

Matthew 26 vv.17-19.

Mark 14 vv.12-16.

Luke 22 vv.7-13.

On Thursday morning two men leave the village of Bethany and set forth on the road to Jerusalem. Who are these men? ... Look carefully! You know them well. They are Peter and John. Where are they going, and what do they intend to do? ...

As we have already told you, the Lord Jesus had, in all probability, on the Tuesday evening been anointed by Mary in the house of Simon the leper. What the Lord did on the Wednesday we do not know. Did He speak again to His disciples about His approaching death? ... Did He spend the day in prayer? ... We do not know. Perhaps He did both.

Thursday morning some of the disciples ask: "Where wilt thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the Passover?" They remind their Master that they have come to Jerusalem to partake of the Passover.

In answer to this question, the Lord Jesus instructs two of His disciples, Peter and John, to go to Jerusalem and there to make ready. But where are they to go there? ... They must surely have a room for this purpose?

Well then, Jesus tells them that when they come into the city, they are to follow a man who is carrying a pitcher of water. He will lead them to a room.

Now, why does the Lord Jesus not tell them exactly which street and which house? ... Why does He give them such seemingly vague directions? ... We cannot tell with certainty, but it is very possible, yes, even probable, that He did so with Judas in mind. Jesus knew, after all, that Judas was waiting for a suitable opportunity to deliver up his Master to the Sanhedrin. If Judas knew the address precisely, then he could quite easily inform the Sanhedrin, and Jesus could then be taken in the Upper room itself. And that was not the Lord's will. He did not want to be disturbed during the Passover supper. Furthermore the Lord Jesus was not to fall into His enemies hands by surprise or defeat, but He was to give Himself up of His own free will. That may be why the Lord kept the exact address quiet.

Be that as it may, both the disciples set out for Jerusalem, while He Himself remains behind with the others.

When Peter and John come into the city, they see indeed a man bearing a pitcher of water.* They follow this man, who a little later enters a house,

*I have read that a man bearing such a pitcher would in those times have been a

which they also do. When they are asked their business, the disciples say: "The Master saith, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples?"

At once the person shows them a large room which is already furnished and ready. But ... does this man know who is meant by "the Master"? ... Who is this man? ...

Who that man was, I cannot tell you children, for God's Word is silent on this point. Some think that it was a room belonging to Nicodemus, but we do not know whether that is true. One thing is certain, the man knew the Lord Jesus, and he was not an enemy of Jesus either, or he would never have given the room. You do not believe, surely, that Caiaphas would have been so obliging?

At once Peter and John set to work. The paschal lamb is slain and roasted. The unleavened bread is baked. The bitter herbs are prepared. They make sure that there is wine. In short, everything that is needed for the Passover supper is procured and prepared. At last, all is ready. The table is laid. The benches are set around it. The lamps are filled. The water vessels are set full, by the door. There is nothing missing.

Meanwhile evening has fallen. Peter and John await the arrival of their Master. They do not have long to wait.

Very soon afterwards Jesus with His disciples steps inside and they all sit at the table.

Matthew 26 v.20.
Mark 14 v.17.
Luke 22 vv.24-27.
John 13 vv.1-20.

Look, there sits the Lord Jesus with His twelve disciples around the table. The disciples look at each other. There is a painful silence. Why then? ... Well, something has to be done which not one of them wants to do.

When the Jews sat at table, then first of all their feet would be washed. Since in the land of Canaan they always walked about in sandals, their feet were always dusty. So it was necessary that this should take place. But ... washing feet was not a pleasant job. That was always done by a slave.

Here there is no slave present, and yet the feet must be washed. It is an awkward situation. Not one of the disciples wants to do it. Each one thinks: "Why should I do it? There are others who can do that, surely?" Not one of them

wants to perform that despicable slave work. They look at each other hoping that one will do it. But it is not to be.

Then the disciples begin to quarrel. They argue among themselves, which of them should be accounted the greatest. He would then, of course, have the best position and would not be required to wash the feet. What a sad sight. At this solemn moment the disciples are striving among themselves as to which of them is the greatest.

All at once the striving ceases and there is a breathless quiet. The disciples look embarrassed and shamefaced. Why? ... Look what is happening.

Whilst the disciples are arguing and speaking hard, ungracious words, the Lord Jesus gets up. He removes the fine linen cloak which He was wearing as an outer garment. Then He takes a linen cloth, a sort of towel, and girds Himself with that. Then He fills a bowl with water and kneels down by one of the disciples. If none will wash the feet, then shall He, the King of Israel, the Creator of heaven and earth perform that servant's task. Though His disciples are too proud to do it, yet He shall humble Himself. Not of necessity, but freely and willingly.

What will have gone on in the hearts of the disciples? ... We may be sure that they were ashamed, very deeply ashamed. Hesitantly they put forth their feet to their beloved Master. He washes the dust away and then dries them with the linen cloth. They hardly dared to look at Jesus.

One by one they have their turn. Even Judas, the traitor! No, the Lord does not pass him by, the Lord is not resentful towards him, but washes even his feet. When at last Jesus comes to Peter, the latter cannot keep silent.

"Lord," he bursts out, "dost Thou wash my feet?"

No, he does not want that, he cannot allow that. Must his Master, whom he loves so deeply perform for him that filthy slave's work? No, never! O, perhaps he was sorry he had not volunteered in the first place.

Calmly Jesus answers Peter: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

Yet Peter shakes his head emphatically, as he answers vehemently: "Thou shalt never wash my feet."

But then Jesus replies solemnly: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me."

What? ... No part with Jesus? ... Cut off from Jesus? ... No, no, that cannot be. Peter cannot live without his Master.

"Lord," says he resolutely, "not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

But Jesus tells him that that is also unnecessary. "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit."

Then Peter allows his feet also to be washed.

At last the Lord Jesus has completed the work. He pours away the dirty water, hangs up the linen cloth, replaces His outer garment, and sits down again.

"Know ye what I have done to you?" He asks.

Nobody answers Him.

Then the Lord Jesus explains to them why He has done that. In the first place He has given them an example which should put them to shame. They must not quarrel over the question as to which of them is the greatest, but they must wash one another's feet. They must be willing to serve one another. Each must esteem the other better than himself.

For you too this is a lesson, boys and girls. If there is a nasty or a dirty job to be done at home or wherever you may be, should your brother or your sister then do it? ... That same wicked pride lives in your hearts too, no doubt.

But this washing of the feet also points to the forgiveness of sins. As the dust of their feet was washed away by the water, so must their sin-stained souls be cleansed by the blood of the Saviour.

I could write a great deal more about this, but it would still be too difficult for you to follow. Remember, though, what you have read!

Matthew 26 vv. 21-25.

Mark 14 vv. 18-21.

Luke 22 vv. 21-23.

John 13 vv. 21-30.

The disciples do not have much to say, they are still too ashamed or embarrassed. Silence follows when the Lord Jesus has given this explanation.

The Lord is troubled in spirit. Troubled? ... Why is that? ... Well, listen!

Suddenly the Saviour's voice is heard to exclaim: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me."

The disciples are greatly shocked when they hear these words. Disconcerted, they look at Jesus with anxious eyes. A ~~xxxxxx~~ ^{traitor} in their midst? ... Whoever

could that be? ... They do not trust their own selves, and the awful thought comes uppermost in each heart "What if it were I?" No, now there is no thought that they are too good for such a deed. Now they do not think that they are incapable of such an action. Through that washing of the feet they have learned an important lesson.

Hesitantly and timidly they ask, one after the other: "Lord, is it I?"

Judas also is startled. He eyes Jesus very carefully. Could the Lord know anything about it? Surely not, thinks Judas, that cannot be, for nobody saw it. But the others must not notice that he is in the least confused. Whatever would they think of him? He looks insolently at Jesus and asks, quite shamelessly: "Master, is it I?"

O, Judas, how can you dare to ask that? Judas dares all things. He will not now shrink back for anything.

Softly Jesus answers him: "Thou hast said." We would say "Yes!" Thus Jesus gives to Judas a glimpse of His all-knowing power, of His Divinity.

The other disciples probably did not catch the answer Jesus gave. In any case they did not understand it.

Jesus still spares the traitor. Still He refrains from putting Judas to open shame. There is still an opportunity for Judas to turn back.

Close by Jesus is sitting John. Peter indicates to John that he must find out from Jesus who the betrayer really is.

John falls on Jesus' ²bre¹st and asks urgently: "Lord, who is it?"

Jesus replies in a hushed voice: "He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it."

Jesus then takes a piece of unleavened bread, dips it in the bitter herb sauce, and gives it to ... Judas!

And what then ... Does Judas bow his head in shame? Does he burst out into sobbing? Does he plead trembling for pardon? ... No, indeed. Just read what John writes:

"And after the sop Satan entered into him."

Judas casts an angry look at his Master. Now he realises that Jesus knows all, but this does not humble him, on the contrary, he is more hardened. Hatred blazes in his eyes. Insolently he accepts the sop which Jesus offers him.

When the Lord says to him: "That thou doest, do quickly," he gets up from

table and trembling with wrath, he leaves.

The disciples who do not yet comprehend it, and who think that he has an errand to run, or that he must give money to the poor, watch him go. They see him open the door, hurry out and disappear into the dark evening.

"And it was night." Thus we read in the Word of God.

True it was dark outside; the sun had long sunk and it was indeed night. But it was also night in the soul of Judas Iscariot.

How patient the Lord had been with him. How many warnings he had been given. Only a few moments before, the Lord Jesus had said to him: "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed!" That had been a final warning. But it was of no avail. Judas went on. He would not be warned. He had become a ^{prey}~~prey~~ of Satan, and willingly too. How terrible, do you not agree?

But children, you too are being warned almost day by day. In God's house, at catechism or Sunday school, at school and at home. And what is the result? ... Do you laugh about it? ... Do you make fun of it? ... Does it make no impression upon you? ...

If that is the case, then how sad it is children. The door of mercy still stands open. There is still hope for you of finding the way of salvation. But it will not always be so. If you die unconverted, and have to appear thus before God at the last day, then for you also it will be night. Then for you will begin an everlasting night, and how awful is that to contemplate.

O that the Lord may bind upon your souls the solemnity of life, that you may now, whilst it is still the day of grace, plead with Him for mercy.

May the Lord sanctify this solemn story to your heart!
