

Devotion on Holy Week (Fifth Day - Thursday before Easter) - 17 April 2014, Anno Domini (Proclaiming the Acceptable Year of the Lord)



1 Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. 2 And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; (John 13:1-2)

Today is Maundy Thursday – the day we observe the institution of the Lord's Supper as well as the washing of the feet of the disciples. The word derives from Middle English meaning 'mandate.' The 'mandate' or New Commandment is given in St. John 13:34 - ***A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.***" (John 13:34) This Commandment of the Lord covers all others. But its demands of love far exceed our normal ability to obey it. What neighbor, or member of the Body of Christ, do we love as much as Christ loved us and gave His very life for us? Unfortunately, there are many smug Christians who believe that they are keeping this Commandment.

This thirteenth chapter of John is related to that same thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, popularly called the LOVE chapter. John, being the disciple whom Jesus loved most especially, is perfectly suited as the one to relate this love of Christ to us.

For fifteen centuries before the Coming of Jesus, the Passover meal of Goshen has pointed to this night of the Lord's support. It is the Passover meal and the Lord Jesus Christ is the Passover (Heb: Paschah). ***"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."*** (1 Cor 5:7-8) The Passover is to be served by the single Cup that represents the Cup of Christ's suffering. It is to be eaten with unleavened bread despite the objections of some good Christians who believe the symbol is not important. Leaven represents false doctrine and sin; therefore, I believe the bread should reflect the same meaning of that which it symbolizes and should be unleavened.

This is a meal to which the Lord looked forward with much joy, but that joy was

mingled with sorrow, too, for He knew that He must depart out of the world and leave His beloved disciples behind. But each act of grace was intended to prepare them for this departure.

There was one among the twelve that was a devil and a traitor. Please do not be deceived by those tired old, unbiblical arguments that Judas was forced to sin and do evil – he was not! He was a devil from the beginning, and this the Lord well knew. Early in His ministry, Jesus revealed this truth. *“Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.”* (John 6:70-71) If you prefer to believe the fables on man on this point to the detriment of plain biblical truth, so be it. Every man must answer for his own unbelief! God is not, nor ever has been, the author evil in forcing men to sin.

The opening verse of John 13 is very touching and profound: *“...Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”* It is remarkable to me that Jesus maintained a total presence of mind and balance of thought even from this moment of grave danger which He continued even during the excruciating pains of the cross. The ‘end’ to which this verse replies is that temporary end that death brings, but not the end of a glorious relationship that endures in eternity beyond that end. Jesus greatly desired that His disciples would not fall victim to the deceits and allurements of Satan. When the danger is greatest, and fears mount, this is the time that the devil does his best work. Yet, all disciples (except the man of perdition) came shining through until the resurrection. Fearful though they were, they kept the faith, and that faith multiplied seven-fold when the fact of the resurrection became known.

It should be a blissful comfort to the Christian to know that Christ will love us to the end of our days, and then we shall rest secure in His bosom throughout Eternity. Though at the end of every field of Machpelah (Genesis 23), there lies a grave; beyond that cave lies an open tomb for the Christian. The Tomb of Christ was a borrowed tomb. Isn't the tomb of a Christian only borrowed as well? We need it only for those corrupt remains that rot and are consumed by worms. That which is spiritual in Christ springs forth eternal at the moment of death.

Consider those things that are passing through the mind of Christ as He prepares for His Passover meal. He is fully aware that one guest has already sold Him out to His enemies for thirty pieces of silver – such a modest ransom for the One who would serve as ransom to all who believe. Five hundred years earlier, the prophet had made mention of the cost of the Lord's betrayal: *“And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. 1 And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the LORD. And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.”* (Zech 11:10-13)

Jesus, the Lord of Glory and King of Kings, deigned to wash the feet (as a lowly servant) of his disciples. It was traditionally the lowest servant of a household who washed the feet of guest who entered the home. So Jesus placed Himself as the lowest servant of the household. He was not without majesty and highest honor, but He took upon Himself uncommon humility. That is a strong lesson for the proud ministers and

laypeople of the church. **“Oh no, I do not go that little country church. I am a member of the FIRST CHURCH,”** many proud Christians will proclaim. The Church is literally the family of God. Who would ever compare a family to some marbled façade of a church building? It is NOT the building, but its contents of faith that make a church. It is possible to have a far more fervent church family who meet underneath a Con Tree in Kenya than under the lofty, high-steepled crystal palaces that pass themselves as churches in our day. Remember, the sin which the Lord literally hates is that of PRIDE! The first of the seven sins that the Lord despises is Pride. *“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, 19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.”* (Prov 6:16-19)

You will admit that love dispels all remnants of pride. A mother will prostrate herself before her proud neighbors to save her child from harm. That one commandment of LOVE that Christ gave the night before His Passion will see us through every trial and temptation. In fact, love covers ALL sin. *“. . . love covereth all sins.”* (Prov 10:12) This is not the namby-pamby love that opens the door for an old lady, or carries her shopping bag to the car for her. It is the kind of love that would sooner be nailed to the cross than to see a little child perish, or even a criminal suffer for his sins. That is a most amazing measure of love and, without it, none of us would have been saved!