

When Jesus had washed their feet and put on his garments and resumed his place, he said to them,
*"Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me the Teacher and the Lord, and you are right, for so I am.
 If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.
 For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.
 Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.
 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.
 I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen.
 But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'
 I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.
 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me,
 and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."
 After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified,
 "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke.
 One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side,
 so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he spoke. So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him,
 "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it."
 So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.
 Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly."
 Now no one at table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the money bag,
 Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor.
 So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.
 When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.
 If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once.
 Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you,
 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another:
 just as I have loved you. You also are to love one another.
 By this all people will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

John 13:12-35

"And It Was Night"

Pastor Stephen Ridge

C. S. Lewis once described joy as happiness tinged with pain. When Carl Mende read from John's gospel last week of Jesus remembering that he had come from heaven and believing that he was going back there, and loving the men around him at table right to the end of their time together, taking off his robe and taking up his towel, and circling the table cleansing their feet from the dust and grime of the day, just as he would soon cleanse their souls and ours from a lifetime of sin and shame and hurt and pain, it was joyful for me to hear of a Savior unafraid of the muck we've all stirred, not too proud to kneel and scrub our feet.

It was hard for me to wrap my mind around it. Like the disciples, I would have sputtered at table, uncomfortable at the sight of heaven's king stripped down to a sleeveless tunic, not wanting him that close, not wanting him to see how dirty I'd gotten, only to feel relief at his promise that once he had served us we would be "*completely clean*." So Jesus promised. So happiness and pain were mixed that night. Jesus was closer, warmer, more intensely affectionate than he had ever been in all their travels, and yet there was this foreboding, this looming, growing shadow threatening to tear them apart and take Jesus away.

"If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them." Jesus said, but then he went on, "*I'm not speaking of all of you; I know whom I've chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'"* So Jesus remembered Psalm 41 that night, a song David wrote during his long reign as Israel's king, a moody, brooding piece about the pain of finding that people he had trusted really weren't his friends at all. They had dipped from the same bowl, toasted each other at the same table, but now the halls of David's palace were echoing with whispers and slander, "*...even my close friend, whom I'd trusted,*" David sang.

"I'm telling you this now," Jesus told the disciples, "*that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.*" Literally, he said, "*that you may believe that I am,*" which both Carl and Jason have noted is a loose translation of the name God had taken for himself in Hebrew: "Yahweh," or, "the One who is," or simply, "I am." And the point of Jesus calling himself that was to express to his disciples that the betrayal and anguish they were about to go through was not due to any flaw in God's plan, no mistake on Jesus' part, no angel had missed his mission. Rather, it was that, to save us, Jesus had to face the anguish we all face when love goes awry.

So John goes on to tell us, "*After he said these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit and testified, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.'*" He had hinted of this before, but still the table fell silent and John describes for us a circle of bewildered disciples, gazing back and forth across the table, speechless and uncertain of themselves and of each other.

It fell to Simon Peter to push Jesus' terrible words to some sort of awful resolution. He motioned to the disciple closest to Jesus, we think it was John, to find out what Jesus was getting at. And John took the hint and tucked his head on Jesus shoulder and whispered to him. *"Who is it?"* Jesus whispered back, *"It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it."*

It should be noted that the disciples were reclined, laying on their left sides on futon style couches, their feet fanned out in a circle, and their heads and shoulders right up against the table. With twelve men there, it was a long low table, likely two plates at either end on which flat bread was stacked, and two bowls which held the spicy meaty sauce in which they all dipped their bread.

It was a remarkably intimate way to eat, men breaking and passing pieces of bread to each other and even dipping for each other if the reach was awkward. You could whisper to your immediate neighbor, but anything louder than the softest whisper would be heard by everyone there. So John knew first that Judas had gone wrong, and tells us that, when Jesus hand-fed Judas the morsel, *"Satan entered into him."* What John saw we can only imagine, but Jesus is intent on seeing Judas on his way.

"What you're going to do, do quickly!" he tells Judas. Everybody but John thinks Judas has been sent on an errand, but John bleakly realizes that the darkness Jesus had repeatedly warned about had finally fallen. The brilliant daylight of Jesus' earthly ministry was gone. *"And it was night."* John tells us. The Passover was coming in and Jesus would be the sacrifice. And Jesus appears to realize the same thing at the same moment. *"Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him!"* Jesus tells us.

It is the same paradox Jesus had taught on Palm Sunday to the bewildered Greeks. Remember? Jesus told them that it was his glory to be buried in the ground like a seed. Now the disciples will learn it was his glory to be betrayed by a man he loved. The point being that it is to God's glory, not only for Jesus to suffer unimaginably on a cross, but before that to suffer the same disappointment we all suffer because people are fallen and all too often they won't be loved, and won't be saved, and won't be grateful.

So Jesus will be betrayed, and the Father will suffer grief, and we will be saved, and that is to God's glory. Jesus says of his Father, *"If God is glorified in him [Christ], God will glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once."* In other words, this is all going to happen very fast now. So Jesus returns to the love he feels for the men around the table. *"Little children,"* he calls them, *"yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, where I am going you cannot come."*

In other words, what is glorious for Jesus, the resurrection, the ascension, the reunion with his Father and the angels, glory for Jesus will mean some measure of bereavement for the men at table. Glory is always wonderful, but never easy. Going forward it will be the disciples on trial. Jesus had already warned them, *"Truly, truly I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, a messenger is not greater than the one who sent him."* What Jesus had done without, the disciples would have to give up in their turn, each according to his measure. The love Jesus had taught them, they were expected to show to all and especially to each other.

"A new commandment I give to you," Jesus said, *"that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."* This from the man who had run his soapy fingers through the crevices of their grimy toes, who had known for months that Judas would betray him and never showed him any malice, the man who before sundown the next day would have borne their sins, and ours, to the Cross. For us to love *"just as"* Jesus loved is a tall order indeed. But it is the way of life that distinguishes sinners saved by grace from those self made souls who master a religion and think it entitles them to master less worthy people.

To have been unworthy and been loved is the only experience that can teach us to love the unworthy. Jesus put it this way: *"By this all people will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."* Joy happens when happiness is tinged with pain. Glory can be seen when grace overcomes and outlasts darkness. Love comes within reach when we know God loves us, unworthy though we are, and we extend his love to the other unworthies who need it.