

## Dealing with Power-Hungry Christians

Mark 14:12-16 And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover {lamb} was being sacrificed, His disciples said to Him, "Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?" <sup>13</sup> And He sent two of His disciples, and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him; <sup>14</sup> and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"'" <sup>15</sup> "And he himself will show you a large upper room furnished {and} ready; and prepare for us there." <sup>16</sup> And the disciples went out, and came to the city, and found {it} just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

- It was the beginning of the Passover Feast and there would have been upwards to a million people packed into the city of Jerusalem for the occasion. If that is accurate, then that would produce over 100,000 Passover lambs to be sacrificed and served in the houses of the people.
- Each home celebrated with a roasted lamb that had not a broken bone. It was served with bitter herbs and unleavened bread in the pattern set forth in Exodus 12. They would fill the house with visitors based on the total consumption of the Lamb.
- During the meal, there were four ceremonial cups of wine served to the people based on the four phrases of deliverance in Exodus 6:6-7 "I will bring out", "I will deliver", "I will redeem" and "I will take". They would sing the Hallel (Ps 113-118) and recount the story of their deliverance from Egypt from many centuries prior. It was a special time for these people and they did not take it lightly.
- Meeting places like banquet halls would have been at a premium for this holy day. The fact that Jesus had been in town for nearly a week, the fact that the banquet hall was already prepared and the fact that it was common for people in Jerusalem to rent out their homes doing this occasion leads me to assume that Jesus had already arranged for this room to be used for the Last Supper when sending Peter and John in to complete the plans.

Luke 22:14-16 And when the hour had come He reclined {at the table,} and the apostles with Him. <sup>15</sup> And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; <sup>16</sup> for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

- In this large upper room we find Jesus partaking in the Passover feast for the last time in the earthly realm. According to Jewish first-century design, the table would have probably been U-shaped *triclinium* about 6 to 8 inches off the ground. The men would have reclined on their left elbow, perhaps with a cushion or pillow, leaving their right hand free to dine. Their feet would have extended out from the table and the servers would have done so from inside the "U".

- The #1 position, the head of the table was not in the middle, but one from the end on the left-side. This would leave a spot open on the very end for the #2 position, the honor-seat of the table. This was chosen by the leader, which in this case was Jesus. The apostle John was in this spot according to John 13:23, for he was the one that was reclined against Jesus. The #3 position would be the person on the other side of Jesus. This is important to the understanding the text we are about to study. The last time there was some division among the disciples, a week prior, was when James and John's mother, Mrs. Zebedee, requested of Jesus to have her sons sit in the coveted spots of recognition. *Matt 20:21 And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left."* Keep that in mind as we continue the passage.
- Jesus used a form of the common Hebrew idiom "*With desire, I have desired*". He truly longed to eat this meal with them, but this would be the last before the kingdom. This would have naturally raised the eyebrows of the disciples, for Jesus was soon going to take the throne for His kingdom. They were thinking this kingdom was earthly and were wondering what their place would be with Jesus when He took the throne.

Luke 22:17-23 And when He had taken a cup {and} given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; <sup>18</sup> for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes." <sup>19</sup> And when He had taken {some} bread {and} given thanks, He broke {it,} and gave {it} to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." <sup>20</sup> And in the same way {He took} the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood. <sup>21</sup> "But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Me on the table. <sup>22</sup> "For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!" <sup>23</sup> And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing. <sup>24</sup> And there arose also a dispute among them {as to} which one of them was regarded to be greatest.

- There will not be much time spent here on the Last Supper, for that will be in the next lesson. What is important to note that Jesus inaugurated the Lord's Supper and actually warned that there was one among them that was going to betray Him.
- They were so-focused on themselves and a possible position of power that they took this most historic and humbling moment and completely missed it. Their discussion of betrayal was short and they began talking about who was the greatest among them. They were politicking and jockeying for position with Jesus. They were so focused on themselves that they probably did not even notice Judas leaving to make his betrayal move. The scripture was clear, for there was a great division among the ones that were the closest to Jesus.

- How many times have we seen this in the workings of the church? How many times have we seen those that are to be the closest to Jesus lose track of that in pursuit of their own agenda? If it could happen to those that personally knew Jesus, are we exempt from the very same? How are we to deal with this problem when it occurs among church family?

### Jesus Verbally Taught Them:

Luke 22:25-30 And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' <sup>26</sup> "But not so with you, but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant. <sup>27</sup> "For who is greater, the one who reclines {at the table,} or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines {at the table} But I am among you as the one who serves. <sup>28</sup> "And you are those who have stood by Me in My trials; <sup>29</sup> and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you <sup>30</sup> that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

- Jesus educates them that their power hunger is the way of the earthly kingdoms, but not of the heavenly kingdom. In the world the kings lord over the gentiles and do so through their benefactors, but in the heavenly kingdom it is the opposite. In earthly kingdoms the rule comes from the top down, but in the heavenly kingdom it is from the bottom up.
- They have sacrificed the last three years of their lives to follow Jesus in the ministry. He assures them that they will all have a position on the Messianic table, but that will not be for awhile. In the end they will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, but in the meantime, they will have to continue their sacrificial service.
- We also as a church family must always resist desperately seeking power for ourselves and continuing teaching humility and service to one another. This should always be one of the great themes of the people of God, for the closer we are to Jesus, the tougher it can be to resist. Satan has and always will take advantage of a congregation that is drawing closer to Jesus. We must verbally teach each other to be the servant first, then the leader.

### Jesus Visually Taught Them:

John 13:2-5 And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, {the son} of Simon, to betray Him, <sup>3</sup> {Jesus,} knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God, and was going back to God, <sup>4</sup> rose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself about. <sup>5</sup> Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

- To the Jews, it was insulting to come into a home and not have their feet washed prior, for that could soil the throw rugs. Generally they would wash

- their own feet, but in the case of larger gatherings, like the one here, they would have a servant do it. Apparently the disciples needed to learn the lesson of humility and service to a deeper extent.
- Jesus took the initiative to rise up from the table, gird Himself with only a towel and start washing the disciples' feet. This should have shamed the disciples; they should have been washing His feet, for He was the Master and they were His followers, but now Jesus was carrying out the actions of a slave. The silence would have communicated very loudly their shame in jockeying for position instead of humbly serving. The reaction of Peter seems to summarize the moment.

John 13:6-11 And so He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" <sup>7</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you shall understand hereafter." <sup>8</sup> Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." <sup>9</sup> Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all {of you.} <sup>11</sup> For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean."

- Peter could not deal with the thought of Jesus visually teaching the lesson of humble servitude to him and the others. When Jesus finally arrived to him at the table, Peter called the Lord into question. Having his Master and Teacher wash his feet was something that he would not accept. It was only at the point of Jesus saying it was absolutely necessary that Peter completely reversed his position and requested a complete sponge bath.
- Apparently Peter had already bathed earlier and only his feet were dirty, which would only be normal. Jesus is trying to teach them that it is not the removal of dirt from the body that is the focus, but the removal of rebellion from the soul. Not all those that were having their feet washed were clean, for Judas was soiled in his soul because in just a short time he would betray Jesus.
- It was not enough for Jesus to teach them verbally, but also visually. Often the actions of a person can communicate a message better than just words. If they did not get the words alone, which they did not, then the actions of service would do the trick.

### Jesus Viably Taught Them.

John 13:12-17 And so when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments, and reclined {at the table} again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? <sup>13</sup> "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for {so} I am. <sup>14</sup> "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. <sup>16</sup> "Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master;

neither {is} one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup> "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

- Jesus taught His disciples in a way that called for them to do as they were told and shown. His lesson was viable and all of them could live what they were taught. He gave them something that they themselves could carry out in their own lives.
- There are so many congregations of the Lord that have taken the route of selfishness when it comes to power. The solutions that are often proposed when this problem occurs are not able to be carried out nor should be carried out. Outside sources are contacted, bad advice is given and angry decisions made. Power-hungry souls end up seeking more power and innocent souls are put at risk. Why not just do the simple thing by humbling ourselves in service to one another?
- Jesus taught His disciples in a viable way that really could be carried out. Is it any wonder that Jesus would encourage them to do the same, for they could carry out loving service to each other and it was by this that they would be defined. *John 13:34-35 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. <sup>35</sup> "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

The disciples were closer to Jesus than anyone else on the earth, yet they still struggled with power-seeking. Jesus taught them to overcome this divisive problem by teaching them verbally, visually and viably. They learned and the church thrived from the very beginning.

We must always be willing to do the same when it comes to power-seekers in the church. Correct them verbally, visually and viably, just like Jesus would.