

TUESDAY 12 April 2022 "It's YOU!" John 13:18-38

Hello my "Walking with Jesus" friends on this Tuesday of what many call "Holy week", the week between Palm Sunday & Easter.

Let's return to that very special place, an 'upper room' of a home in Jerusalem, early in the first century. Jesus has come there with His closest friends, His disciples, for their celebration of the Jewish Passover meal. John, the disciple who may have been Jesus' closest human friend, gives us 4 chapters of his record of that evening. Let's rejoin the experience in John chapter 13 as Jesus has just completed a most remarkable act. **Jesus actually washed His disciples' feet!** They all wore open sandals in those days, and the roads were dusty and often had animal dung on them, so feet got really dirty. Meals were not eaten at high tables with chairs, but rather low tables and people reclined as they ate, thus their dirty feet could be an offensive problem, especially when so many were crowded around the table as they were that night. Normally a servant would be at the door as guests arrived for such a Passover meal, and the men would remove their sandals, leave them at the door, then have their feet washed before they came to the table. But for some reason unknown to us, there was no servant and no basin of water as the disciples came in with their dirty feet that night. *Jesus shocked them all by becoming the feet washing servant* as John records in John 13:3-17.

*After Jesus had explained about 'servant leadership' through what He had just done, Jesus then shocked His friends with a remarkable statement: **"I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray Me."** (John 13:21)* I doubt any of us can imagine how that sounded to them. Each of them must have felt as though someone punched them in the face! Impossible! Look at them staring at Jesus and then at each other. It was unthinkable, for they'd been together for several months and no one among them could be imagined as doing such a terrible thing! Do you suppose some of them turned their faces away, unable to look Jesus in the eye, as they searched their own soul seeking to find any evidence that they might do such a despicable act of treason? John tells us: ***"The disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them He meant. One of them, the disciple Jesus loved, was reclining next to Jesus. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, 'ask Him which one He means.' Leaning back on Jesus John asked Him, 'Lord, who is it?' Jesus answered, 'it is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.'*** (John 13:22-26)

Why did Peter ask the question they were all thinking? Why was John sitting next to Jesus? Why did Peter ask John to ask Jesus, why didn't Peter ask Jesus directly? What gave John the courage to ask Jesus who it was? Why did Jesus use "serving the disciple" as identification rather than simply saying his name? I wonder what you think about all this my friends. Look around the table, what do you see in each man's eyes? What do you see in Jesus' eyes?

"Then dipping the piece of bread, Jesus gave it to Judas Iscariot. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. So, Jesus said to Judas, 'what you are about to do, do quickly!' But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him... As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out." All of us have been at the dinner table with others when the host passes the food and guests take their portion. This was a powerful moment. I can imagine 13 guys around the table at mealtime and everyone reaching and taking for themselves what they want, sometimes reaching over each other. These were 'blue collar' guys, every one of them, and I presume table manners were probably in short supply. *But this was the Passover meal and in this very ordered meal every action, every morsel of food is significant. Jesus' action was an action of friendship, even 'family', for the Passover meal was a family meal,* remember how they ate as families that original Passover night? (Exodus 12)

As Judas reached out his hand to take what Jesus offered it should have been a gesture of gratitude, of friendship, of unity and family love. Oh, what a hypocritical moment! *Look at Jesus as He held the bread out, awaiting Judas' reach to take it.* What a mockery of love, what a humiliating moment of identification of the betrayer. Without words, as Judas took the bread, he was silently shouting "YES, it is me. I am the betrayer. I have made a contract and received betrayal money. Yes, I will hand Jesus over to those who want Him dead." And in that moment John tells us ***"Satan entered into him."*** *It was a moment of rejection and invitation.* Just as Adam and Eve had done, so Judas **rejected** the friendship and relationship Jesus offered Him and **invited** Satan's powerful influence into his life! *In that moment Judas became a willing weapon of the dark kingdom and Satan's attempt to abort God's Redemption plan for which Jesus had come to earth and was ready to give His life as a love ransom for every sinner.*

John tells us: ***"When Judas was gone, Jesus said: "Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in Him... I will be with you only a little longer. You will search for Me, but where I am going you cannot come. A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another."*** (John 13:31-35) Once again the oxygen seemed to be sucked out of the room. How is it that with the betrayer out of the room it is NOW that God is glorified in Jesus? Why is Jesus only going to be with them a short while longer? Where is He going that they cannot come? *And this selfless, unconditional, serving, bold love which Jesus has modeled for them through these months, why will that be their identifying character trait?*

Peter was about to explode! It was simply too much for him, so he asked Jesus: ***"Master, where are you going?" Jesus replied, 'Where I am going you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.'*** That's not what Peter wanted to hear, not at all! Peter's blood pressure was rising. Peter didn't like being told NO or told he wouldn't be able to do something. Peter blurted out: ***"Master, why can't I follow You now? I will lay down my life for you!"***

Look around my friends, eyes are big, guys are leaning in, heads are nodding in strong agreement with Peter, as they all anticipate how Jesus will respond to Peter's courageous offer. Jesus paused, slowly turning His head around the table, looking at each man, deep in his eyes. Then focusing on Peter Jesus said: ***"Will you really lay down your life for Me Peter? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will deny that you even know Me three times."*** (John 13:37,38)

Once again, the shock feels like each man was just punched in the face! Bold, brash, strong, self-confident, courageous, Peter... the only guy among them crazy enough to step out of the boat in a storm and try to walk on the water... that Peter, deny Jesus? Impossible! No one in the room could imagine it! Why would Jesus say such an outlandish thing? What pressure, what torture, what blackmail could possibly bring Peter to deny he even knows Jesus? It could never happen... *but it did, didn't it my friends?* Less than 8 hours later, Peter denied he was one of Jesus' disciples, and then a short while later he denied he even knew Jesus! *John was eyewitness to all three denials and records them for us in John 18:15-18, 25-27.*

Let's pause right here in this shocking moment. Jesus has identified Judas as His betrayer and every man was shocked. Now Jesus has predicted Peter's denials of Him, and again every man in the room is shocked. But I suspect there's something deeper happening in the heart of each of these men who'd been walking with Jesus for months. A deep, probing, painful question is resonating... *'could it be me? Could I deny Jesus? Could I betray Him? What would it take for me to reject Him, abandon Him?*

Those are important questions for us too, my friends, so I urge us to spend some time in deep reflection. *What is the true condition of your relationship with God, with Jesus?* Here's a song to help you consider the truth of your heart:

Today's Scripture is John 13:18-38.