

# On the Night

## The Last Days of Lent

...On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. ..."

1 Cor 11:23-24 (NLT)

"On the night He was betrayed..." On the very night. Knowing the horrors to come, knowing that Judas had sold Him out and that everyone else around the table would turn their backs on Him, Jesus not only ate a meal with these people, but He declared the sacrifice He was about to make for them.

It's a hard thing to love broken people. People are messy at the best of times. When their actions are motivated by fear or anger or power, they become not just messy but dangerous. Thrashing around like wounded beasts, whatever is broken inside them becomes a weapon, wielded against everyone in their vicinity.

We know what came next. The religious elite, angry they can't trap Jesus in His words, arrange to arrest and murder Him. Peter, terrified by the mob coming for Jesus, grabs a sword and cuts off the ear of a servant. Roman guards, to prove how powerful they are, brutalize their apparently helpless prisoner. Were any of these people inherently bad? Maybe, but more likely they were just broken.



It's a hard thing to make a sacrifice, much less to sacrifice yourself for someone else. How much harder when you know the very people for whom you are sacrificing yourself have betrayed you, will desert you.

In His humanity, Jesus may not have known the details of the physical suffering He was about to face, but He already knew the pain of treachery.

As He shared this Passover with His disciples, did His divinity vividly remember the ghastly events of the first Passover? Did the memory of the shed blood of the lambs that night wash over His senses as He anticipated becoming the sacrificial lamb for the very people who would flee as He was taken? As He looked at Judas, did He remember the way the Israelites betrayed Him with the golden calf, in the wilderness, with the baals? Did every wound in history fill His heart as He ate this meal?

And after this sorrowful meal, Jesus washed the feet of those who would betray Him that very night.

I can be civil to people I don't like. I can be gracious to those who have hurt me. I can extend hospitality to people with whom I strongly disagree. But I cannot imagine the love that allowed Jesus to let Himself be tortured to death for such broken people – the religious elite, the Roman guards, Judas, the disciples who insisted they would never leave Him then fled just hours later, me. This is love beyond comprehension.

And this is the love that reaches every one of us. Because we are all broken. We are all betrayers. We have all turned our backs on Jesus at some point in the past and will again at some point in the future. God knows this, and He loves us anyway.



In what ways have you turned your back on Jesus in the past week?

What can you do today to remind yourself that God loves and forgives you for each betrayal?

## Exercise

1. Commit this time to God, asking Him to speak to you throughout this exercise.
2. Read the passage.

<sup>3</sup> Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; <sup>4</sup> so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.

<sup>5</sup> After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

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

<sup>7</sup> Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

<sup>8</sup> "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

<sup>9</sup> "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you."

1 John 13:3-10

3. Now read the passage on the next page, which includes prompts to help you imagine yourself there with the disciples. As you allow your imagination to create the scene, pay attention to the details: sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and feelings.
4. As you finish this time, bring yourself gently back to the present and review it with the Lord.
5. Journal about the experience, your prayer, your conversation with Jesus.
  - Note anything that struck you, especially the unusual or unexpected. Ask the Lord to show you:
    - Why did I feel or think or react the way I did?
    - What does what stood out to me show me about the way I see God, myself, or others?
  - Note any desires or concerns that have come up as a result of this prayer.
  - What, if anything, did God show you?

Imagine you're lounging in a large room, feeling full and a little sleepy after a big holiday dinner. Your friends (the other disciples) and your beloved Lord Jesus are around you. Notice the bustle of servants clattering about, clearing the dishes away. Take in the smells lingering in the air: roast lamb, bitter herbs, freshly baked unleavened bread, other people. Hear the murmur of distant voices downstairs, and the calls of night birds and cicadas drifting in through the windows.

There was a festive atmosphere at first, but the mood has grown somber. Look at your companions in the room. What do you see in their faces? What do you want to say to them?

*Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.*

You notice Jesus standing up, talking to one of the servants. You wonder what he's saying. You can't hear His words, just the soft murmur of His voice before the servant walks away. A few minutes later the same servant returns with a pitcher, a basin, and a towel and brings them to Jesus. Jesus removes his robe and wraps the towel around his waist. What are you thinking as you see this? What are the others in the room doing? What, if anything, is anyone saying?

*After that, he poured water into a basin ...*

Hear the gentle glug-glug as Jesus pours the water from the pitcher into the basin. He carries the basin to the nearest of the disciples, a few bright drops of the water dripping from the bowl as He walks.

*And [He] began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*

Jesus kneels down and begins to wash the feet of the person in front of Him. Hear the sloshing of the water as the cloth splashes in and out of the basin, the gentle swish of cloth against skin. What do you feel as you see this? What expressions do you see on the others' faces? What are they saying? What do you say to them?

Jesus works His way around the room, washing the feet of each disciple. Some are shocked and silent, embarrassed.

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

*Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."*

*"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."*

*Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."*

Peter is vocal in his dismay. How do you feel as you watch the others' reactions?

Finally, Jesus comes to you with the basin and cloth and kneels down in front of you. Feel His work-roughened hands as He washes your feet. He looks up into your eyes, taking these moments to focus only on you. What do you say to Him? What does He say to you? Let the conversation continue, talking with your dear friend Jesus as long as you need to.