

- Rev. Grant Mangold, www.RiversideChurchIowa.com

PETER'S FEET

You're at a festive gathering with friends, honoring a special person you greatly admire. You've given a big part of your life to this person, your hero, you count as mentor and friend. Suddenly, he says and does things you just can't understand. It raises lots of questions. How can things ever be the same?

No, not your favorite candidate for the Iowa Caucus. We're talking about Jesus, in John 13, in the upper room. **"Having loved His own in the world, He loved them to the end... knowing the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going back to God."**

The apostle John recounts what happened. Jesus took a towel and a bowl and began to wash the feet of His disciples. You have to think past our below-zero winter to a hot desert climate where everyone wears sandals. The lowest servant had the job of washing the dirty feet of house guests. But Jesus' disciples had been arguing about who would be greatest when Jesus set up the Kingdom of the Messiah.

Jesus showed them. **"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."** They didn't understand.

Judas had already been tempted to betray Jesus. Judas had his own script for Jesus. He followed for his own purposes, not God's. He read the Old Testament scriptures about Messiah as a political savior. He wanted someone to change the nation. But not his own heart. Judas listened to the world, the flesh, and the devil. He was under-committed. And when Jesus didn't fit his script, he betrayed Him.

There's a preview of this back in John 6:60-71. Judas didn't understand the deity of Christ, nor His humility, nor the idea that His kingdom is not of this world. Judas wasn't re-born by the Holy Spirit. He was only going through the motions. He pretended to know Jesus, and even to love Him - as in a few hours he would betray Jesus with a kiss in the garden. At the last judgment Jesus will say *"I never knew you."*

Jesus washing feet is a picture of the child of God who is restored to fellowship with Him after repenting from sins, something believers do daily. But Judas wasn't converted. He wasn't washed by the Holy Spirit from the inside. Judas was sorry for his sins, but not with repentance and faith. That wasn't Judas.

But it was Peter. He's the other disciple highlighted in John 6 and John 13. Peter had a script too. He was over-zealous, always responding in the flesh. At the end of this chapter, Jesus even has to tell him that before the rooster crows, Peter would deny Jesus three times - even with oaths.

So I pray you are more like Peter than Judas. Peter sinned. But Peter repented, and was restored. Peter believed that Jesus is the Holy One sent by God with words and works of eternal life. He was re-born by the Holy Spirit. Later, he understood what Jesus showed them in John 12 and 13. He understood what Jesus meant when He told His disciples to not only love Him, but follow Him, and serve Him.

What about YOU? Will your life have a happy ending like Peter? Or a dreadful ending like Judas? Think of the eternal love in the eyes and heart of Jesus as He took the feet of both of these disciples in his hands and washed them in the water - knowing how each of them would respond. How will YOU respond to Jesus? And, who in your life do you need to show the forgiving love of Jesus?

Think of the eternal love of Jesus, recounted in the parallel passage of Philippians 2. Jesus came from the realms of heavenly glory where He exists eternally as the Son of God. He came to a cradle in the flesh, to go to the cross to pay for sins, and then receive the eternal crown. Jesus was obedient, even to death. But He lives again! And God has highly exalted Him so at the name of Jesus, one day every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to God's eternal glory!

Jesus came as the Suffering Servant to pay for sins so you can have peace with God. When He comes again as the Conquering King, it will be to complete the salvation of all who believe in Him. Do YOU believe? Have you received His eternal spiritual life, by being re-born from above by the Holy Spirit? Then

live it out. Trust Him, obey Him. Be changed by Him, transformed by the Holy Spirit - *as are all those washed in His blood, who bear His mark of loving others just as Jesus loved.*