

“Do You Know What I Have Done?”

Thomas Robinson, February 7, 2010

John 13:1-20

¹ It was just before the **Passover** Festival. **Jesus knew** that **the hour had come** for him to **leave this world** and **go to the Father**. Having **loved his own** who were in the world, **he loved them to the end**.

² The **evening meal** was in progress, and the **devil** (accuser) had already prompted (intended for) Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, 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.

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 (forever) 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!***"

¹⁰ Jesus answered, "*Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their 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.*** ¹⁵ *I have set you an **example** that you should do as I have done for you.* ¹⁶ *Very truly I tell you, **servants are not greater than their master**, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them.* 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 this passage of Scripture:*

*'He who shared my bread
has **lifted up his heel against me.**'* [Ps 41:9]

¹⁹ "*I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen **you will believe that I am** who I am.*"²⁰ *Very truly I tell you, **whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me.***"

The Last Day

John has led us to the last 18 hours before Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus understood what was coming, but none of the disciples did. John helps us see. He has led us from ch.1 with many confessions: Logos, God, Lamb of God, Messiah, Son of God, Son of Man, King of Israel, glory, grace, truth; through many encounters, conversations, controversies, to the difficulty of faith in Jesus as God in flesh among us remaking all our values, being our resurrection and life.

That last evening was crucial, as all the various memories of the disciples recalled. John tells it differently from the others, though with several overlaps, 5 chaps focusing on Jesus' teaching. Jesus prepares them and us for his crucifixion.

The Meaning of the Moment

Imagine the events through the eyes of a disciple: excitement, throngs, Passover, Lazarus, procession, banquet; Jesus acts without a word: takes off garment, puts on towel, fills basin, begins to wash their feet. Why? Meaning? Not his task.

John helps us by letting us see the moment through Jesus' eyes: deeper reality. Jesus would die - leave this world. He loved his disciples fully "to the end." Cosmic drama of Satan and betrayal: what should he do about the betrayal? Universal power. Stark contrast to Jesus' circumstances. All was in his hands. Jesus knew that this life was circumscribed by God: God was his identity.

How do you manifest that identity, power, glory, love? Jesus answers in two acts. First, he kneels and washes the dirt of the disciple's feet into his basin. Second, he is lifted up on the cross to pour out the Father's love on the world. We are caught. We know that we would never have shown such glory by menial service. If we're learning faith we wonder why we wouldn't and why Jesus did.

"You'll Never Ever Wash My Feet!"

Peter knew something was very wrong here. Jesus encourages him, but he refuses. Peter has been on the journey of faith, following faithfully (6:68). He wants to heroically follow his heroic leader. He wants a sovereign God, glorious in power, but when your great Lord is making himself your servant, what do you do? Peter looks through the doorway to Jesus' world, is aghast, and can't step through.

Jesus is gentle but uncompromising. Unless I your Lord can be your slave, wash you, die for you, you have no hope. No need for heroics. Just let me wash you.

Do You Understand?

Jesus begins the task of helping the physical parable get inside their/our hearts. He is Teacher and Lord. They must let him define what is right, true, loving. If they/we can only understand to follow his example, that's a beginning. They/we will enter the reality he knows and experience its blessing.

Jesus refers enigmatically to the coming betrayal by Judas (Ps 41:9). Jesus did not just wash Peter's feet; He washed Judas' feet, the heel raised to step on him. When Jesus acted so slavishly, Judas opened his heart to the accuser.

Jesus helps them/us through all this so that we can trust in his reality - "I am." If Jesus is Lord, we must learn to see that true reality, service, love. Jesus knew his own immeasurable power and showed its true reality washing his betrayer. Like Peter, our eyes are often blind to see Jesus' glory. Step into the light.