

John 13
Exodus 12
Psalm 41

“And It Was Night”

August 16, 2020

Seven times in this passage we are told that it was night.
The Passover feast took place at night.
The death of the Firstborn took place at night.
Pharaoh arose in the night to discover the death of his son.
And he called Moses and Aaron by night –
and thus it is a night to be observed to the LORD.

So – of course, when Jesus came to celebrate the Passover –
it was night.

God had said that the Passover was when God would execute judgment on the gods of Egypt.
God had said to Pharaoh,
“Israel is my son, my firstborn. Let my son go that he may serve me.
But if you refuse to let him go, I will kill your firstborn son!” (Ex 4:22-23)

Eighty years before, a Pharaoh had killed many Israelite sons –
throwing many baby boys into the Nile River.

Imagine that – if you will!
You’ve just gone through the pain of childbirth.
You are thrilled that your baby is finally here!

And as you take that baby into your arms – the door crashes open –
soldiers charge in – snatch the baby from your arms and...

Moses had survived because his mother had hidden him –
ironically enough – she hid him in an ark *in the Nile River!* –
and was discovered and adopted by Pharaoh’s daughter.

Now, eighty years later...

God has a funny sense of timing.
Eighty years later!

Do you sometimes wonder why is God doing this?
Why does God allow these awful things to happen?
So many grieving mothers lived out their whole lives *never knowing* the answer...

Eighty years later – one of those sons who had been doomed to die –
returns from Exile to save his people!

Our Psalm of response is Psalm 41.

This is the song of the betrayal of Jesus.

The song of the Last Supper – “my close friend in whom I trusted,
who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.”

Psalm 41 is a Psalm of David –

the first person singular voice is the voice of the Messiah – the Lord’s Anointed.

Jesus sings this song on the night in which he was betrayed – when he broke bread.

His foes were seeking his death.

And he was betrayed by Judas.

And as Judas goes out, John reminds us:

“And it was night.”

Sing Psalm 41

Read John 13

He loved them to the end!!

He loved *you* to the end.

He loved his own who were in the world.

Do you belong to Jesus?

Are you alive? (are you still in the world?!)

He loved you to the end.

John 13:1 is the thesis statement for the rest of the Gospel of John –
certainly for chapters 13-17.

Introduction: “He Loved Them to the End” (v1)

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.

John 13-17 consists of Jesus’ private conversations with his disciples after the Passover meal.

John’s gospel is the only one that does not recount the institution of the Lord’s Supper.

John knows that you already have that in the other gospel accounts,
so he doesn’t bother with it.

There is a way in which John 13 is about Judas.

He is there in verse 2 in explaining about the supper.

Both of Jesus’ explanations of the foot washing include references to him (vv 10-11, 18)

And he is focus of the discussion at the Last Supper itself (21-38).

John 11-12 focus on Lazarus and the coming of Jesus' hour.

And if the glory of God is revealed in Jesus through the raising of Lazarus,
so also the glory of God is revealed in the betrayal by Judas.

So John 13 focuses on Judas and the coming of Jesus' hour.

Jesus knew that his hour had come.

Just a few days before

Jesus had proclaimed

“the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified”

But the glorification he spoke of, was the glorification of his death.

The “hour” in John 12:27 is plainly the hour of the crucifixion.

John 3:16 says that God loved the world in this way:

that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish,
but have eternal life.

John now tells us that Jesus knew that his hour had come
to depart out of this world to the Father.

And knowing that his hour was at hand, what was Jesus' focus?

Knowing that he would die in a matter of hours now,
what did he do?

“Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.”

This was why Jesus came.

“For this purpose I have come to this hour!”

He came so that the love of God might be displayed to the world.

He came to give light to the world (12:46).

He came to save the world (12:47).

But he would no longer remain in the world.

He would now return to the Father.

And yet he loved those who would remain in the world.

The “world” is not a neutral place.

The world, after all, is the realm under the dominion of the devil.

Remember 12:31–“Now is the judgment of this world;

now will the ruler of this world be cast out.”

Jesus has come to save the world

–to deliver the realm of humanity from the dominion of the devil–
and to establish the Kingdom of God.

So “having loved his own who were in the world”–who were under the dominion of the devil–

“He loved them to the end.”

He did not forsake his mission.

1. Washing Feet at the Passover (v2-20)
a. Judas, Jesus, and Peter

There are three main characters in our story today:
Judas, Jesus, and Peter.

In the first half of the chapter (verses 2-20) Jesus and Peter are the only two speakers.

But Judas looms large over the passage (v2, v10-11, and v18)

What do you know about Judas Iscariot?

He is the one who betrayed Jesus.

He was one of Jesus' disciples—one of the twelve—
he had seen Jesus' miracles.

He had been there when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

But Judas wanted Jesus to die.

We heard in John 6 that Jesus knew who would betray him.

And yet Jesus took Judas as his disciple,
and even entrusted him with the moneybag (John 12:4-6).

John 13 is about Judas.

And Peter.

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!"

And so during the supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot
Simon's son, to betray him,
Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands,
and that he was going back to God,
rose from supper,
and laying aside his garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist.
Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet
and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.
He loved them to the end.

You often hear people say that washing feet was a slave's job –
and that's true!
But what did washing feet signify in the Old Testament?

Jesus is *plainly* engaged in an action with much symbolic importance.
All of his other actions are closely connected to the story of the OT.
What about foot washing?

In Genesis 18:4, Abraham offers to have water brought
so that the three travelers can wash their feet.
In the next chapter – Genesis 19:2 – Lot offers hospitality to the two angels –
“spend the night and wash your feet”
(the same language is used in Judges 19 – with the parallel story).

Later in Genesis 24 – Abraham's servant
(who comes as an honored guest to negotiate for Isaac's bride!) has his feet washed.
In Genesis 43 – Joseph's brothers are brought into his house for hospitality –
and they washed their feet
In 1 Samuel 25 – Abigail says she is a servant to wash the feet of the servants of David
And in 2 Samuel 11 – David tells Uriah to go down to his house and wash his feet

So the basic meaning of foot washing is symbol of hospitality –
“make yourself at home!”
“you belong here!”

There's one other place:

In Exodus 30 – Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in the bronze basin
before they enter the tent of meeting to burn incense or burn a food offering
(they had been washed in their priestly anointing –
but now it is just their hands and their feet that they must wash).

In other words, when the priests are preparing to enter the holy place –
they must wash their hands and their feet –
yes, as a means of cleansing (removing dirt from the body –
as a picture of the sort of purity we must have to enter God's presence!) –

but *please* do not lose sight of the central meaning of foot washing!

“Make yourself at home!”
“You belong here!”

The priest entered the holy place as the representative of Israel.
He had to wash his own feet – because there was no one else who could wash them.

Now, Jesus – the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us –
kneels before them and washes their feet!

The incarnation consists of one humiliation after another.

The eternal Word of God humbled himself to become a man.

He humbled himself to be born as a helpless baby.

He humbled himself to endure through temptation and hunger.

And now he humbled himself to do the task of a common house servant.

He, the Lord and Teacher, now took the role of a common slave,
and washed their dirty feet.

Indeed, John heightens the strangeness of this by reminding us that Jesus knew
that he had come from God, and was now returning to God.

Jesus *knew* who he was—and he still did this.

Simon Peter did not fully understand yet who Jesus was,
but he recognized that this was wrong.

“Lord, do you wash my feet?”

You are my master.

You have no business washing my feet.

Jesus replied: “What I am doing now you do not understand now,
but afterward you will understand.”

Peter said: “Lord, you don’t get it. Never. Never will you wash my feet.”

Okay, Jesus said, but “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.”

That did it.

Peter’s convinced!

“Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!”

If being washed by you means that I have a share with you,
then wash me Lord!

Jesus replied, (verse 10)

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.”*

Peter, there is no need for me to wash your head and hands,
because you are already clean.

I wash your feet, because as you walk around this world,
you get your feet dirty.

But you are clean.

Remember that this is in the context of Jesus discussion of the “world”

The feet—especially when you are wearing sandals—

are the parts of the body that come into the most contact with the world.

So although you have been cleansed, and are no longer part of the world,
your feet are dirty.
And Jesus must continually wash your feet.

You—like the disciples—have been baptized.

You are clean.

Think about that Nathan – and Raegan – and Lincon – and Oliver –
and all of you who are baptized!

You have been washed and cleansed – so that you *are welcome* in the holy place!
You are welcome in the presence of God!

You are home!

You belong here!

And that’s why Jesus must continue to wash your feet.

This is why we include a confession of sin and declaration of pardon every week.

We are *in the world* – but not *of the world*.

You are no longer part of the world,
but you still sin.

And so you must be cleansed week by week and day by day.

This is why we must repent when we have sinned against God and others.

And this is why we must forgive those who have sinned against us.

¹¹ *For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, “Not all of you are clean.”*

But, Jesus says, “not all of you are clean.”

Some pastors might be tempted to use Judas as an example,
and warn you “don’t be like Judas!”

I find it interesting that the New Testament never does this.

When Paul wants to find an example of covenant breaking,
he turns to Esau or Israel—not Judas.

It would cheapen Judas’ betrayal to use him as a common moral example.

Judas betrayed the Son of God to his death.

Judas sat at that table with treason in his heart,
had his feet washed by the Eternal Son of God,
partook of that holy meal,
and still betrayed the Word made flesh.

b. A Servant Is Not Greater Than His Master

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.

But the disciples don't get it.

So Jesus asks, "Do you understand what I have done to you?
You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.
If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet,
you also ought to wash one another's feet."

The example in this passage is Jesus.
No servant is greater than his master.
If Jesus has washed your feet,
then you must wash the feet of others.

How do you wash the feet of others?

I spent a summer in Eritrea after I graduated from Westminster.
When I was in Eritrea I told husbands that Christ called the husband to serve his wife.
I gave them an example, suggesting that they could help with the dishes.
That afternoon over lunch the missionary doctor informed me that in Eritrea
men *never* do dishes,
and that my suggestion had impugned their manhood.
She suggested that I not make such suggestions in the future,
fearing that my credibility would be damaged.

I found it interesting, though, that it was after that Sunday that the men in the church
started getting more involved in the Bible studies.
I think that they got the point
(whether they ever helped their wives with the dishes, I don't know),
but the example of Christ is one that strikes at the heart of every "status" issue
in every culture.
Whatever it is that you "won't" do, because it is "beneath" you,
is precisely what Christ calls you to do.

What is it that you think is "beneath you"?
What is the thing that you say, "that's for the little people to do...!"

"If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." (17)

But remember, this is about Judas.

Even as Jesus calls his disciples to imitate him in his humiliation,
he draws their attention to the fact that there is one who does not belong.
(Read 18-19)

¹⁸ *I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled,^[d] 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'* ¹⁹ *I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.*

Jesus knows his sheep.

“I know whom I have chosen.” (This is plural)

There is one among the disciples whom Jesus did not choose as his sheep.

There is a traitor in their midst.

And then he quotes from Psalm 41.

We sang Psalm 41.

“Blessed is the one who considers the poor!”

Jesus is that blessed one.

The Psalm goes on to say that “all who hate me whisper together about me”;
it speaks of the plots of the wicked against the Anointed King.

“Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread,
has lifted his heel against me.”

But then David cries out, “But you, O Lord, be gracious to me, and raise me up,
that I may repay them!”

By this I know that you delight in me:

my enemy will not shout in triumph over me.

But you have upheld me because of my integrity,
and set me in your presence forever.”

Jesus is that blessed one—the anointed King who is betrayed by his close friend,
but raised up by God to sit in his presence forever.

Jesus invites us to see Psalm 41 as a song about his betrayal,
but also about his vindication.

So when he says “I am telling you this now,

....that when it does take place you may believe”

he is not just talking about his betrayal,

but about the whole sequence of events in Psalm 41.

I can find no better application than the one that Jesus gives in verse 20:

²⁰ *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.*”

The lesson for us, is to receive the one whom Jesus sends.

Jesus sends many people our way,

calling on us to humble ourselves and imitate him in our self-sacrificial service.

As we have been received –

as God has shown hospitality to us – making us at home in his presence –

so also are we to make others welcome –

we are to welcome all those who come in Jesus’ name!

But again, Judas returns to center stage.

2. The Betrayal and the Denial (v21-38)

a. Judas, Jesus, and Peter

In the second half of the chapter, John also speaks – but at Peter’s behest.

Otherwise, only Peter and Jesus speak.

But the silent Judas again dominates the scene (v21, 26-31)

²¹ After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” ²² The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. ²³ One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus’ side,^[e] ²⁴ so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus^[f] of whom he was speaking. ²⁵ So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, “Lord, who is it?” ²⁶ 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. ²⁷ Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” ²⁸ Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. ²⁹ Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor. ³⁰ So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit.

After talking about self-sacrificial service to the brethren,

Jesus testifies to the twelve: “Truly, truly I say to you, one of you will betray me.”

The juxtaposition could not be stronger:

Jesus, the master, washes Judas’ feet.

Judas, the disciple, betrays the master’s trust.

But the disciples are stunned.

Peter asks John to ask Jesus who it is (John never refers to himself in his gospel, except in terms such as “the one whom Jesus loved”)

So John asks, “Lord, who is it?”

Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it”

This is precisely what Psalm 41 says.

“He who ate my bread.”

Jesus is self-consciously establishing himself as the one who fulfills Psalm 41.

And in one of the most chilling moments in scripture,

it says that “after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into Judas.”

John has made it clear that Judas already intended to betray Jesus.

But now Judas’ plans are so identified with Satan’s

that it is proper to say that Satan entered Judas.

And Jesus commanded him.

Interesting, isn’t it?

Jesus *commanded* him.

Even the one possessed by the ruler of this world still must obey the Son of God!

“What you are going to do, do quickly.”

The disciples don’t understand this:

was he going to buy something for the feast? or give to the poor?

But Judas obeys the command of the Son of God and immediately went out.

And it was night.

Jesus has just said in John 12, “while you have the light, believe in the light,
that you may become sons of light”

Judas is a son of darkness—a son of the night.

Perhaps there are echoes here of Saul—the apostate king,

who went to visit the witch of Endor at night (1 Samuel 28:8)

But certainly there are echoes of the Passover in Exodus 12.

This is, after all, the Passover meal.

The meal that must be eaten by night,

as the angel of death passes throughout the land of Egypt,
striking down the firstborn of man and beast.

Only those protected by the blood of the lamb can survive this night.

God himself declared, “on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment.” (Ex 12:12)

That Passover night, God struck down the firstborn of Pharaoh and all Egypt.

The ruler of this world was judged, together with all his people.

Jesus has just said,

“Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.”

What was done on a local level in Egypt more than a thousand years before,
is now done on a cosmic level in Jesus.

The betrayer goes forth by night to accomplish the judgment of God against the world,
and against its ruler.

Because this night the judgment of God is coming against the firstborn
—just as on that Passover night more than a millennium before.

But this time it will be God’s firstborn.

b. A New Commandment: Love One Another as I Have Loved You

³¹ *When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. ³² If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once.*

³³ *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.’ ³⁴ 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. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

And when the betrayer goes out into the dark of night,

Jesus says,

“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.”
In the betrayal of Judas, Jesus is glorified.
In the suffering of the cross, Jesus is glorified.
In his death, Jesus is glorified.

And this is why Jesus says tenderly to the eleven, “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.’”
Jesus’ task is unique.
They can wash each other’s feet,
but they cannot participate in this.
Only one man can bear the judgment of God against the world
And yet through that unique, unrepeatable action
comes the universal command of the gospel:
“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 that you are my disciples,
if you have love for one another.”

We sometimes talk about the marks of the church in terms of faithful preaching,
sacraments and discipline.
But the mark of the Christian is summed up in this: if you have love for one another.
You can get all your theology neatly packaged up with a bow,
but if you have not love, it is worthless.
You can have discipline and order and all the purity in the world,
but if you have not love, it is still worldly.

Indeed, Jesus goes so far as to say that people—out there—
have a right to say that you are *not* Christ’s disciples if you don’t love each other!
Jesus will go on to say in John 17:23 that this love will demonstrate to the world
that the Father has sent the Son.
Francis Schaeffer was right to say that if we don’t love each other,
then the world should conclude that the Father never sent the Son.

Are you a Christian?
Then Christ commands you to love each other—by serving one another!
—by demonstrating that love by your actions toward one another!

³⁶ Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.” ³⁷ Peter said to him, “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” ³⁸ Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.

Simon Peter again asks,
“Lord, where are you going?”

Jesus answers:
“Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow me afterward.”

It is night now.
No one else but the one who has life in himself—the one who is the light of the world,
will be able to see in this darkness.

Indeed, when Peter protests that he will lay down his life for Jesus,
Jesus can only say, No, Peter, in this darkness even you will fall away.
“Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.”

I said at the beginning that this passage is about Judas.
It is.
But it is also about Peter.

Because it is now night.
This is the hour when no one can stand against the power of the evil one.
Judas has succumbed to the devil,
and Jesus warns that Peter will not withstand the temptation to deny Christ.
“Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.”
Now it is night—and the disciples will falter in the darkness,
but as Jesus will go on to say in the following chapters,
the darkness will not prevail.
Jesus *alone* will stand that night.
The light of the world will appear to be snuffed out,
only to rise again in the glory of the Father.
And when he is raised from the dead,
he will pour out his Spirit upon his people.
And never again will they walk in darkness.
YOU will never again walk in darkness.
That is why John says in Revelation 22,
“And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun,
for the Lord God will be their light.”