

The Gospel of John
Week Twenty-One
John 13:1-30

Day One

1 It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. 2 The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. 3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

v. 1 – Jesus' time was finally at hand. Throughout the gospel, we were told it was not the time. **Now it is. It's good to know what time it is, isn't it? Do you know what time it is in your life?**

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8).

v. 2 – Jesus delivered His final message to His disciples before His death as reported in the next five chapters. The evening Passover meal was being served and the stage was set, for Satan had already “prompted” Judas to betray Jesus.

vs. 3&4 – Before Jesus said anything, He did something that epitomized how He wanted the disciples to treat one another from then on. It is interesting that Jesus did not speak in His last meal on theology or the doctrine of God. He talked about loving one another and bearing fruit. A man's last words indicate his priorities. I would say those two things are Jesus' highest priorities for you and me. **Would you agree?**

Jesus did what He was about to do with the disciples because He knew who He was, what the Father had assigned Him to do, and where He was going. That is true self-awareness as He walked out His covenant with God the Father. God wants you to know His will. He is not playing a shell game with you, where you choose and there may or may not be a little ball under your shell. There is a ball under every shell where God is concerned, for He wants you to know His purposes for you. Too many people act like God is finicky or arbitrary. “God, what is Your will for me?” “I won't tell you now. Ask Me later!” “But I have asked you 100 times already!” “That's not enough. I'm not ready to tell you.”

That scenario is absurd, but is played out every day in many lives. Jesus knew what time it was in His life and you can know, too.

v. 5 – Jesus knew His time had come to depart, so He wanted to leave the disciples a lasting impression of how they were to treat one another. He chose to wash their feet as the symbol of His expectations of how they should treat one another. Jesus took the role of a humble servant, which is just what He wants you and me to do today. **Whose feet can you wash today?**

Day Two

6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." 8 "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." 9 "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

v. 6 – When someone serves you, it is a humbling experience, especially if you perceive that the person serving is above you in rank or authority. The normal flow of service is up to those over you and not down from those on the top of the organizational chart. Peter was not quite comfortable with this scenario and expressed his uneasiness. **What is your response when someone tries to serve or help you? Does pride prevent you from receiving?**

v. 7 – Jesus was willing to do a lot of teaching that His listeners would not understand until much later. Yet He kept on teaching and training for the day when His listeners would need what He had taught. This is how you train children, saying things to them today that they will need tomorrow. It is also the way you train disciples. **To whom are you saying things today that may not be needed until their tomorrow comes?**

v. 8 – When you deny the opportunity for someone to serve you, you are robbing that person of a blessing. It is better to give than receive but sometimes it can be harder to receive than give. **If no one wants to receive, however, then who can be blessed through giving? How do you react when someone tries to do something for you, or give something to you? Does pride disguised as humility prevent you allowing others to serve or bless you?**

Jesus gave Peter a strong response. If Peter did not allow this to take place, then he had no part in Jesus and His mission! If you do not make room in your life for what only God and others can do, then you are the worse for it! **Where might you be resisting the grace of God in your life, not receiving the help that you could receive?**

v. 9 – Peter was a special man. In one breath, he protested the Lord's attempts to wash him. In the next breath, he was offering his whole body to be washed! This gives us an indication of how much Peter loved Jesus and showed he realized how much he needed

Jesus. We all need Jesus to continually wash us from the contact we have with the world as we walk through this life.

Notice also that Jesus did not explain what He did until after He did it. He was only showing that what He did was consistent with who He was and not below Him in any way. Yet He expected the disciples to receive the action and then the explanation. There may be something in your life that is going on that God is not explaining yet; He is only acting. If that's true, then you should react like Peter by saying, "Lord, I accept what you have for me. Do it all and do it to any extent that you deem necessary!"

Day Three

10 Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." 11 For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean. 12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. 13 "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.

v. 10 – Jesus responded to Peter's comment by alluding to the imminent betrayal by Judas. It seems also that Jesus was saying the disciples were clean due to their relationship with Him but needed refreshing on a regular basis. Of course, we can only surmise this from the context of the foot washing itself.

v. 11 – Jesus showed remarkable restraint, for He knew who was going to betray Him, yet He carried on like their relationship was normal. **Can you also treat people who are not your friends with such grace?** Jesus lived what Paul later wrote:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

Where is your love deficient as you use John 13 and 1 Corinthians 13 as a measure?

v. 12 – Jesus interrupted the Passover meal to carry out this symbolic act. This was not part of the historic Passover ritual, but Jesus had the authority to adjust something that was sacred to the Jews. This is another proof of His divine authority. Notice also that the disciples did not try to stop him from introducing this lesson (except for Peter's embarrassment at Jesus' humbling act). It is interesting to me that the other three gospel writers do not mention this foot washing at all. Of course, we don't know why, but I am glad the Spirit moved John to include this in his gospel written much later.

As I have stated many times, Jesus was always looking for a teachable moment. He started out with a question, for which they did not have the answer. He created the need

for what He was about to say. *Lord, I want to be a teacher like Jesus! I want to be effective and help people learn your lessons. Help me!*

v. 13 – Jesus acknowledged that He was truly their Lord. That’s how they addressed Him and He said, “You are correct to do so.” Jesus did not hesitate to accept that reference, so He must be the Lord!

v. 14 – Jesus completed the lesson by informing the apostles that He expected them to do what He did in this instance. **What were the lessons from this symbolic act?**

1. He showed that rank had no place among His followers.
2. His disciples would be in need of constant washing, not total cleansing.
3. Only God can perform a total cleansing.
4. Jesus expected His disciples to pay particular attention to one another’s needs.
5. Jesus was a Teacher, and was willing not to be understood at the moment.
6. He showed that serving one another is a humbling experience.
7. Service and ministry to others is not an option.

Can you think of any other lessons to add to the list?

Day Four

15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 16 I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. 18 "I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.'

v. 15 – Jesus did not only teach with words but also with action. He provided an example of what the disciples should do to others. I said in staff devotions earlier today that in some ways a symbolic gesture like washing feet is easier to perform than actual real-life service to others. Service to others requires that you pay attention to others’ needs, then stop what you are doing, take on the role of a servant and minister to their needs. That is quite demanding actually and requires that you lose yourself in the needs of others.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:5-8).

Are you willing, ready and able to be this kind of servant? Then whose feet can you wash today? How will you do it?

v. 16 – You and I are not greater than Jesus, our Master. So if we are not greater, then we should do the things that the One who is greater has done. **Why did Jesus have to**

preface this with “I tell you the truth”? It seems pretty straightforward, but somehow He had to convince the disciples that He was serious. This is because power and leadership tend to have power, rank and hierarchy connected to them. When you are “on top,” the expectation is that others will serve you and not the other way around. Jesus had preached this message on more than one occasion. **Don’t you think it’s significant that He revisited this in His last hours on earth?**

Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves (Luke 22:24-27).

This issue of a leader’s attitude and demeanor was a high priority to Jesus. **Is it to you?**

v. 17 – We are the most knowledgeable generation that has ever served the Lord. We have DVDs, CDs, books, the Internet, dynamic church programs and a lot more “stuff” that teaches us the things of God. **Yet are we the most productive generation?** That is open to debate. Jesus said it is not enough to know something; it is only significant in His eyes if we do them. **If you know to serve someone and don’t serve them, what good is that? Where in your life are you operating far below what you know? Where can you improve, starting today?** You must make the journey from knowing to doing wherever possible.

v. 18 – It was heavy on Jesus’ mind that one of His chosen disciples was about to betray Him. Judas knew the right thing to do; he did not do it and it changed the course of history. It was quite an insult to eat with someone and then betray him. Eating was a sign of loyalty. Agreements or covenants were sealed with a meal. **Is eating a significant spiritual event for you?** (For some of us, eating is significant as our waistlines can attest). Let me rephrase that: **Is eating with someone else a significant event for you? Who would you like to have a meal with soon? How often do you eat with your family?**

Day Five

19 "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He. 20 I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me." 21 After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me." 22 His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant.

v. 19 – Jesus was telling them about Judas, but they did not comprehend what was about to happen. Looking at it from our vantage point, it is obvious, but they did not have the benefit of history. Plus, they were not looking for anyone to betray Jesus and certainly not to the Romans or Jewish leaders, so they could not see it.

I am constantly working to broaden my perspective and thinking so I can see new things and be creative. I woke up this morning with a new idea for these Bible studies, and the idea was right in front of me all along. The blockage wasn't anything but in my mind. **Where is your thinking blocking seeing something new or important? That begs the question: How can you *know* if you don't know what you aren't seeing?** You can always ask God to open your eyes, which is really saying, "Confront and change my bad thinking so I can see."

v. 20 – Again and again, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth." I suppose this was for emphasis as well as to warn the men that what He was about to say would sound ridiculous because their thinking was so subnormal. Jesus was giving them divine authority to represent Him and, if anyone did not accept them, then they were rejecting Jesus. If they rejected Jesus, then they have rejected the Father.

So if Jesus sends you anywhere, you are representing Him there. When I preach, I pray, "*Lord, help me to speak the words that Jesus would speak if He were physically present today. That will require a miracle.*" But if Jesus sent me to speak, then I should expect that to happen, not because of who I am but because of who He is.

v. 21 – Even though Jesus knew this in advance and even though Judas' betrayal was predicted by Scripture and would happen to fulfill it, Jesus was still troubled by it. This was the third time He referred to it at the Passover meal. Jesus loved them all to the uttermost, not just the eleven. Judas was His brother and friend and the betrayal was hard for Jesus to accept. It pained Him that one of His own was not going to be with them much longer. Jesus had maintained and watched over His sheep and one of them was about to sin grievously. That affected Jesus deeply.

This shows the value that Jesus puts on loyalty and covenant commitment among brethren. **Are you a loyal friend? Do you value your relationships with your brothers and sisters? Are you diligent to fulfill your biblical duties and responsibilities toward them?**

v. 22 – The men had no idea about whom Jesus was talking. They were clueless, as I often am as well. Yet tomorrow we will see that one of the disciples ventured to ask Jesus who would betray Him and Jesus answered. That gives us the "secret" to know what we don't know and understand. We ask God, and He will tell us.

If you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God (Proverbs 2:3-5).

What answers are you seeking from the Lord at this point in your life? Do you really believe you will get the answers?

Day Six

23 One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. 24 Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means." 25 Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" 26 Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon.

v. 23 – Jesus said that one of the disciples was going to betray him, yet none of them knew who. So a disciple whom Jesus loved was sitting next to Him. **Does this mean that Jesus had a favorite among the group?** Apparently He did! **Does this offend you that God may have one He loves more than the other?** When you hear something like that, it is almost impossible to fathom because for us it smacks of favoritism or something unfair. Yet God can love all and still have His special friends, such as Moses, Abraham or David. **Don't you have a best friend along with other friends? Does that make you biased against some because you love one most?** Not at all! That is how it is with God.

v. 24 – Peter wanted to know who the traitor was, so he directed to the disciple to ask Jesus who it was. When you don't have the answers to life, ask the Lord! Peter knew that Jesus would tell the disciple He loved. **What secrets are you asking God to reveal to you? What don't you know that you would like to know, but don't know because you haven't asked to know?**

vs. 25&26 – So the disciple asked and Jesus was ready to tell him who it was. He did not tell Him directly, however, but He did something symbolic to indicate that it was Judas. He dipped a piece of bread and gave it to Judas to eat. The traitor was willing to take bread from Jesus on minute and betray Him the next. There are some modern portrayals of Judas that make him out to be a sympathetic figure who was confused, concerned for Israel or disillusioned. While those portrayals may make for interesting conversation, they are misdirected. Judas was a thief who saw a chance to make money on Jesus and did it.

There are still many who make money off Jesus one way or the other. Paul even said that some men make money off the preaching of the Word:

Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God (2 Corinthians 2:7).

And then there are others whose livelihood is damaged when the Lord arrives on the scene. They usually react violently, even in modern times.

About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in no little business for the craftsmen. He called them together, along with the workmen in related trades, and said: "Men, you know we receive a good income from this business. And you see and hear

how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that man-made gods are no gods at all. There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty” (Acts 19:23-27).

Judas was eager to make some cash off His relationship with the Lord. Be careful that you don't ever do the same thing, for Jesus was clear concerning the ramifications:

"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money” (Matthew 6:24).

Day Seven

27 As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. "What you are about to do, do quickly," Jesus told him, 28 but no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. 29 Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the Feast, or to give something to the poor. 30 As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.

v. 27 – It is interesting that the devil was moving in the midst of the Passover meal but that is how he works: in the hearts and minds of people. They can be in a religious setting and because they bring the devil with them internally, he can operate in some settings where it would seem he would not comfortable or welcome.

I call these areas where he works in our hearts “landing strips.” They are places he is free to take off and land as he chooses. Our job, with the Spirit's help, is to remove these “landing strips” such as unforgiveness, anger, lust, fear and greed, to name a few. It seems that Judas' landing strip was greed, for he was always pursuing money. That landing strip was what the devil, who is very smart, used to tempt him to betray Jesus. Obviously it was an effective strategy.

v. 28 – Jesus told Judas to act quickly, but none of the other men understood what He meant, even though Jesus had clearly indicated to the disciple He loved Judas would betray Him. As we have discussed on many occasions, if you don't know what you are looking for, you may miss it! I was recently looking for something that was right in front of me, but I could not see it, because my copy of that object at home was packaged differently. Because I had my mind set on one thing, I could not see the other. The disciples had no concept that a fellow Jew would betray anyone let alone Jesus to the leaders and Rome, so they could not comprehend what Jesus was saying.

Where is that dynamic happening in your life? But you are correct if your answer is: How would I know unless God helps me to see it? So ask Him to open your eyes to see what has been in front of you all along.

v. 29 – You still see this happening, for the disciples “assumed” Jesus was referring to Judas going to buy something, since he was the treasurer. They missed Jesus’ meaning altogether, because they thought they knew what Jesus was saying. They did not. *Lord, open our eyes to see what we cannot see and give us grace to expand our minds so that we can see and learn new things.*

Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come (Ephesians 1:15-21).

v. 30 – Judas consumed the food that Jesus had given him and then went out to betray Jesus. It was a dark night in every way imaginable. Judas was about to betray the Son of Man and it would lead to horrific events that would see Jesus die an excruciating death. Yet Jesus was clear that this was not some random event, but in the will and purpose of God for Him. Things would move quickly from there, but Jesus still had many more important things to say to His disciples before the evening was over. We will continue to look at his comments in the coming weeks.