*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

April 29 – May 4

*Jesus in John’s Gospel*

**Monday, April 29 John 13:1-5**

*“He began to wash the disciples’ feet”*

Having loved his disciples throughout their three plus years together, he now loves them to the very end. The instrument of Jesus’ death is at the table with him, for the intention of betrayal has already entered the heart of Judas. In the midst of the silent struggle going on during the meal, the purpose of God is being worked out. The Father has not become a bystander, removed from the evil which is closing in on his Son. He is with him and has given him authority and power to finish the work for which he had come. Jesus is a free man, knowing who he is, why he has come, and what will be the end of his journey.

As the supper ends, Jesus acts out the significance of his death. This is far more than a courteous gesture by which he is attempting to give his disciples an ethical lesson in serving. This is an act of incredible humility when Jesus voluntarily does the menial work of a slave, and it is a parable in action of the sacrifice of his own life. As he physically washes the disciples’ feet, so his death on the cross will spiritually cleanse them of their sin.

*Your death on the cross, Jesus, washed me clean of my sin. Amen.*

**Tuesday, April 30 John 13:6-17**

*“Unless I wash you”*

While the circle of disciples seems to accept Jesus’ gesture, Peter reflects how shocking the deed must have seemed. The depth of his devotion to Jesus defines the strength of his objection, and Jesus’ rebuke is carefully worded: “If *I* do not wash you . . .” means that the question is not simply one of washing, but a question of *who* does the washing. Peter must participate in the work of Jesus. He lacks a cleansing only Jesus can supply. The implied reference to Judas in verses 10b and 11 indicates that Jesus’ work of footwashing has not changed Judas’ heart.

Jesus explains what he has just done. But while the subject of the footwashing in verses 2 through 11 pertained to Jesus’ salvific work on their behalf, his teaching now points to how they might imitate his deeds. Jesus’ sacrifice will be the supreme token of his overwhelming love for the world, and he wants his followers to exemplify that same love to one another. His act of sacrifice cannot be repeated, but his model of self-giving love can become a natural feature of the community that follows him and imitates him.

*May we lovingly serve one another, Jesus, as you have served us. Amen.*

**Wednesday, May 1 John 13:18-20**

*“He who shares my bread has betrayed me”*

For the third time, the subject of Judas’ betrayal enters the story as Jesus’ interpretation returns to thoughts of him. This builds the impression that Jesus is troubled about this matter and that the betrayal of this man weighs heavily on him. Jesus makes clear that his choice of Judas was no mistake. “I know those I have chosen” should not be read to say that Jesus chose the eleven but that somehow Judas had been forced on him. Rather, what Jesus means is that he knows the kind of men he chose.

There are no surprises for Jesus after so many years together in ministry, and this betrayal has not taken him unawares nor should it shock his disciples. Still, Jesus’ citation of Psalm 41:9 underscores the personal affront that this betrayal meant. In verse 20, Jesus returns to the subject of the servant and his master. As servants are obligated to reflect the work of their masters in every respect, so too such servants enjoy the respect and the authority that comes from working in their master’s name.

*May I always be true to you, Jesus, doing the good work you have given me. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

April 29 – May 4

*Jesus in John’s Gospel*

**Thursday, May 2 John 13:21-30**

*“He gave it to Judas, son of Simon Iscariot”*

Jesus and his disciples are reclining at the table. Jews in this period adopted the Roman *triclinium* table, a low three-sided table shaped like a “U.” Guests reclined on cushions around the perimeter while the interior of the table setting provided access for servers. The body was supported with the left arm (or elbow), the right hand was used for eating, and the feet were extended away from the table. We are told that John was reclining next to Jesus.

Jesus tells John that the betrayer is the one to whom he gives some dipped bread, and then he promptly serves Judas. To serve someone a morsel from the table like this was not unusual, and the disciples could have taken it as a simple honoring gesture for Judas. If so, it is particularly ironic since this gesture of respect is the last thing Jesus can do for Judas. This is love’s last appeal! Jesus is reaching out to him as a friend, and one wonders if Judas could look into Jesus’ eyes. But at that moment Judas gives himself completely into Satan’s control, and Jesus releases him to his act of betrayal.

*You have reached out to me in love, Jesus, and I have responded with love for you. Amen.*

**Friday, May 3 John 13:31-35**

*“Love one another”*

The departure of Judas leaves Jesus with those who are his intimate followers, to give them his final instructions (which will continue through chapter 17). Here he speaks of his glorification. Note that Jesus uses the past tense, saying that *already* the glory of God has been revealed in his life. Throughout Jesus’ life of perfect obedience, God has been honored. God’s power has also been made visible through the many miraculous signs of Jesus’ ministry. Now the hour of glorification has dawned; even in washing his disciples’ feet, Jesus has revealed something more of God’s glory. Jesus’ glory thus occurs when God’s glory radiates through him.

The supreme place where this divine radiance will be visible will be on the cross. This future glorification, then, is not some distant event at the end of time or in heaven. It is the series of events that will unfold at the end of this momentous week: Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension. Another place where the glory of God has radiated through Jesus is in his love for his disciples. As he has loved them, they are to love one another.

*May we love one another, Jesus, with the kind of love you modeled. Amen.*

**Saturday, May 4 John 13:36-38**

*“I’m ready to die for you”*

One wonders if Peter was paying attention to Jesus’ command for them to love one another. He seemed to still be brooding over where his Lord is going when he leaves. Jesus again states that Peter cannot follow him now, but afterward he will. Surely Jesus is speaking prophetically, for at the end of his earthly discipleship, Peter will join Jesus through a martyr’s death. But Peter, who does not understand, insists that he is ready lay down his life for Jesus’ sake. He is able to do the work of the Good Shepherd, which is to lay down his life for his sheep.

How stubbornly presumptuous Peter is. The disciples are not without sin simply because Judas has left. Are not all of us guilty at times of the sin of pride, trying to play the Savior, making ourselves into “little Messiahs,” insisting we can do his work? Little does Peter realize that at the very outset of the struggle he will deny Jesus, not once but three times. How well Jesus knows him, as he does us. And he still loves us with a love that will not let us go.

*In the face of danger, Jesus, may I still be loyal to you. Amen.*