them she heard the voice of her Lord, felt his presence take control of the proceedings, shared the atmosphere of being at one with her surroundings in the common meal together. If only for a short while, she was at peace.

Dear Lord,

Forgive me for not resting in your presence, for always wanting to anticipate the future and make plans, to take precautions, to secure it ahead of time.

Teach me how to live in the 'now', in that place where my chief responsibility is 'to be' - to be for others and for you, Lord. Like the times at table, when eating is the thing, savouring the nourishment and delighting the spiritual taste buds till I'm glad to be alive and the rest of the 'family' around me are grateful for my life also. Should this be any different at the table of the Lord?

Please let me dip in the bowl with you, Lord, whether the taste be bitter or sweet. Amen.