

BEHOLD THE LAMB: SESSION 11

He Loved Them to the End

John 13 · A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of John

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim: Participants discover that the foot washing is not an interruption of Jesus' glory but its unveiling: knowing that all things were in his hands, he took a towel, and the very verbs of laying aside and taking again enact in miniature the laying down and taking up of his life. They watch the betrayal go out into the night, the light and darkness thread land in two words, and the new commandment receive its new and impossible measure: as I have loved you.

Catholic Touchstone: Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end (13:1; CCC 1337, 616). The towel as the definition of all authority in the Church, the bath and the feet as the shape of Baptism and ongoing forgiveness, and the mandatum the Church still provides for on her knees each Holy Thursday.

What You Need to Know

John 13:1 is the overture of the entire second half of the Gospel, and it deserves to be read like one: now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. Every loaded word in the study is present: the Passover (the third and last; your sealed guesses are inside their final week), the Hour (arrived, named, owned), and a new phrase whose weight you must carry alone for two more sessions: to the end, in Greek *eis telos*, to the end, to the uttermost, to completion. File the root: *telos*. The last word Jesus speaks from the cross in this Gospel, *tetelestai*, it is finished, it is completed, is this word conjugated. 13:1 and 19:30 are one bracket: the Book of Glory opens with love-to-the-telos and closes with the telos accomplished. Say nothing; know everything. Note also what disappears tonight: the signs. The tally closed at seven, and there will be no more, because the Book of Glory does not point at the reality; it is the reality arriving.

The foot washing's theology is in its syntax, and you should walk the group through it slowly. Before Jesus rises, John loads the sentence with everything Jesus knew: Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper (13:3-4). The full divine consciousness comes first, and then the towel: not a lapse of glory, not humility despite the majesty, but majesty's own self-expression. Because he knew he was God, he washed feet; the knowing is the reason, not the obstacle. And John's verb choice is a masterstroke your group can verify with their own eyes: he laid aside his garments (*tithēsin*) and afterward had taken them again (13:4, 12). These are the exact verbs of the Good Shepherd discourse: I lay down (*tithēmi*) my life, and I take it again (10:17-18). John narrates the disrobing and re-robing with the vocabulary of the dying and rising. The foot washing is the cross performed in miniature, a dress rehearsal with a towel, and once the group sees it they will never unsee it. The posture itself, stripped and girded with a towel, was a slave's: the task was proverbially slave's work, beneath free men. The hands into which the Father had given all things took the basin.

Peter's protest and overcorrection (13:6-10) are the session's pastoral gold. You shall never wash my feet is pride wearing humility's coat: Peter will serve, admire, even die (he thinks), but being served, being cleansed, kneeling receiver rather than noble giver, is intolerable to him. Jesus' answer makes receiving the non-negotiable: if I do not wash you, you have no part in me. Grace must be received before it can be imitated; a Christianity of pure self-donation that never lets Christ kneel to it has no part in him. Peter then overcorrects gloriously, not my feet only but also my hands and my head, and Jesus' reply distinguishes: he who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but he is clean all over. The Fathers, Augustine at their head, heard the sacramental architecture: the bath, once for all, is Baptism, and the feet, which gather the road's dust daily even on a clean man, are the daily faults needing ongoing forgiveness, the Our Father's forgive us our trespasses, and, for the serious wounds, in the Church's fuller reading, the sacrament of Penance. Offer the reading warmly and with its patristic pedigree; it preaches, and it sends people to Confession.

The mandatum (13:12-20) contains tonight's steelman, so read it precisely. Jesus asks, do you know what I have done to you?, and then does something the anti-hierarchical reading always skips: he affirms his own titles. You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. The rank is real and stated; what the towel changes is not whether authority exists but what it is for and how it kneels. I have given you an example (*hypodeigma*), that you also should do as I have done to you, followed by one of this Gospel's rare beatitudes: if you know these things, blessed are you if you do them, knowing is not the unit of measure; doing is. And verse 20, in the same breath as the towel: he who receives any one whom I send receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me, the principle of apostolic representation, sending and representation, voiced at the same table as the basin. Then the betrayal texts: verse 18 quotes Psalm 41:9, he who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me, tonight's live discovery, David betrayed by his trusted table-companion, and for your own preparation, the shadow behind the psalm: Ahithophel, David's counselor, who betrayed him and went and hanged himself (2 Samuel 17:23), a typology the group should not be handed but the leader should know. And verse 19 hides a jewel most readers miss: I tell you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he (RSV2CE), *egō eimi*, absolute, one more entry for the tally, spoken over the betrayal itself: even the treachery, foreknown and folded into the plan, will end up testifying to the Name.

The morsel scene (13:21-30) introduces the beloved disciple, lying close to the breast of Jesus, and here is one of the most beautiful echoes in the Gospel: the word is kolpos, bosom, and John uses it only twice in the whole Gospel: here, *en tō kolpō* tou Iēsou, in the bosom of Jesus, and at 1:18, *eis ton kolpon* tou patros, the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known. The wording is not identical; the image is, and this is the only place John reaches for it again. The echo invites the reading that the beloved disciple is to Jesus something of what the Son is to the Father: the same posture of intimate knowing, and from that posture comes testimony; this Gospel claims to be written from that chest. Note also the Peter-and-beloved-disciple choreography beginning here, Peter beckoning, the other closer; the pairing will recur at the tomb and on a beach. The morsel itself must be taught correctly: dipping the choice morsel and handing it to a guest could be a gesture of honor and friendship, and many interpreters therefore hear Jesus' last act toward Judas not as exposure but as appeal, love making its final offer, and the offer is refused: then after the morsel, Satan entered into him. What you are going to do, do quickly. The table does not understand; and then John writes the two most devastating words of the Gospel's longest thread: he immediately went out; and it was night (13:30). Since 1:5 the group has tracked light and darkness; Nicodemus came out of the night toward the light; now Judas leaves the Light and walks into the night, and John, master of economy, lets the clock preach. Make the board moment count.

Then, with the betrayer gone and the machinery of death in motion, Jesus says the sentence that inverts every human category: now is the Son of Man glorified (13:31). Now: with Judas in the dark and the cross now hours away. The glory thread and the Hour are one thing now. And the new commandment: love one another; even as I have loved you. Leviticus 19:18 already commanded love of neighbor as oneself; what is new is the measure: no longer as yourself, but as I have loved you, to-the-telos love, towel-and-cross love, and it is made the Church's identifying mark before the watching world: by this all men will know that you are my disciples. Not by arguments won; by love recognizable at a distance. The chapter closes with Peter's magnificent, doomed boast, and notice whose words he borrows: I will lay down my life for you, the Good Shepherd's own sentence from 10:11, claimed by a man who does not yet know what it costs. Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the cock will not crow, till you have denied me three times. Plant it cleanly: a bird, three denials. And, leader only: a charcoal fire is coming, twice.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- **Psalms 41:9.** He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me: David betrayed by his table-companion, quoted by Jesus at 13:18. The live discovery.
- **2 Samuel 15-17 (esp. 17:23).** Ahithophel, David's trusted counselor, betrays him and goes and hangs himself. Leader background only; the shadow behind the psalm, offered with hedged language if it surfaces.
- **Leviticus 19:18.** You shall love your neighbor as yourself: the old commandment whose measure the *mandatum novum* fulfills and surpasses with as I have loved you. Quick reference.
- **Exodus 12.** The Passover frame of 13:1. Under seal; the third Passover has arrived and the guesses mature in Session 13.
- **Isaiah 52:13-53:12.** The servant song continues to hum beneath everything. Leader background; the neighborhood remains sealed.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), *Doctor of the Church*, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, Tractates 56-57

Augustine reads the bath and the feet with a pastor's realism: the man who has bathed is clean all over, the once-for-all bath of Baptism; and yet, so long as he walks this earth, his feet gather the dust of the road, the daily human affections and small failures no traveler avoids. So the Lord who bathed us once stoops daily to wash our feet, in the forgiveness we beg in the Our Father and receive in the Church, for even the baptized must pray, forgive us our trespasses. The bath is not repeated; the footwashing never stops.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Benedict of Nursia (c. 480-547), *The Rule of St. Benedict*, chapters 35 and 53

Benedict did not admire the towel; he legislated it. In his Rule, the brothers who complete their week of kitchen service wash the feet of the whole community, and when guests arrive, the abbot himself and the brethren wash their feet, because, the Rule says, all guests are to be received as Christ. Fifteen centuries of monks have knelt on schedule ever since. The *mandatum*, in Benedict's hands, stopped being a sentiment and became a rota: love with a schedule, humility with assigned

shifts.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Jerome (c. 347-420), Doctor of the Church, recounting the aged Apostle John, Commentary on Galatians

Jerome preserves the most tender tradition about tonight's author. The Apostle John, extremely old in Ephesus, carried to the assembly in the arms of his disciples, could no longer preach at length and would say only, little children, love one another. Asked why he always repeated it, he answered: because it is the Lord's commandment, and if it alone is kept, it is enough. The apostle whom tradition knows as the one who leaned on Jesus' breast at this supper spent his last strength repeating this chapter's one commandment, and judged it sufficient.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 1337.** The Catechism's doorway to the Eucharist opens with this verse: having loved his own, he loved them to the end; and in order never to depart from his own, he washed their feet and instituted the Eucharist.
- **CCC 616.** It is love to the end that confers on Christ's sacrifice its value as redemption: the *eis telos* of 13:1 is the price tag of the cross.
- **CCC 1823.** Jesus makes charity the new commandment, loving as he loves: the measure, not merely the fact, of love is what is new.
- **CCC 520.** In all of his life Jesus presents himself as our model: he is the perfect man who invites us to become his disciples and follow him; by his self-emptying he gives us an example to imitate.

Thread Watch

THREAD WATCH

The Hour. Arrived and owned: when Jesus knew that his hour had come (13:1). Everything remaining in the study happens inside the Hour. The board line is fully lit.

Light and darkness (LANDS). He immediately went out; and it was night (13:30). The thread planted at 1:5 lands in two words. Give the board moment real silence. The thread is not finished, dawn is coming in later chapters, but the plunge is tonight.

The betrayal (CONVERGES). The devil in the heart (13:2), the psalm of the table-companion (13:18), the morsel of honor refused, Satan entering, the night. The line the group opened at the Bread of Life discourse goes out the door tonight.

I AM. A hidden absolute: that when it does take place you may believe that I am he (13:19; the Greek a bare *egō eimi*), spoken over the betrayal itself. Log it; the group will be startled it is there. One more absolute use remains, in a garden, and it is leader knowledge only.

Laying down and taking again. The garment verbs of 13:4 and 12 are the life verbs of 10:17-18. Name it when the group verifies it: the foot washing is the cross in miniature.

Eis telos (leader only). The root of to the end (13:1) returns as the last word from the cross, *tetelestai*, it is finished (19:30). The bracket completes in Session 13. Absolute seal.

The beloved disciple and Peter. Introduced tonight in the bosom of Jesus, the same rare bosom-word as 1:18, the Son in the bosom of the Father. Name the echo; it is beautiful and spoils nothing. The Peter-and-beloved-disciple pairing begins; it recurs at a tomb and on a beach.

Peter's denial (PLANTED). The boast in the Shepherd's own borrowed words (10:11), and the prediction: a cock, three denials. Tell the group to watch for a bird. Leader only: watch also for a charcoal fire, twice.

Passover and the Lamb (sealed, FINAL APPROACH). Before the feast of the Passover (13:1). The narrative is now inside the week. Two sessions to maturity. Total silence.

Session Goals

1. Participants can explain from the syntax of 13:3-4 that the towel expresses the divine consciousness rather than interrupting it.
2. Participants verify the garment verbs against 10:17-18 and can state that the foot washing enacts the laying down and taking up of his life.
3. Participants wrestle with Peter's refusal to be served, and can articulate the bath and feet as Baptism and ongoing forgiveness.
4. Participants hear the strongest case that the towel abolishes hierarchy, and weigh it against 13:13, 13:20, and the Church's own institutionalized mandatum.
5. Participants feel and it was night land on the board, and can state what is new in the new commandment.

Time Note (90 minutes)

Opening prayer and Win, 12 minutes. Build, 58 minutes. Send, Live It This Week, and closing prayer, 20 minutes. If running long, the pre-chosen cuts are, in order: the Dig Deeper on the trouble triad, the Leviticus 19:18 lookup in question 8 (cite it verbally), and the second Win question. Do not cut: the syntax walk of 13:3-4, the garment verbs, Peter's protest, the steelman, the morsel with and it was night, or the denial prediction. One chapter tonight; let the pace breathe, and let 13:30 have its silence.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader prays aloud: Lord Jesus, on the night you were betrayed, knowing that all things were in your hands, you took a towel. Take us into that room tonight. Wash what we would rather hide, teach us what we would rather skip, and give us the one commandment your beloved disciple never stopped repeating: that we love one another as you have loved us. Amen.

Win (open the conversation)

1. Has someone with every right to be served ever done something for you that was beneath them? What did it do to you?
2. Has anyone ever predicted your failure to your face, and been right? What did their being right do to the relationship?

Transition: The signs are over; the tally is full. Tonight the doors close on the public, the basin comes out, and we are inside the last night. Everything from here to the cross happens within about twenty-four hours; the study's last dawn waits just beyond it.

Build (inductive discovery)

Have someone read John 13:1 aloud, alone, twice. Then ask:

Question 1. This single verse is the overture of the Gospel's whole second half. Unpack its freight: what feast frames it, what has finally happened to the Hour, and how far does John say this love goes? Sit on the phrase to the end for a moment: what might loving to the end have to mean, before this week is over?

ANSWER: share after the discussion

Before the feast of the Passover: the third and final Passover, and our narrative is now inside its week. When Jesus knew that his hour had come: the Hour we watched turn at 12:23 is here, named, owned, and everything remaining happens inside it. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end: not merely to the last moment, but to the uttermost, to completion, love run all the way out. Let the group speculate on what to the end will require, and confirm nothing; the Gospel intends to show them rather than tell them. One structural note to give plainly: the signs are finished. Seven stand on the tally, and there will be no eighth, because the Book of Glory does not point at the reality. It is the reality, arriving.

Question 2. Read 13:2-5, and read verse 3 like a lawyer: before Jesus ever rises from the table, what three things does John insist he knew? Then watch the sequence: knowing all that, what does he do? And one for the Greek-watchers, checkable in any interlinear: verses 4 and 12 say he laid aside his garments and took them again. Where in this Gospel have we heard exactly those two verbs, about something much bigger than clothing?

ANSWER: share after the discussion

He knew that the Father had given all things into his hands, that he had come from God, and that he

was going to God: origin, destiny, and total authority, the fullest statement of divine consciousness in the Gospel, and John places it immediately before the towel on purpose. The washing is not humility in spite of the majesty; it is what the majesty does. Because all things were in his hands, his hands took the basin. And the verbs: he lays aside (tithēsin) his garments and takes them again, the precise verbs of 10:17-18, I lay down my life, that I may take it again. John has narrated a man undressing and re-dressing in the vocabulary of dying and rising. The foot washing is the cross performed in miniature, less than a day early, with a towel for a shroud, and the slave's task he performs was so low it was proverbially left to slaves. The hands holding all things held twelve dirty feet, one pair belonging to the man about to sell him.

Question 3. Read 13:6-11. Diagnose Peter honestly: you shall never wash my feet sounds humble; is it? What does Jesus make non-negotiable in verse 8, and why would refusing to receive cut a man off from having part in him? Then the overcorrection and the answer: what is the bath, what are the feet, and what does the distinction look like in Catholic life?

ANSWER: share after the discussion

Peter's refusal is pride in humility's coat: he will serve, admire, defend, and (he thinks) die, but he cannot bear to kneel as a receiver. Many of the most generous people in your group have the same disease, endlessly giving, incapable of being given to, and Jesus diagnoses it as fatal: if I do not wash you, you have no part in me. Christianity is received before it is performed; grace comes first or it is not grace, and a discipleship that never lets Christ kneel to it has no part in him. Then the overcorrection, hands and head too!, and the reply that the Fathers heard sacramentally: he who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but he is clean all over. The bath, once for all, is Baptism, never repeated; and the feet are the road's daily dust, the small failures no walking man avoids, met by the daily footwashing of the Our Father's forgive us our trespasses, and, when the dust is more than dust, in the Church's practice, by the sacrament of Penance. Bathed once, feet washed continually: that is simply the Catholic life described from a first-century floor.

Question 4. Read 13:12-17. Do you know what I have done to you? Before answering what the towel teaches, catch what Jesus says about himself in verse 13: does he renounce his titles? Then the example (hypodeigma) and verse 17's rare beatitude: where does Jesus locate the blessing?

ANSWER: share after the discussion

He affirms the titles in full: you call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. The rank is not dissolved by the towel; it is defined by it. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet: authority in his kingdom is henceforth measured by the basin it carries. And the beatitude relocates the payoff: if you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. Not blessed are you if you are moved by them, or can explain them; this Gospel of high theology ends its most theological scene with the bluntest possible test: doing. Hold verse 13 in your hand; the steelman is about to want it.

Steelman: Does the Towel Abolish Hierarchy?

BUILD THE STEELMAN FIRST: present this at full strength

Many low-church Protestants, and many disillusioned Catholics, read this scene as Christianity's permanent verdict against religious hierarchy, and the case has real force. Here is the Lord of glory on the floor with a towel, deliberately inverting every rank in the room, and commanding the inversion as the pattern: you also ought to wash one another's feet; a servant is not greater than his master. Elsewhere he forbade his followers the very love of titles and places of honor that clericalism feeds on. And yet, the argument runs, within a few centuries the Church of the towel had thrones, courts, vestments modeled on imperial dress, and a graded pyramid of ranks, and Catholicism today still runs on hierarchy, excellencies, and eminences, the very apparatus this chapter kneels to wash away. The towel, on this reading, abolishes the pyramid: true Christianity is a fellowship of equals with no priestly caste, and every structure of ordained authority is a betrayal of the basin. And there is a sober version of the case that is harder to answer than the radical one. It grants ordination, elders, ordered ministry and accountable governance, because the New Testament plainly has them; it grants that authority in the Church is real. Its question is narrower and sharper: Jesus forbids his followers status-seeking and domination, the New Testament describes ministry with the vocabulary of service and never with the vocabulary of court rank, and yet within a few centuries the Church of the towel had graded jurisdiction, honorifics and ceremonial borrowed straight from empire. Does that development follow from apostolic ministry, or did something foreign attach itself to it? Put that version at the table too, because most thoughtful Protestants hold it, not the radical one. State the case with its full sting; church history has given it plenty of ammunition, and someone at your table has been personally wounded by rank worn without a towel.

Question 5 (press from the text). Three probes, all from tonight's chapter. First: what did Jesus just say about his own titles in verse 13, in the middle of the washing? Second: read verse 20, still at the same table: what principle does Jesus establish minutes after the towel, and what does receiving one whom I send require to exist? Third: what has the Church actually done with this scene, liturgically and in her deepest self-understanding of office, and what happens in communities that abolish office in humility's name?

ANSWER: share after the discussion

First: the towel and the titles coexist in the same sentence, from the same mouth: you call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If the scene abolished rank, it would have to begin by abolishing his, and instead he affirms it and then kneels, which is the whole point: authority is not denied but redefined, its insignia changed from throne to basin. Second, verse 20 is devastating to the no-office reading: he who receives any one whom I send receives me, spoken at the same supper, minutes after the towel, voices sending and representation, the apostolic principle within which the Church's ordinations stand. The chapter that supposedly abolishes hierarchy voices the very principle of authorized mission that the Church's ordained ministry presupposes, and the two fit perfectly once the towel defines the office. The full case for ordination and apostolic succession rests on the whole New Testament and the Church's teaching, not on this verse alone; what this verse does is make the no-office reading much harder to hold. Third, the Church did not file this scene away; she legislated it: each Holy Thursday the Roman Rite provides the Mandatum, and popes and bishops have knelt at it for centuries, the towel built into the liturgy precisely for the hierarchy; St. Benedict put footwashing on the monastic rota; and St. Gregory the Great took for himself the title *servus servorum Dei*, servant of the servants of God, which later popes kept as the

papacy's standing self-description. And to the sober version, which deserves a straight answer: ordered office and jurisdiction are not the same thing as princely ceremonial, and the Church has in fact reformed and stripped away the ceremonial repeatedly, most recently and deliberately in the last century, without ever surrendering the office. The New Testament itself refuses to separate service from authority: the same apostles who are told to wash feet also bind and loose, ordain, correct churches by letter, and settle a doctrinal crisis at Jerusalem with the words it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us. So the question the towel actually puts is not whether jurisdiction survived it, but whether jurisdiction kneels. Where rank has been worn without the towel, and it has, God have mercy, the failure indicts the men, not the office, exactly as Judas indicts Judas and not the apostolate he betrayed from. And honesty requires the last observation: communities that abolish ordained office in humility's name do not thereby abolish power; they render it informal, unaccountable, and invisible, which the wounded can testify is not an upgrade. The towel does not erase the shepherd's office; it tells the shepherd what his crozier is for. The test of any authority in Christ's Church is not whether it exists but whether its knees bend.

Question 6 (live discovery). Read 13:18-20. Jesus says the betrayal will fulfill Scripture and quotes a line. Send the group to Psalm 41:9 and read it in its setting. Whose experience is this psalm, and what does eating bread together add to the treachery? Then look very closely at verse 19: what exactly does Jesus say the betrayal, once it happens, will lead them to believe? There is an entry for our board hiding in it.

ANSWER: share after the discussion

Psalm 41 is David's: even my bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted his heel against me. Table fellowship was covenant in miniature; to eat a man's bread and strike him was treachery squared, and David knew it from his own trusted counselor. Jesus quotes the psalm while the bread is still on the table and the friend still at it. And verse 19: I tell you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he (RSV2CE), egō eimi, absolute, no predicate, one more entry for the tally, and look where it stands: spoken over the betrayal. Even the treachery is foreknown, folded into the plan, and will end by testifying to the Name. Nothing that happens in the next twenty-four hours will be happening to a victim taken by surprise.

Question 7. Read 13:21-30, slowly. Three things to find. First, the new character: how is the beloved disciple positioned at the table, and, memory check, where has this Gospel used that same rare bosom-word once before? Second, the morsel: in that culture, what kind of gesture was it to dip the choice piece and hand it to a guest, and what does that make Jesus' last act toward Judas? Third, the final two words of the scene. Give them their silence, and then place them on the board.

ANSWER: share after the discussion

The beloved disciple lies close to the breast of Jesus, en tō kolpō, in the bosom, and the only other bosom in this Gospel is 1:18: the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known. The disciple is to Jesus what the Son is to the Father: intimacy that becomes testimony, and this Gospel claims to be written from that chest. Watch him and Peter from now on; the pairing has appointments ahead. The morsel: dipping the choicest piece and offering it to a guest was, many interpreters note, a gesture of honor and friendship, making Jesus' final act toward his betrayer is

not exposure but appeal, love extending the seat of honor one last time, and it is refused: then after the morsel, Satan entered into him. What you are going to do, do quickly, and no one at the table understands. And then John, the great economist, lets the clock preach: he immediately went out; and it was night. Two words, and the thread we planted at 1:5, the light shines in the darkness, tracked through a man who came by night and a feast of candelabras, lands. Nicodemus walked out of the night toward the Light and is still walking; Judas walks away from the Light into the night with bread in his hand. Write and it was night on the board and give the room ten full seconds of quiet.

Question 8. Read 13:31-35. First sentence out of Jesus' mouth once the betrayer is gone: NOW is the Son of Man glorified. Now? With Judas in the dark and the cross not a day away? What has this Gospel done to the word glory? Then the commandment: love was already commanded in Leviticus 19:18, love your neighbor as yourself. What exactly is new in the new commandment, and what job does verse 35 assign to it?

ANSWER: share after the discussion

Now, because in this Gospel the glorification is the Hour, and the Hour is the lifting up, and the machinery just engaged: glory in John is not what happens after the cross as compensation; the cross, freely embraced for love, is the glory, Isaiah's lifted up and glorified fused, as the group saw last week. And the newness of the commandment is its measure: not as yourself, the old and already demanding standard, but as I have loved you, which the room has just watched defined: to the end, with a towel, toward feet that included his betrayer's. And verse 35 assigns this love the Church's entire public apologetic: by this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. Not by our arguments, our aesthetics, or our numbers: by love visible at a distance. The world has always reserved the right to judge the sermon by the congregation, and Jesus, alarmingly, signed off on the method.

Question 9. Read 13:36-38. Peter's boast is magnificent, and listen closely to his exact words: I will lay down my life for you. Whose sentence is he borrowing, from which discourse? And the prediction that answers him: what precisely will happen before what sound? Put it on the board as a planted thread, and say what it must have been like to hear.

ANSWER: share after the discussion

Peter borrows the Good Shepherd's own line: I lay down my life for the sheep (10:11), claimed now by a sheep who believes himself ready to be the shepherd, and the love in the boast is real even though the strength is imagined. The answer is surgical: will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the cock will not crow, till you have denied me three times. Not a doubt, a schedule: before a specific bird sings, three specific denials. Plant it on the board: a cock, three times, and tell the group to listen for the bird in Session 13. What must the next hours have felt like for Peter, carrying that prediction? And here is the mercy already hidden in the wound: the Lord who predicts the fall is the same Lord who just washed the feet that will run, and who loves, we were told in the first verse, to the end. The end is further away than Peter's failure. Keep the boast and the borrowed sentence in mind; this study will hear about laying down life and following one more time, on a beach, and it will break your heart in the good direction.

DIG DEEPER

Troubled, three times. If the group has energy, track a word: deeply moved and troubled at Lazarus' tomb (11:33), now is my soul troubled before the Greeks (12:27), and tonight, troubled in spirit over the betrayer (13:21). The same verb, three times, as the Hour closes in. The Word made flesh approaches his Passion with a genuinely human interior: grief, dread, and the ache of betrayed friendship. He does not glide to the cross; he walks to it, feeling everything, and chooses it anyway, which is precisely what makes 10:18 glorious rather than effortless.

Synthesis question. One sentence each: what did Jesus teach with the towel that no sermon could have taught, and, given where the word *telos* is headed, what do you now suspect loved them to the end is going to mean?

ANSWER: share after the discussion

Listen for the group to land somewhere near: authority is for kneeling, glory looks like service, and love is proven at floor level, taught in a way ears could have argued with but feet could not. And on to the end: let their suspicions grow dark and true, a love that will not stop at dignity, at comfort, at betrayal, at death itself, a love with no point at which it says, this far and no further. They are one session of farewell and one Passover away from watching the sentence finish itself. If someone says, the towel was the trailer, the session has landed.

Send

1. Whose feet, name them privately, would be hardest for you to wash, and what is the actual obstacle: their unworthiness, or your rank?
2. Peter could not bear to be washed. Which is genuinely harder for you: serving, or letting yourself be served, forgiven, helped? What does your answer tell you?

Live It This Week

- **Wash one set of feet.** Choose one concrete act of service this week that is genuinely beneath you, unglamorous, unthanked, for one specific person, and do it quietly. Not service in general: one basin, one pair of feet, this week.
- **Let him wash you.** The bathed still need their feet washed. Get to Confession this week if it has been a while: kneel as a receiver, which Peter found harder than dying, and let the Lord do the part you cannot.
- **The old apostle's examen.** The aged John repeated one sentence: little children, love one another, and called it enough. Each night this week, end the day with his one question: did I love them today, as he has loved me? One question, honestly answered, is a complete examen.

Closing Prayer

Leader prays aloud: Lord Jesus, Teacher and Lord, for so you are, you knelt at the feet of the men who would fail you and loved them to the end. Wash us; we will not refuse like Peter, or we will, and you will be patient. Give us towels for our rank, basins for our pride, and your own measure for our love. And as the night takes the betrayer out the door, keep us at the table with you, near your breast, like the

disciple you loved. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Scripture Memory Verse

MEMORIZE THIS WEEK: John 13:34

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. (RSV2CE)

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used or referenced in Session 11, in order of appearance. Flag these in your Bible before the session.

- **John 13:1** · the overture: Passover, the Hour arrived, loved to the end (eis telos)
- **John 13:2-5** · the knowing before the towel; the garment verbs (tithēsin, 13:4, 12)
- **John 10:17-18** · cross-reference for the verbs: I lay down my life, that I may take it again
- **John 13:6-11** · Peter's protest and overcorrection; the bath and the feet
- **John 13:12-17** · Teacher and Lord affirmed; the hypodeigma; blessed if you do them
- **John 13:18-20** · the betrayal foretold; the hidden absolute I AM (13:19); he who receives whom I send
- **Psalms 41:9** · live discovery, the table-companion's heel
- **2 Samuel 17:23** · LEADER ONLY, hedged: Ahithophel, the counselor who betrayed and hanged himself
- **John 13:21-30** · the trouble, the beloved disciple in the bosom (compare 1:18), the morsel of honor, and it was night
- **John 13:31-35** · now is the Son of Man glorified; the mandatum novum and its measure
- **Leviticus 19:18** · quick reference, the old commandment's measure
- **John 13:36-38** · Peter's boast in the Shepherd's borrowed words; the cock and the three denials
- **CCC 520, 616, 1337, 1823** · Catechism connections