

The Greatest Among You

October 29 — *Mark 14:10-26; Matt. 26:14-30; Luke 22:1-30; John 13:1-30* Day 302 — 63 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

Jesus and the disciples met in Jerusalem for the Passover celebration and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Satan, knowing that the priests and teachers of religious law were looking for a way to get their hands on Jesus, "entered into Judas Iscariot," to carry out his plans and betray Him. (*Luke 22:3, 4*). Jesus knew His betrayer, identified Him at the Passover meal, and confirmed, before the rest of the disciples, that it was all part of God's plan (v.22). He was to die, "as the Scriptures declared long ago" (*Mark 14:21*).

During the last supper, two other notable events occurred. First, Jesus washed the disciples' feet. Although His actions took everyone by surprise, they revealed Jesus as the Suffering Servant who was prophesied in the Old Testament. Not only was He setting an example for His followers of unconditional love, humility, and servitude, He identified those who belonged to Him. "You are clean," He said, "but that isn't true of everyone here" (*John 13:10*). Jesus, of course, was talking about Judas, who did not believe.

The other notable event that occurred that night was the institution of the Lord's Supper. Jesus gave new meaning to the bread and wine of the Passover meal. When He broke the bread, He said, "This is My body, given to you." Of the wine He said, "This wine is the token of God's new covenant to save you, an agreement sealed with the blood I will pour out for you" (*Luke 22:19, 20*).

Today, the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the Church, a means by which the followers of Christ remind themselves of His sacrifice for sin. "Do this in remembrance of Me," He said (v.19). Also, with this act, Jesus established the New Covenant (Testament). The Old Covenant, with its sacrificial system, would be replaced and sealed by the blood of the Lamb of God.

Daily Reflection

By washing everyone's feet, Jesus was settling a dispute that the disciples had that night, regarding who was the greatest among them. "Among you," Jesus said, "**those who are the greatest should take the lowest rank; the leader should be like the servant...** Since I, the 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" (*John 13:14; Luke 22:26*).

These words shattered every prideful thought the disciples had, for Jesus had upended their understanding of what it meant to be "great." **He alone was great, yet He was the Suffering Servant**, humble and willing to stoop in order to help others.

What does it look like to "wash the feet" of others today? What are some ways that you are "washing the feet" of others?

Why does "washing people's feet" contradict our natural tendencies?

Are you a great person, looking for positions of authority or service? **Are you looking for ways to wash others' feet, or are you expecting them to wash yours?**

In Jesus' Name

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections

October 30 — *John 13-15; Mark 14:27-31; Matt. 26:31-35; Luke 22:31-38* Day 303 — 62 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

After Judas left and the Passover meal was finished, Jesus took some time to talk with His disciples. It would be last time before His arrest that He would have alone with them. What He shared is only recorded in the book of *John*; the other three Gospels (sometimes called the *Synoptic Gospels* because of their similarities) recorded the Passover meal and the washing of the disciples' feet, but not the teaching. These "last words" of Jesus are some of the most meaningful of His ministry (*John 13-17*).

The topics that were covered today included Peter's denial of Jesus, the reaffirmation of the exclusivity of Christ — "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man can come to the Father except through Me" (*14:6*) — the promise of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the new commandment of loving others, and an explanation of fruitful followers.

Also included in our passage were three statements that are often misunderstood. First, Jesus said, "Now I can go to the Father, who is greater than I am" (*14:28*). If Jesus is fully God, and He and the Father are one, then how can the Father be greater than He is? The answer is quite simple, when one remembers that Jesus chose to limit Himself in order to take on flesh as a man. While on earth, the Father was greater than He was, but after His return to heaven, Christ resumed His former position and power.

Second, Jesus said, "I don't have much more time to talk to you, because the prince of this world approaches; he has no power over Me, but I will do what the Father requires of Me" (*14:30, 31*). The "prince of this world" is Satan, who does not have power over Jesus. However, Jesus allowed Himself to be arrested, tried, and crucified, which is what Satan wanted and what God ordained.

A third statement that is misunderstood is this, when Jesus said, "**You can ask for anything in My name and I will do it...**" (*14:13, 14*). He also said, "If you stay joined to Me and My words remain in you, you may ask any request you like and it will be granted... So then, the Father will give you whatever you ask for using My name" (*15:7, 16*). Of course, this is where the popular phrase, "In Jesus' name," was added to the end of our prayers.

Daily Reflection

This phrase, "In Jesus name," does not hold some magical power to grant all of your wishes. God answers prayers without your using this phrase and He chooses, at times, not to answer prayers even when you use that phrase. **To emphasize the phrase is to miss the point.** The point is to "remain in Him, to do the same works as He has done, and to bear Christ-like fruit" (*14:12; 15:5-8*).

In other words, **the phrase**, "In Jesus' name," **was never meant to be a special key for you to name or claim whatever you want.** The phrase indicates who is to receive the glory for what is done. Thus, are the things you pray for meant to glorify God or glorify yourself?

Are you guilty of using this phrase in a careless way? Is it a meaningless part of a routine? "Remaining in Christ" means that you have surrendered to Him, that you are trusting in Him, that you are obeying His instructions, and that you are seeking to live like Him. His concerns are your concerns. His agenda is your agenda, and His purposes are your purposes. His desire may not be to give you more stuff or to make your life more comfortable or convenient. **His desire is for you to become more like Christ. Are you praying toward that end?** Then, ask what you wish and He will answer it.

Playground or Battleground?

Today In Your Reading...

Jesus ended His upper room discourse. He warned the disciples of the hatred and abuse that the world would hurl at them for being His followers. He explained more of what the Holy Spirit would do when He arrived. He encouraged them in regards to His death with the prediction of His resurrection; and, finally, He prayed for their unity, purity, and protection. It was the last time that the disciples would be with Him before the coming chaos of His crucifixion.

The summary of Jesus' message that night was this, "I have told you all this so that you may have peace in Me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows, but take heart, because I have overcome the world" (*John 16:33*). What is this world that Jesus had overcome and how exactly did He overcome it?

By living a righteous life, Jesus had already overcome temptation, and, thus, He had overcome Satan's wiles. He had also overcome the harshness and hatred of the world; and, now, as He neared His crucifixion, He would overcome the power of sin and the grave. With His death on the cross and His eventual resurrection, He will have defeated and, therefore, overcome every obstacle this world could set before Him.

The Greek word used for "overcomer" is *nike*, "one who has gained a victory." Because Christ was victorious, those who are in Christ will also be victorious. Because He had overcome the world, His power in us can and will help us to overcome the world. Though while on earth, we will have many trials and sorrows, we can have peace, knowing that we can overcome them all.

Daily Reflection

What is important for us to remember is that **this world is a battleground, not a playground**. It appears to have everything that we

need, but, in truth, it really has nothing for us. Our enemy has established a system that caters to our flesh. It has distractions for our eyes, pleasures for our mind, and treasures for our heart. In reality, these shallow offerings hide their true purposes, that of encouraging pride, greed, and self-indulgence; they are meant to get our eyes off of the true meaning of life.

While this world seems to be for us, it really works against us.

Why has Satan disguised this world to look like a playground?

A soldier, who believes he is in a safe place, will let his guard down. Describe a time when the enemy has caught you "off duty" or taking a break.

Though you can overcome this battleground, it will take its toll on you. Temptation, tribulation, and persecution will leave you with scars, injuries, casualties, collateral damage, and battle fatigue. **The good news is that you are on the winning side.** The enemy you are fighting is a defeated enemy, and your King is a victorious conqueror!

Yes Even Though

Today In Your Reading...

Courage — what does it mean? It is derived from the French word *coeur*, meaning “heart,” and marks one who has a resolute spirit. Noah Webster defined courage as a “quality of mind that enables a man to encounter danger or difficulty with firmness” (*1828 Dictionary*). Courage, then, is not simply to act in the absence of fear, but rather to act in spite of it. Thus, courage is being brave enough to do what should be done even when we are afraid.

In the Scriptures, courage has been demonstrated in many ways. For example, David faced a giant warrior when he was only a boy. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow to a king’s idol, even when that meant getting thrown into a fiery furnace. Esther stood up for what’s right, even when she could lose her position as Queen. There are many pictures of courage, but none of them are as exemplary as what Christ did in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The night of His arrest, Jesus was facing His fears. In fact, He was in such “agony that His sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood” (*Luke 22:44*). The word “agony” comes from the word *agon*, which means “to wrestle.” What exactly was Jesus wrestling? He was wrestling with a decision to walk the path His Father had prescribed, knowing full well that it was fraught with danger and ended with the most barbarous death one could suffer.

His fears were obvious; His anxiety evident. He admitted, “My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death” (*Mark 14:34*). He was disturbed and distressed. The pressure was so intense that His sweat glands began to hemorrhage and drops of blood were squeezed from His pores. What a scene, to see our Savior pressed by the weight of the world, like the olives that were so often pressed in that very garden.

However, despite the emotional and mental torture that He had already endured, and despite seeing ahead to the excruciating pain of the cross, He uttered the most courageous words in the Bible, “Yet I want your will, not mine.” The most important word in that statement is “yet.” I like to use it as an acrostic which stands for three words — **“Yes Even Though.”** Jesus said “yes” to the Lord’s will, even though He was afraid. Jesus said “yes” and offered to lay down His life, even though it was ours that should’ve been sacrificed.

Daily Reflection

What is it that God has asked you to do for Him? In what position has He placed you that causes you to fear or fret?

The most glorifying choice you can make in your life is to say yes to God’s will, even though it may not be what you had in mind, even though it may not be easy, and even though it may cause you pain and heartache. Christ humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death. Jesus said “yes” to the cross, even though He was afraid. That is courage.

Whatever God is asking you to do today is nothing compared to what He asked Christ to do. Still, sometimes your problems look so daunting. Just remember to say **“Y.E.T.,”** yes to His will, even though you may foresee danger or difficulty. “Be strong and of good courage; do not fear or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (*Joshua 1:9*). **He has not given us a spirit of fear, but of strength... and courage.**

Brothers in Betrayal

Today In Your Reading...

Having been arrested in Gethsemane, Jesus was taken to the house of Caiaphas, the High Priest. Though this “trial” was illegal, it didn’t seem to matter. The religious leaders heard testimonies from false witnesses in order to invent charges against Him. In the end, the only charge they could levy at Him was blasphemy, for claiming to be the Messiah, the Son of God. However, this charge was false as well, because Jesus was who He said He was.

In the background of this staged trial was the betrayal of two of Jesus’ disciples — Peter and Judas. Judas delivered Jesus to the chief priests for thirty pieces of silver, and three times Peter denied that He had anything to do with Jesus. Both of these men were guilty of the same sin, but each of them responded differently to the conviction of his guilt.

Judas was condemned by his conscience that he had sinned. He even felt remorse for what he had done and returned the money. However, his remorse did not lead him to repent of his sin or to ask God for forgiveness. Instead, it led him to take his own life. Paul best described this kind of remorse when he wrote, “God can use sorrow in our lives to help us turn away from sin and seek salvation. We will never regret this kind of sorrow; but sorrow without repentance is the kind that results in death” (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Judas’ lack of repentance and failure to ask for forgiveness are evidence that he did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, the only means of salvation. In Jesus’ prayer with His disciples, He said, “During My time here, I have kept them (the disciples) safe. I guarded them so that not one was lost, except the one headed for destruction, as the Scriptures foretold” (John 17:12). Simply put, **Judas was not a believer in Christ**. He will not be in heaven.

In contrast to Judas is Peter, who was also guilty of betrayal. However, **his remorse was godly sorrow which led to repentance and restoration**. That restoration came after Jesus’ resurrection, when He appeared to the disciples at the Sea of Galilee. Although Peter had to have been nervous to see Jesus, the Lord gave him an opportunity to make things right. He asked Him three times, “Do you love Me?” Peter confirmed his love for Jesus and was restored to Him (John 21:15-19). Peter would go on to be one of the leaders of the early church.

Daily Reflection

How would you describe the difference between remorse and repentance?

Are there sins in your life for which you have felt remorse but have never asked forgiveness? What are some of the effects of unrepentance?

What exactly produces godly sorrow in you? Why is that a good sign?

Given, Not Taken

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November 3 — *Mark 15:2-20; Luke 23:1-25; John 18:28-19:16; More*

Day 307 — 58 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

We watched the unjust trial of Jesus unfold and end with His sentencing to death by crucifixion.

The trial had to be unjust because Jesus was not guilty of any crime. The Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, declared, "I find nothing wrong with this man." Pilate's wife, who had a terrible nightmare about Jesus, told her husband, "Leave that innocent man alone." King Herod came to the same conclusion, that Jesus had done nothing worthy of death. Finally, after Pilate had Jesus flogged, He announced to the crowd, "I am going to bring Him out to you now, but understand clearly that I find Him not guilty" (*Luke 23:4; Matthew 27:19; John 19:4*).

Since Jesus was innocent, the trial was a sham. The Jewish leaders were desperate to get rid of their enemy. They had already procured false witnesses; now they manipulated the crowds and pressed their political leaders into wrongful action. The most hypocritical move was to condemn Jesus for claiming to be their King, which was blasphemy in their eyes; while they swore allegiance to God alone, they verbally exclaimed, "We have no King but Caesar!" Their shallow allegiance was feigned for political expediency.

Despite all of the injustice that was committed, Jesus did nothing and said very little. Just a few days earlier, He was quieting those scoundrels who were trying to trick Him with controversial questions. He could have said something during His trial that would have confounded everyone and earned His release, but He didn't. Before the Roman Governor, "He said nothing, much to Pilate's surprise" (*Mark 15:5*). Though Herod demanded a miracle, Jesus did nothing. He asked Jesus question after question, but He refused to answer (*Luke 23:9*). It was prophesied that **the Messiah would be quiet before His accusers** (*Isaiah 42:1, 2; 53:7*).

Why would Jesus do that? Why did He not fight for His innocence, for His life, for justice, or for a fair trial? He could have freed Himself from this mess. Earlier, when Jesus was arrested in the Garden, He told Peter, "Don't you realize that I could ask the Father for thousands of angels to protect us, and He would send them immediately? But if I did, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled...?" (*Matt. 26:53, 54*). He told Pilate, "I am not an earthly king. If I were, My followers would have fought when I was arrested... My kingdom is not of this world... You would have no power over Me unless it were given to You from above" (*John 18:36; 19:11*). The fact that Jesus did nothing and said nothing was proof that **His life was not taken but given**. He was born to die and these things had to happen to fulfill prophecy.

Daily Reflection

In the middle of Jesus' trial was a side story that captured the meaning of the entire ordeal. A criminal named Barabbas, who was guilty of murder, was released to the crowd. **Jesus, an innocent man, was betrayed and murdered to free sinners from death — the penalty of their actions.** How much more clear of a picture of the Gospel can we get than that?

Pilate made one other comment that is interesting. He sent for a bowl of water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this man..." (*Matthew 27:24*). *Though Pilate may have not been the political reason Jesus was crucified that day, his sins were the personal reason Jesus was crucified.* **No man is innocent.** All have sinned and are guilty before God. It was our sin, your sin, that condemned and crucified Jesus.

Like Pilate, you may proclaim your innocence, but, in truth, **you are Barabbas**; and *Jesus willingly gave His life so that you would go free.*

It Is Finished

Today In Your Reading...

Jesus was led to a place called Golgotha, or "Skull Hill," where He was crucified. Evidently, His scourging had compromised His physical strength to the point that He could not carry His own cross. A man named Simon of Cyrene was forced to help Him.

While Jesus hung on the cross, nearly everyone on the scene hurled abuse at Him — soldiers, religious leaders, travelers, bystanders, even the criminals that were crucified with Him. However, one of the men recognized Jesus' innocence in light of his own sins. "We deserve to die for our evil deeds," he said, "but this man hasn't done anything wrong" (*Luke 23:41*). Jesus confirmed this man's faith and said, "I assure you, today you will be with Me in paradise" (v.43). In regard to His accusers, He asked His Father to forgive them, "because they don't know what they are doing" (v.34).

One of those in the crowd had to be the Great Accuser, Satan himself, who understood Jesus' redemptive mission. Even though He was on the cross, Satan tempted Jesus to avoid the agony of crucifixion and succumbing to death. "Save yourself," he said, "and come down from the cross. You saved others but can You save Yourself? You trust God, but let's see if He will now deliver You!" These temptations were Satan's last attempts to keep Jesus from fulfilling His earthly task, that of sacrificing Himself for the sins of mankind. Satan knew if that happened then Jesus would have broken his oppressive chains of sin and death. Jesus resisted Satan and completed what He came to do.

By taking the sins of mankind upon Himself, Jesus had become an unbearable sight for His Father. In that moment, Jesus was crushed, not only by the weight of our transgressions but by His Father's abandonment. He cried out, "My

God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" For a brief moment, the holy God of heaven and earth could not look upon His Son, who bore man's every evil thought and wicked way. Then, Jesus voluntarily yielded up His spirit.

Jesus' final words said it all — **"It is finished!"** We might say, "Mission accomplished." His redemptive assignment had been completed. Through His sacrifice, He had delivered us from the penalty of sin. No more sacrifices were needed. He alone — the Lamb of heaven — is all that is required to enter the presence of God. Herein lies the meaning of the Temple veil that was torn in two (*Matthew 27:50, 51*). The old sacrificial system was no longer necessary. Jesus provided a new and living way to God and eternal life (*Hebrews 10:19, 20*).

Daily Reflection

Let's assume that you were there that day, when Jesus was crucified, and you understood what was happening, why He was doing it. Would you allow it or stop it? Explain.

Every passage of Scripture that you have read this year has built up to this point — the crucifixion of Jesus. It is the focal point of the entire Bible. How important, then, should it be to you?

Take some time today to thank God for sending His Son to die on your behalf. Consider where you would be in life without Him. Then, **consider how you should live in light of knowing that He died for you.**