

## THE HANDS OF THE PASSION<sup>1</sup>

### Hands of Humility

In the name of Jesus, our humble Lord and Savior, dearly redeemed, fellow disciples:

If you've ever been privileged to travel abroad, you might find the experience in restaurants much different than ours. In China, patrons seem to look down on the wait staff as if they are less important human beings than we important people sitting around the table. But in Italy, some places seem just the opposite. Sure if you look like lots of money or are hitting the alcohol hard, you might get mega attention. If not, maybe you have to go looking for your waiter and ask for the bill, "Il conto, per favore." Back in America, you might be pleasantly surprised because the gratuity is not yet set. If service is good, you pay more; if bad, you may leave a quarter and walk out. In fact, more than most of the world, Americans are known for their impatience when it comes to being served. We want service cheaper, better, and quicker.

Sadly, most of us would fit right in with Jesus' disciples that first Maundy Thursday. Waiting for the most important feast of the year, the Passover meal, they had already argued about which of them was the greatest. They seemed to save those arguments for times when Jesus was predicting His suffering and death. As Luke (22:26-30) reports, it was right between the moments when Jesus said, "**One of you will betray me,**" and that Peter would deny Jesus before the rooster crow. Were the disciples still sulking from that argument as they waited to recline at the Passover table?

Something was supposed to be done by someone. But where was the wait staff? Of course none of these very important men, followers of the most famous rabbi at the time, none of them could be expected to do such a menial task. Were all the waiters avoiding that job too? Apparently everyone just sat down, reclined, and glared at each other. Until Jesus **got up from the supper and laid aside his outer garment. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.**" (EHV<sup>2</sup>)

God created people to depend on each other, didn't He? Everybody needs their "guy" with special expertise in taxes, health care, home or car repair, whatever. We all need service, and good service is so rare that we honor it with great tips and enthusiastic referrals. This is one for your friends and relatives and your enemies too. When you learn about the kind of service God provides, Jesus is incomparable, and he does it *for free*. No demands for payment, no pulling rank, no excuses or condescension or patronizing. Jesus serves his disciples with His own gentle, loving, determined . . . **Hands of Humility**

The closer you look, the more amazing Jesus is. He's fully aware of what's about to happen to Him because He is God with a divine nature that is omniscient. At the same time His human nature fully feels fear and pain. **Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father.** (v.1) He knew that Satan had baited Judas to betray him. (v.2) He knew that the Father had laid all things at his feet (v.3). Jesus entered the evening with complete omnipotence and omniscience. Yet rather than leveraging his full authority in some dazzling display of the divine, Jesus exercised abject **Humility**.

While Jesus' mind is racing in anticipation of pain of sin and suffering of hell, feeling the cross he would endure, so conscious of the souls he would redeem, his disciples are arguing and waiting for someone else to serve them. So insensitive to the needs of Jesus! As they keep glaring at each other with snobbish superiority, not one man even reaches for the bucket.

---

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from NPH 2021 Lent: *The Hands of the Passion* by Adam Mueller and Steven Pagels.

<sup>2</sup> EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version* (<http://wartburgproject.org>) © 2019. NPH: 800-662-6022, Amazon-Kindle, LOGOS.

Why didn't Jesus just walk out? "Forget it. They don't deserve me. After all I've done enough for them! It's time for me to think about myself!" More maddening still, Jesus had already settled this argument. James and John sent their mother to lobby for them to sit and Jesus' right and left in heaven. That's when Jesus taught His disciples how to be great: ***"Whoever wants to become great among you will be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you will be your slave."*** (Matthew 20:26f)

On this Thursday evening, Jesus chose to teach by example to show them what humble service looks like. Why? ***Having loved those who were his own in the world, he loved them to the end.*** (v.1)

Literally, Jesus *loved them into the goal*. It's the way most of us can only play soccer in our dreams. The ball and your feet are one. No fatigue, just total energy and blazing speed. Every fake leaves you opponent in the grass until only the goalie stands between you and the score. No hesitation, no clumsy fumble, just hard driving skill that puts the ball right where it counts. Dream on; that's only Jesus.

If Jesus based His service on the disciples' behavior, no feet would have been washed at all. In fact, no sins would have been forgiven because Jesus would never have gone to the goal of the cross! Jesus' **Humility** shines brighter and greater because it is not based on human behavior. Jesus' **Humility** is powered by God's grace. He serves us because he loves the pitiful and selfish. His love is unconditional. His love is so perfect that Jesus even washed the feet of Judas. ***The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*** (Matthew 20:28) Christ's obedient death paid the ransom price for our pride, our own entitlement attitude, for our obnoxious self serving ways, for making people feel small and unimportant, for every shallow, insecure excuse we throw up to God for our failures to serve. ***The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.*** (1 John 1:7)

Did the disciples finally get the point? Do we? After Jesus washes their feet, He does not leave them in shame. His humble hands and heart want so much more for us than pride; He wants to rewire our attitude into **Hands of Humility**. ***"Now if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. Yes, I have given you an example so that you also would do just as I have done for you. Amen, Amen, I tell you: A servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."*** (v.14-17)

So do we? Do we wash one another's feet? Do we love one another as Christ has loved us?

Someone hearing this the first time might wonder, "Why would you wash someone's feet? I'm with Peter on that one. Not my feet – no way!" Didn't Jesus know it would be cold in Minnesota? And most people aren't wearing sandals. It's shoes or even boots in the icy winter!" That's why Jesus gave us ***an example***, a *pattern* to follow. So, do we really love?

A question came up after my last article in *New Life News*, our member newsletter. New Life once had only two volunteers; both quit. "But what about...?" Several charter members were mentioned who are either still serving or have passed from grace to glory. Good question. Got me to thinking. That night of 100% loses was just before willing, eager hands started showing up to plan our first worship service. Fact is, Jesus was just about to rise like the morning sun with **Hands of Humility** in this mission that no one but God knew would survive. Hearts united in God's Word don't want to argue about who's the greatest. That would be Christ and Christ alone – thank-you very much! It has long impressed me how willing these **Hands of Humility** are to move on to other things and let new hands have a chance to serve.

Do we really love as Christ has loved us? Yes – not on our own, but perfectly in Christ alone. ***"The LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation.*** (Psalm 149:4 NIV84) To keep us humble, the Lord reminds us that we are only doing our duty as servants of the Lord. (Luke 17:10) And yet, God gives rewards of grace. ***"God is not unjust. He will not forget your work and the love that you showed for his name's sake, when you served the saints, and while you continue to serve them."*** (Hebrews 6:10) Wherever we have failed? That's the message for the Friday that we call Good. Rest in Jesus tonight. Christ's **Hands of Humility** saved your soul and set your hands free to serve. Amen.