

Reflection - Maundy Thursday, 2020

1 Now 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.

2 The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper

3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God,

4 got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself.

5 Then 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.

6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

7 Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

8 Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me."

9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"

10 Jesus 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."

11 For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

12 After 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?"

13 You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am.

14 So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

15 For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

16 Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them.

17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

31 Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him.

32 If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.

33 Little 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."

34 I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.

35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."



The medium of theatre is a dangerously exciting mechanism to bring to life the emotional horror or tantalising suspense of a drama writ large on a stage. The narrative of the play may have captured something of our own drama in the plot. It may have captured some of the sentiments the audience had sought to conceal, making for uncomfortable viewing. The American theologian and writer, Raymond E. Brown, writing a condemnation

and passion of Christ, asks the reader to imagine that we are one of the characters involved in the course of events. The author asks us to analyse our feelings and motivations and respond to the events as they unfold. Having never being confronted with such a spectacle, we may harbour thoughts that we would naturally behave with the utmost integrity, presenting our best selves. But in reality, it is when we are faced with such emotionally formidably terrain that our true nature emerges.

The profundity of the challenge was brought home to me when I unexpectedly stumbled across a re-enactment of Christ's passion, dramatised on a gloriously sunny Good Friday morning, in a town in Kent. Shopping for last minute bits and pieces, I was drawn towards the spectacle by an incessant drumming. Curiosity had got the better of me and I followed the sound only to be greeted with a cross-bearing Christ, bloodied and whipped, the full horror of which I could not contemplate. I found myself navigating unfamiliar streets in my attempt to escape this tormenting scene. In that moment I had not only witnessed the brokenness of a single mortal man but the utter despair of all humanity, played out in a single act of cruelty and betrayal. I found myself contemplating my own collusive betrayal. I could not bear to witness this grotesque scene of selfless giving. I had fled, sensing my unworthiness of such great love.

This chapter of the gospel of John depicts an intimate pastoral scene which soon descends into confusion, high anxiety and ultimately despair. The writer tells us that Jesus had already come to terms with the purpose and manner of his death, relinquishing all desires of his own and surrendering to the will of the father. In a final act of humble humility, the God made man washes the feet of those who would ultimately deny and abandon him. Even those who would profess their unwavering allegiance would be noticeable by their absence.

The washing of the disciples' feet could be seen as a renewal of the covenant between God and man, washing away of sins as yet unrealised. In removing the dust of their former journey, Christ invites those who believe in him to undertake a new foray into a hostile world, a holy commission which contemplates the equality of love, realised in this

commandment. Jesus, teacher, becomes the servant in the humblest of gestures and yet his is not diminished for he chooses to serve.

When we live through uncertain times and are seized with panic, fear and anxiety, we can be comforted in knowing that Christ sought to liberate us from our bondage of fear. The Christ that endured an ignominious death upon the cross in order to bring hope in the darkest of times. The Messiah continues to call to us and walk with us in the midst of our troubles; darkness will give way to light as we follow the servant king.

Repenting our many sins and pondering our unworthiness, let us stand firm, be still and be present to the Holy Spirit that calls to us, extending to us the gifts of eternal love, healing and lasting forgiveness, recognising that we too are restored to new life in Christ.

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