



SCRIPTURE + SHARED

Week 1 – John 13:1-38

Day 1 – John 13:1-11

¹Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ²The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. ⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." ¹¹For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

Understanding the Passage:

The phrase "his hour" in the first part of this passage is a curious one. We know that Jesus isn't crucified within an hour of this supper that he is having with his disciples. So why does the text say that "his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father"?

The idea of Jesus' hour is a prominent theme in John's gospel. It's not used as a measure of chronological time, but instead describes the period of Jesus' life when he is glorified. On three occasions earlier in the gospel, the author writes that it is not yet Jesus' hour (2:4, 7:30, 8:20). It is not until John 12:23 when Jesus tells his disciples that his hour has come. This comes when he turns from his public teaching ministry and faces his certain death. Jesus explains that the hour is not something from which he is running away – in fact, he is running towards it, for that is how he will be glorified and people will know the Father:

"Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." (John 12:27-28)

The fact that "his hour" begins with Jesus washing the feet of his disciples is an indication that an important component of Jesus' glorification is self-sacrifice and self-emptying. This is a theme we will trace through the rest of the Book of John.

One of the most ancient Christian hymns we know of is one recorded in Paul's letter to the Philippians: the Kenotic Hymn. The root of the word kenotic is kenosis, which means to empty oneself. In this moment, when Jesus washes the feet of his disciples, he is demonstrating what truly emptying oneself and becoming like a slave looks like (ref. Philippians 2:7). He does this as an example before he leaves his disciples so that they will know how they should love and serve others.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. What does it look like to be glorified in this world? How does that stand in contrast to the glorification that Jesus will experience through crucifixion and resurrection?
2. Have you ever been served by someone that you don't think should serve you because they are elevated in status or authority? How did it make you feel? Were you able to accept their service as a gift?

Day 2 – John 13:12-20

¹²After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

¹⁸I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But it is to fulfill the scripture, 'The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.' ¹⁹I tell you this now, before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am he. ²⁰Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me."

Understanding the Passage:

Through this explanation about the foot washing, Jesus is laying out for his disciples what he wants Christian community to look like. Earlier in this chapter, the author of the Gospel of John says that Jesus "loved his own who were in the world... to the end." Even until the moment of his death, Jesus was focused on the community he was leaving behind. He knew that once he was crucified, it would be up to his disciples and followers to continue to live as he taught them so that others would know God's grace.

Jesus asks, "do you know what I have done to you?" The answer is not as simple as, "you washed my feet, Lord!" If Jesus wants this action to be the measure by which Christian communities live, then he's talking about something much deeper than a community of people that just goes around and washes people's feet. Can you imagine how Christianity would have stagnated if it was all about holding big foot washing events?! No, what Jesus was talking about was love, forgiveness, and humble service.

Ephesians 4:32 tells us, "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." What we're meant to do in Christian community is pass on the forgiveness that God offered to us.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. How does Jesus' act of washing everyone's feet (including Judas' feet) have a greater impact because of his foreknowledge about the betrayal? What does this tell you about forgiveness?
2. Have you withheld forgiveness from anyone? Is it causing strain in your relationship?
3. What is a practical thing you can do today through which you can imitate the love and forgiveness demonstrated by Jesus' foot washing?

Day 3 – John 13:21-30

²¹After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, “Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.” ²²The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. ²³One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him; ²⁴Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. ²⁵So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?” ²⁶Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “Do quickly what you are going to do.” ²⁸Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. ²⁹Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the festival”; or, that he should give something to the poor. ³⁰So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

Understanding the Passage:

Most of Jesus’ ministry was spent in Galilee. He grew up in Nazareth, which is in Galilee. His home base during his ministry years was Capernaum, which is on the Sea of Galilee. He traveled and preached and healed all throughout Galilee – and, importantly, it is the land in which he was accepted (John 4:45 - “When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him.”)

Conversely, Jesus is regarded with suspicion in Judea, the land to the south where Jerusalem is located. In John 7:45-52, the Pharisees and chief priests get into an argument with the temple police about Jesus. They declare, “Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee.”

The betrayer, Judas Iscariot, is the only one of the twelve disciples who is a Judean. The Judean leaders (both religious and political) would not have gone to a Galilean to betray Jesus — they would be looking for a Judean who they trust... and a Judean who might need to re-earn his street credit since he might have lost it by hitching his wagon to Jesus.

The first time that Judas is introduced in the Gospel of John, the author writes, “‘But among you there are some who do not believe.’ For Jesus knew from the first... who was the one that would betray him.” Jesus had complete foreknowledge of Judas’ betrayal (and, for that matter, Peter’s denial), and describes the root of the issue as Judas’ unbelief. Even after all of this time following Jesus as one of his disciples, Judas must truly not have believed that Jesus was the Messiah.

Of note at the end of this scripture passage is that it says “and it was night” when Judas departed. The author of the Gospel of John uses a lot of dualism language throughout the book. Jesus is described as the light of the world (ref. John 8:12), so the inclusion of Judas leaving at night was not as much about telling time as it was about making a comparison to Jesus as the light.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. Have you ever been betrayed by someone you love? What was that experience like?
2. In the beginning of chapter 13, Jesus is described as loving the disciples (including Judas) to the end. In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:38-46, Jesus teaches his followers how to react when someone betrays or does evil to them. In light of all of this, how do you think God wants us to respond to those who betray us?
3. Even though Jesus knew that Judas would betray him, Jesus made no effort to stop him. What does this willingness to allow the betrayal (and consequently his crucifixion) tell you about Jesus’ great love for all humans?

Day 4 – John 13:31-35

³¹When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³²If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ ³⁴I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Understanding the Passage:

*We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand
And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land
We will work with each other, we will work side by side
And we'll guard each man's dignity and save each man's pride
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love*

John 13:35 always makes me think of the lyrics to “They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love.” But look around at the Christians you know or the churches in your community... how often is **love** their defining marker?

Jesus didn't say, “they'll know you are my disciples if you are circumcised” or “they'll know you are my disciples if you keep kosher.” What he said was, “they'll know you are my disciples if you... turn the other cheek, go the second mile, offer forgiveness, search for the lost sheep, welcome home the prodigal son.” Each of these things is a marker of love, which is what Jesus commands of us. Too often however, we get caught up in thinking that the crucial characteristics of Christianity are our doctrines and theology and we lose sight of the fact that it is about love.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. Which people in your life are easy for you to love? And who is hard for you to love?
2. What are some of the radical ways that Jesus loved people in the gospels?
3. In Leviticus 19:18, the Israelites are commanded to love their neighbor as themselves. That is similar to this commandment, but Jesus elevates it by commanding his followers to love one another *as he loved*. What does it mean to love as Jesus did rather than loving as you love yourself?
4. Do you think that people know you are a Christian simply by the way you love? If not, what are practical things you can do to change that?

Day 5 – John 13:36-38

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

Understanding the Passage:

Jesus tells Peter that he cannot follow him now, but will be able to follow afterward. It is no surprise then that Jesus' last words to Peter are, “follow me” (John 21:22). This comes during Peter's restoration, during which Jesus tells him to “feed my sheep.” The fact that Jesus relies on this disciple that denies him to carry out his earthly ministry is a reminder that no matter how broken we are, no matter what we have done or not done, we can and will still be used to build God's kingdom.

This passage also provides a challenge for us... what if we really asked God, “where are you going?” and then listened and responded by going there too? In *Experiencing God*, Henry Blackaby says that we are

called to “watch to see where God is working and join in on that work.” Too often we get caught up in our own ideas of ministry and meander along paths we direct ourselves, and we lose sight of following Jesus wherever he wants us to be.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. Have you ever made a commitment to do something, especially as it relates to your faith, and then found yourself doing the opposite? Why did you struggle to keep your commitment?
2. Have you ever denied Jesus or watered down your faith to make it more “palatable” when talking to someone? Why?
3. Start your day by praying, “Jesus, where are you going today and how can I join you there?” and taking some time to really listen.

Video Discussion Questions:

1. A belief is a stagnant thing – something we can define or a conviction of truth. But believing is a dynamic process and requires us to engage our minds and hearts on an ongoing basis. Each of the 98 uses of the term “*pisteuō*” (πιστεύω) in the Gospel of John is a verb and refers to this dynamic process. What does this mean for your faith? Do you feel like your faith is more about belief or believing? Talk with your Bible Buddy or your group about a time that felt like your faith was something living and dynamic rather than stagnant. Is this where you are now?
2. Jesus’ farewell discourse falls into the category of testamentary literature – like a last will and testament. But unlike the way in which we think about using a will to leave our material belongings to our family and friends, Jesus uses this discourse to give his disciples the Holy Spirit, the power to do works in his name, the promise of an eternal home, and peace. What are the intangible things that you hope to leave behind after you are gone? Are you living in a way that makes that likely? What may need to change in your life?
3. Crucifixion was used by the Romans as a punishment because it was so humiliating. It was used to add insult to injury – not only would the criminal be killed, but he would be embarrassed as well. How does Jesus turn this on its head with his death? Talk with your group or Bible Buddy about how this relates to the idea of God’s upside-down kingdom.
4. What are the ways in which the church and Christians could demonstrate radical hospitality like what was shown through the foot washing? What makes those acts of radical hospitality distinctly Christian?
5. Do you serve others with strings attached or do you serve out of the love you receive from Jesus? Think about close relationships like your family and friends as well as the way you serve those who you don’t know at all (like homeless folks and immigrants you don’t know).