

John 13 The Last Supper

In Jesus' last meal with his disciples, his love is contrasted with Judas' betrayal.

Have you experienced being let down by someone you trusted? What feelings did it provoke?

(1) It was now the day before the Passover Festival. ^a Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. He had always loved those in the world who were his own, and he loved them to the very end. (2) Jesus and his disciples were at supper. ^b The Devil had already put into the heart of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, the thought of betraying Jesus. (3) Jesus knew that the Father had given him complete power; he knew that he had come from God and was going to God. (4) So he rose from the table, took off his outer garment, and tied a towel around his waist. (5) Then he poured some water into a washbasin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. ^c (6) He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Are you going to wash my feet, Lord?" (7) Jesus answered him, "You do not understand now what I am doing, but you will understand later." (8) Peter declared, "Never at any time will you wash my feet!" "If I do not wash your feet," Jesus answered, "you will no longer be my disciple." (9) Simon Peter answered, "Lord, do not wash only my feet, then! Wash my hands and head, too!" (10) Jesus said, "Those who have taken a bath are completely clean and do not have to wash themselves, except for their feet. All of you are clean, all except one." (11) (Jesus already knew who was going to betray him; that is why he said, "All of you, except one, are clean.")

(12) After Jesus had washed their feet, he put his outer garment back on and returned to his place at the table. "Do you understand what I have just done to you?" he asked. (13) "You call me Teacher and Lord, and it is right that you do so, because that is what I am. (14) I, your Lord and Teacher, have just washed your feet. You, then, should wash one another's feet. (15) I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you. (16) I am telling you the truth: no slaves are greater than their master, and no messengers are greater than the one who sent them. (17) Now that you know this truth, how happy you will be if you put it into practice! (18) "I am not talking about all of you; I know those I have chosen. But the scripture must come true that says, 'The man who shared my food turned against me.' (19) I tell you this now before it happens, so that when it does happen, you will believe that 'I Am Who I Am.' ^d (20) I am telling you the truth: whoever receives anyone I send receives me also; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me."

^a The Passover festival celebrated God rescuing God's people from slavery. The writer sees this as an illustration of what Jesus would do.

^b Part of the Passover celebration was a shared meal recalling the ancient Israelites last meal in Egypt, their slavery, the sacrificed lambs and God's rescue.

^c It would be the job of the lowest slave to wash the feet of the guests arriving for a meal.

Why do you think the writer links this story so strongly to the Passover meal?

What contrasts does the writer bring out between Judas (2) and Jesus (1, 3)?

Why do you think Peter was so uncomfortable about having his feet washed? How would he have felt?

Why do you think this was such a make or break issue for Jesus?

What is the deeper meaning of washing / being clean in (8, 10)?

What does this section teach us about Jesus?

^d This was the personal name by which God revealed himself to Moses. The Jews regarded it as too holy to say out loud, but Jesus uses it for himself.

What are the attitudes that Jesus was modelling for his disciples?

How do you think Jesus understood that acting as a servant / slave to others could lead to happiness?

Why do you think the writer puts the fulfilment of scripture at the centre of this story of love and betrayal?

What do you think Jesus intended by using the name of God to refer to himself? How do you think the disciples would have felt?

What are the implications of Jesus fully identifying himself with his disciples in (20)?

(21) After Jesus had said this, he was deeply troubled and declared openly, "I am telling you the truth: one of you is going to betray me." (22) The disciples looked at one another, completely puzzled about whom he meant. (23) One of the disciples, the one whom Jesus loved, was sitting next to Jesus. (24) Simon Peter motioned to him and said, "Ask him whom he is talking about." (25) So that disciple moved closer to Jesus' side and asked, "Who is it, Lord?" (26) Jesus answered, "I will dip some bread in the sauce and give it to him; he is the man." So he took a piece of bread, dipped it, and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. (27) As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "Hurry and do what you must!" (28) None of the others at the table understood why Jesus said this to him. (29) Since Judas was in charge of the money bag, some of the disciples thought that Jesus had told him to go and buy what they needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor. (30) Judas accepted the bread and went out at once. It was night.

How do you think the disciples would be feeling in (22)?

How do you think Judas would be feeling?

How do you think Jesus would be feeling?

Why do you think the writer portrays Jesus and Judas as the only two people in the story who know what's really going on?

Why does the author emphasize it was night in (30)?

The symmetrical structure of the story can be shown as follows:

The Devil inspires (1-2)

Peter misunderstands (3-9)

Betrayed from within (10-11)

Jesus sets the example for the disciples (12-17)

Fulfilled Scripture points to Jesus' identity (18-19)

Jesus identifies himself with the disciples (20)

Betrayed from within (21-22)

Peter enquires (23-26)

Satan moves (27-30)

How does this outline help us to see what the author sees as important in the story?

What do you observe about the identity and heart of Jesus in this story?

How does Jesus subvert traditional ideas of power and leadership?

How do you feel about being led by Jesus?