
Tonight is the last night of Jesus' earthly life – and it takes up more pages of our Bibles than **any** other night.

Shortly, we shall observe the command Jesus gave us this night: ***Eat this bread.. and drink this cup.. in remembrance of Me.*** But John doesn't so much as mention it. Why? Because, he wants to tell how, in a ***more personal way***, Jesus spoke to those he loved.

No greater love

Guests at a banquet, coming in from dusty streets, would need their feet washed. There already is a pitcher of water, a basin and a long cloth. But none of the twelve is prepared to do such a menial task. ***Jesus waits*** until the meal has begun, ***then he gets up***, without a word. He is going to show them ***the true way of his kingdom.*** To reveal his incomparably great love for them and ***why tomorrow he is going to die for them.*** He strips himself of his outer clothes, as if he were a slave.

John 13:1-15 & 21-30

He then wraps the long cloth around his waist, leaving a length free as a towel. He pours water in the basin ready to wash his disciples' feet and dry them, ***himself.*** In their astonishment, I'm sure there was just a stunned silence – until Jesus comes to Peter. ***Lord, you – are you going to wash my feet?!***

Peter is horrified that ***the Messiah*** should do such a thing. Jesus gently tells him he doesn't yet understand – but Peter has his pride, ***Never – ever - will You wash my feet!*** But Jesus answers, ***Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.***

Even at this point, Peter is not willing to submit unreservedly; his love for Jesus demands wholehearted expression – ***of his own choosing!*** But Jesus tells him no. Like a man who has bathed and then leaves the house, he only needs his feet washed. ***You are already clean – but not all of you.*** Jesus knows that one of them is going to betray him.

Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.

(John 13:8)

John had begun by telling us **Jesus knows** the hour has at last come, when he will return to the Father, his work completed. **His work of dying the death our sins deserve** so that **we** may go free. Jesus' life-long motive is love for his own, **love to the uttermost**. This hour has been planned from eternity by the Father. A plan that makes use of the devil's hatred and Judas' betrayal.

Jesus knows, right then, that *the Father had put all things under his power*. **What an amazing statement!** Despite tomorrow's awful death, Jesus is no disappointed, defeated, man – but **a King**, striding majestically to the rescue of his people!

Certainly, Peter believes Jesus is the Messiah – but he doesn't **want** a Messiah that has to go through humiliation, suffering and death. So, when suffering and shame come – Peter is **not** prepared. Not prepared to face humiliation himself. He will **disown** his Lord when challenged. But are **we** any different, pressured by the way the world around us thinks?

Jesus says that not all of them are clean. Jesus has washed the feet of Judas as well as those of Peter, **knowing** one had agreed to betray him and that the other would deny him. Both had accompanied Jesus for 3 years, heard his teaching and seen his loving compassion to the sick, bereaved and outcast. Both had received his love, but both would fail him.

Jesus loved **both** men. At this night's supper, reclining on couches around a low table, Judas is on Jesus' left, the most honoured position, while John (the beloved disciple) is on Jesus' right, able to lean back on him and whisper his question about who is going to betray Jesus. It is surely one last opportunity Jesus gives to Judas, to save him, as, directly and lovingly, Jesus passes to him the special piece of food! But Judas immediately leaves the room, to go to the chief priests – and when he leaves, **it is night!**

Later Judas, overwhelmed with remorse, took his own life. But Judas had never really loved, repented or sought the **inward** washing that would have saved him.

We too may be baptized and be regular churchgoers – but unless we have really **submitted inwardly** to Jesus, and asked for his deep, **inward** cleansing from sin and guilt – we have not begun to know the way of the King in our lives.

It is time to ask: **where do each of us stand?!** Have we really tried to love Jesus, and truly asked him to cleanse us from the defilement of our sins? Like Peter, have we wanted to do things **our** way, showing that we've never really surrendered to Jesus as our **Lord?** It took the cock-crowing to reveal to Peter, his own independence of spirit, and his utter need of forgiveness and a changed heart. **He** wept bitterly. Has Jesus brought **us** to such a realisation? If he has, **have you sought** the washing that only Jesus can give you?

As we take the bread and wine, symbols of Jesus' wonderful love and sacrifice for us, may each of us ask for that cleansing, renewing our commitment to **him!**

When he had washed them all, Jesus put his clothes back on and returned to his place. He asks, **Do you understand what I have done for you?** Jesus makes his washing of their feet an acted parable of what each of **us** is to do, if we are faithful disciples. **You also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example.**

Will we learn this lesson among us, in this fellowship? God forgive us, we all make preference among our acquaintance. We all enjoy the company of some more than others. But true love involves sacrifice for the good of others, to whom we may, or may not, be naturally attracted. That is what our Lord did for us: *while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom 5:8)* The genuineness of our love and gratitude to Jesus, **will appear** in this way.

Let me conclude with an example. The Middle East is very much in our present news. Some years ago, when war disrupted everything in Iraq, and places fell to Islamic extremists, the city of Mosul was one of these places. Many fled to the Kurdish city of Erbil, where Christian believers worked tirelessly to meet their needs and those of other refugees. They filled plastic bags with food, clothing, hygiene items and Bibles.

One day a believer, who had often witnessed to a Muslim friend, invited his friend to lend a hand. The team worked for nine hours without even stopping for lunch.

The Muslim friend, that evening, over a meal, asked questions: “What kind of love do you have? What’s the reason for this love? How can you love people you don’t even know?”

The believer replied, “God **empowers** us to work hard. **He** gives us this love.” The conversation went on from there. “Could I have a Bible?” “Start reading in Matthew – and ask Jesus for answers.” Next morning, “I’ve been up all night. Jesus revealed himself to me. I want to be baptised. I want to be involved like you.”

When we follow Jesus seriously, those who need Jesus will notice. Didn’t Jesus say, ***By this all people will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another ? (John 13:35)***