

Gospel of John - episode 26

Chapter 13 part 3

Welcome to chapter 13 of John's Gospel. I'm reflecting on the washing of the feet, and I left you the last day in the middle of a discussion, so, we need to go back and look at Peter's reaction to Jesus. Peter had said initially, 'I don't want you to wash my feet', because he realised that he was the disciple and Jesus was the Lord. But then Jesus told him, well, "if I don't wash you, you won't have any part with me".

I want to go behind that a little bit, because if I don't, you won't understand Peter's denials of Jesus later. At this point in time, Peter lacks humility. He is looking at Jesus at his feet, with tremendous humility. But a humble person is able to receive and be vulnerable, and both of those qualities are needed in order to be able to love. Because to love God and our neighbour - to love anyone - you have to be open and vulnerable to let the other person reach you and serve you as well. Peter is a sort of 'action man'. He wants to fight for Jesus, and you're going to see that in Gethsemane when he will take a sword and do a silly thing of cutting a man's ear off, as if that was going to help. It's going to make things worse, as I will show you. So, he wants to fight for Jesus, and he wants to die for Jesus as well. But what's the point in dying at this low level?

That's not going to achieve anything. He doesn't realise that he needs Jesus to fight for his salvation and to die for Peter first. In order for us to open up to God's love, we have to acknowledge our need of him and our need to be saved and sanctified. So, I will emphasise this a bit more when it comes to the condemnation of Jesus when the whole crowd cries, 'let him be crucified'.

In fact, all of us needed Jesus to be crucified in order that we could be saved. He has to fight for us first. At this particular moment, Peter reacts on the level of below, and he must be released from that, and be lifted to the realm of love, where everything is possible. It's only when Jesus succeeds in lifting Peter up, and of course, that implies all the others as well, to this level of above, that he can put the Mission into their hands, because we will see in chapter 21 that he will only put the Mission into the hands of a shepherd who loves God and the sheep.

Love is the essence. It's extremely important. It's how the kingdom works. It's only this love which is embraced by a very healthy humility, and will bring forth the divine fruits in the New Era. So, Jesus is our model in this, an example of giving and receiving. Here is the thing you might not have considered with regards to the foot washing. It requires humility to give and receive love. John has already shown us in chapter 12 that when Mary of Magdala, his beloved disciple, anointed Jesus feet, and that Jesus accepted this. He received it, and he received it with love, humility and simplicity. He defended her when the others criticised her.

Now, when we come to the foot washing, the difference between that event and this one is that Mary of Magdala was a disciple anointing or washing the feet of the Lord. But here it is the Lord washing the feet of the disciples! Jesus is saying, 'I don't just receive, I give also, and I give with the same simplicity with

which I receive'. What makes love so divine, is that the giving and the receiving is on this very simple level. True love is very simple. It has no complications. It is giving and receiving life at a deep level. So, both of these washings, the anointing in Bethany and this one here, are associated with Jesus' death. In the first one, Jesus said that Mary of Magdala had anointed him prior to burial because someone who was crucified would never be anointed before burial. Here, Jesus is saying that this is the meaning of what's going to happen when he is brought to the cross.

Then when Peter reacts again, Jesus picks up another subject. So, let's look at it. This is John, chapter 13.

Peter reacts and says to Jesus, "then, Lord, not only my feet, but my hands and my head as well". Jesus said, "no one who has taken a bath needs washing" - that is, I presume you've done all your ablutions before you came here. They would not come to the supper without doing that. He is clean all over. "You too are clean (we are not talking about the body), "though, not all of you are". Judas wasn't. Jesus knew who was going to betray him. That's why he said, "you're not all clean". Here you will naturally associate the word 'clean' with washing, but Jesus, as usual, lifts it onto his own divine level and asks us to understand it at a level we might not have thought of at all. Jesus says that by the Ministry of his Word and all that he did in the 3 1/2 years of his Ministry, they have been purified.

Now you are only purified by the Word if you take it in, if you internalise it, if you let it work with you. Otherwise, nothing happens. That's why Jesus asks them, "do you understand what I've done to you? You call me Master and Lord (this is verses 13-17), so, I am. If I then who am Master and Lord have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example that you may copy what I have done to you". This is the only time that Jesus ever asked us to copy anything. Once Jesus put his clothes back on he went back to his place and started teaching again. He wants the disciples to try to penetrate what they have experienced instead of looking at it superficially. Now, in those days, it was normal for a disciple to copy their master in everything; they had the same hairstyle and clothes. They even copied the man's accent, his way of life, everything.

Jesus didn't want that. That's all external stuff. Jesus only wanted us to copy an internal attitude of love and humility. That's all, because if we have this internal attitude of love and humility, then God, the Power from on High, will be able to work with us to transform the world. Jesus wants a photocopy of this. He doesn't want them to hear it and do nothing about it. He says, "happiness will be yours if you do it", not if you talk about it or write books about it or give sermons on it. No! Those who are to behave like this are those in high office, like the apostles, and people who have no office at all, like Mary of Magdalen. It doesn't matter where we are in the church or what office we carry out, or whether we have an office or not. This is the standard of living for the disciples of Jesus. This will be a recognition point.

So, let's look at our need to be purified. Jesus says, "not all of you are clean". Now when you go back to the Ministry of Jesus, you find that he preached to anybody who would listen to him. He didn't mind who was in the crowd, whether they were friend or foe. He gave the Word of God to everybody because God loves everyone equally. The difference lies in our reaction to him. Jesus, told us in chapters 6 and 11 of this gospel that he was sent by the Father; now he is the one who is sending the church out into the

world. So, the Sent one becomes the Sender. In the first half of the gospel, the Father sent his Son, and the Son was the image of his Father. The Son did everything the Father wanted him to do. "All that the Father tells me, I do. Everything I teach, comes from the Father. I don't speak as from myself", and it goes on and on in the first half of the gospel. Now, in the second half, the church, if it is to go out and represent Jesus, must be like him, but that similarity is not physical, in dress or anything Earthly. It's to do with this internal attitude. Jesus wants a pattern of behaviour from us, and he wants obedience to this because our obedience to his Word is going to release the grace and the power of God to work in the world. Jesus is preparing them to go out as his ambassadors - as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:20, they are to go out and officially represent him to the world. In that case then they must be like Jesus. They must be recognisable. Here is an interesting detail: In Acts chapter 4-5 we see the apostles persecuted by the Sanhedrin - who recognised them as followers of Jesus! They were doing and saying the same things as Jesus did.

So, as the church goes out into the world, she must be recognisable as the followers of Jesus. We have to be exact copies of him. So, what does 'clean, pure and cleansed' mean? Jesus said in 13:11 unfortunately, "not all of you are clean". The one who is not clean is Judas Iscariot. Why was he not clean? Because the Word of God cleansed. Maybe if I use the Word purified it might get the message across better. Why wasn't Judas purified in the 31/2 years? It was because he did not allow himself to be changed by Jesus' Word. Jesus teaching did not penetrate. He did not allow himself to be cleansed by the foot washing, and he did not allow himself, ultimately, to have his sins washed away by the Precious Blood of the Lamb. Unfortunately, he remained impervious to it all. I will show you soon that he is the only one in the supper room that says to Jesus, "not I, rabbi" for Jesus wasn't his Lord. Jesus was Lord to everybody else present, but not to Judas, because Judas had not accepted the Word. Notice how extremely important it is for us to accept the Word of Jesus which comes to us in the scriptures.

Now, let us look at that from a slightly different angle. Judas Iscariot remained untouched by Jesus' living Word. I'm doing it this way so that we can do an examination of conscience. The living Word of Jesus is proclaimed in every Eucharist; we have our bibles; we can read them. Judas Iscariot remained untouched by Jesus' divine and human love. Now that divine and human love is coming to us through the scriptures, through the Eucharist, very particularly, and through our personal relationship with God; to remain untouched by it is an unbelievable tragedy. Judas did not allow Jesus' forgiveness to change his heart.

This is where free will becomes dangerous. We can say 'No' to God. If our 'No' is real, He will accept it. He did not allow Jesus' forgiveness to change his heart. If you look into the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew and Simon Zealot allowed Jesus' forgiveness to change them- as did many others. Mary of Magdalen was totally transformed by his forgiveness, yet Judas remained untouched. So, what you see is a heart of stone. It doesn't allow anything to penetrate. Because of that - not because of anything outside of him - Judas remained in the cosmos, the unbelieving world. In the Cenacle he is in the actual presence of God with Jesus, and with the apostles, who are the foundation of the church, the great saints of the church, yet he is untouched by it all. It is a great mystery. Judas remained thinking like the unbelieving world. The book of Proverbs says that "as a man thinks, so is he". Because of this, Judas will do the unthinkable, as I said before. He will fulfil Psalm 41:9 for Jesus. "Even my close friend whom I trusted, he who literally

shared my bread - and we're going to see that in a minute - has lifted up his heel against me". The expression 'to lift up your heel' means an act of contempt.

So, the betrayer made this terrible act of contempt against his Saviour. Jesus must now forewarn the others regarding who Judas really is. It will be a great shock to them. This is 13:15: "I've given you an example that you may copy what I have done". I tell you solemnly, no servant is greater than his master and no messenger greater than the man who went before him". In other words, we have to be copies of Jesus. It is absolutely impossible to be greater than him; we cannot improve on the image. The icon of Jesus has to be improved in us. 13:17 is very telling. "Now that you know this happiness will be yours **If** you behave accordingly". The 'If' clause is terribly important.

From 13:18 Jesus says, "I'm not speaking about all of you. He begins to open up this terrible tragedy because the apostles have forgiven Judas so often that they don't think there's anything unusual. I'm not speaking about all of you. I know the ones I have chosen. Judas was also chosen, but the choosing is on both sides. But what the scripture says must be fulfilled" - that's Psalm 41:9 above. Then he says, "I want to tell you this before it happens, so that when it does happen, you may believe that **I AM HE**. I am the Lord, I tell you most solemnly, whoever welcomes the one I send welcomes me", and so on. Jesus warns them about this terrible tragedy in their midst - which even though they know Judas isn't a good disciple - they still can't take on board that this is what they are dealing with. When he says, I'm telling you ahead of time so that you'll know that I am he - what he's saying is that when all of this happens, you will look back and you will realise that everything that happens between now and when I come back to you is fulfilling the scriptures.

St. Luke deals with that very well in chapter 24 of his Gospel, where Jesus takes 2 of the disciples through the scriptures so they see how they were fulfilled for him. But he wants the disciples to realise that He is **THE GREAT I AM**, and that he voluntarily submitted to betrayal, humiliation, death for love of them. It's when this finally dawns on them that they will begin to love Jesus in a way they've never loved him before. Then they will go out into the world, suffer and bear torture for him. I think it was a wonderful moment when Peter bared his back for a whipping in Acts chapter 5. Jesus won a great victory there. Peter was completely against the idea of suffering. When he considered suffering for Jesus a privilege, not a humiliation, it was a great spiritual victory. There you see a man being completely transformed. To finish this point today, I will apply this to us: if a betrayer was found at the first Mass, at the first Eucharist with the twelve apostles, then we must not be surprised or shocked if a 'Judas' were to turn up in the church today. It's a mystery because Judas is the prophetic foreshadowing of all failed disciples of Jesus. Thank you for listening. Goodbye. God bless you.

INTERVAL

Welcome to our reflection on John's Gospel. We continue with our look at chapter 13. I'm just anxious to lay down foundations so that we will understand as we go along. We will understand the discourse of Jesus much better once all the foundations are laid here. So let me begin by reading chapter 13: 21-,

“Having said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit, and he declared, I tell you most solemnly, one of you is about to betray me”. The disciples looked at each other, wondering what he meant. “The disciple that Jesus loved was reclining next to him. Simon Peter signed to him and said, ask who it is, he means. So, leaning back on Jesus breast, he said, who is it, Lord? It is the one, replied Jesus, to whom I will give a piece of bread that I dip in the dish. He dipped the piece of bread and gave it to Judas, Son of Simon Iscariot. At that instant, after Judas had taken the bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus then said, what you are going to do, do quickly. None of the others at table understood the reason he said this. Since Judas had charge of the common fund. Some of them thought that Jesus was saying, buy what we need for the festival, or telling him to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the piece of bread, he went out. Night had fallen”.

Now, there's a lot here, and I'm going to try and deal with it as well as I can. In contemplating the issue of betrayal among the beloved disciples of Jesus we must remember the teaching that Jesus gave about the darnel and the wheat in Matthew 13, where Jesus explained, “the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom of God and the bad seeds are the sons of the evil one”. That means those who have given themselves over to the kingdom of God and those who have given themselves over to evil. The truth about the bad seeds, Jesus said, would not be revealed until harvest time. That's why Jesus waits until the last moment before revealing Judas. It is harvest time! It's the end of the Mosaic Era, and the beginning of a New Era.

But all they can see at this moment and all they experience is that it is the end of an era, and the end of an era is usually traumatic. Also, Jesus said in the parable of the wheat and the darnel, and in a couple of other parables as well, that it is only at the harvest time that the good and the wicked will be separated. It is in this instant that I have just read for you that Judas is separated from the others. It's when you see it in the context of Jesus' other teaching that you look at it differently and begin to grasp something of the enormity of what we're reading.

Judas is only revealed now, so, what I want to do is compare the only three disciples that are actually named at the supper. All twelve were present, but only three are named Judas, John and Simon Peter, and it's because all three of them had a part in the Passion of Jesus. 1): comparing John and Judas, I want to say that both of them were appointed apostles by Jesus. That means given the highest office in the kingdom of God. Both of them participated in Jesus Mission. Both of them worked miracles in Jesus' name, but then you must realise that working miracles is not a sign of sanctity. Jesus said this in Matthew 7:22-23. It's actually quite shocking: “Many will say to me on that day - that means the day of judgement when all the seeds are separated from each other- ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name?’ (Isn't that a wonderful thing to do?) Did we not drive out demons, (which is even greater?) Did we not perform many miracles? (In other words, we were great people). Jesus said, then I will tell them plainly, I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers”. There's something radically wrong with working miracles and getting yourself condemned at the end!

The next thing I want to point out to you is the placements at the table. They reclined at the Passover supper, so, the body would be stretched out leaning on their left arm. Their right hand was the hand that

they shared food with. This places Judas on Jesus' left in the position of a special guest. Jesus would have shared a dish with him. The special guest who's sitting at the table is offered the morsel which was a sign of special affection for that person. In other words, right up to the very end, when Judas is separated from the others, Jesus is still offering new love to him. It's really heart-breaking. Judas is there as the special guest. John is on the right hand side because John is free to lean back against the chest of Jesus. So, Judas represents the reprobate and John represents the elect. It's frightening, but throughout the scriptures, there is the phenomenon that I call the two types of children, which is there from the very beginning: Adam had two types of children: Cain and Abel. Isaac had two types in Jacob and Esau. Jacob had two types of children, his eleven Sons and Joseph, who was very different.

There are other examples right through the scriptures; when you come to Jesus on the cross, the two types of children are still there! St. Luke gives this detail. John doesn't. These are the 2 thieves, one who accepts salvation and the one who does not. That is an uncomfortable reflection on the power of the human will and the human heart to close or open itself up to God. So, it's the question of the saved and the lost. John in this instance represents the saved and Judas the lost. That doesn't mean that God put you into that position. You put yourself into that position yourself. Here in 13:21, John again comes back to using a special verb. He says "Jesus was troubled in spirit". This is the same verb that he used in chapter eleven when Jesus was confronting the tomb of Lazarus. So, John, is connects this incident here concerning Judas with that incident involving Lazarus.

In both cases, Jesus was confronting death and Satan, because it was Satan's envy that brought death into the world. The scriptures tell us here in this instance, Jesus will confront Satan, deal with him and bring him down. Jesus is also troubled and broken hearted because one of his own friends will set all this drama in motion. We have to take it on board that Jesus was broken hearted with the reaction of Judas. "For God wants everyone to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth". Facing the fact that somebody could walk away and not allow himself to be saved is just awful.

I've read the text and now I want to say something just to make sure you hear it. When Jesus revealed the traitor, the first thing he let them know was, he is in the room! But there was only the family of Jesus in the room! There was only his special apostles! The traitor is in the room. Not only that, Jesus said **he is at the table!** We know from the Synoptic Gospels that this is the Eucharistic table, the very first Eucharist. The traitor is at the first Mass! Even worse, he is right here at my side! In other words, he has the highest office, or one of the highest offices in the kingdom. The scandal couldn't be greater. The shock couldn't be greater. One of the twelve! John says that the apostles began looking at each other. One of us? That's not possible! They all knew Judas was a problem, but they couldn't imagine even Judas being a traitor. They had been trained in love, forgiveness and humility.

What John wants us to hear is something you mightn't notice if you read the text superficially. That is that from here on in - that is after the Death and Resurrection of Jesus - the leaders of the church will have to look at one another much more wisely. They will have to use great discernment about people in leadership in the church, because it won't be long before false teachers, false prophets and antichrists up. You'll read that in 1John: 2:18-19 where he says that antichrists have already come. An antichrist is

someone who opposes the Christ. He's not talking about The Antichrist at the end of the world, but one who actually opposes the Christ. In Acts chapter 20:28-30, you meet Paul giving his final address to the church at Ephesus. There he says, "I know that as soon as I'm gone, fierce wolves will attack the church". Paul was acting as a protecting shepherd but as soon as he would be removed, the wolves would move in. Why is this? John wants us to know that the darnel was going to be sown among the wheat at every stage of the church. Satan was not going to give up. He was going to try and destroy the church in every generation. So, we must not be surprised. We mustn't be surprised at failed disciples, people who start off well and then they go astray. It is the weakness of human nature.

Notice again, the one who reacts to the situation is Peter. The one who takes a decision is Peter. I showed you that already in the foot washing. Here he points to John, who is the closest to Jesus, to tell him, to ask Jesus for the identity of the betrayer. If Peter is going to be the shepherd of this flock, he definitely needs to know 'who's who' among the disciples of Jesus. Anyone in leadership in the church desperately needs that information. When you read about the church developing in the Acts of the apostles, you realise that Peter is a very protective shepherd, and he cannot allow something to get into the church that will destroy it. In the incident involving Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 5 he makes sure to excommunicate them because the survival of the whole church was at stake.

Jesus' response is very touching. I'll read it for you again. "It's the one to whom I give a piece of bread that I dip in a dish". Now, if Jesus is reclining on his left arm, then the person on his left is sharing a dish with him. Jesus took a morsel of the food, dipped it in the sauce so that the sauce covers Jesus' fingers! He put that into the mouth, not into the hands, of the special guest. This was considered a very special intimacy before all your other guests, saying, 'this person is very special'. Jesus does that at the moment when this man Judas finally closes his heart to him. But he took the morsel; he didn't reject it because it would tell the other apostles that he was greater than they were! This is the final sign of love from Jesus to Judas. It is also the final rejection of this man to love. Now, nobody can get into the kingdom of God without love, because God is love. So, we have this terrifying mystery that we observe somebody finally close their hearts to God. If you close your soul to light, you open yourself up to darkness. That's exactly what Lucifer did in the beginning - closed himself off to light. "God is light. In him, there is no darkness" (1John:1:5). The very action of doing that meant that he was plunging himself into darkness, and he became the king of darkness. Anybody else who makes the same mistake goes in the same direction. It is really frightening.

Now, we were told in chapter 3:16-21, that people reject the light because their deeds are evil. We know that Judas Iscariot had problems. But John, who is the mystic and therefore can see deep into things, said it was at that moment that Satan possessed him. Now, why is it at that moment? It's because it's the final rejection of love. It's the final rejection of light, and therefore it's the opening to darkness. This is the key to setting all the events of the Passion of Jesus in motion. That's why Jesus says in 13:31, 'now is the time'. This was it. Now we've arrived. The key has been put in the door. Everything will proceed. The frightening thing is that the disciples had said to Jesus, who is it, Lord? But not Judas. Jesus was no longer master or lord for him. For Judas, Satan had taken over to become his master and prince. Notice I didn't say lord because "Satan is the prince of this world". Jesus said that in John 14:30. Jesus told us in

chapter 8:44 that Satan is a liar and a deceiver; that he was a murderer from the beginning. Therefore, Judas has opened himself up to darkness, and to deception.

Satan deceives Judas into thinking he is doing the right thing by selling this innocent Lamb. He leads Judas not only to that act of despicable betrayal, but to murder and suicide. Judas is the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and he broke Jesus heart. Jesus wanted to save everyone, and he couldn't save one of his friends because that friend closed the heart to him, not because Jesus wasn't able to save him. Jesus could save millions of worlds because his love was divine and human. This is the moment when John says that night had fallen. There are two very short sentences in John's gospel. One is "Jesus wept" – in John 11. The other is here: "night had fallen".

When John says night had fallen, he is speaking about the hour of darkness when Satan is going to do the most terrible things to everybody in Jerusalem. It wasn't just 'night' in the sense that the sun had set; it was night in the sense that the darkness of evil was going to take over and envelop everybody in it. Back in chapter 11:9-10 Jesus said that "people will stumble in the dark". You need light to be able to walk. So let us remember that and make sure that we are always walking in the light.

Thank you for joining us. God bless.