

The Gospel of John Pt. 21

John 13:1-38

Big Idea

Jesus devotes Himself to His closest disciples as He shares how His disciples were to be known by their love for one another.



Exposition – John 13:1-38

John 13 takes place entirely in the Upper Room. One of the more recognizable narratives of the gospels, the Upper Room scene features Jesus washing the feet of His disciples, the satanic work in Judas, and Jesus' betrayal. In John's presentation of this event, there is no mention of the bread and cup. John's emphasis was on the relationship between Himself and the disciples rather than the ordinance or the Passover ritual.

1. Jesus Washes Feet (V1-20)

- A. (V1-5) – It is Thursday evening, the day before the crucifixion. John is clear, the die of betrayal is already cast in Judas Iscariot. It is clear that whatever stimuli coerced Judas to betray Jesus has already proven effective. Jesus is willing to face the betrayal, humiliation, and death because He knew that He would rise to God and His glory and fellowship. "... who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb.12:2)
Foot washing was a necessity given the conditions of Palestine. Typically, however, the washing was left to the lowest ranking servants. Foot washing among peers was rare and was considered to be an act of great love.
- B. (V6-10) – No doubt the disciples are astonished that Jesus would perform an act of service so lowly in nature as washing feet. Peter is likely speaking as a representative of the rest of the group. MacArthur says the disciples miss the symbolism of washing due to the audacious act on Jesus part. This seems clear by Peter's response, "Lord, then wash not only me feet, but also my hands and my head." What Jesus does in cleansing a person does not need improved upon or repeated. The righteousness of Jesus, Himself, is imputed (transferred) to us at the moment of redemption (Philippians 3:8-9).
- C. (V11-20) –
 - 1. (V10-11) -- While Jesus illustrates the redemption that He offers through His sacrifice on the cross, He acknowledges that not all of them have been made clean. This is a strong reminder that an outward, religious act, such as foot washing is not what saves. It is an inward, act of the Spirit.
 - 2. (V12-16) – Jesus compares His relationship with the disciples (Lord and Teacher) with the metaphor of slave/master. If the Lord washes the feet of others, why shouldn't His servants do the same?
 - 3. (V17-18) – Joy comes from obedience. A truth that is lost today. The "chosen" here should not be understood to be universal, but rather the 12 themselves. Jesus alludes to the prophecy found in Psalms 41:9.

2. Prediction of Betrayal (V21-30)

- A. "troubled" here packs a punch. It is a strong term that communicates horror and anxiety.
- B. V23-25 – "... one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved" – John refers to himself five times in his gospel and always in similar ways (13:23; 19:26-27; 20:2-9; 21:1, 20-23; 21:24). John's position at Jesus' bosom is an indication of his intimate standing with Jesus.
- C. V26-28 – At a feast like this, the host would often dip into a communal dish and pass especially tasty pieces of food to a guest as a gesture of honor. Some say the way in which the food was easily passed to Judas indicates that he was also seated at the bosom of Jesus and therefore shows one last act of love and compassion on Jesus' part.

- D. V29-30 -- At this point Judas is fully, powerfully possessed by Satan. Satan's accord with Judas comes from the result of both parties desiring the same outcome, the death of Jesus. Judas departs in darkness. Both physical darkness and spiritual darkness. Judas is handed over fully to the power of darkness.

3. Departure Discourse (V31-38)

- A. (V31-32) -- Now, for the first time, all of the pieces are in place for Jesus' greatest work – the Cross. However, Jesus doesn't dwell on the suffering and agony of the cross. He looks beyond it to glory.
 - 1. We mustn't fail to see what Jesus is showing us here – the emphasis of human existence cannot be on the temporal, the nearby, the physical. As Jesus stares crucifixion in the face and looks past it, so should we. Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:16–18)

- B. (V33-35) – Jesus had previously told the Jews that there was coming a time when they would no longer be able to find Him (John 7:34 & 8:21). Jesus doesn't say this for the purpose of expressing urgency so much as to show that He was about to go to a place spiritually where mortal man could not go. Only Jesus could go to the Cross and die (1 Pet. 2:22-24) and only Jesus could possess the glory which He had before His incarnation (12:41, 17:1-5). Up to this point Jesus has been the symbol for His movement, but with His departure, love would become the signature of His followers. The Bible has previously charged us to: Love God (Deut 6:5) and to Love our neighbor (Lev. 19:18), but here Jesus ups the expectation. Here, we are to love "as He loved us" AND this love is only possible through the New Covenant by the Holy Spirit.

- C. (V36-38) – Jesus indicates that Peter would follow in Jesus' footsteps at a later date. Jewish tradition holds that Peter was crucified upside down because he did not believe himself worthy to be executed in the same way that his Lord was. Whether or not Jesus has this in mind here or if He is simply indicating that Peter would suffer and die for the sake of the gospel, is unclear.

While Jesus' work was about to be finished, the work of the disciples was just beginning.

