

Maundy Thursday

The Radiant Glow of Compassion

John 13:1-17, 31-35

Maundy Thursday

Analysis by Cathy Lessmann

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[When he had gone out,] 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."



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:0movenie_nog.jpg

There's something marvelous about Christ's glory. It gets reflected—like light bouncing off a mirror.

DIAGNOSIS: Opting for a Simple Spiritual Tune-Up

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Peter Doesn't Get It

You just gotta love Peter. He's so all over the place. First, he wants it this way: "No Jesus, don't wash MY feet! It just wouldn't be right! After all, you're the head honcho here." Then he wants it the other way. "Please Jesus, don't just wash my feet, wash ALL of me!" Makes you wonder about him. But notice how incredibly patient Jesus is with him. Peter has no clue what kind of glory he's encountering.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): Straight-Jacketed by the Law

Peter's waffling is an indication (in fact a dead giveaway) that he is still operating under the "old" system of debits and credits, of "might" and "right." Glory has to be earned, has to be achieved, deserved. Peter is so obsessed with—even straight jacketed by—this system that he assumes that everyone, including Jesus, is bound by it too. He's traversing the glory-road. When Jesus insists on washing his feet, Peter assumes Jesus is just going to make some minor character adjustments on him—the equivalent of a spiritual tune-up—to assist in his travels. Keep noticing how patient Jesus continues to be.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): In Desperate Need of a Complete Overhaul

Not in his wildest dreams does Peter catch what he REALLY needs

from Jesus: a complete overhaul, a comprehensive cleansing—from the inside out! Nor does he realize that it's exactly BECAUSE he is on the glory road that he is in such desperate straights. He will learn later that all glory roads abruptly culminate in dead-ends. They kill you, literally!

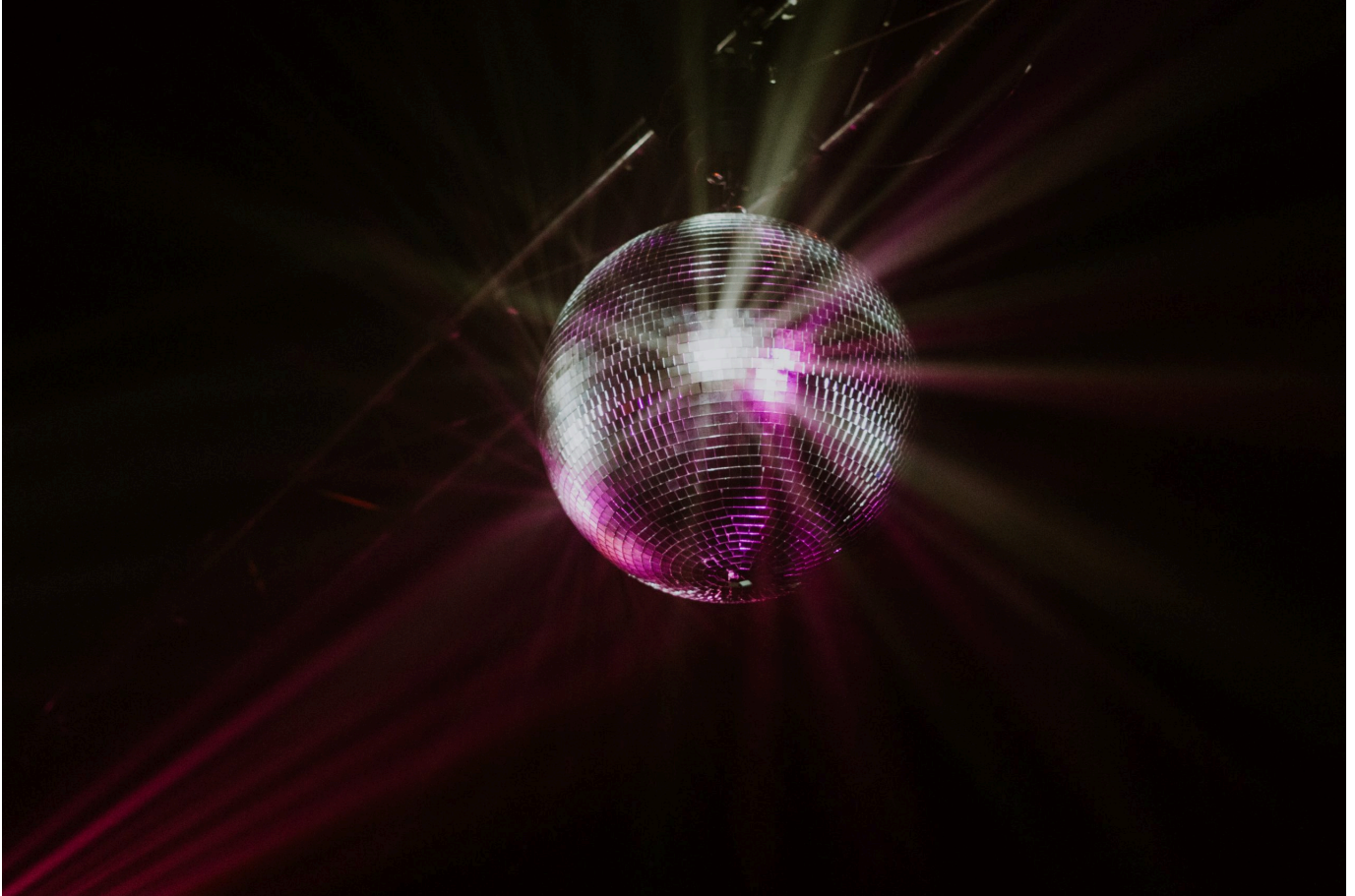


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PROGNOSIS: The Radiant Overhaul

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): God's Glory

Again, notice Jesus' incredible patience with Peter. In fact, it's that very patience—or call it compassion (the prophets called it _hessed_)—that has been radiating from him for a long time already! As he explained, he came from the Father—the source of such compassionate love—and “he loved them to the

end.” I picture both Jesus and his Father being broken-hearted over Peter’s plight (and let’s expand that to all humanity), resolving to come to our rescue. The Father and Son’s intense and compassionate love led Jesus to the cross where Almighty God joined God’s self to all (us) dead-ended humans. Then Easter morning Almighty God changed everything and destroyed death with resurrection! That’s compassion—compassion that you can see! Radiant Glory.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Peter’s Complete Overhaul

Outside in the courtyard, Peter’s heart broke when he realized he had betrayed Jesus. (One glance from his beloved Jesus and the memory of his prediction brought Peter to tears, Luke 22:61.) But it was Jesus’ gloriously empty tomb, and his forgiveness from the cross that finally overhauled Peter; it got him off the glory road and onto Jesus/God’s “road” of compassion: mercy/ forgiveness/love—a totally different way of living. Moderns like us are equally transformed by the power of that cross, causing us to trust the one who wields power in mercy and forgiveness instead of ourselves. Our hearts are overhauled by the radiance of this kind of glory.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): Glory Ricochets Around

There’s something marvelous about Christ’s glory. It gets reflected—like light bouncing off a mirror. Jesus-trusters become conduits of God’s original, intense glow. And what does that radiant compassion look like in the real world of relationships? Answer: It looks like forgiveness. It looks like loving both neighbors and enemies alike. Isn’t that what Jesus meant when he said that everyone would recognize them/us as his disciples by the way we love each other? Furthermore,

when someone asks any of us, "How can I know God really loves me?" we can confidently answer: "Look there. Look to the cross. That is how much God loves you!"