

Reading #1 PROUD HEARTS AND DIRTY FEET

John 13:1-17 (ESV)

1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. **2** During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, **3** Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, **4** rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. **5** Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. **6** He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" **7** Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." **8** Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." **9** Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" **10** Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet,[a] but is completely clean. And you[b] are clean, but not every one of you." **11** For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."
12 When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? **13** You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. **14** If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. **15** For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. **16** Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant[c] is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. **17** If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

No one really understood just how significant that Passover meal was. No one but Jesus. Jesus knew His "hour had come." He was living in the shadow of the cross, less than eighteen hours away.

He told the disciples, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." And in the middle of His talk, a dispute – literally a verbal fight – arose

among the disciples. They argued over which one of them was regarded as the greatest. How ridiculous for this solemn night! What shameless pride!

The argument was going strong and heavy when all of a sudden, the disciples heard water splashing. Without saying a word, the One you would least expect to be doing the lowest servant's duty was kneeling beside a disciple, washing his feet. The cool water ran over the disciple's ankles then across and between his toes. Jesus dried the disciple's feet with a soft towel and moved on to the next disciple.

The room was deathly silent. They were willing to fight over the throne, but nobody fought over the towel. Their hearts were proud and their feet were dirty. Jesus had some important truths still to teach them, but He couldn't until they replaced their pride with humility.

When Jesus knelt before Peter to bathe his feet, Peter said Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" At first that may sound humble, but his response was actually self-assertive, a form of subtle pride. He pulled his feet back, refusing to humble himself and allow Jesus to be who He really was – a Servant who came to wash the sin of pride from all of them. Pride keeps us from being vulnerable, protects us from being exposed.

So, Jesus answered Peter, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Connecting the dots, Peter surrendered.

Finally, Jesus put away the towel and bowl, covered His under tunic with His outer garment, and sat down again to eat.

If ever a man had a reason to be proud, Jesus did. He had never once been contaminated by sin. Never once had He failed because of carnality. He came to His last hours in perfect obedience, having accomplished the Father's will. No other human on earth can die with that sense of reality. If there was ever a time to dispatch the angels to display His glory, that would have been the moment. But He didn't. That's what made Him so great, you see. At His most critical hour, He was washing feet.

Reading #2 "LAST TIMES"

Sometime late Thursday night, Jesus and His men left the Upper Room and made their way through the streets of Jerusalem. They passed the lower pool and exited out of the city walls through the Fountain Gate. Because the city was bursting with Passover pilgrims camping along the hills and roads, nobody would have noticed this group of men walking down into the Kidron Valley, together for the last time.

Thursday evening was all about last times. The Passover had been their last meal together. For the last time, they were going to their familiar spot on the Mount of Olives. Jesus looked at His friends, fully aware that it was the last time they would be together before they would abandon Him. And that was only a short time away.

Jesus knew that within the next couple of hours He would hear the voices of His captors coming up the hill with torches, slashing the night. He would not run, though He could. They would think they were taking Him by force, but He knew what they could not have known. This was not the march of the condemned but a strategic battle of a war in which victory was promised and assured.

Jesus fought the battle here, in the hour before. In essence, He said, "Let it pass. Let this cup pass." He pleaded with the Father three times in the shadows of the olive trees, in the loneliness of His choice, "Let this cup of suffering pass."

He also won the battle here. Refusing to create the canyon that a stubborn will would have carved, He uttered in essence, "My Father ... not what I want but what You want." Surrender. Jesus's will and the Father's were one, as it always had been. No distance between them. There would be enough distance the next day. That night, under the gnarled olive trees, He drew close to the Father in prayer.

He had come to do the will of the Father, and so He freely submitted to the Father's plan. In His surrender, He won an important battle on the road to victory.

Reading #3 “MISSION ACCOMPLISHED”

In the first three hours on the cross – with spikes piercing His hands and feet and pus oozing from the raw inflammations on His back – Jesus’s only words revealed concern for others. He forgave a criminal dying beside Him, entrusted His mother into John’s care, and looked on His murderers with compassion: **“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”**

Their words, however, revealed different hearts. **“Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross,”** the chief priests and the scribes mocked, **“so that we may see and believe!”** **“He saved others; He cannot save Himself,”** they blasted.

Darkness shrouded Jerusalem during Jesus’s final three hours of life. During this time the Gospels record absolutely nothing spoken – until the very end. The darkness reflected the unimaginable spiritual agony Jesus endured.

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” In that moment, Jesus entered into spiritual death – that is, separation from the Father. Never in all eternity had Jesus endured this incomprehensible severance. But He willingly embraced it, knowing that the penalty for the sins of all humanity received its atonement then and there.

Right there, the new covenant began, the universe was redeemed, and every sin ever committed was paid for.

“It is finished!” Jesus shouted. He raised Himself against the nails to draw a final breath. **“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.”** Even in the blur of His pain and in the agony of spiritual death, Jesus entrusted His destiny to the Father’s will.

Jesus’s body fell limp, motionless, and silent.

In that moment – a mere three hundred yards east – the temple experienced *anything* but silence. A deafening rip filled the courts as the veil that separated humankind from the Holy of Holies tore in two from top to bottom. Like the sky that “tore” open above Jesus’s baptism, so the renting of the veil revealed the Father’s acceptance of Jesus’s death on our behalf. Centuries of sacrifices – burnt offerings wafting their pleasing aroma heavenward – found ultimate fulfillment in the flawless sacrifice of Jesus.