

FIRST READING: Acts of Apostles 13:13-25

A reading from the Acts of Apostles:

From Paphos, Paul and his companions set sail and arrived at Perga in Pamphylia. But John left them and returned to Jerusalem. They continued on from Perga and reached Antioch in Pisidia. On the sabbath they entered into the synagogue and took their seats. After the reading of the law and the prophets, the synagogue officials sent word to them, "My brothers, if one of you has a word of exhortation for the people, please speak." So Paul got up, motioned with his hand, and said, "Fellow children of Israel and you others who are God-fearing, listen. The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and exalted the people during their sojourn in the land of Egypt. With uplifted arm he led them out, and for about forty years he put up with them in the desert. When he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance at the end of about four hundred and fifty years. After these things he provided judges up to Samuel the prophet. Then they asked for a king. God gave them Saul, son of Kish, a man from the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. Then he removed him and raised up David as their king; of him he testified, *I have found David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will carry out my every wish.* From this man's descendants God, according to his promise, has brought to Israel a savior, Jesus. John heralded his coming by proclaiming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel; and as John was completing his course, he would say, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. Behold, one is coming after me; I am not worthy to unfasten the sandals of his feet.'"

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 89:2-3, 21-22, 25 and 27

For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

The favors of the LORD I will sing forever; through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness. For you have said, "My kindness is established forever"; in heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness.

For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

"I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him, That my hand may be always with him, and that my arm may make him strong."

For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

"My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him, and through my name shall his horn be exalted. He shall say of me, 'You are my father, my God, the Rock, my savior.'"

For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

GOSPEL: John 13:16-20

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to John:

When Jesus had washed the disciples' feet, he said to them: "Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it. I am not speaking of all of you. I know those whom I have chosen. But so that the Scripture might be fulfilled, The one who ate my food has raised his heel against me. From now on I am telling you before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe that I AM. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection for the 4th Thursday of Easter

We are reading the Acts of the Apostle during Eastertide more or less in the order that Luke wrote it. Tomorrow will pick up where today leaves off. The purpose of Paul's exhortation is to connect the promises of God to Israel with the mission and ministry of Jesus. Paul, who believed in Jesus deeply, described himself, a few times, as a good practicing Jew. There was no contradiction or syncretism in this either. Jews and Christians had not yet parted ways on a path to become separate world religions. Christians were still recognized as Jews.

It was Paul's profound hope that all of Judaism would convert to Christ. This is why he persisted in preaching and teaching in Jewish synagogues. His purpose was to persuade his audience to convert. This only had limited success. During this time, he began to attract more pagans rather than Jews to Christ. He did this as a Jew for Jesus. This was a brave thing to do in a potentially hostile congregation.

I understand Jesus' motivation in prophesying that he would be betrayed. The events of the cross and resurrection were still a day and a half in the future. The realization of Jesus' vision and truth helped the eleven recognize that he was I AM; in other words, God. Why did John connect Jesus saying about the eleven's relationship to Jesus with his washing of their feet? Jesus, in this metaphor, is master and the sender of the message. They are the juniors in this relationship; the slave and messenger. Jesus became like a slave and a messenger when he washed their feet. Jesus was just about to reverse something else too. He was also sinless and would become like sin on the cross. If the disciples knew this, they made the connection. His blessing was theirs as a result.

We already know the story of what Jesus has done. We have read it in faith. Do we understand this? Jesus, by his obedient actions has reversed the normal patterns. God became a human being, chose to serve others and opted to become a sacrifice for human sin and death. He would rise from death as an everlasting sign that he is I AM. Jesus' words prepared the eleven for the events of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection. Their understanding of what Jesus told them was different than ours. We have the perspective of history and see this through eyes of faith.

May God's gift of clarity come to us all.

James D. Beath

May 12, 2022