

13. PART II : JESUS' RETURN TO THE FATHER

John 13:1 - 20:31

ACT I : The Last Supper John 13:1 - 17:21



Washing of Feet, Sieger Köder Photo of print



John 13:1

‘Before the festival of the Passover (11:55; 12:1), Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.’

The other Gospels portray this meal as a Passover meal ('I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer', Luke 22:15). John locates it '**before the festival**', but he also wishes to place the whole of the action of the second part of his Gospel in the context of this festival, for Jesus is about to pass over from this world to the Father, and, as the new Passover Lamb (1:29), he is about to give his life that we might pass over with him to share his intimate love-union with his Father who 'has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son' (Colossians 1:13).

Jesus loved '**to the end**', till he could say in his final breath that his mission of love was accomplished (19:30).

John 13:2

The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him.

John shocks us by the stark reminder that even here in this intimate meal with his own there is in the heart of one of Jesus' chosen disciples a darkness that is resistant to love. Talk of betrayal sets the scene and gives a sense of urgency to what follows.



Scene 1 : Jesus washes the feet of his disciples (13:3-20)

John 13:3-5

‘During supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel he had wrapped round his waist.’



Jesus is ritually acting out his approaching death and resurrection. Laying down his robes and taking them up again is an action that is meant to remind us of what he said earlier: ‘the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again’ (10:17).

John 13:6-11

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” Jesus answered, “You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” Peter said to him, “You will never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” Jesus said to him, “One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.” For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, “Not all of you are clean.”

Jesus insists with Peter that he must do what he is doing, for it is only through his laying down his life in love, it is only through his loving to the end, that he can return to the Father and that Peter can share Jesus' life with him.

John 13:14-15

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord – and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

‘Do this in memory of me’ (1Corinthians 11:24-25 & Luke 22:19).

We are being invited to give ourselves to others, even to the pouring out of our lives. We are being invited, in Paul’s words, to ‘let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus’ (Philippians 2:5).

John 13:16-20

Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master (see Luke 6:40), nor are messengers (ἀπόστολος - only time in John) greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed and happy (μακάριος) if you do them.

I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But it is to fulfil the scripture, 'The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me' (Psalm 41:9). I tell you this now, before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am (ἐγώ εἰμι).

Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives the One who sent me (see Mark 9:37).”

Scene 2 : Jesus, Judas & the Beloved Disciple (13:21-32)



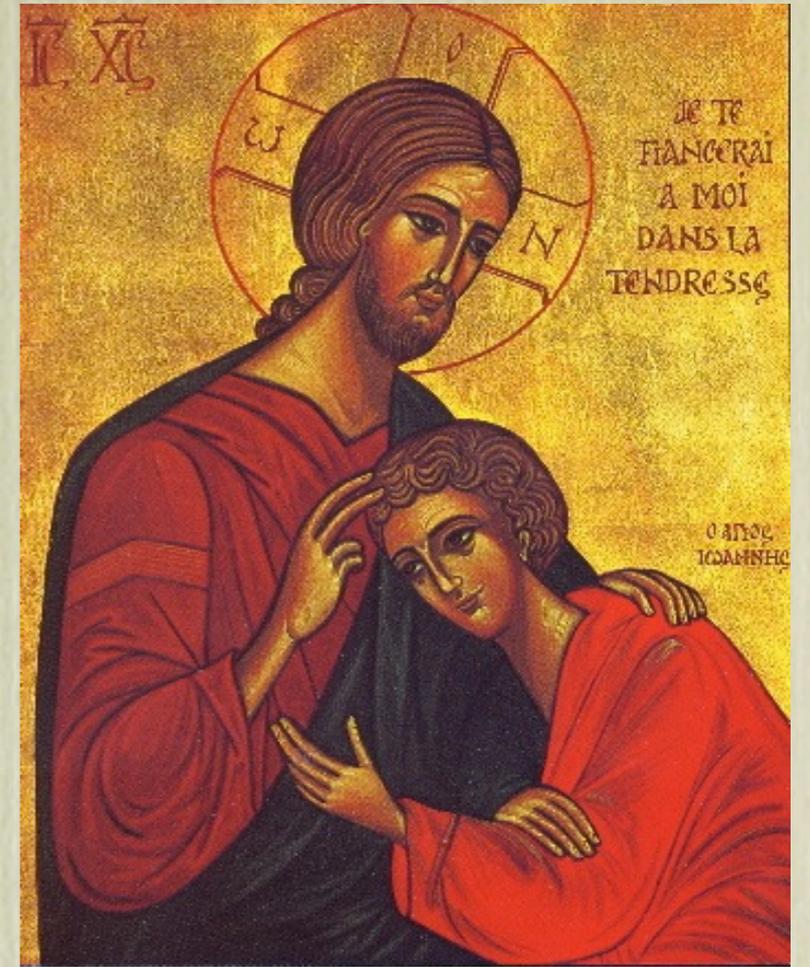
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John 13:21-22

‘After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit (see 11:33; 12:27) and declared: Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me. The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking.’

John 13:25-27

‘One of his disciples – **the one whom Jesus loved** – was reclining next to him.’ Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?”



George Viredaz from an icon of Christ and Saint John Dormition Abbey, Jerusalem. Used with permission.

Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish (see Mark 14:20).” So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. After he received the piece of bread, Satan (only time in John) entered into him.

John 13:27-30

Jesus said to him, “Do quickly what you are going to do.” Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the festival”; or, that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.



John 13:31-32

When Judas had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.

John 13:33

‘Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’

‘You will search for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come’ (7:34).

Jesus is present in his Eucharistic community and addressing ‘**his own**’. For the last time in John’s Gospel, he identifies himself as the ‘Son of Man’. Just as God exalted the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 52:13), so ‘**now the Son of Man has been glorified**’. Victory is assured. The hour of his being ‘lifted up’ (8:28) has come. We are to see it as his hour of glory. He came to reveal God and, in his identifying with the poor and the broken who cry to God in their distress, in his loving to the end, he is about to achieve the goal of his mission. He is about to give the final revelation of God as a God of love. God has been glorified in him and God has revealed the glory of Jesus – the love which binds him to the Father and which draws everyone to him.

Scene 3: Jesus' Farewell Speech (John 13:34 - 14:31)

Modelled on Moses' Testament in Deuteronomy

We will find that Jesus' speech moves in and out of various time-frames. As we listen, there are times when we hear Jesus speaking at the supper. At other times we hear him either addressing us from the cross or from the communion with his Father that he enjoys in his post-resurrectional glory.

As John writes he is very conscious of the risen and glorified Jesus present in his own community and constantly reminding them of his love. We are being invited into the mind and heart of Jesus as revealed to the Beloved Disciple. The material may come from homilies given by the Beloved Disciple.

John 13:34-35

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

Jesus is giving to us the love which his Father gives to him (see 15:9). It is this love which we are to give each other. He has given us an example. We are to serve each other with the same delicate intimacy which he has displayed in washing our feet.

Ezekiel 36:26-27

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.'

To refuse the love which he is placing upon us as his final commandment is to refuse the life he is offering. John makes this point over and over again in his Letter: ‘Whoever says, “I have come to know him,” but does not obey his commandments, is a liar, and in such a person the truth does not exist’ (1 John 2:4). ‘Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him’ (1 John 3:18-19). ‘Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love’ (1 John 4:8).

‘Those who say, “I love God,” and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also’ (1John 4:20-21).

John 13:36-38

Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered, “Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow afterward.” Peter said to him, “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times.

Peter’s love for Jesus is sincere, and one day he will be a good shepherd and lay down his life for the sheep (21:15-19). but only when he has learned humility. He must learn that the love which Jesus is asking of him and of all his disciples is not a love that they can claim as their own, even the love that stirs in them when they are attracted to him.

It is his Father's love which Jesus shares and which he is offering them as a gift. We never have control over this love. We must always receive it as a gift with empty hands and an open heart, and live it in complete dependence upon God.

John 14:1-3

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.

Believe: Choose to be in the divine love that surrounds you, the love God is offering through Jesus.



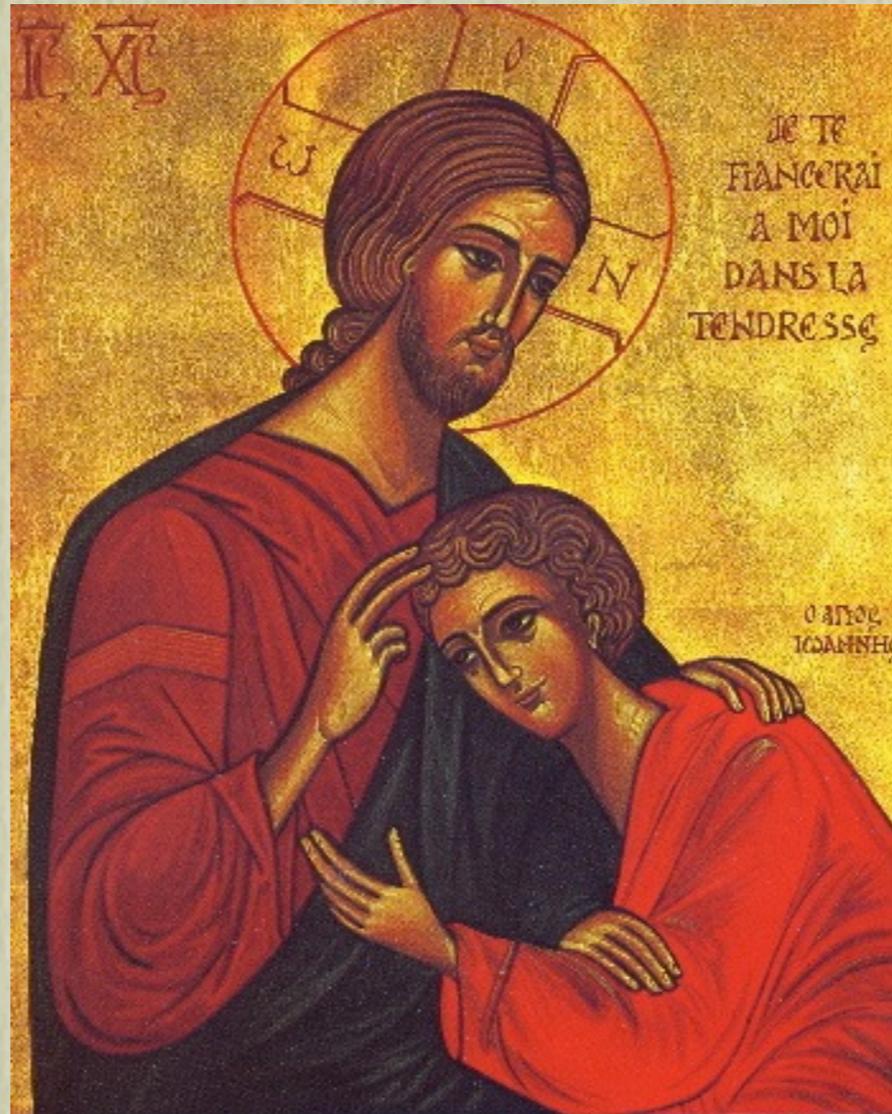
Healing Touch, Mary Southard, CSJ, Photo of print.

In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

Jesus is going to the Father. He assures ‘**his own**’ that there are many dwelling places in his Father’s house. He is speaking of the love-communion which those who believe in him can experience now, in the midst of the journey and the struggle, enjoying the same intimacy as Jesus himself experiences. Jesus will take us to himself when our turn comes to die (2 Corinthians 5:1). He will take us to himself now by sending his Spirit to dwell in us and to draw us into his intimate communion with the Father which he longs to share with us.

Communion with God

God's perfect
human Word,
human realisation
of the Divine Word
of the Self-giving
transcendent God



George Viredaz from an icon of Christ and Saint John
Dormition Abbey, Jerusalem. Used with permission.

Communion in the
Love-Spirit that
unites Jesus and God,
sharing in the Divine
Love-communion of
the Transcendent God.

John 14:4-6

‘You know the way to the place where I am going.’ Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I am (ἐγώ εἰμι) the way, and the truth, and the life.

Jesus not only shows us the way. He is the way, for it is our communion in love with him that opens us to the Father’s love and draws us into God’s embrace.

We recall the prayer of the psalmist: ‘Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth’ (Psalm 86:11).

‘You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy’ (Psalm 16:11).

Jesus is the way.

Jesus is the truth:

‘O send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling’ (Psalm 43:3). Jesus is the truth that will set us free (8:32), the truth of God’s faithfulness to love. In Paul’s words, he is the Yes to all God’s promises (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Jesus is our life

He reveals God’s faithful love to us by being himself the expression of it.

John 14:6

No one comes to the Father except through me.

To the extent that circumstances make hearing the Gospel impossible, or that people fail to come to know Christ because of the failure of Christians to live his life in an authentic way, the risen and exalted Christ ‘lifted up from the earth’ has his own mysterious ways of ‘drawing all people to himself’ and so to the Father.

The Second Vatican Council in its Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (n. 22) has this to say: The Christian partakes in the paschal mystery, becomes like Christ in his death and will encounter the resurrection fortified with hope. Nor does this hold only for those who believe in Christ: it holds for all people of good will in whose hearts grace works in an invisible fashion. Christ died for everybody, everybody's ultimate vocation is the same, divine vocation. So we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers everybody the possibility of sharing in some way known to God in this paschal mystery.'

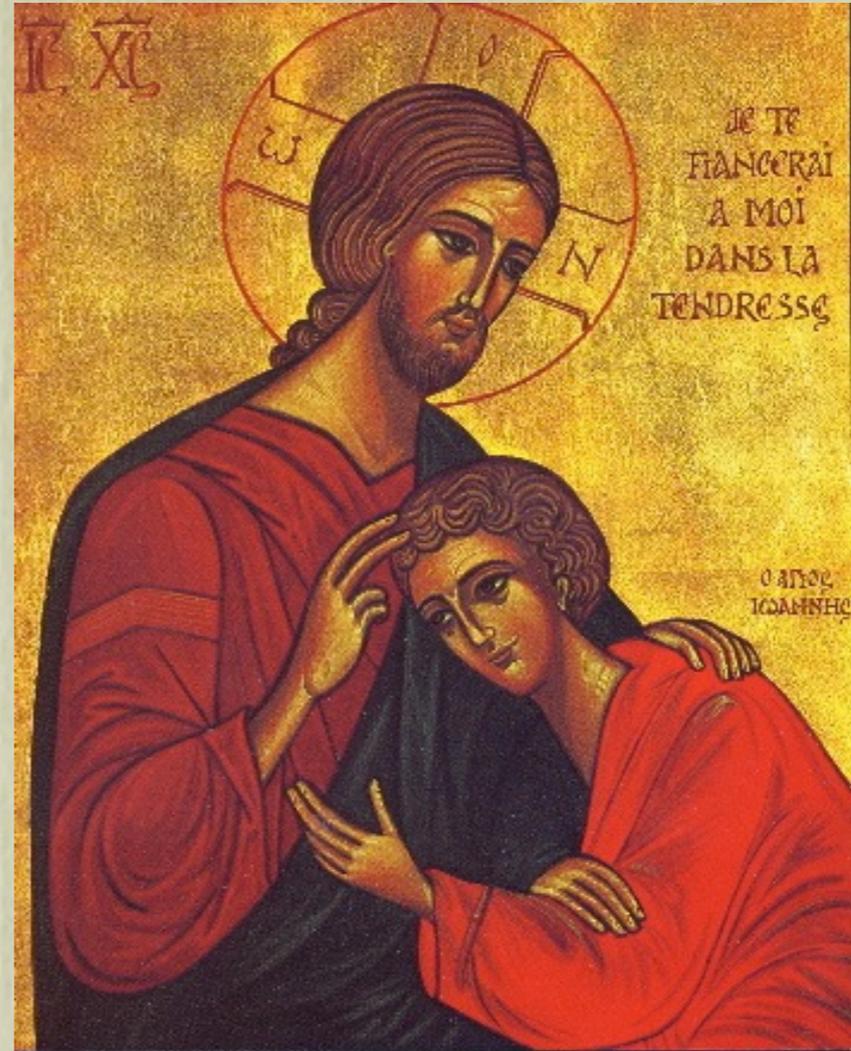
John 14:7-9

‘If you know me, you will know my Father also.

From now on you do know him and have seen him.’

Philip said to him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.’

Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”?’



George Viredaz from an icon of Christ and Saint John Dormition Abbey, Jerusalem. Used with permission.

John 1:18

‘No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, who has made God known.’

The Psalmist gives expression to the desire arising from the human heart to see God: ‘Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me! “Come,” my heart says, “seek his face!” Your face, Lord, I seek’ (Psalm 27:7-8). ‘My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?’ (Psalm 42:2).

Moses pleads with God that he might see God’s face only to be told: ‘You cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live’ (Exodus 33:20).

Elijah journeyed to the mountain of Moses that he might see God. God revealed himself to him in mysterious ways, but, once again, Elijah could not see God’s face. This is dramatically portrayed by the veil with which Elijah had to cover his face (1Kings 19:13).

We are being assured that to see Jesus loving ‘to the end’ (13:1) is to see God revealed. This seeing is, of course, a seeing-in-faith. We do not see God in God’s transcendent mystery, but we do see God as God has chosen to reveal himself in Jesus. As John has already declared in the Prologue: ‘We have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son’ (1:14). For, while it remains true that ‘no one has ever seen God’ (1:18), the Son sees the Father and it is John’s belief that ‘it is the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, who has made God known’ (1:18).



2 Corinthians 4:6

‘It is the God who said: Let light shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.’

Source Unknown

John 14:10-11

Do you not believe
that I am in the Father
and the Father is in me?
The words I say to you
I do not speak as from myself.
It is the Father living in me
who is doing this work.
You must believe me when I say
that I am in the Father
and the Father is in me;
believe me on the evidence of
this work, if for no other reason.



Christ Pantocrator mosaic in Byzantine style, from
Cefalù Cathedral in Sicily, Italy, c. 1130
Public Domain

John 14:12-14

I tell you most solemnly, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and, in fact, will do even greater works, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask for anything in my name, I will do it.

We will continue to experience Jesus' presence in our lives because he will be continuing his mission through us. He will continue to bring about through his disciples his Father's design for the world in ways that are greater than what they have witnessed to this point. We recall Jesus' earlier words: 'The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished' (5:20). Through the ministry of his disciples he will 'gather into one the dispersed children of God' (11:52).

John 14:15-18, 23

If you **love** me, you will keep my commandments.

And I will ask the Father,
and he will give you another **Advocate**,
to be **with you forever**.

This is the **Spirit** of truth,
whom the world cannot receive,
because it neither sees nor knows the Spirit.
You know the Spirit, because the Spirit
abides with you, is in you.

I will not leave you orphaned; **I am coming to you ...**

If you love me you will keep my word,
and **my Father** will love you, and **we will come to you**
and **make our home in you**.



The Trinity, Andrei Rublev, 1411,
Tretyakov Gallery, Public Domain.

John 14:19-21

In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

John 14:22-24

Judas (see Luke 6:16) (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?” Jesus answered him, “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

Whoever does not love me does not keep my words;
and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father
who sent me.

John 14:25-26

I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.

We find a similar statement in the First Letter of John: ‘The anointing that you received from Christ abides in you, and so you do not need anyone to teach you. His anointing teaches you about all things’ (1 John 2:27). Jesus’ mission is to reveal the Father. And Jesus will continue his mission by sending the love-Spirit that he shares with God. This gift will deepen the disciples’ understanding of Jesus’ revelation and to keep them faithful to it. This is achieved by our being continually drawn by the Spirit into the embrace which unites Jesus and the God he calls ‘Father’ in a communion which is Jesus’ incarnate experience of the union between the Word and God – a union in which the very being of God consists.

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.

The peace which Jesus offers as his farewell gift is the Messianic peace promised by the prophets. Jesus is the 'Prince of peace' (Isaiah 9:6), God's messenger 'who announces peace' (Isaiah 52:7). 'Peace, peace, to the far and the near' (Isaiah 57:19).

It is the peace of the new covenant: 'I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them' (Ezekiel 37:26). It is the peace for which the Psalmist prays: 'May the Lord bless his people with peace' (Psalm 29:11).

John 14:27

Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

The kind of fear against which Jesus is warning his disciples is the trepidation of heart that causes us to so focus on our own insecurity that we forget to cry out in faith to God. We may be powerless to prevent this fear or to put a stop to it when it comes over us, but we are not powerless in the way we respond to it. To simply give in to it is to be enslaved by it. We can take this feeling to prayer. We can remember with gratitude moments of love that have been real to us. We can learn to counteract the often nebulous and dysfunctional thoughts that are at the root of our feelings of fear. We are not powerless to respond to God's encouraging grace. We need not be a victim of fear. Jesus is encouraging us, as he encouraged us earlier: 'Believe in God, believe also in me' (14:1).

John 14:28-29

You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.

When Jesus is glorified he will be able to send his Spirit to his disciples (7:39). He will be able to come to them with his Father in a way that transcends the communion that he now has with them. The 'joy' which they are promised is the joy experienced by the Baptist when he heard the voice of the bridegroom (3:29), the joy of those who share Jesus' mission (4:36; see 15:11; 16:22). This joy is a fruit of the Spirit (20:20-21; see Galatians 5:22).

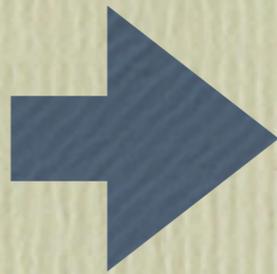
John 14:30-31

I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.

(see Mark 14:42).

We will see the terrible things that others do to Jesus. But we must not be distracted. We must keep our eyes on him and we will see the communion with his Father that sustains him throughout his passion. His suffering did not separate him from the love of his Father. Throughout it he remained obedient, and so was able to continue giving himself in love. In this way he continued to carry out the mission given him by the Father.

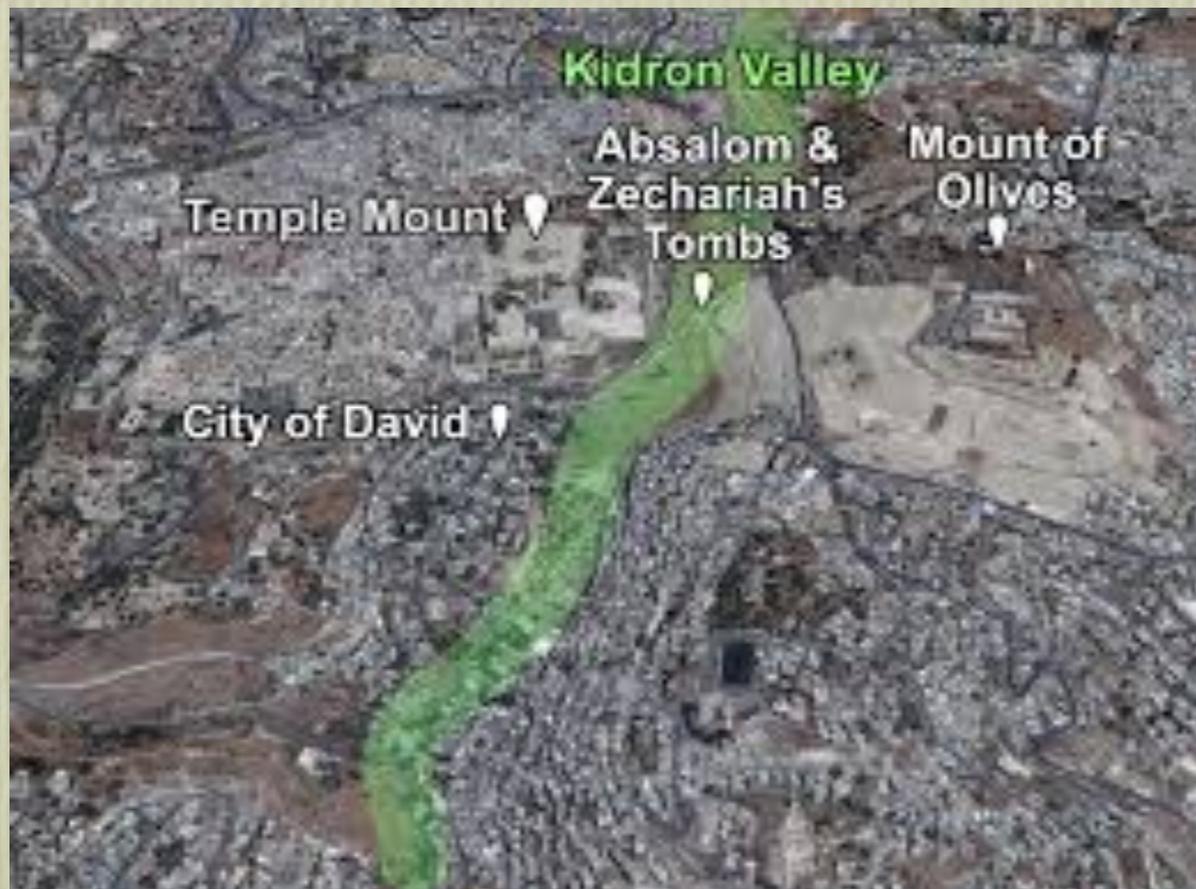
John 14:31



Rise, let us be on our way

John 18:1

After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley



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