

Dear Friends,

Mark 14: 12-16

The religious leaders have made up their minds. They see Jesus as a trouble maker who must be stopped. They decide to arrest him and have him put to death. Their job is made easier when Judas one of Jesus' inner circle offers to betray him. They agree to pay him for his services.

The Passover Festival is approaching. This is a commemoration of God setting the Israelites free from slavery. It is a time to lament oppression and celebrate freedom. At the heart of the festival is the Passover meal. Jesus and his friends need to find somewhere in Jerusalem where they can share this together. His disciples say to him, "Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?" Notice their attitude. They put themselves in his hands when they say "Where do you want us to go?" Their concern is for what he wants. They are all going to eat the meal, but their emphasis is on him eating it.

"Where do you want me to go" is also a good question for you to ask Jesus. With it, you can put another question, "What do you want me to do?" It is always good to ask these things, but in these changing and uncertain times, it is particularly important to seek to know and do what Jesus wants.

The story follows a similar pattern to the one we saw on Palm Sunday. Jesus sends two of his friends. He tells them what they will find and what they are to say. He has confidence that everything will be put at his disposal. They are to go to the city where they will meet and are to follow a man carrying a water jar. It was common for both men and women to carry water. It was more usual for it to be carried in leather bottles rather than in jars. When the water carrier goes in to a house, they are to say to him "Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?" Once again, the emphasis is first on Jesus eating and then on his friends eating with him. He does not hold back from claiming ownership of the room which he calls "my guest room". They will be shown a large upstairs room, which is furnished and ready. There, they are to make the preparations.

You go to Jesus with the questions, "Where do you want me to go? What do you want me to do?" Jesus comes to you with the question, "Where is my guest room?" Is there in you a large space for God which is totally ready for God's use? We need God's help in preparing such a place. We each contain our own chaos of stuff. We depend on God to put it all in order so that we are ready for God's presence. It's a happy thought that God is already in you, working to prepare you for even more of God. What's essential is what God does, but you also have a part to play. A central part in your preparation is the life of prayer and worship. The time you carve out for that is prime time for God to get at you.

And when you prepare a guest room for God, you tend to find that God comes to it not alone, but with lots of friends. Jesus asks "Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?" He also says, "I will take you to myself

that where I am there you may be also” and “I, when I’m lifted up from the earth will draw all people to myself”. So, having gathered everyone to himself, he then brings them all with him. That includes those who are vulnerable and in need. They belong to Jesus, how we treat them is how we treat Jesus; that includes those who are part of God’s family, we may not always agree with them but we belong together and are asked to welcome them; that includes those yet to be born and it includes those who have died, we are united with those who now rest in the arms of God’s mercy and in the joy of everlasting peace.

The two disciples go where Jesus sends and do what he tells them to do. Everything works out just as he said. They find the room and make the preparations. When evening comes Jesus arrives with more of his friends and they take their places for the meal. Do the friends have any idea that this meal will be their last supper, that in a few hours Jesus will be arrested and they will all desert him, and that by the end of tomorrow Jesus will have been put to death?

God bless you,

Tony