

Gospel Reflections:
JOHN 13

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JOHN 13:1-20 – JESUS WASHES THE DISCIPLES’ FEET @ THE LAST PASSOVER

1 Now before The Feast of The Passover, when JESUS knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto The Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.

² And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him;

³ JESUS knowing that The Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from GOD, and went to GOD;

⁴ He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself.

⁵ After that He poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.

⁶ Then cometh He to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto Him, Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?

⁷ JESUS answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

⁸ Peter saith unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. JESUS answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me.

⁹ Simon Peter saith unto Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

¹⁰ JESUS saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

¹¹ For He knew who should betray Him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

¹² So after He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?

¹³ Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I AM.

¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

What picture does CHRIST paint here for us? Entering into The Covenant with GOD under The Lord washes away our Original Sin at baptism. His Blood washes away the stain of the sin of our fallen race from over the heads of our souls. But every saint whose soul is vouched safe in CHRIST in this life still remains imperfect and still falls into sin from day to day. Then we are called to humbly and earnestly confess our sins before GOD and man, repent of them and receive the forgiveness of our Blessed Saviour at The Cross.

What does Saint Paul declare? He says in EPHESIANS 5:25-27, where we see the intimate portrait of love that is to be between husband and wife – a reflection of The Perfect Love which The Messiah JESUS loves us His Church – “Husbands, love your wives, even as CHRIST also loved The Church, and gave Himself for it; That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” As GOD calls His Church to be holy as He is holy corporately, so He calls each of us His saints to be holy as He is holy.

The fallen and rebellious nature of unredeemed man stalks all of us. Even the people of GOD, unless their sins be washed away by The Grace of GOD, remain in offense and cut off from The Almighty. The psalmist writes of Israel's rebellion against Him, always falling back into hardheartedness and rebellion, as do we even in The Church. It is part of being human. So we read in PSALM 78:40-42, "How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, *and* grieve him in the desert! Yea, they turned back and tempted GOD, and limited The Holy One of Israel. They remembered not His hand, *nor* the day when He delivered them from the enemy."

But when the Israelites confessed and repented of their sins before The LORD, He extended His ever merciful hand and washed away their sin-guilt, embracing them always again and again in His loving arms. So He does with us who are under His Loving Presence within The New Covenant! So at The Last Passover, before The Lord gives us The Sacrament of The Holy Communion, He washes away the defiled dust of recurrent sin from the feet of His beloved disciples, making them clean again before His Presence. How fitting before He celebrates The Last Supper with His holy but imperfect Apostles, and declares, "This is My Body, This is My Blood, given up for you!"

We can hear The Same Lord and King of the universe speaking to us in ISAIAH 1:16-18, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith The LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool!"

We read These Words also from Saint Paul's mouth in ACTS 22:14-16, "...The GOD of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His will, and see That Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth. For thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on The Name of The Lord!" O Lord JESUS CHRIST, wash our feet, and not only our feet, but all of us, that we may be made clean before Thee!

JOHN 13:15-20 – HE THAT EATETH FROM MY HAND SHALL BETRAY ME

¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

¹⁶ Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

¹⁷ If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

¹⁸ I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that The Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me.

¹⁹ Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He.

²⁰ Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me receiveth him that sent Me.

If JESUS indeed came as The CHRIST, many have asked for instance, “How did He not know that His disciple Judas would betray Him?” The answer is of course that JESUS did indeed know this would come about through Judas. He chose Judas as one of The Twelve Apostles exactly for this reason, allowing Judas to retain his free will, but knowing that in His Plan of Divine Providence to redeem the lives and souls of men, that this disciple would betray Him.

PSALM 41:9-12 is read by many Christian Apologists as the voice of The Righteous One, The Messiah JESUS, speaking beforehand in prophesy of the one who would betray The CHRIST, “Yea, Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of My bread, hath lifted up His heel against Me. But thou, O LORD, be merciful unto Me, and raise Me up, that I may requite them. By this I know that Thou favourest Me, because Mine enemy doth not triumph over Me. And as for Me, Thou upholdest Me in Mine integrity, and settest Me before Thy face for ever.”

The resurrection, ascension and birth of The Church on earth and in Heaven vindicate and show forth JESUS to indeed be The CHRIST. The Tomb is empty! So when the faithful women came to CHRIST’s Sepulchre on The Day after The Sabbath Day, they found the stone rolled away and an angel of The LORD sitting there waiting for them, who declared as in MATTHEW 28:5-6, “...Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek JESUS, Which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where The Lord lay!”

JOHN 13:21-32 – LORD, WHO IS IT THAT SHALL BETRAY THEE?

²¹ When JESUS had thus said, He was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me.

²² Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom He spake.

²³ Now there was leaning on JESUS' bosom one of His disciples, whom JESUS loved.

²⁴ Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom He spake.

²⁵ He then lying on JESUS' breast saith unto Him, Lord, who is it?

²⁶ JESUS answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when He had dipped the sop, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.

²⁷ And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said JESUS unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.

²⁸ Now no man at the table knew for what intent He spake this unto him.

²⁹ For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that JESUS had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against The Feast; or, that he should give something to the poor.

³⁰ He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.

³¹ Therefore, when he was gone out, JESUS said, Now is The Son of man glorified, and GOD is glorified in Him.

³² If GOD be glorified in Him, GOD shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him.

Such a fearful question, “Lord, is it I that betray thee?” And in the dark corner of each man’s soul who is saved by CHRIST is the realization that, at one time or another, we fall into the sin of betraying The Master. For though the Christian man be saved and forgiven his sins, washed clean and made white as snow by The Blood of The Lamb of GOD, still he may be sure that he will sin again. And when he does, there is always the voice of the devil there to accuse him, “See what poor Christian you are! You betray and trample under foot The very Body and Blood of your Master The Lord! He shall surely never forgive you!”

But The Almighty declares to us through Saint John in I JOHN 1:8-9 The Words which close the mouth of the devil, that lying accuser of the saints of GOD, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and The Truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness!” For our Great Eternal High Priest – JESUS CHRIST - stands ever ready in The Everlasting Tabernacle to apply The Blood of The Atonement upon the doorposts and lintels of our souls, that we may not perish in our sins, but live! When we then fall into sin, let us repent at The Cross of our Redeemer, and give glory to GOD.

JOHN 13:33-35 – THE NEW COMMANDMENT – LOVE ONE ANOTHER

³³ Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek Me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.

³⁴ A New Commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

³⁵ By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Moses writes in The TORAH that we are commanded to love GOD and to love our neighbours. So he writes in DEUTERONOMY 6:5, immediately after The SHEMA in DEUTERONOMY 6:4:

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד:
וְאַהַבְתָּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל-מְאֹדְךָ:

I offer this transliteration, “SHEMA” YISRA’EL [‘ADONAY] ¹ ‘ELOHEYNU [‘ADONAY] ² ‘ECHAD. VE’AHAVTA ‘ET [ADONAY] ‘ELOHEYCHA BECHAL-LEVAVCHA UVECHAL-NAFESHCHA UVECHAL-ME’ODECHA. ³ And this wooden translation, “You hear, Israel, The LORD The GOD of us, The LORD, [is] one.

¹ It is the practice of faithful Jewish people to not pronounce The Name of The LORD - יהוה - “The Tetragrammaton,” out of reverence for Him, but rather in reading The Sacred Scriptures in The Hebrew to substitute - הַשֵּׁם - HASHEM, which means simply “The Name,” or - אֲדֹנָי - ‘ADONAY, which means “The Lord,” a title of JEHOVAH.

² Ibid.

³ In my transliteration of The Hebrew, I represent the letter א aleph = ‘ and the letter ע ayin = “

And you love The LORD The GOD of you with all the heart of you, and with all the soul of you, and with all the force of you.” The Almighty LORD is The only One GOD and Creator. From this follows The First Great Commandment, that men are to love Him with all their heart, mind and soul – with all their strength and being.

The love of GOD first above all else and Him alone as GOD is the foundation required for men to be able to love others. For without The First Great Commandment, we have no objective standard or unchanging bearing to love other men, who like us are made in GOD’s Image by His hand. So Moses records The Second Great Commandment in LEVITICUS 19:18:

לֹא־תִקֹּם וְלֹא־תִטּוֹר אֶת־בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ וְאֶת־בֵּית לְרֵעֶךָ כַּמּוֹד אֲנִי יְהוָה:

I offer this transliteration: LO’-TIQQOM VELO’-TITTOR ‘ET-BENEY “AMMECHA VE’AHAVCHA LERE”ECHA KAOKHA ‘ANIY [ADONAY].^{4 5} I offer this wooden translation, “Not you will at any time, now or ever, avenge yourself. And not you will at any time, now or ever, keep wrath [towards] sons of the people of you. And you love towards the friend of you like the equal of you. I [am] The LORD.”

The question that the Jews at The First Advent of The Messiah JESUS struggled with was, “Who is my neighbour?” Is he just those like me within my community? Only those who are within The Covenant of The LORD’s salvation with me? Or is it all men? This CHRIST works to correct throughout His earthly ministry, and His Church ever since, that we are all our brother’s keepers – no matter who they may be. If GOD loves us all so much that He gave up for us His only begotten Son on The Cross, and we are all made in His Image, how can we not seek to love Him back as He loves us? How can we not seek to love others as He loves us? So we see The Master giving us This New Commandment, “Love one another.” It was not really a New Commandment, but the second focus of The Law of Moses, which His covenantal people had forgotten.

What is the use of having a mere intellectual love of GOD if it bears no fruit of loving others? And how can we in truth really love others if we do not first love GOD? What does Saint James say? He says in JAMES 2:19-20, “Thou believest that there is one GOD; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” The High Priest, Pharisees, Saducees, scribes and lawyers of The Law who condemned The CHRIST to suffer and die on The Cross knew with the devils and believed that GOD is and is The One GOD. Heaven have mercy on their souls! But where was their love for others? It went only so far as the applause of men would extend it!

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But GOD Incarnate, about to suffer and die as The Perfect Atonement for the sins of the world – to redeem us back to Himself because of His fathomless Love for us – tells us, “You must love one another as I love you!” Total Love. Self-giving. Other-loving. Willing to even suffer and die, so that others may live, and that in righteousness before The Almighty. To be as The Likeness of GOD, as He has made us in His Image. To be molded and to grow to be as is our Saviour Himself, of Whom we read in PSALM 103:8, “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.” How much is This Divine Love that JESUS calls us to love one another with? The answer is The Cross of CHRIST.

JOHN 13:36-38 – LORD, I WILL NEVER DENY THEE!

³⁶ Simon Peter said unto Him, Lord, whither goest thou? JESUS answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterwards.

³⁷ Peter said unto Him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake.

³⁸ JESUS answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied Me thrice.

One of the most monumental denials of The blessed Saviour in my life came upon me suddenly one day years ago at work. I was at the time working as a hospital Paramedic at a large urban teaching hospital. We had 4 to 4 advanced Paramedic units and at least 6 or more basic ambulance units staffed by our hospital, backed up by about 12 more basic ambulance units in neighbouring cities. It was a pitifully inadequate force to provide for the EMS [Emergency Medical Service] needs of such a high population county. It was an ambulance system that was constantly forever teetering on the verge of being overwhelmed with calls, and in fact often was! I have often observed that such work is the closest any civilian could ever get to being a combat soldier in a non-war setting and still be a civilian, in common with cops, firemen and Emergency Room Nurses.

So we, the EMT's [Emergency Medical Technicians], Paramedics and Supervisors in this EMS system were forever ourselves always on the brink of becoming casualties of the daily battles we were called to fight. And indeed, we often were. On one rotation I had a female Paramedic partner who happened to be Jewish. I myself am from a mixed marriage – Jewish and Christian. But at the time, I had drifted far from The Church. I was not praying. I was not reading GOD's Word. I was not in fellowship with anyone of The Body of CHRIST on earth. I had not in fact entered a Church for several years. So at the time, I considered myself somehow Jewish and had shared that with this lady through the daily grueling horror of our ministry.

So to the day which I will ever regret. One day we were swapping shifts. I pulled out my calendar, which happened to be a “Messianic Jewish” or “Hebrew Christian” calendar from “American Board of Mission to The Jews.” My wife, also of mixed Jewish-Christian blood, and I had in fact been married in an ABMJ congregation – a synagogue-Church or Church-synagogue – where Jewish customs were kept and where

JESUS was acknowledged as The CHRIST, The Messiah. So she saw the ABMJ title, the notes of Jewish customs printed on the sides, the Jewish pictures, The Old and The New Testament Scriptures. “You’re not ‘one of those’ – [a.k.a. ‘Jews For JESUS’] – are you?” I replied, breaking my eye contact with her, “Oh no! I friend just gave this calendar to me.”

In fact, what I had said was superficially true. I was not in fact, nor had I ever been, involved with ‘Jews For JESUS.’ ABMJ was a very low-key, discrete, gentle Hebrew Christian denomination. Further, a friend had indeed given me this calendar – an unknown friend from ABMJ, as we were still on their mailing list, but were no longer attending any of their congregations. I stood immediately ashamed before this coworker – a colleague who so desperately needed the peace and love of JESUS in her tattered life – and recalled The very Words which our Lord had prophesied to Saint Peter here, “Before the cock crows, you shall deny Me as your Lord and Saviour!”

My prayer here has always been since that sad day, to thank The LORD for His forgiveness of this sin upon my head and to send other Christians into the life of this dear former coworker of many years ago, that her soul might be saved and her life might be renewed at The Cross of CHRIST. I will find out the course of these things when I stand before His Judgement Seat above. Saint Paul warns us in II TIMOTHY 2:11-12, “*It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us!*” And yet, The Lord is faithful to redeem the souls of His servants, even when His servants turn and for a time walk away. Lord have mercy. CHRIST have mercy. Lord have mercy!