

Praying with the Bible: Maundy Thursday – Jn 13:1-15

Retire:

As we begin this time of praying with the Bible, we keep aside all other things that could distract us; keep the phone on silent mode; switch off TV, music system, etc. Keep your Bibles ready, opened to John 13:1-15.

Let there be inner silence too, as we as we begin with the sign of the cross... and sing a soft Hymn or Bhajan

Read:

We try to experience the feelings of the characters mentioned as we read the passage: John 13:1-15

After a few moments of silence, someone else reads the same passage again softly and slowly

Reflect:

We imagine each of the characters sharing their feelings (Ask different members to read):

- **Disciples:** The day before the festival of Passover is usually a happy day of preparations, but today we are having mixed feelings – eagerness and disappointment. It seems that Jesus is going to do something great that will establish his kingdom. We are eager to stand by him and give our best support, and then have important positions in his administration. But Jesus is also talking of his end. He says one of us is going to betray him. This is his last supper... maybe until his kingdom is established. We know pharisees and so many others are against him. But we also know Jesus is powerful. God listens to whatever he asks. But the problem is he doesn't ask God to do some big, spectacular things; that's why he is so slow in establishing his kingdom. Most of us wish Jesus would move fast, overthrow the Romans and establish his kingdom.
- **Peter:** I don't understand why Jesus is wasting his time on small things that can be delegated to others; like today he insisted on washing the feet of all of us, which could have easily been given to a servant for a small expense. This is the time when we should have focussed on planning our strategy for establishing the kingdom... where to start and how to proceed... But I think Jesus is worried that there is one among us who will betray him. When I objected to him washing my feet, he said I don't understand him; and if I didn't allow him to wash, then I can have no part with him. I thought he was suspecting my loyalty. I told him wash not just my feet, but he can wash me fully, hands and head as well. Even if I don't understand him, I wanted to assert my full loyalty to him.
- **Judas:** I had high hopes that Jesus would overthrow the Romans and establish a kingdom where I would have money, power and status. But I was wrong. I got carried away with his sweet talks. He can't establish a kingdom. I am disgusted with him. I think it's time for me to move on; but let me make the best of this situation. I can take the money offered by the authorities to give them information about Jesus. After questioning him they will realise that he is capable only of sweet talks; he is no threat to anyone. They will let him go his way; and I will go my way, to find a better leader who can really establish a kingdom.
- **Jesus:** I can see that the ones dearest to me are feeling disappointed and let down. One of them is so disgusted with me that its clear he will betray me. Never mind what happens to me; at this moment, I need to help all of them to experience true unconditional love. I want them to learn that true power and status lies in humble service, not in establishing kingdoms and lording it over people. I want to make this last supper with them such a memorable event that they will re-live this experience, and reach out in love and service to one another, instead of hungering for popularity, power and money.

We spend a minute of silent reflection

Respond:

We get in touch with our feelings as we empathize with the feelings of the characters mentioned above.

Conclude the Bible Prayer session with a hymn or Bhajan.

Praying with the Bible: Good Friday – Jn 19:18-30

Retire:

As we begin this time of praying with the Bible, we keep aside all other things that could distract us; keep the phone on silent mode; switch off TV, music system, etc. Keep your Bibles ready, opened to John 19:18-30.

Let there be inner silence too, as we as we begin with the sign of the cross... and sing a soft Hymn or Bhajan

Read:

We read the passage: John 19:18-30

Take one question at a time, and very briefly try to find your answers in the verses indicated:

1. The first incident is about the inscription on the cross. What was written? In which languages? What was the objection raised? What is the deeper meaning of the manner in which their objection is overruled by Pilate? (answers are in vv19-22) [*It seems to be a divine plan to declare Jesus on the cross as a King*].
2. The second incident is about the soldiers dividing among themselves the clothing of Jesus. What is the deeper meaning attributed to this action? (answer is in v24) [*Whatever is happening to Jesus on the cross is a divine plan for the fulfilment of Scripture*]
3. The third incident is about Jesus handing over his mother to the beloved disciple. What is the deeper purpose for this handing over? (answer in in the first part of v 28) [*Handing over his mother to the beloved disciple is also part of the divine plan Jesus had to finish*]
4. The fourth incident is of Jesus saying "I thirst"; what is the deeper purpose of this incident? (answer is in second part of v28, and in v 30) [*Whatever is happening to Jesus on the cross is a divine plan for the fulfilment of Scripture*]

After a few moments of silence, someone else reads the same passage again softly and slowly, while all pay attention to the points highlighted above.

Reflect:

Jesus' crucifixion is the climax of John's Gospel. It is for this purpose that Jesus came into the world. The unfolding of the divine purpose, while Jesus is on the cross, gives us a deep insight into the mystery of life:

- There is a divine meaning and purpose to life; and it can unfold in the most painful situations, in the most unexpected manner.
- 'Fatalism' ('*kismet*', or '*naseeb*') is a mindset where one feels like a helpless victim of circumstances; on the other hand, having a 'sense of divine purpose' is quite the opposite – it gives meaning and purpose in the most painful circumstances of life.
- The 'small things' of life are indeed a 'big part' of the divine purpose of life
- In the ultimate analysis, 'Success' and 'Failure' are about faithfulness to the divine purpose, rather than achievements and results.

We spend a minute of silent reflection

Respond:

We ask ourselves: Do I sense a divine purpose unfolding in my life? Am I trying to measure it in worldly terms? Is faithfulness to the heart and mind of Jesus my measure of 'accomplishment' in all struggles of life?

We spend a few minutes of answering the above questions.

Conclude the Bible Prayer session with a hymn or Bhajan.