

A Bunch of Power Seekers Meet a Servant

Series: The Journey to the Cross

Luke 22:15-26

April 13, 2017

Jesus Plans Everything Out

Luke 22:7-15

Thank you for being part of our Maundy Thursday celebration. Tonight, we will retell the story of the Last Supper to the Crucifixion through the reading and teaching of Scripture, songs, the sharing of Holy Communion, and video clips. All to help us come to a closer understanding of the sacrifice made for us.

During our series “Journey to the Cross,” we have seen that Jesus is singularly focused on going to Jerusalem. Matthew 16:21 reads:

From then on Jesus began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that he would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead.¹

Two more times, He foretells this fate to the disciples, so Jesus was not trapped in Jerusalem, then executed – just being in the wrong place at the wrong time. No, He intentionally set His eyes on the plan God had for Him.

So now, on Holy Thursday, He knows this is the last day that He will be able to choose for Himself what He does and where He wants to go. And it seems He has thought this all through.

Let me read from Luke 22:7-15:

Now the Festival of Unleavened Bread arrived, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John ahead and said, “Go and prepare the Passover meal, so we can eat it together.” “Where do you want us to prepare it?” they asked him. He replied, “As soon as you enter Jerusalem, a man carrying a pitcher of water will meet you. Follow him. At the house he enters, say to the owner, ‘The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room where I can eat the Passover meal with my disciples?’ He will take you upstairs to a large room that is already set up. That is where you should prepare our meal.” They went off to the city and found everything just as Jesus had said, and they prepared the Passover meal there. When the time came, Jesus and the apostles sat down together at the table. Jesus said, “I have been very eager to eat this Passover meal with you before my suffering begins.²

The Festival of Unleavened Bread, or Passover, was the most important religious festival for the Jew. Wherever a Jew might live, it was his ambition to observe one Passover in the Holy City. According to New Testament commentator William Barclay, when Jews in foreign lands observe the Passover, they say: “This year here; next year in Jerusalem.”³

The disciples seem utterly clueless as to what was happening. They don’t even know where they are going to celebrate Passover. So Jesus singled out Peter and John to perform what seems to be a clandestine mission. Could it be that Jesus didn’t want a public announcement as to where the group was going, in part to keep the crowds

¹ Matthew 16:21 (NLT)

² Luke 22:7-15 (NLT)

³ Barclay’s Daily Study Bible, John 12:12-19

away, and also so that Judas would not have advanced knowledge that he could pass on to the chief priests, who were ready to arrest Jesus. It appears that Jesus ensured this Last Supper would not be interrupted.

Jesus gave Peter and John specific instructions: follow the guy with the water jug. Why was that so special? Because men did not carry water jugs; women did. So to see a man carrying a jug of water would be like a strobe light flashing in the night. Wherever he went, they were to follow. He would lead them to the place Jesus had arranged: the Upper Room.

The owners had prepared the space. The entire house had been searched, looking everywhere, even in the nooks and crannies, for any leaven in the house. No leaven was supposed to be in the home at the time of Passover.

Once the disciples secured the room, they had to handle preparations for the meal itself. The most important detail included making sure the lamb had been slaughtered properly and roasted. The lamb served as the centerpiece of Passover. Israelite families who made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem would have to purchase their lamb four days before Passover. The lamb had to be unblemished and not more than one year old.

On the day of the meal, starting about 3:00 in the afternoon and continuing until dusk, fathers or other family leaders would take the family's lamb to the temple. Under the supervision of the priests, the family representative would slaughter the lamb and catch the blood in a basin. The priest then tossed the blood at the base of the altar. Then the family representative would skin the lamb and remove the fat and kidneys so they could be placed on the altar and burned. At that point, he would wrap the lamb in the skin, place it over his shoulder, and carry it to the place where the family would share the meal together. There, the lamb would be roasted outside over an open fire until it was ready to eat.

Preparation also included attention to other details. Items such as jars of water, bitter herbs, unleavened bread, a fruit-and-nut paste, and a raw vegetable dipped in tart dressing had to be gathered and prepared. Also, wine had to be secured. In addition, the room had to be arranged with floor cushions so everyone could recline at the table. Timing was critical in the preparation of the Passover meal. The roasted lamb and all of the items had to be prepared by 6:00 p.m. That's when the family would recline at the table and the meal would begin.

Jesus had it all planned out. Why? Verse 15:

Jesus said, "I have been very eager to eat this Passover meal with you before my suffering begins."⁴

I like how the Message Bible put it:

You've no idea how much I have looked forward to eating this Passover meal with you before I enter my time of suffering.⁵

The Greek word indicates a deep longing and desire. It is used in John 3:29 in a context of a wedding day. So think about how excited and longing you were for the day of your wedding – or for that matter, any other very significant and long awaited day – and you get the feeling of what Jesus felt for this night, this time, with His disciples.

So He planned it all out.

⁴ Luke 22:15 (NLT)

⁵ Luke 22:15 (MSG)

Jesus Teaches Servanthood Luke 22:24; John 13:3-17

Yet, the night did not quite start off as Jesus had hoped. Apparently, there was some “discussion” about the seating chart or who was the “best” disciple. There probably was some animosity among them all, as it seemed Peter, James, and John were singled out for special times and experiences with Jesus. After all, only they were invited to the Mount of Transfiguration.⁶ Only these three were summoned into the home where the 12 year old girl was raised from the dead.⁷ James and John’s mother had asked Jesus for special seats of honor for her sons in the Kingdom;⁸ that didn’t set well with the rest of the disciples. And of course, Peter and John were the two called upon to prepare the Passover meal; they may have felt that since they had done all the hard work, they should be rewarded by sitting next to the Master. So the disciples were in a mood not consistent with the atmosphere that Jesus wanted for the night. Luke tells us:

Then they began to argue among themselves about who would be the greatest among them.⁹

Then John gives us the story that changes Jesus’ followers understanding of what it means to be a leader: you must be a servant. Hear these words from John 13:

Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end. It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.¹⁰

It was custom that a non-Jewish slave would wash the feet of the guests as they entered the house. It was not only to be an act of hospitality; everyone reclined when they ate, and those feet could be smelly.

But no slave came with the borrowed room, and of course none of the disciples wanted to do it, so Jesus used the moment for a great and wonderful teaching. Such a contrast between the self-seeking disciples and Jesus’ place of humility was too great for Peter:

When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” Jesus replied, “You don’t understand now what I am doing, but someday you will.” “No,” Peter protested, “you will never ever wash my feet!” Jesus replied, “Unless I wash you, you won’t belong to me.” Simon Peter exclaimed, “Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!” Jesus replied, “A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not all of you.” For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, “Not all of you are clean.”¹¹

⁶ See Mark 9:2-13

⁷ See Mark 5:21-42

⁸ See Matthew 20:20-28

⁹ Luke 22:24 (NLT)

¹⁰ John 13:1-5 (NLT)

¹¹ John 13:6-11, (NLT)

Jesus washed his disciples' feet as a final proof of His love for them, setting an example of humility and servanthood, and signifying the washing away of sins through His death. In a striking demonstration of love for His enemies, Jesus washed all of His disciples' feet, including those of Judas. That had to have been interesting: Judas already in cahoots with the opposition, and Jesus knew it.

After demonstrating His object lesson, Jesus told the disciples the meaning of what He has just done:

After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them."¹²

Jesus, the Son of God, demonstrated His love to His disciples by stooping down and being a servant, a slave, and washing their feet. This dramatic expression of the greatness of Christ's love previewed the meaning of the Cross, where the essential elements of Divine love for humanity were represented.

1. It was love that could not be quenched by evil.

John 13:2 tells us: *It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.*¹³

2. It was love that was given knowing the full extent of His powers.

*Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything...*¹⁴

Jesus knew exactly Who He was: the Son of God. And yet, He stooped to wash the men's dirty feet.

3. The love of Jesus transcended the barriers of social class.

*Jesus knew that... he had come from God and would return to God.*¹⁵

It did not matter to Jesus that He was God, and these were mere mortals.

4. The love of Jesus was an active love.

*So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist...*¹⁶

5. Jesus' love cleanses. John 13:10:

*... And you disciples are clean...*¹⁷

6. Love's cleansing must be constant. John 13:10 reads:

¹² John 13:12-17 (NLT)

¹³ John 13:2, NLT

¹⁴ John 13:3, NLT

¹⁵ John 13:3, NLT

¹⁶ John 13:4, NLT

¹⁷ John 13:10, NLT

*A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean.*¹⁸

We must continually go to Christ to cleanse us and fill us deeper with His spirit. Otherwise, you were just born and never grew up. The Christian life is a life that constantly turns over to Christ the sins, attitudes, and self-centeredness that is the human heart.

7. Jesus' love taught a spiritual truth: service. John 13:14:

*And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet.*¹⁹

Human love is often selfish. Christian love is always service, giving away.

Imagine if you will what it would have been like to be one of the disciples at that Last Supper.

“The Last Supper” Video

The Great Thanksgiving

Communion Liturgy

No. 15

“The Garden” Video

Jesus' Trial Before Pilate

Matthew 27:15-26

After His arrest, Jesus was eventually taken to Pilate, the Roman governor. Pilate was not well liked by the Jewish people, for he did not care about their traditions and customs. All he wanted was peace, and the only way he knew to guarantee that was through force.

So, with Passover approaching, Pilate left his place on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, and set up residence in the Antonia Fortress, overlooking the Temple Mount, with the purpose of reinforcing the garrison permanently stationed there to squelch any thought of uprising and rioting.

So early on Friday morning, Jesus was brought before Pilate. Pilate may have heard reports about a traveling preacher who was gathering large crowds in the countryside, but he had heard nothing to suggest this man was a political insurrectionist. The religious leaders made wild accusations that had no basis in fact. Pilate's own interrogation of the prisoner yielded little to nothing.

As a result, Pilate deemed Him innocent and tried to have this Jesus released. But little did he know that all the evil of the devil was gathered against this man.

Here is Pilate's final hearing regarding Jesus of Nazareth:

Now it was the governor's custom each year during the Passover celebration to release one prisoner to the crowd—anyone they wanted. This year there was a notorious prisoner, a man named Barabbas. As the crowds gathered before Pilate's house that morning, he asked them, “Which one do you want me to release to you—Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?” (He knew very well that the religious leaders had arrested Jesus out of envy.) Just then, as Pilate was sitting on the judgment

¹⁸ John 13:10, NLT

¹⁹ John 13:14, NLT

seat, his wife sent him this message: “Leave that innocent man alone. I suffered through a terrible nightmare about him last night.” Meanwhile, the leading priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas to be released and for Jesus to be put to death. So the governor asked again, “Which of these two do you want me to release to you?” The crowd shouted back, “Barabbas!” Pilate responded, “Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” They shouted back, “Crucify him!” “Why?” Pilate demanded. “What crime has he committed?” But the mob roared even louder, “Crucify him!” Pilate saw that he wasn’t getting anywhere and that a riot was developing. So he sent for a bowl of water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood. The responsibility is yours!” And all the people yelled back, “We will take responsibility for his death—we and our children!” So Pilate released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified.²⁰

“Via Dolorosa”

Cathy Butler

Forgiveness

Luke 23:32-34a

History tells us that the Persians created crucifixion as a method of capital punishment, perhaps derived from the Assyrian impalement. It was later employed by the Greeks, especially Alexander the Great, and by the Carthaginians, from whom the Romans adapted and perfected the practice as a punishment for slaves and non-citizens, and occasionally for citizens guilty of treason. It is arguably the most painful death ever invented by man and is where we get our term “excruciating.”

Older paintings as well as movies have tried to soften the image of the Crucifixion. Yet, it is the newer portrayals that try to return the realism of the experience and image of Jesus hanging on the Cross. There is no question: it is brutal and difficult to look at. But I believe these newer interpretations are more accurate, especially when you remember the ghastly flogging that happened a few short hours before. Jesus was already brutalized before He was nailed to the cross; to ignore that is to lessen the sacrifice made.

The crucified individual was thrown to the ground on his back, with his arms outstretched and tied along the crossbar, in preparation for transfixion of the hands. When this happened to Jesus, His scourging wounds most likely would become torn open again and contaminated with dirt. Furthermore, with each respiration, the painful scourging wounds would be scraped against the rough wood of the stipes. As a result, blood loss from the back probably would continue throughout the crucifixion ordeal.

His hands and feet were nailed to the cross in such a way that every second of the experience was filled with incredible pain. There was no rest, no breather. If Jesus tried to hold Himself up with His arms, excruciating, fiery pain shot along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain. If He pushed himself upward to avoid this torment, to breathe, and to speak, He placed His full weight on the nail through His feet. Again there was searing agony as the nail tore through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of His feet.

And yet, in the midst of this, Jesus spoke, and one of the seven last words were these:

²⁰ Matthew 27:15-26 (NLT)

“Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.”²¹

It is almost unbelievable to hear these words, still to this day. Jesus said many wonderful things in His life, but rarely anything more wonderful than these. Jesus asked God to forgive the people who were putting him to death: Jewish leaders, Roman politicians and soldiers, even the bystanders. Jesus was suffering the most horrible, painful death ever devised by sinful man, and He looked at the people responsible for His suffering and prayed for their forgiveness.

“Golgotha” Video

²¹ Luke 23:34, NLT