

In John's gospel, the story of the raising of Lazarus is the last of a series of signs that Jesus has given. In this gospel we have come to know Jesus as the source of living water, the light of the world, and the good shepherd. Now we will know him as the resurrection and the life.

John 11:1 – Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ²(This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) ³So the sisters sent word to Jesus, “Lord, the one you love is sick.”

We have not had anything about Mary and Martha as of yet, not have we had the story of Mary anointing Jesus (next chapter). However, John assumes that the readers are familiar with them, as they would have been. Remember, the other gospels were in circulation by the time this was written.

V. 4 – When he heard this, Jesus said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it.”

This sickness will not end in death. Those are some of the most powerful words ever spoken by Jesus.

The Bible tells us:

Romans 3:23 – all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

Romans 6:23 – the wages of sin is death

But Jesus tells us that our sin sickness will not end in death. Will we die? Yes, physically, but death is not the end.

John 11:5 – Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, ⁷ and then he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.”

If he loved them, why did he stay where he was?
He loved them, and he wanted them to experience the power of God.

God loves us, too. God knows that we, like Mary & Martha, will mourn when our loved ones die. Yet, God wants us, like Mary & Martha, to know about the power of God.

V. 8 – “But Rabbi,” they said, “a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?”

At the end of chapter 10, Jesus had left Jerusalem and gone to the area where John had been baptizing. It may be safe to assume that this is where he was during the time of this story.

Bethany was just a couple of miles from Jerusalem.

V. 9 – Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world’s light. ¹⁰ It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light.”

A proverbial saying similar to what Jesus said in **John 9:4** – “As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me.”

Basically, in verse 9 Jesus is telling the disciples that they must do the works that God has prepared, regardless of the possible worldly consequences.

V. 11 – After he had said this, he went on to tell them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.”

¹² His disciples replied, “Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.”¹³ Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

¹⁴ So then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead, ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”

¹⁶ Then Thomas (also known as Didymus^[a]) said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

Thomas is more prominent in this gospel. He gets a bad rap as the doubter, but here we see that he is bold – ready to die with Jesus.

By the way – Thomas is a transliteration of the Aramaic word for twin.

John 11:17 – On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.

The mention of four days would have been significant to the original hearers of this story. It was the belief in those days that the soul would hover near the body for three days until decomposition set in. After that time, the soul departed never to return.

Jesus is not going to raise someone who died a few hours prior (and have the possibility of people saying the person didn’t truly die). There was absolutely no question as to Lazarus’ death.

V. 18 – Now Bethany was less than two miles^[b] from Jerusalem, ¹⁹ and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

²¹ “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

²⁴ Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

Martha's answer must have had a bit of disappointment in it. Her response was the basic theology of the Pharisees, that there would be one final day when all who had died in God would rise again.

Jesus doesn't refute her theology, but expands her theology when he responds with the most important of the I am sayings.

V. 25 – Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die;²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

²⁷ “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

Martha said that she believed in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus states that he is the resurrection.

Christians – most Christians – believe that a new eschatological era began with Jesus. Eschatological means our final destiny.

This new era is marked by the presence of Jesus upon our death, not some final day of the resurrection.

Martha uses three messianic titles for Jesus: Messiah, Son of God, and the one who is to come into the world.

Jesus has come into the world, and the new age / era has begun.

John 11:28 – After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside.

“The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.”²⁹ When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him.³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him.³¹ When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

³² When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ³⁴ “Where have you laid him?” he asked.

I want to give you an alternative to what everyone has accepted for years.
Verse 33 – he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.

Deeply moved – **em-brim-ah'-om-ahee** –

Almost always defined to mean to be moved with anger or express indignant displeasure with some one

Often used in Greek to denote someone snorting with displeasure.

Troubled – **tar-as'-so** – Agitated.

Why are these words word used here? If we were to translate them as they needed to be, not as we have accepted them by tradition, it reads: When Jesus saw them weeping, he was moved with anger and became agitated.

Why?

John 11:4 – “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.”

John 11:11 – “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.”

¹² His disciples replied, “Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.”

John 11:14 – he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead, ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”

John 11:21 – “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

²⁴ Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.

Jesus had told them that he and God were one. He told them he was the Messiah. Here was God in the flesh and the people could not see. Here was God in the flesh and the people still mourned.

Some scholars say that Jesus was upset, but he was upset at Satan, upset at death. I believe that Jesus was upset that so far no one has really understood that Jesus was God in the flesh. I believe that Jesus was upset that no one truly knew him as the resurrection and the life.

John 11:34 – “Where have you laid him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

³⁵ Jesus wept.

³⁶ Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”

³⁷ But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

The word we translate as wept. It means to shed quiet tears. Perhaps Jesus was moved by the grief of those around him. Even when I conduct funerals for someone I did not know, it’s easy to be moved by the display of grief of others.

Was he weeping for them – was he weeping for their unbelief in him?

Either way, while being God in the flesh, Jesus was fully human. This aspect of Jesus – fully divine and fully human, is one of John’s emphases.

Remember, there was a gnostic heresy called Docetism. It claimed that Jesus was not human at all. Well, no matter how you translate the words we’ve looked at, Jesus certainly expressed human emotions.

To get the full effect of verse 38, let’s back up to verse 37 –

³⁷ But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

John 11:38 – Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance.

The way this is written, I truly believe that Jesus is upset with the lack of faith – and the lack of understanding – of what Jesus is all about.

V. 39 – “Take away the stone,” he said.

“But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.”

Again – four days is emphasized.

V. 40 – Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”

⁴³ When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

I like the language – unbind him. However, the Greek is let him loose and I like that, too.

Because Jesus is the Resurrection and the life, death has no hold on us. We have been let loose from death.

1 Corinthians 15:54 – “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”(Isaiah 25:8)

⁵⁵ “Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?” (Hosea 13:14)

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

John 11:45 – Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. ⁴⁶ But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷ Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin.

“What are we accomplishing?” they asked. “Here is this man performing many signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation.”

What did they mean – take away our temple and nation?

The religious leaders feared a messianic movement. Remember, their understanding of a Messiah was that of a political messiah. If Jesus was that kind of Messiah, then Rome would certainly come in and put down any such revolt.

The religious leaders held much control of the temple revenues.

They feared what a Jesus movement would do to their pocketbooks. Glad Christians aren't like that today!

The high priests now speaks. In his words, John shows his masterful way of telling a story. Remember, Jesus is often saying things that are taken not spiritually, but meant to be spiritual.

Here, Caiaphas speaks and if we took his words spiritually then they would have been prophetic.

John 11:49 - Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, “You know nothing at all! ⁵⁰ You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.”

⁵¹ He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation,⁵² and not only for that nation but also for the scattered

children of God, to bring them together and make them one.⁵³ So from that day on they plotted to take his life.

Caiaphas believed that the death of Jesus would be good for the Jews. How right he was! It would be good for everyone.

John 11:54 – Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the people of Judea. Instead he withdrew to a region near the wilderness, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples.

⁵⁵ When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. ⁵⁶ They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple courts they asked one another, “What do you think? Isn’t he coming to the festival at all?” ⁵⁷ But the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who found out where Jesus was should report it so that they might arrest him.

So, does Jesus show up at the festival?

Chapter 12

The anointing of Jesus is found in the other gospels, but there are notable differences. In Mark’s gospel they are at the home of Simon the Leper. However, John doesn’t actually say at who’s house this dinner was held. Just that it was in Bethany, and that Martha served.

Also, in Mark’s gospel the woman doing the anointing is not named, in John it is Mary. In Mark the woman anoints Jesus’ head, in John Mary anoints his feet.

There are some differences between this account, and Luke, as well. Whether we have a blending of a couple of stories, or not, we cannot say. Let’s read it.

12:1 – Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

Timeframe – we are on Saturday evening, following the end of the Sabbath. What we know as Palm Sunday would be the next day.

V. 2 – Here a dinner was given in Jesus’ honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. ³ Then Mary took about a pint^[a] of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

⁴ But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ⁵ “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.^[b]” ⁶ He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

⁷ “Leave her alone,” Jesus replied. “It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. ⁸ You will always have the poor among you,^[c] but you will not always have me.”

Most likely, Mary was showing her appreciation for the raising of her brother from the dead. Jesus, however, alludes to his upcoming death.

Jesus quote about the poor always being among them comes from Deut 15:11.

V. 9 – Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, ¹¹ for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.

Keep in mind that there would be a week long – or longer – festival in Jerusalem before the Passover. There would have been many Jewish pilgrims present. So, in relation to the tiny town of Bethany, a large crowd of these pilgrims makes its way there to see both Jesus and Lazarus.

Next we have the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. It follows the basic pattern that we had in the other three gospels, although some minor differences.

John 12:12 – The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem.¹³ They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting,
“Hosanna!^[d]”

This was a political cry – it meant save us, or save us now. It wasn't their sins they wanted to be saved from, but from the Roman government. As we saw in the other gospels, the religious leaders use this against Jesus, saying that he was calling himself the king of the Jews.

V. 13b – “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”^[e]
“Blessed is the king of Israel!”

The people were quoting from a messianic psalm.

Psalms 118:25 – LORD, save us! (Hosanna)

LORD, grant us success!

²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.

John 12:14 – Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written:

¹⁵ “Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion;
see, your king is coming,
seated on a donkey's colt.” (Zechariah 9:9)

¹⁶ At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.

¹⁷ Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. ¹⁸ Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. ¹⁹ So the Pharisees said to one another, “See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!”

Again, John uses Pharisees because they, at the time of the writing of the gospel, were the rulers of Judaism. Use of Sadducees would not have meant much to them. However, as we read in the other gospels, it was the great council, or Sanhedrin, that was calling the shots, and they were a majority of Sadducees.

John is a masterful storyteller, as we have already seen. So, remember the last verse – “Look how the whole world has gone after him!”

Now consider the next.

V. 20 – Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival.

The Greeks would have been what was called God Fearers. They were gentile followers of Judaism, and there were a number of them in those days. They would not have been allowed into the temple, but would most likely be allowed into the synagogues in their villages. They worshipped as Jews, but maintained much of their Greek culture.

V. 21 – They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.”²² Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

Philip and Andrew were the two apostles with Greek names, so it would have made sense that they went to them, or Philip. Philip was from Bethsaida, which a gentile frontier town.

V. 23 – Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

We read this and think, did Jesus ignore them? No, what is implied here is that Jesus did meet with them, and the Greeks seeking Jesus was the sign he was waiting for as confirmation that his hour had come.

V. 23 – Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ²⁵ Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

People of that time believed that seeds died, then were reborn into a plant. They didn't know about dormant states of seeds and such. But, the analogy is clear. While he is talking about his own death and resurrection, he is also speaking of us.

Paul speaks of this dying to be alive with Christ.

Romans 6:5 – For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with,^[a] that we should no longer be slaves to sin— ⁷ because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

Unlike the other gospels, in John's gospel we don't have the transfiguration, and we don't have the agony in the garden of Gethsemane. However, in the following verses, we have John's equivalent of both.

John 12:27 – “Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.”

So, certainly we see the elements of the Gethsemane story and the mount of transfiguration.

V. 29 – The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

³⁰ Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine.³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up^[g] from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

The Prince of this world – the devil.

Ephesians 2:1 – As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

V. 34 – The crowd spoke up, “We have heard from the Law that the Messiah will remain forever, so how can you say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this ‘Son of Man’?”

³⁵ Then Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going. ³⁶ Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light. “When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.

John 12:36 has: Jesus left and hid himself from them.

This marks the end of Jesus’ public ministry. We have nine more chapters, and no more public ministry. A good portion of these nine chapters will be the teachings of Jesus to the disciples at the Last Supper.

John 12:37 – Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. ³⁸ This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet:

“Lord, who has believed our message

and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” (Isaiah 53:1)

³⁹ For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere:

⁴⁰ “He has blinded their eyes
and hardened their hearts,
so they can neither see with their eyes,
nor understand with their hearts,
nor turn—and I would heal them.” (Isaiah 6:10)

According to John, the rejection of Jesus by some of the religious leaders had been foretold by the prophet Isaiah.

V. 41 – Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him.

⁴² Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved human praise more than praise from God.

Two things about this last passage. First, some of the religious leaders believed in Jesus, but because of the Pharisees – Remember, John uses Pharisees as his general term for the religious leaders. He did this because his audience would have only known of Pharisees, as there were not any Sadducees by this time.

In reality, it was probably from among the Pharisees that those who believed came from.

Second – there is a big difference between believing and following.

Even today, many believers do not follow because they fear what others might say or do. They love human praise more ...

John 12:44 – Then Jesus cried out, “Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. ⁴⁵ The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me. ⁴⁶ I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

In verse 36, Jesus withdrew from the people and hid himself, so we assume these words were being spoken to the apostles only. Perhaps, the larger group of disciples we spoke of in the other gospels, but not to the crowds in public.

V. 47 – “If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. ⁴⁸ There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day. ⁴⁹ For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. ⁵⁰ I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 begins the events in the upper room. This section continues through chapter 17. As long as this section is – it does not contain the breaking of bread and the giving of the cup.

On first glance, this seems rather strange. All of the other three gospels record it. Even before the other three gospels were written, the Apostle Paul wrote about it in 1 Corinthians. So, why does John leave it out?

The Eucharist was already common knowledge by the time John wrote his account. John was adding material that had not been previously given.

John 13:1 – It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

The other gospels, Jesus shares a Passover meal with his disciples. In John, it was before the Passover. In fact, in John, the Passover begins a few hours after the death of Jesus.

To this day, scholars debate as to why we have this discrepancy. A quick google search on this subject will provide you with all the reading material you would need for quite some time.

Some have suggested that calendar changes by the time that John wrote this account for it. However, if John was present at the Last Supper, one would assume he knew what day it was on.

What does “Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end”, mean?

Most probably that these who were closest to Jesus, he would lead and teach them until the very end – which is what the next several chapters are all about.

V. 2 – The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

The evening meal – nothing about a Passover.
We only have the washing of the feet here in John’s gospel.

While we have communion on the Thursday of Holy Week, many churches have foot washing. Most call the Thursday of Holy Week Maundy Thursday. Maundy comes from the Latin word for command – as in a new command I give you, to love one another.

John 13:6 – He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”

⁷ Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.”

When dialogue is translated from any language, often there is something lost. There are some emphatic pronouns used in this dialogue that we miss.

V. 6 – He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are *you* going to wash *my* feet?”

Later you will understand – this is an emphasized teaching of the next several chapters – the coming gift of Holy Spirit which will explain all things to them.

V. 8 – “No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.”
Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.”

Jesus washes their feet to teach humility, love, and servant hood. However, here he responds with a spiritual lesson. If we are not washed clean by Jesus then we have no part with Jesus.

V. 9 – “Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!”

¹⁰ Jesus answered, “Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.” ¹¹ For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not everyone was clean.

“Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. – Jesus is referring to an ancient custom where the lowest of slaves would wash the feet of those who entered into their masters house.

If someone had travelled a great distance, and bath was prepared for them. But for those who were clean, their feet were washed.

The interpretation has been that if we are cleansed by Jesus, then we are covered, but we still seek cleansing from those small every day sins of earthly life.

1 John 1:7 – But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all^[b] sin.

Jesus lowered himself and washed their feet, not he speaks about the way we should live our lives – lowering ourselves to serve others.

John 13:12 – When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. ¹³ “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

You will be blessed if you do this -
Want to be blessed? We turn this term around. We have a nice car – I’m blessed. We have this or that – I’m so blessed. Jesus tells us that blessings come from serving others.

V. 18 – “I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill this passage of Scripture: ‘He who shared my bread has turned^[a] against me.’ (Psalm 41:9) ¹⁹ “I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am. ²⁰ Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me.”

Even the betrayal of Jesus was prophesied.
Psalm 41:9 – Even my close friend,
someone I trusted,
one who shared my bread,
has turned^[b] against me.

John 13:21 – After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.”

Troubled in spirit – the very same words used when Jesus was confronted with the crowds before he raised Lazarus from the dead.

V. 22 – His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. ²³ One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. ²⁴ Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, “Ask him which one he means.”

The Last Supper did not look like Da Vinci’s painting. In that place and time they did not eat at tables, but close to the floor, while they reclined on cushions.

The disciple whom Jesus loved – John’s way of inserting himself into the story, much like Mark inserted himself into the gospel in the Garden.

V. 25 – Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?”

²⁶ Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷ As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. So Jesus told him, “What you are about to do, do quickly.” ²⁸ But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. ²⁹ Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor. ³⁰ As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.

Reading this carefully it would appear that John wasn’t able to pass along the word that it was Judas. Jesus’ answer to John was spoken only to him, probably at a whisper.

And it was night. John’s masterful storytelling sets the mood. It’s a dark time, the dark night of the soul is beginning for Jesus.

Now begins a lengthy section called the farewell discourse. There are many scholars who believe that this section consists of teachings of Jesus to his disciples from different times, and placed here to be read by his readers before the crucifixion of Jesus.

Perhaps, it doesn’t really matter when Jesus said it, he said it!

John 13:31 – When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. ³² If God is glorified in him,^[c] God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

³³ “My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

The cross was the way for Jesus to be exalted with the Father.
Guess what? The cross is the way for us to be glorified with Jesus/The Father.

Galatians 2:20 – I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.

Romans 6:5 – For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with,^[a] that we should no longer be slaves to sin— ⁷ because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

John 13:34 – “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

We could speak of these two verses for an entire class. It’s quite a command. We are commanded to love people. Agape is the word, most church going Christians are familiar. It is a love that doesn’t depend upon a fondness for someone.

One Greek translation is agape denote a preference to love. Jesus commands us to prefer to love – to choose to love.

This is how the world will know that we are Christians – if we choose to love – to act out of love – to speak out of love / or be quiet out of love.

It fairly well covers all of the Christian behaviors outlined in the New Testament.

John 13:36 – Simon Peter asked him, “Lord, where are you going?”

Jesus replied, “Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but *you will follow later.*”

³⁷ Peter asked, “Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.”

³⁸ Then Jesus answered, “Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!

You will follow later. Was Jesus talking about his death, or the manner of his death? Tradition tells us that he, like the other Apostles, was martyred.

We will all follow Jesus into death. Those that trust in him will follow Jesus beyond death.

Jesus loved Peter, and knew that he would deny him.

Jesus loves us, and he knows when we will deny him by words/actions. We should pray for strength that we won’t!

Chapter 14

In 13:33 Jesus told them: “My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.”

So verse 1 picks up from there.

John 14:1 – “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God^[a]; believe also in me. ² My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Several things about these verses – many rooms/mansions. The Greek word is abodes, dwelling places. To be honest, mansions is not found in the Greek word, but has been traditionally used.

The point is that there is room for everyone with God.

In verse 3 Jesus says that he will come back and take them/us back with him. Some believe that this points to one final return of Jesus for all of humanity. Not saying that won't happen, but in the meantime we believe that upon our death we are met by Jesus.

John 14:4 – You know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”
⁶ Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

The way to get to Jesus – through the death our mortal bodies.
Jesus doesn't just point to the way – Jesus is the way.

The earliest known name of followers of Jesus was – The Way.

Acts 9:1 – Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way.

Jesus is The Way, and the way leads to life.

John 14:7 – If you really know me, you will know ^[b] my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

⁸ Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

⁹ Jesus answered: “Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’ ¹⁰ Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. ¹¹ Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves.

While it is a mystery for us to understand fully, Jesus and God the Father are one. Likewise, Father, Son & Holy Spirit are one. Jesus had explained to the religious leaders that the works he performed were the works of the Father.

V. 12 – Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

How can we do greater things than what Jesus did?
Together – as the Church, the Church universal as well as local.

Whatever you ask – if we are abiding in Jesus, what we ask for will be in God’s will.

Next we read the first of the Holy Spirit sayings. Three of these use the Greek word – Paraclete – which means counselor, advocate. Sometimes translated as comforter, but the use of the word comfort would be more along the lines – this person helped me and it brought me comfort.

So comfort as the result of help or counsel.

John 14:15 – “If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be ^[c] in you.

This advocate is God presence, just as Jesus was God’s presence in human form. In 1 John, John calls Jesus our advocate.

1 John 2:1 – My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

So, advocate, another name for God. The Spirit of Truth, yet another name.

Don't lose sight that the presence of the Holy Spirit is contingent upon something – keeping the commands of Jesus to love one another and to love God.

John 14:18 – I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

The world will not, but you will. The world doesn't live by nor seek to keep Jesus' commands. Those who do will receive the advocate/spirit. The spirit will give life.

Receiving the Holy Spirit – while it can be given during an emotional time, is not dependent upon emotions, but instead dependent upon obedience to Jesus' commands.

V. 21 – Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

²² Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?”

²³ Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴ Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

Again, the Holy Spirit is given to those who seek it and live by Jesus' commands.

The Holy Spirit sayings continue.

John 14:25 – “All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

The work of the Holy Spirit is to continue the work of Jesus. Part of that work is to teach, to bring about understanding to those who seek Jesus and live by his commands.

John 14:27 – Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

The legacy of a Christian life is peace, for that is what Jesus gives. If a Christian – a Christian home – a Christian household – is not defined by peace, then one has to wonder is it/they truly Christian?

Not to say that there are never events that bring chaos into our lives. Absolutely. Jesus brings to us a peace beyond what the world can offer.

²⁸ “You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. ³⁰ I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me, ³¹ but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me.

“Come now; let us leave.

The death of Jesus was not a defeat because death could not keep him.

Chapter 15

The farewell discourse continues in chapter 15 with the allegory of the vine. In the Old Testament, Israel had often been called the vine.

Jeremiah 2:21 – I had planted you like a choice vine
of sound and reliable stock.
How then did you turn against me
into a corrupt, wild vine?

Israel had become the corrupt vine, so listen to what Jesus says.

John 15:1 – “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes^[a] so that it will be even more fruitful. ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

Cuts off every branch that doesn't bear fruit? Certainly he was speaking about the nation of Israel. I don't think God is done cutting off branches.

V. 4 – Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

Remain – Greek is meno – not moved. Rock solid.

V. 5 – “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

In the Greek, double negatives were used for emphasis. This literally says – apart from me you can't do nothing.

V. 6 – If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷If you remain in me and my **words** remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

If we remain in the teachings of Jesus, what we ask for will be godly things, righteous things.

V. 8 – This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

A Christian or a Church that produces fruit is for God’s glory. It points others to God.

V. 9 – “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

We sing – What a friend we have in Jesus.
Does Jesus have a friend in us? If we do what Jesus commands, then we are Jesus’ friends.

John 15:18 – “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.

I’m sure the weight of those words was fairly well lost on the apostles at that time. Following Pentecost, however, they would know all about the hostility of the world against the things of God. ¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own.

As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

The world is always partial towards those who share its standard, but hates those who speak against its accepted practices.

V. 20 – Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’^[b] If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.

Some will follow, some will reject Jesus and The Way – Christianity. We can’t let rejection – or even persecution – deter us from sharing the love of Christ with others.

V. 21 – They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me. ²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: ‘They hated me without reason.’ (Psalm 35:19 & Psalm 69:4).

In this passage, Jesus is talking about those in Israel who had rejected him, even though they say the works of his Father that he performed.

So, there will be rejection. This tells us that if we have never had someone reject Jesus through our actions, then we need to start sharing Jesus.

While not singling out any particular social issue – and there are many – the Church in America has been trying to be loved by the world, yet Jesus tells us plainly that the world will not love the Church.

The Holy Spirit sayings continue.

John 15:26 – “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. ²⁷ And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.”

The presence and the power of the holy Spirit is what enables and empowers us to testify – to speak about Jesus. In our sermon series we considered being an Ambassador for Christ, and to take up for Jesus the ministry of reconciliation. To do this, we need the Holy Spirit.

John 16:1 – “All this I have told you so that you will not fall away.² They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God. ³ They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. ⁴ I have told you this, so that when their time comes you will remember that I warned you about them. I did not tell you this from the beginning because I was with you,

When we read the Book of Acts, we see that what Jesus is saying here did, indeed, come to pass.

Acts chapter 7 tells the story of the stoning of Stephen – and what Pharisee was present? Saul / Paul.

V. 5 – but now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’

This seems strange when we consider 13:36 & 14:5. This is one of the reasons many scholars believe that these verses of the Last Supper were a composite of various teachings.

V. 6 – Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. ⁷ But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ about sin, because people do not believe in me; ¹⁰ about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you

can see me no longer;¹¹ and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

God in bodily form could only be with a few people at a time – so Jesus says it is better for you that I go. God in Spirit can minister to and with all people.

John 16:12 – “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. ¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. ¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.”

Jesus has much more to say – more than they could bear – but the Spirit will take over.

The Holy Spirit helps us grow and mature as a Christian.

The Holy Spirit doesn't speak independently of God, but is God and speaks God's words.

John 16:16 – Jesus went on to say, “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.”

¹⁷ At this, some of his disciples said to one another, “What does he mean by saying, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,’ and ‘Because I am going to the Father?’” ¹⁸ They kept asking, “What does he mean by ‘a little while’? We don't understand what he is saying.”

¹⁹ Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, “Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me’? ²⁰ Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. ²¹ A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. ²² So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

Jesus was referring to the Resurrection. There are some who believe Jesus was speaking of some further off event, and they use this passage to point to the second coming of Christ.

I am not saying that Jesus will not return, what I am saying is that these verses refer to the Resurrection.

V. 23 – In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.²⁴ Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

This is a very confusing passage, and even more so in the Greek. Remember, the context is Jesus talking about the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Also, there is the contrast between asking and a request, which the English translation does not show.

So – When the Holy Spirit comes, we won't need to ask Jesus (in the bodily form of God), but instead we will ask the Holy Spirit.

In fact, we won't ask the Holy Spirit, we will make a request to the Holy Spirit.

Are we that bold? Do we request from the Holy Spirit? Do we request the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control?

John 16:25 – “Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father. ²⁶In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. ²⁷No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. ²⁸I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.”

How do you explain the Trinity to humans? This is what Jesus is trying to do. Verse 26 says in that day – when Jesus leaves them. We live in that day.

We have access to God – to Jesus – through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus came from the father, and would be returning to the father. Then the Holy Spirit will come.

V. 29 – Then Jesus’ disciples said, “Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. ³⁰ Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God.”

Well, bless their hearts, the disciples think they’ve got it! They think that the time Jesus was talking about was right then, but no, not yet, as Jesus will say in the following verses.

V. 31 – “Do you now believe?” Jesus replied.

Another way to interpret this verse is – You believe at this moment. I like that interpretation. Let’s read it ...

You believe at this time – ³² “A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me.

³³ “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Chapter 17

The prayer that Jesus prays in chapter 17 has often been called the High Priestly Prayer. We are so far removed from Jewish customs that the reason why it is called a high priestly prayer is lost on us.

The Jewish High Priest would have a prayer of consecration over lamb to be sacrificed on the Passover. Here, Jesus consecrates himself as the sacrifice.

He then consecrates his followers, that they would offered in the service to win the world to God.

V. 1 – After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed:

“Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. ²For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. ³Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. ⁴I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. ⁵And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

Verse 3 – Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. – Eternal life begins now. It begins when we know God and know Jesus.

The Greek word for ‘know’ is *genosko* – and it is more than a belief, it conveys an understanding.

V. 6 – “I have revealed you/your name to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. ⁷Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. ⁸For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.

The work of Jesus was not just to deliver us from our sins, but to reveal the true nature of God. “I have revealed you ...”

V. 9 – I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.

I find something very distinctive in that Jesus did not pray for the world, but instead prayed for those that knew/believed/understood Jesus. Too often I hear people say something like – pray for the lost. The lost are people of the world.

Pray for believers, that they would represent Jesus and reconcile the people of the world to God.

The church – the Body of Christ – is God’s plan for the world.

John 17:10 – All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.

Glory should be given to God/Jesus through our lives.
How? When we forgive, we glorify God’s name.
When we love –
When we serve –
When our lives bear witness –

V. 11 – I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of^[b] your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. ¹² While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by^[c] that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

The power of your name. There is power in God’s name. It’s not a name we should throw around lightly, or vainly.

V. 13 – “I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. ¹⁴ I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. ¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ¹⁷ Sanctify them

by^[d] the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

What a prayer! Can Jesus say those words about us?
Does the world hate us for God's word?
Are we not of the world as Jesus was not of the world?

Jesus prays not to take them out of the world but to protect them from the world. Some Christians seek to withdraw from the world for protection. God doesn't want us to withdraw from the world. We need to live in the world but not be a part of the worldly ways.

We go out into the world to be different from the world – set apart for God to use. Set apart – Holy.

In the following verses we understand that Jesus was praying for all who would follow him.

John 17:20 – “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— ²³ I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

We need this prayer – all Christians should pray this prayer: That we would all be one as Jesus and the Father are one.

Christianity in America is marked by denominational fighting, and as a result – the church in America is struggling.

The closing verses of Jesus' prayer.

V. 24 – “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

²⁵ “Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. ²⁶ I have made you^[e] known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”

Chapter 18

As we just saw, John’s account of the Last Supper has some material not found in the other gospels, and omits some of the material found in other gospels. The events following the Last Supper follow along more closely with the other gospels.

John 18:1 – When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it.

If you have the KJV, it reads differently. Doesn’t have Kidron Valley, but brook Cedron (cedar). How does one translation have a brook and another a valley? Suffice it to say, there were some translation difficulties. It is, however, a valley and a brook, or wadi/spring, is in the valley.

The point – they went to the Garden of Gethsemane. John calls it a garden. Mark and Matthew do not call it a garden, just Gethsemane – which means oil press.

V. 2 – Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. ³ So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.

Only John's gospel mentions the interaction with the band of soldiers that we have in the following verses. They may have been temple guards, but if the religious leaders were accusing Jesus of treason, then they may well have been Roman soldiers.

V. 4 – Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, “Who is it you want?”

⁵ “Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied.

“I am he,” Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) ⁶ When Jesus said, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground.

Only John records this, which has caused some to say that it was his own bit of literary privilege.

V. 7 – Again he asked them, “Who is it you want?”

“Jesus of Nazareth,” they said.

⁸ Jesus answered, “I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go.” ⁹ This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: “I have not lost one of those you gave me.”^[a]

¹⁰ Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)

¹¹ Jesus commanded Peter, “Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?”

Only in John's gospel are Peter and Malchus named here. In other accounts it was one of Jesus' companions and a servant of the high priest.

Malchus was a servant of the high priest, but named only here. Of course, there are stories about Malchus becoming a Christian. Maybe, but we have nothing in the Bible about it.

John 18:12 – Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him ¹³ and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. ¹⁴ Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people.

John's account of the trial is similar to the other gospels, however, there are some differences, and there are different names.

Here, Annas is the father in law of Caiaphas, the high priest. Luke 3:2 doesn't tell us of a relationship between the two men, but that they both served as high priests together.

Anyway, the names of the officials is not the point.

John 18:15 – Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard,¹⁶ but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in.

Many see this 'other' disciple as John. Not all do, however. They claim that John only identifies himself as the disciple that Jesus loved. They claim that Judas was actually the one who went with Jesus into the courtyard.

Judas certainly would have been known by the high priest, as they conspired to arrest Jesus. Again, we can't know for sure.

V. 17 – “You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?” she asked Peter.

He replied, “I am not.”

¹⁸ It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.

So, his first denial was given to servant girl.

John 18:19 – Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.

²⁰ “I have spoken openly to the world,” Jesus replied. “I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. ²¹ Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said.”

According to Jewish law at that time, and we have encountered this law here in John’s gospel before now, no one can give witness to themselves. So, Jesus asks why are they questioning him and not those he has taught.

V. 22 – When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby slapped him in the face. “Is this the way you answer the high priest?” he demanded.

²³ “If I said something wrong,” Jesus replied, “testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?” ²⁴ Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

V. 25 – Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they asked him, “You aren’t one of his disciples too, are you?”

He denied it, saying, “I am not.”

²⁶ One of the high priest’s servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, “Didn’t I see you with him in the garden?” ²⁷ Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

In this next section we have Jesus taken before Pilate. John didn’t give much narrative about Jesus before the religious leaders, but gives a more extended narrative of Jesus before Pilate.

John 18:28 – Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus from Caiaphas to the *palace* of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness they did not enter the palace, because they wanted to be able to eat the Passover.²⁹ So Pilate came out to them and asked, “What charges are you bringing against this man?” ³⁰ “If he were not a criminal,” they replied, “we would not have handed him over to you.” ³¹ Pilate said, “Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.”

“But we have no right to execute anyone,” they objected.³² This took place to fulfill what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die.

So, we see the reason they bring Jesus to Pilate. They want Jesus executed, and according to Roman Law, only Rome could carry out such a sentence.

V. 33 – Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

³⁴ “Is that your own idea,” Jesus asked, “or did others talk to you about me?”

³⁵ “Am I a Jew?” Pilate replied. “Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?”

³⁶ Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.”

³⁷ “You are a king, then!” said Pilate.

Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

³⁸ “What is truth?” retorted Pilate.

We can gather from this dialogues that the Jewish leaders had accused Jesus of claiming to be a king – and no one was thinking about a heavenly kingdom.

Jesus did not deny being a king, but made it clear that it wasn’t an earthly kingdom.

What is truth? What we know from John’s gospel is that truth is the knowledge of God. And one can know God by knowing Jesus.

V. 38b – With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him. ³⁹ But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release ‘the king of the Jews?’”

⁴⁰ They shouted back, “No, not him! Give us Barabbas!” Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising.

Don't miss the irony of Barabbas. He had taken part in an uprising – to overthrow the government. Exactly what Jesus was accused of.

Chapter 19

John 19:1 – Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged.

A short little verse that we usually just pass by quickly to move on to the rest of the story. This was a severe whipping. Jesus would have been tied to a post. The whips would have included glass and metal imbedded in the cords. While it was meant to be a corporal punishment, people often died as a result of it.

V. 2 – The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe ³ and went up to him again and again, saying, “Hail, king of the Jews!” And they slapped him in the face.

Purple was the color of royalty, so the robe was part of the mockery.

V. 4 – Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews gathered there, “Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him.” ⁵ When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, “Here is the man!”

Here is – or Behold the man – was a joke on Pilate's part. Meaning you sent me a king, a messiah, but he's a whipped man. John's readers would have caught a deeper meaning to Pilate's announcement. Behold the man – behold the Word in the flesh.

Most likely Pilate thought his beating and humiliation of Jesus would pacify the Jews. So, he's a little taken back with what follows.

V. 6 – As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, “Crucify! Crucify!”

But Pilate answered, “You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him.”

Two things here. First, the Jews couldn't crucify him, Pilate knew it. He was basically saying that you lowly Jews can't run things, not shut up and leave me alone!

Also, this was the third time that Pilate said he found no basis for a charge.

V. 7 – The Jewish leaders insisted, “We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.”

The religious leaders have lost their battle to get Jesus charged with a crime against the state, so now they fall back on their religious laws.

John 19:8 – When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid,

Why was Pilate afraid?

Matthew 27:19 – While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: “Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him.”

He had probably heard other things about Jesus from his advisors – some of which handled Jewish matters. Maybe Pilate knew of the miracles associated with Jesus.

As we read on we learn that he is afraid of the Jewish mob. Their threats would certainly cause him fear.

V. 9 – and he went back inside the palace. “Where do you come from?” he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ “Do you refuse to speak to me?” Pilate said. “Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?”

¹¹ Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.”

¹² From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.”

Here is the real fear factor for Pilate. If word got back to Caesar (unlikely, but still) that he had let go someone who claimed to be superior to Caesar, it would be political suicide – or perhaps actual suicide.

V. 13 – When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge’s seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). ¹⁴ It was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about noon.

“Here is your king,” Pilate said to the Jews.

¹⁵ But they shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!”

“Shall I crucify your king?” Pilate asked.

“We have no king but Caesar,” the chief priests answered.

¹⁶ Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

One last time Pilate tries to get the Jews to relent, and is once again unsuccessful.

There is quite a big discrepancy in this passage compared to the other gospels. It was about noon. In the other gospels Jesus is crucified by 9 am. Plus, it’s noon on preparation day, which meant that the Passover would begin at sundown.

To be honest – I can’t reconcile the difference – it just is. I don’t think the point of the gospel is the hour or day of Jesus’ death, so it doesn’t bother me.

In verse 16 it says that Pilate finally handed Jesus over to them to be crucified. That doesn’t mean the Jews carried out the crucifixion, as the rest of the verse tells us. Only

Roman soldiers would be allowed to do so, and Pilate would never have let a mob crucify someone, for then he would lose control of the people.

John 19:16b – So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. ¹⁷ Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).

John makes it a point to say that Jesus carried his own cross. He doesn't mention Simon of Cyrene who was conscripted to carry the cross according to the other gospels. Why not?

Remember, John has a few heresy's that he is fighting against in his gospel. One of those was a heresy from the Gnostics which claimed that Simon and Jesus switched places, and Simon was killed and Jesus lived.

¹⁸ There they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

¹⁹ Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. ²⁰ Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. ²¹ The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, “Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.”

²² Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”

The other gospels mention the placard that read King of the Jews. John's account is a bit different. First, it was written in three languages. Each criminal had to have their legal charge posted on their cross. That's why they posted it.

While it was commonplace for signs to be written in multiple languages during that time, the deeper meaning would have been symbolism of the universality of the gospel.

What is really striking, however, is the Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. The religious leaders probably would have been more upset that a Galilean had such an

inscription than had it been a Judean. Remember, the folks in Jerusalem looked down on those from Galilee.

V. 23 – When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

²⁴ “Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot who will get it.”

This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said,

“They divided my clothes among them
and cast lots for my garment.”^[a]

So this is what the soldiers did.

Not even the trivial matters such as soldiers taking the clothes of Jesus is overlooked, but has significance, being a quote from Psalm 22:18.

Remember, Psalm 22 was the last prayer of Jesus according to Matthew & Mark.

Psalm 22:1 – My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

V. 16 – Dogs surround me,
a pack of villains encircles me;
they pierce^[e] my hands and my feet.

¹⁷ All my bones are on display;
people stare and gloat over me.

¹⁸ They divide my clothes among them
and cast lots for my garment.

¹⁹ But you, LORD, do not be far from me.
You are my strength; come quickly to help me.

V. 27 – All the ends of the earth
will remember and turn to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations
will bow down before him,
²⁸ for dominion belongs to the LORD
and he rules over the nations.

V. 30 – Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the Lord.

³¹ They will proclaim his righteousness,
declaring to a people yet unborn:
He has done it!

John records three sayings of Jesus from the cross. The first has to do with his mother's care. As the oldest male in his family, it would have been up to Jesus to provide for his mother. Obviously, by the words of Jesus in this passage, his earthly father had passed away.

John 19:25 – Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son,"²⁷ and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Remember, woman denoted no disrespect.
This is only the second time in John's gospel that Mary the mother of Jesus is mentioned. Interestingly, she is only mentioned at the cross in this gospel.

Mary is only mentioned once outside of the gospels, in Acts 1:14.

V. 28 – Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty."²⁹ A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.

Psalm 69 is a prophetic psalm. In it we read –
Psalm 66:19 – You know how I am scorned, disgraced and shamed;
all my enemies are before you.
²⁰ Scorn has broken my heart
and has left me helpless;

I looked for sympathy, but there was none,
for comforters, but I found none.
²¹ They put gall in my food
and gave me vinegar for my thirst.

So, this second saying from the cross, according to John, fulfills the prophecy of Psalm 69:21.

V. 30 – When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

The Greek word for finished is telos, and it means to be fulfilled. The mission that Jesus had on earth was fulfilled.

John 19:31 – Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down.

You might ask, if the religious leaders wanted Jesus killed, why be concerned about his burial?
Because it was against Jewish law to leave a body unburied after sunset.

Deuteronomy 21:22 – If someone guilty of a capital offense is put to death and their body is exposed on a pole, ²³ you must not leave the body hanging on the pole overnight. Be sure to bury it that same day, because anyone who is hung on a pole is under God’s curse. You must not desecrate the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.

They would have seen Jesus’ unburied body as a curse upon their land, and they certainly didn’t want that. Especially since it was not about to be the Sabbath, but a special Sabbath, for Passover was falling on the Sabbath that year.

John 19:32 – The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. ³³ But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

Rome would often let those crucified last for hours, even days, as torture, but here because of the religious holiday they allow they're request.

The practice of breaking the legs of those crucified was not all that uncommon, they actually had a word for breaking the legs on those being crucified – crucifragium.

V. 34 – Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. ³⁵ The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. ³⁶ These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken,"^[c] ³⁷ and, as another scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced."^[d]

While the blood and water flowing from Jesus is seen by many to be a miracle, John may have had another reason. Remember the gnostic heresy of Docetism. Docetism meant 'to seem.' These people claimed that Jesus only seemed to be dead.

So, the soldier who pierced his side seemed to have had a well-known testimony about the event. Of course, there are legends about that soldier. It states that his name was Longinus.

He is said to be the unnamed centurion in the other gospels who said, 'surely this man was the son of God.'

There are some wild legends about him, some good, some not so. But, of course, the legend that lasted was that he became a Christian. He is even a saint in the Roman Catholic and the Coptic Churches.

Verse 36 – not one of his bones will be broken. This comes from the rules for the Passover Lamb, found in Numbers 9:12. It states that no bones shall be broken on the Passover sacrifice.

Because of Jesus, we are passed over from death to life.

Verse 37 says they will look on the one they have pierced. This comes from the prophet Zechariah.

Zechariah 12:10 – “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit^[a] of grace and supplication. They will look on^[b] me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

Remember Nicodemus? He was a Pharisee, who spoke up for Jesus at one point. We will also encounter Joseph of Arimathea, who is mentioned by name in all four gospels.

John 19:38 – Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate’s permission, he came and took the body away. ³⁹ He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds.^[c]

⁴⁰ Taking Jesus’ body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs.⁴¹ At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. ⁴² Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Matthew tells us that the tomb belonged to Joseph of Arimathea.

Chapter 20

V. 1 – Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ² So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

The other gospels have Mary going to the tomb with several other women. Here, only Mary is mentioned by name, however, she tells the Peter & John – **we** don’t know where they have put him!

So, we can assume that in John's Gospel she did not go to the tomb alone.

V. 3 – So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷ as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen.

There's been much written about the significance of the grave clothing in this passage. The cloth that had been around Jesus' head was called a napkin. Some claim that the significance napkin was that a folded napkin meant the person at the table was coming back. They claim that this was Jesus' way of saying he was coming back. Sounds nice, and maybe so, but I think what John was trying to convey was something else. Besides, we aren't told that the face cloth, napkin, was folded. Just that it was lying in its place.

The cloth was lying in its place, separate from the linen, had covered Jesus' head. The linen covered his body. The picture John is painting is that it appeared as if Jesus' body has simply dematerialized – raptured if you will. The linen and the cloth were where they would have been had Jesus been wrapped in them.

Paul's theology – what became Christian theology – would seem to back up this understanding.

1 Corinthians 15:20 – Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. **44** – it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. **50** – I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

John 20:8 – Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

He saw and believed that Jesus had risen from the dead – not been stolen.

It says that they still did not understand from the Scripture that he was to rise. They didn't yet understand because those Scriptures had never been interpreted that way.

Scriptures like **Psalm 16:10** – you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.

Also, the Scriptures about the Passover lamb being sacrificed would have spoken to them because in John's gospel Jesus died as the Passover lamb was being killed.

The other three gospels have an appearance of a vision following the resurrection. Mark has the vision of a young man, Luke has two men, and Matthew has an angel. John has two angels.

John 20:11 – Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³ They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him."

The same answer she gave the disciples earlier, except this time she uses the singular I, and not the plural we.

V. 14 – At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!”(which means “Teacher”).

¹⁷ Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Why did Jesus not let Mary hold on to him? If Jesus had not yet ascended into heaven, then his body would have been considered unclean by the Jews.

It is implied here by John that the Ascension of Jesus took place on the day of Resurrection.

V. 19 – On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”

The first day of the week. This is the same day, Easter.
The disciples is an inclusive term, meaning it wasn’t just who we call the apostles. Various followers. Most likely family members. Maybe even Nicodemus and/or Joseph of Arimathea.

V. 20 – After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

²¹ Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

In John, Pentecost seems to come about 40 days early! Some believe that John, as he did in the farewell discourse, was condensing material. We can’t say.

With what comes in the next chapter, it seems unlikely they started the church after the receiving of the Holy Spirit on that first Easter day.

V. 23 has been debated and considered to be rather controversial – ²³ If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.

I would suggest that this verse was indeed given to the disciples – the ones who would lead and build the church upon its birth. He was giving them authority. Authority to teach, to lead, to guide the church.

Next we have the story of Jesus appearing to Thomas, and unfortunately we call it the doubting Thomas passage. We encountered Thomas back in chapter 11 where he with boldness stated that they should go to Jerusalem and die with Jesus.

Here in this passage, he makes another statement that is bold, and what he says is simply glossed over by modern readers, but it was not missed by those who were first reading / or hearing / this gospel.

And even today, it is not missed by converts from other faiths.

John 20:24 – Now Thomas (also known as Didymus^[a]), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

²⁸ Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

²⁹ Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Did you catch what Thomas said? My Lord and my God!
Just let the meaning of that sentence sink in. Lord and God.

We’ve had disciples say all sorts of things about Jesus.
You are: the son of the most high – the messiah – the one who is to come into the world.

But here we have the great theological statement which we who have grown up in the church take for granted.

Jesus is God.
Jesus is our Lord.

We worship our God.
We serve our Lord.

John 20:30 – Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe^[b] that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

If this sounds like an ending to a story, it’s probably because it is. Chapter 21 is a later addition, but we will save it for next week.

Chapter 21 appears to be a later addition to the gospel. Some have claimed that someone other than John added it at a later date. However, a careful study of the Greek – of the syntax and words used – causes many scholars to believe that while it was a later addition, it was written by the gospel writer.

It's believed that the last two verses were written by one of John's disciples, and seems to claim to be so.

Why did John write an epilogue? There are several theories.

As the end of the gospel asserts, John probably had a lot of other stories about Jesus that were not included in the gospel. Some of those may have been written down, and this was one of them and it got added by a disciple of John.

Another theory – the other gospels do not have anything about Peter being reinstated after denying Jesus, and this does and John felt it needed to be included.

Whatever John's reason, it's a great story. Let's read it.

John 21:1 – Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee.^[a] It happened this way: ² Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus^[b]), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³ “I'm going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We'll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

I read the sea as Sea of Galilee, but it actually says the sea of Tiberias. John is the only gospel writer who uses that particular name. It was more of a local name, not known by Tiberias in other places. Tiberias was a Jewish city on the lake.

There are seven disciples on the boat, so most of them. The sons of Zebedee were James and John. John being the gospel writer.

The two other unnamed disciples may have been Andrew and Philip, who were commonly named together, and from Galilee.

V. 4 – Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

There was nothing divine about Jesus' appearance being hidden from them. It was early in the morning, which meant before sunrise. Probably light enough that they could see someone standing on the shore, but couldn't see who. Plus, they were a ways out.

V. 5 – He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?"
"No," they answered.

So why didn't they recognize his voice?
Again, nothing divine here hiding his voice. It was not quite light. They had been up all night. They were a ways off shore.

V. 6 – He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

Because we know the fishing practices of the people of that region, this tells us a lot. They used cast nets. They would cast to their left, and usually cast towards shore. Casting to their right would not have been their customary manner, but as commercial fishermen it wouldn't have been too difficult.

At any rate, John in his spiritual way, has Jesus telling the disciples a couple of things here. First, he wants them to go deeper.
Second, do things differently.
What a lesson!

These men would be instrumental in leading the church, but they hadn't gone deep enough yet. Not deep enough into their faith.

And, it appeared that they weren't doing anything different than they were before they met Jesus.

If we want God to work through us, we have got to go deeper. We have got to move on from our old ways.

V. 7 – Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. ⁸ The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.

V. 9 – When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

¹⁰ Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” ¹¹ So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.

153 fish. Early theologian and priest by the name of Jerome stated that according to a certain authority, there are 153 species of fish – whether in the sea of Galilee, or wherever – and that this miraculous catch of fish represented all people.

First, there aren't 153 species of fish in the Sea of Galilee, and there are far more than 153 species of fish in the world. If there is symbolism to be found in the number, it might have been their personal record or some such thing.

Like the 12 basket full of leftovers from the meal, sometimes 153 fish is simply 153 fish.

V. 12 – Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord.¹³ Jesus came, took the bread and gave it

to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Actually the fourth time if you count Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene, but here John is speaking of Jesus' appearance to the gathered disciples. Even more specifically, the apostles.

John 21:15 – When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

¹⁶ Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

¹⁷ The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said,

“Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.

The restoration of Peter come through a threefold question and commission from Jesus.

Some commentators make note of the different words used for love in this passage – from agape to philio (unconditional and brotherly love).

However, John uses those two words interchangeably in his gospel. In fact, this is one of the indicators that this additional chapter was written by the same person who wrote the rest of the gospel.

Also, when we look at feed my lambs and tend my sheep and feed my sheep – it is likely that those subtle differences were written that way for the effect of alliteration in the Greek. (The way it would sound).

What is significant is the fact that Jesus asks three times. Peter may have been hurt by Jesus asking three times, but Jesus had been hurt by Peter denying him three times.

Besides restoring Peter, I see a challenge here. Peter had once years before left everything to follow Jesus, now feeling like a failure, he's back to his old way of life. Jesus is challenging Peter to be about the business of Jesus. Feed, take care, and tend to the people that would follow Jesus. Pastor them. Shepherd them.

Verse 15 has – do you love me more than these?

Is it – do you love me more than these other disciples?

Or is it – do you love me more than this old way of life of yours (more than your boat, your business, your livelihood?)

John 21:18 – “Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” ¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

Verse 18 comes from an ancient proverb that Jesus and the disciples would have known. It acknowledges the loss of freedom that the elderly have as they approach the end of their lives.

However, verse 19 makes it clear that Jesus was applying this – especially the part of the outstretched hands – the manner in which Peter would die.

Peter was crucified in Rome around the year 64. He had died long before this gospel was written.

V. 20 – Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”) ²¹ When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?” ²² Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.” ²³ Because of this, the rumor spread among the believers that this

disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?”

We gather that a rumor spread about John’s longevity, and that he would not die before Jesus returned. John makes it clear that Jesus’ answer was more of a rebuke to Peter for asking about the future than it was a remark that John would not die before Jesus’ return.

V. 24 – This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

²⁵ Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.