

## The Submissive Sovereign

John 13: 1-5

I am well aware that all Scripture was given by inspiration of God, through the Holy Spirit for our benefit; but this is one of those passages that almost seems too holy for mere mortals to impose upon. Our Lord is in his last hours upon this earth. Very soon He will make His way to the Garden of Gethsemane, where He will be betrayed, arrested, and taken before the Sanhedrin. There He will be falsely accused, condemned to death, and taken before Pilate, the Roman governor. After intense examination, Pilate will condemn Jesus to death, He will be scourged and crucified upon a Roman cross. Less than twenty four hours from this moment, Jesus will have given His life for the sin of humanity.

Prior to the events that immediately preceded the cross, Jesus took time for one last meal and time of fellowship with His disciples. Through the inspired Word, we have details of this intimate moment forever preserved. We have the privilege to look in on this very intimate moment with Jesus and His disciples just hours prior to His sacrificial death on the cross. This passage reveals the sovereign of the universe humbling Himself to serve others. They will share a meal and a time of precious fellowship before the Lord is arrested and crucified.

In a few moments we will spend some time around the Lord's Table as we celebrate and remember the atoning sacrifice He made for our sin. Before we do I want to consider this intimate moment Jesus shared with His disciples. I pray it will challenge our hearts and give us a fresh perspective of the gracious Savior we serve. As we examine these verses, I want to consider the [commitments](#) of Jesus as we think on: [The Submissive Sovereign](#).

**I. The Sovereignty of Jesus (1-3)** – Clearly there would have been a tremendous heaviness in the room that evening. The disciples could have sensed the burden Jesus carried, and yet they had no way of knowing how this evening would unfold. Even though Jesus was under an intense burden, He was well aware of what lay ahead for Him. Consider:

**A. Jesus knew the Plan (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.](#) Jesus knew that his hour had come; He was well aware that the time for His crucifixion was approaching quickly. There had been seasons of opposition before; but during those times, His hour had not yet come. He is sitting with the disciples in the privacy of the Upper Room, looking toward the cross. He was well aware of the suffering He would endure and the great sacrifice He would make. He also was aware of the emotion felt by the disciples at

this moment. They would soon be scattered, left alone with their thoughts, being afraid, confused, and uncertain of their future.

- As His moment of death and suffering approached, Jesus is found in the Upper Room with the disciples, offering comfort and assurance to them. He wasn't about to forsake them in their hour of need. Jesus knew His time was fast approaching, and yet He understood the need of the disciples.
- There is comfort for each of us in these verses as well. The Lord is aware of our situation, and the difficulties we face. He has promised to never leave or forsake us. He is that friend that remains closer than a brother! In our seasons of adversity, He provides comfort!

**B. Jesus knew the Plot** (2) – *And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him.* Among the disciples was one who looked like the rest. He had been with them for years. He ate with them, shared in their jubilation and hardship, witnessed the miracles, heard Jesus proclaim the Word, and even served as treasurer for the group.

- By all appearances, one would think that Judas held a position of great prominence among the disciples. Most would have considered him to be the most loyal and honest of them all. He may have kept the money, but inwardly he was filled with greed, contempt, and wickedness. Judas had walked with the Christ, Savior of the world, and yet he had never accepted Jesus as the Christ. The others may not have known the heart of Judas, but Jesus was well aware of his desires, knowing Judas would betray Him.
- The Lord sees and knows more than is revealed by the outward appearance; He sees and knows the heart. *John 10:14 – I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.* He knows those who are His. He is aware of the condition of our hearts! Judas may have deceived men, but he had not deceived Christ.

**C. Jesus knew the Purpose** (3) – *Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God.* There has never been a greater injustice than the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. He was God robed in flesh – the holy, sinless, Son of God; and yet He was condemned to death on a Roman cross. A vile, convicted murderer was released as Jesus took his place.

- While I agree this was the greatest injustice ever committed, I know it wasn't in vain. In fact, the crucifixion of Jesus was carried out according to the sovereign plan of God. Jesus came to earth with purpose – He came to die for our sin! He was born to die for the transgression of

humanity. While Jesus knew He had done nothing worthy of death, He knew this was what the Father had planned. By submitting to death on the cross, He would fulfill the plan to redeem humanity from sin. He knew He came to die, and He was prepared to embrace death for us!

**II. The Submission of Jesus** (4-5) – John records one of the most beautiful expressions of love ever demonstrated. Jesus submitted as a servant and washed the disciples' feet. Consider:

**A. The Humility Conveyed** (4) – *He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.* Bear in mind this is the Sovereign of the ages, God robed in human flesh. Foot washing was reserved for slaves. Even Jewish servants were not expected to perform such a demeaning task. It was a work left for Gentile slaves to perform. The Son of God, Savior and Sovereign of the world, rose and assumed the position of a slave.

- In doing so, our Lord taught a profound lesson in humility. Can you imagine the thoughts that must have ran through the disciples' minds? They witnessed the Lord Himself, the Master and Redeemer, the King of glory, bow to wash their feet! What a lesson in humility!

**B. The Consistency Displayed** (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.* Jesus washed the disciples' feet – all of them! Honestly, it might not have been too difficult to wash John's feet; he was very close to Jesus. What about Peter? Jesus knew Peter would deny Him three times before the night was over. What about Thomas? Jesus knew Thomas would have doubts about Jesus following His death and resurrection. What about Judas? Jesus knew Judas was about to betray Him for thirty pieces of silver. Jesus knew all of this, and He washed all their feet, each and every one. He humbled Himself, doing the work of a slave, and left not a one out.

- While they had yet to understand, Jesus knew He had come as the atoning sacrifice for all. He would shed His blood for the sin of humanity. He doesn't see people as we do. He doesn't see a worthless drug addict, an abusive spouse, or a convicted felon; Jesus sees souls for whom He died to save! He came for all men, whosoever! Like Jesus, we must be consistent in our compassion and service for all, without prejudice or partiality.

**C. The Deity Portrayed** (4-5) – This was difficult for the disciples to understand. With the exception of Judas, they believed He was the Son of God, their Lord and Master. They had yet to realize that He alone was worthy to wash their feet. This wasn't an act that pertained to physical cleanliness; this pertained to a spiritual need that only Jesus could provide.

- The twelve didn't have the authority or ability to cleanse themselves, much less anyone else. This work was reserved for the Lord. You and I don't have the ability to cleanse others or force them to change. Jesus Christ alone has that power and ability. Salvation is not obtained through works of the flesh or based on our merit or abilities. It is obtained through obedience to Christ in salvation. We must come with a repentant heart, recognizing our need, and believing by faith unto salvation. As followers of Christ, we can point them to Jesus, but He alone can cleanse and save! [John 12:32](#) – *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*

**Conclusion:** In a moment we will partake of the Lord's Supper, remembering the events that took place on this night and the sacrifice Jesus made to secure our salvation. This ordinance is reserved for baptized believers who are walking in fellowship with Christ. It is not to be partaken of lightly, or with a heart that is not right with the Lord. Have you been cleansed by the shed blood of Christ for the remission of sin? Have you responded to His offer of salvation? If not, I urge you to come to Him today in repentance and faith.

Christian, where do you stand today? Is there unconfessed sin in your heart? Are you following the example Christ left for us to be of service to others? If the Spirit has convicted you of sin in your life, I urge you to come and confess that before you partake today. Whatever the need, bring it to the Lord.