

John Chapters 13-17
Words for Times of Transition

Text: The Gospel of John: A Commentary
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Week 2

Verses for Discussion: John 13: 6-11

“So Jesus comes to Simon Peter, who says to him, ‘Lord, are you washing my feet?!’ Jesus replied to him, ‘What I am doing right now you don’t understand yet, but you will understand later on.’ Peter says to him, ‘You will never ever wash my feet – ever!’ Jesus replied and said to him, ‘If I can’t wash your feet, you can’t have my fellowship.’ Simon Peter now says to him, ‘Lord, not just my feet, then, but also my hands and my head, please!’ Jesus says to him, ‘The person who has had a bath doesn’t need anything else at all, but is completely clean; and you people here are now a clean people. But not all of you.’ You see, Jesus knew who the person is who is turning him in, and that’s why Jesus said, ‘Not all of you are clean.’”

Discussion of the Text:

The Footwashing is the classic parable of how – almost “incredibly” – Jesus wants to relate perpetually to his disciples: namely, to be at our service...For some mysterious reason we mortals – and not least, we disciples – resist divinity’s free grace, its totally unmerited service of us, its way of saving or “salvaging” us human beings. This story illustrates the Gospel’s truth unforgettably. Moral: Let us let ourselves be loved by the Lord. Let Jesus be our Servant-Lord...Give in. Be washed, simply because Jesus wants to wash us and not because we think or feel we deserve to be washed. (Pages 765-766)

(Regarding Peter in particular) Apparently the lesson of Peter’s story as a whole is that disciples can fall, but they can also come back again – to a “wholly clean” relation that has been theirs from the beginning – through their once-for-all washing by Jesus. For most of us this washing consciously occurred either in our conversion or (ideally) in our baptism, which is intended to be the place of public conversion. (Page 769)

Verses for Discussion: John 13: 12-20

“So when Jesus had washed their feet and put his outer garments back on and sat down again, he said to them, ‘Do you understand what I just did to you? You call me “Teacher” and “Lord,” and it is well that you do, because that is who I am. If I then – your Lord and Teacher – have washed your feet, then you ought to wash one another’s feet as well. You see, I have given you a pattern for living: so that what I just did for you, you can do for others. Amen, amen, I want to tell you something very important: A servant is not greater than his master, nor is an apostle (a sent one) greater than the one who sent him (the Sender). If you understand these things I have just done for you, you will be so deeply blessed if you just put them into practice.

“I am not talking about all of you. I know whom I have chosen. But what is going to happen will happen so that the scripture can be fulfilled that says, “The man sharing my meal will lift up his heel against me.” (From now on I am going to tell you things before they happen so that when they do

happen you will believe – that I Am.) Amen, amen, I want to tell you something very important: The person who is welcoming whomever I send is actually welcoming me; and the person who is welcoming me is actually welcoming The One Who Sent Me.”

Discussion of the Text:

Jesus' Footwashing is not only a perfect depiction of what God has done for us in Jesus' atoning work and of what God continues to do for us by applying his Son's atoning work to us through Word, sacraments, Church and prayer (Acts 2:42), it also shows disciples how they can live their lives in the most "*blessed*" possible way: in mutual service, submission, forgiveness, and patience. Good listening in conversation, good hospitality with visitors, guests and callers, good attention to customers, clients, students, and colleagues in business and work, good presence with spouse and children, good "being there at your service" as a whole way of life – these and hundreds of other daily responsibilities and privileges are wonderfully pictured by Jesus' Footwashing gift. Jesus' Footwashing not only teaches the Christian gospel, but it also teaches the Christian ethic. (Page 773)

Verses for Discussion: John 13: 21-30

"When Jesus had said these things, he was deeply troubled in his spirit, and he gave them this testimony: 'Amen, amen, I want to tell you something very important: One of you is going to turn me in.' (The disciples looked around at each other, absolutely non-plussed, wondering whom in the world he could possibly be talking about.) One of his disciples was reclining right next to Jesus' chest – he was the disciple whom Jesus loved so much. So Simon Peter, motioning to this disciple, says, 'Ask him who it is!' So that disciple, who was right next to Jesus, says to him, 'Lord who is it?' Jesus replied, 'The one for whom I will dip this piece of bread and to whom I will give it.' Then Jesus dipped the piece and gives it to – Judas the son of Simon Iscariot. And right after Judas received the piece, Satan went right into that man. Then Jesus says to him, 'What you are going to do, do quickly.' Now none of those reclining at the table knew why Jesus said this to him. You see, some of them were thinking that since Judas had the common purse Jesus was telling him to go buy something they needed for the festival or to give something to the poor. So that man took the piece of bread and went out immediately. And it was night."

Discussion of the Text:

Augustine says, "It is plain [from Christ himself] that the mind of the Christian may be troubled, not by misery but by pity." (Page 780)

"Bernard, 2:469, is helpful: "John, who lays such stress on the consciousness which Jesus had of His oneness with God (cf.5:19), is no less emphatic about His true humanity (see on 1:14), "and, we could add, of his oneness with all hurting human beings. Schnelle, 219, gives us the way John's Gospel uses the phrase, "tarassesthai tō pneumatī" ["troubled in spirit"; cf. the same verb's use at 11:33 near Lazarus's tomb]: It consistently denotes a confrontation with the devastating power of death ("Unheilsmacht des Todes")." ...Jesus is a real human being, not a demigod, nor a god disguised as a human being. (Page 781)

Reflection:

- 1) What is the overall meaning of Judas's betrayal?
- 2) What is the meaning of Jesus being "troubled"?

3) Why does Jesus warn the disciples “One of you is going to turn me in”?

Personal Experience and Application:

In looking at Peter's reaction to Jesus, Bruner comments "Our conscience tells us all too clearly who (we think) we really "are". How can we let Jesus trump the truest truth we know about ourselves – the voice of our own innermost voice, our conscience?... Our conscience, too, needs submission to the gospel; conscience is not Lord, nor does it in fact tell us the *final* truths about ourselves. The conscience can be ethically very helpful, as we all know, and its voice should not be muted ethically or morally; but the conscience is theologically, in our relation with God, most often devilishly wrong, and should be constantly monitored and subdued by the far deeper gospel (which goes far deeper and speaks far truer than even our own innermost voice). Peter plays the role of conscience almost perfectly in our story. (Page 765)

How does this feel in our own lives?

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Verses for Next Week: John 13: 31-38