

The Last Week of Jesus Christ

PERSONAL THOUGHTS:

It's Thursday

Thursday of the Passion Week invites us into the most intimate picture we have of Jesus with His disciples. After three years Jesus and His disciples had formed a bond that was more than simply teacher/follower; they were now friends (see John 15:15). The emotions of the moment were thick. The air in Jerusalem was filled with religious activity due to the Passover feast. Jesus knew that His time was short. Therefore, He wanted to take some final moments to communicate with His disciples. Jesus wanted them to know that while He would be soon gone from their side they could be confident that they were still in the Father's hands. It is at this point in the story that we turn to the Apostle John as he outlines the final moments of Jesus with His disciples.

Starting with John 13, we find the last day of Jesus involving:

- Washing the disciples' feet, a picture of how to serve (chap. 13).
- Confronting his betrayer - a picture of how Jesus was never fooled (13:21-32).
- Providing for the disciples - a picture of how Jesus provides for those who do and will follow Him (chap. 14).
- Instructions on how to bear fruit, abide in me - a picture of dependence (chap. 15).
- Outlining the role of the coming Counselor - the promise of a future (chap. 16).
- Praying to the Father on their behalf and for anyone who will believe (chap. 17), the reality of God's power to all who will entrust their lives to Him.

It is now evening and Jesus leaves the quiet solitude of this intimate setting with His disciples. As Jesus walks through the city it must have been eerie. Although Jerusalem had swelled from an estimated 800,000 to over 2.5 million people Jesus is alone. Sure, His disciples are walking with him. But Jesus is focused on what is about to happen. The sounds of people with unique accents who had traveled from foreign lands are echoing in the streets. Owners of local inns are still haggling with the out-of-towners over the price to rent a room for the evening. There was the bleating of hundreds of sheep coming in and out of the sheep gate with shepherds yelling commands. There were whispers of the stories of old of how God instructed and delivered the children of Israel from Egypt in the first Passover. While this is all occurring, Jesus walks with His disciples through these streets. Jesus is on His way to the garden to meet with His Father because only the Father can help Him in this moment.

Jesus now leaves the city. Jerusalem has rejected her King. Jesus enters the valley of Kidron. Jesus crosses the stream that flowed in the bottom of the valley. He notices the crimson color of the water. The water had turned to a crimson color due to the sacrifices occurring in Jerusalem and had flowed down into the stream from the Temple mount. It is estimated that the priests in the Temple would have to sacrifice a lamb every four seconds if they were to provide the Passover meal for all the families in Jerusalem. Provision for a temporal feast while the Messiah sent from God walked out of Jerusalem. Jesus enters an olive grove, the Garden of Gethsemane, the common meeting area for Jesus and His disciples (John 18:1-2).

It is in moments like these that we find Jesus in the midst of our lives. When you are feeling alone, Jesus understands. When emotions of betrayal gnaw at your soul, Jesus knows your situation well. When reality hits and you learn that there are people who do not like you; it is good to know that Jesus has walked in your shoes.

I am grateful that Jesus refused to be a spectator. I am grateful that Jesus refused to play it safe. Jesus threw Himself into life so that you could be assured that although there are times when life seems incredibly out of control Jesus understands and offers the grace to move forward in the midst of real heartache and pain.

