

Maundy Thursday

CLEANLINESS

John 13:1-13, 31b-35

Maundy Thursday

Analysis by Peter Keyel

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."

DIAGNOSIS: Betrayed

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *"You are clean, though not all of you."*

We're clean. We know this because we go to church, some of us even on Maundy Thursday. Our church may have a washing of the feet, and even though we go up for the ritual re-enactment, we've already washed our feet before the service. It doesn't really matter if there are problems in our life... we're doing okay. Similarly, the disciples know how foot-washing works. Peter doesn't need Jesus to wash his feet.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *"For he knew who was to betray him."*

Yet how deep does our cleanliness go? Does a ritual foot-washing mean anything at all? Doesn't it defeat the purpose of the ritual if we wash our feet in advance, yet how could we in love

do anything else for our poor pastor? And yet, don't we bring dirtier things up to God without any kind of remorse or worry? We worry more about our physical dirt than our spiritual dirt. It doesn't matter whether we've betrayed God in our daily lives; we just couldn't help ourselves. God will understand. Jesus points out to the disciples that they do not understand what is going on, or that Jesus will be betrayed.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Dead*

Yet it is the spiritual dirt that proves deadly. It is the fights we have in the church that tear it apart. It is the fights we have at home that tear homes apart. God understands, but also gives us up to our fate. We know what happens to Jesus' betrayer: death, at his own hands.

PROGNOSIS: Glorified

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Alive*

Jesus suffers the same consequences that we do, for our spiritual dirt: death on a cross. Yet God is doing something new here, and raises Jesus from the dead out of mercy. The spiritual dirt of our sins and the physical dirt of the grave is cleaned off in the resurrection of God's Christ.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *"Now the Son of Man has been glorified."*

In this resurrection, Jesus is glorified, and through him God is glorified. What that means for us is that despite Jesus' betrayal by us, his response is to wash our feet. He serves even those who offer him up to death. When we share in his resurrection, we also share in this kind of glory.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *"One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean."*

The word for this new cleanliness is love. Like Jesus, we wash

each others' feet, not focusing on a once-a-year ritual, but in all the parts of life when feet get dirty. Yet, we also trust the One who has bathed us in his love will bathe others in that same love. As a reflection of this, we love our neighbors, and in so doing proclaim what Jesus has done for us.