

THE FIRST 15

Friday, May 3, 2024

Today is Friday, May 3 and we are studying the Gospel of John chapter thirteen.

OPENING PRAYER

Lord God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as I begin a new day, I seek your presence. Before the events of today begin I focus myself completely on you. I invite you into the intimacies of my thoughts and feelings. Examine my intentions, guide my motivations, inspire my plans, and accompany my comings and goings. Remind me that you are close by my side every step of the way. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

When he was gone, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once. 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. A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later." Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." 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!"
John 13:31-38

REFLECTION

Judas Iscariot's departure into the darkness of night led to a shout of triumph from the Son of Man. God will be glorified in what is about to happen. Jesus' self-gift of sacrificial love and atoning death upon the cross will occur the next day. The divine plan is set in motion for the glory of God and his mercy for humanity. Jesus will be lifted up on the cross to make God known to the world. He will draw everyone to himself for the salvation of souls. His blood will atone for the sins of all people and those who believe in him will be rescued from sin and death and offered eternal life. The cross is the time and place where God's redeeming love will be revealed. On the cross Jesus is glorified and God's love is demonstrated to the entire world for all time. Judas' exit from the table initiates the most important and essential events the world has ever known.

Jesus tells them he is going away to a place they cannot go. He commands them how they are to live. At the Last Supper, on the night he gave himself up for us, Jesus washed the disciples' feet and shared a meal with them. He cleansed them and fed them. He loved them. Then he gave them a new command. "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." It was not a suggestion. Not an idea. It was a mandate. A command. To love others as Christ loved us. Selflessly, with humility, with self-sacrifice. A tall order passed down for generations of Christians. To live a life of love.

I consider where I am experiencing success living a life of love and where I am failing at living a life of love. There is always room for improvement as I grow in grace and God perfects me in his love. This is the process of sanctification, as over time, I give myself to God - body, mind, and spirit and the Holy Spirit works in me to bring me to a place of maturity. I grow in the fruit of love. I love more. I love better. I increase in love for God and others. Over time I find myself loving those who are difficult to love, forgiving people more easily, letting go of my fears, more willing to sacrifice my needs and more apt to put others first. This certainly is not my doing, it is the work of God in me. I am called to love others and the power of God will help me do so.

Ask: How am I growing in my love for God and others? What blocks or prevents me from being more loving to fellow believers, family and friends?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy and loving Lord Jesus, teach me what it means to truly love. Give me a humble heart ready to give my life for the good of someone else, eager to serve my spouse, family and friends, and excited to share my time and talents with others. Let them know that I am a follower of Jesus because of the way I generously demonstrate his love. I love because he first loved me. Amen.