



The Nourishing Vocation Project

Engaging the Living Word

[John 13:1-17; 31b-35](#)

What is this particular text?

- Jesus preparing to say goodbye to his disciples
- Farewell discourse
- Last will and testament
- Huge turning point

How does the text function within the scriptural story?

- Gives the primary overarching theme of Scripture
- Embodied God-in-action
- Love-in-action
- Demonstration of Jesus' identity
- Demonstration of disciples' call

How can this text function in the church today?

- As a call to realize the ways we have betrayed others
- As a reminder that the core of our mission is the love God first gave us in Jesus
- As a call to orient ourselves toward the most marginalized, the most betrayed; to listen to them, wash their feet, care for their needs
- Tells us how others will know we are followers of Jesus

What does the text do to you? How do you react to the text? What feelings does this text engender in you?

- It's incriminating – makes me think of the times I have been the betrayer
- Makes me feel heartbroken - as a transgender person, I'm all too familiar with knowing who will betray me
- Jesus referring to his disciples as "little children" makes me feel comforted
- I felt very close to Jesus as I read and re-read the text – closer than I usually feel when reading Scripture

What do you have to say to the text?

- Jesus knew. Jesus knew what would happen to him. Jesus knew he was going to God. And Jesus knew exactly who would betray him to set off all these events
- My life would look so much different if the church loved me the way Jesus commands it to
- Everyone's feet get washed – except Jesus' feet
- Jesus returns to the table after washing Jesus' feet. It's easy to want to leave or hide after being that vulnerable, but Jesus doesn't feel a need to do that

What do you see through this text from the story itself?

- Embodied God
- Humility of God
- Service in action



- Immersion in the messiness of the human experience
- Vulnerability
- Intimacy

What do you see from within your church/community/world? (2022)

- The ways the church has repeatedly betrayed 2SLGBTQIA+, BIPOC, disabled, and neurodivergent people
 - The church has betrayed me repeatedly. Some days I question why I stay, yet I still have this calling to Word and Sacrament ministry
- The unashamed betrayal of marginalized peoples paired with Jesus' commandment to love one another – doesn't make sense

What do you see within yourself?

- My inner child (re: Jesus referring to his disciples as "little children")
 - The little child who found so much comfort in church, who had no idea who they would grow up to be but knew they had a God who loved them
 - The little child who would grow up to leave the churches they were raised in because they were no longer welcome, yet still somehow kept their relationship with Jesus
 - The little child who would grow to strive to love themselves as Jesus does
 - The little child who feels betrayed, and who now knows exactly who betrayed them
 - The little child who can't figure out why they feel so different
 - The little child Jesus stayed with when they came out as queer and transgender, even when others didn't
 - The little child whose baptismal sponsors failed them, but who would find others who would live out that promise in their life
 - The little child whose life is marked by loss, years blurred by trauma responses, who clung to God because they had nothing else left to cling to
- Someone who has both betrayed and been betrayed
- Someone who has been washed time and time again, whose baptismal promise holds multitudes
- My calling to hold the promise of Jesus for others, and to give Jesus to people
- My own vulnerability as a queer, transgender person

What is the context – textual and historical?

- Follows the passage where Jesus proclaims that God has sent him, and it is God that has told him what to say
- Precedes Jesus foretelling Peter's denial
- During supper / mealtime experience

What questions does this text raise for you?

- What does loving one another look like?
 - What does it feel like?
 - What does it taste like, smell like?
- What does it feel like to be loved the way Jesus says we should be loved?
- What about people who don't have feet?
- What about wheelchair users, whose primary mode of moving through the world is not their feet, but their wheels?



- What does it look like to be able to authentically remain in a space where I've just made myself incredibly vulnerable?

What words/themes seem of particular import?

- Depart
- "He loved them to the end"
- Betray
- Washed
- Glorified
- Commandment
- Love
- "Little children"

What is the Gospel / transforming Good News within this text?

- God intended for us to be loved
- God has gifted us to one another, to show Jesus' love to one another
- Jesus remains with us, even when we betray him
- The love we give comes from God

What is the as-over-againstness of this text?

- Hatred separates us from one another and prevents us from experiencing others as worthy of love
- Being betrayed doesn't diminish Jesus' call to love one another
- Loving others doesn't mean completely sacrificing ourselves or our identities

Who does this text say that Jesus is, or if not Jesus, then who does this text say that God is? What does this text say about God?

- Jesus knows deep betrayal and deep love
- Jesus knew his fate
- Jesus gets messy – he washes his disciples dirty feet
- Jesus remains vulnerable in the face of denial, taking his robe off and taking on the role of a servant
- Jesus tells his disciples they were right to call him Teacher and Lord
- Jesus intended for his disciples to follow his example

What have others said about this text?

- "<https://knitpurlpraypreach.blogspot.com/search?q=john+13> Jesus' entire life—his ministry, his teachings, and ultimately his suffering with us and for us on the cross—inaugurated a new way of loving one another and the world. And on the night in which he was betrayed, Jesus, the King of Love, passed that new way on to us, commanding us: love one another as I have loved you." Carrie Ballenger
- "[And it couldn't be better](#), really, for feet are what carry our entire physical beings. And feet do get dirty, sometimes really dirty. Jesus in this single, simple, surprising act, speaks to all of this for all of us. And by getting his own hands dirty as he cleans up our 'feet,' we are reminded once more of all the gifts God intends for us." Janet Hunt
- "[In this last week of his life](#), at the Passover time, Jesus makes himself a soft target, too. He speaks about betrayal, never denying the reality of violence and evil in the world. Inside that



reality, he is determined to maintain his softness of heart. Instead of giving the disciples a strongly worded lecture about loyalty and honor, he takes off his robe, exposing even more vulnerability. He picks up the basin to do the work of a servant.” Mary Austin

What will I teach or proclaim?

- Being vulnerable in this world is hard – it’s so, very hard. I know because as a transgender person, I am vulnerable, particularly right now when hatred against my community and anti-trans legislation are both on the rise. Jesus knows this; he knows how difficult it is to be vulnerable in this world
- God intended for us to be love, and to be loved
- Service in the name of Jesus requires vulnerability
- Jesus’ commandment to love one another does not mean sacrificing our entire selves for the sake of pleasing others
- There is a difference between the forced vulnerability marginalized peoples experience in this world and the chosen vulnerability that is service in Jesus’ name. It can be incredibly difficult to discern between the two for those of us who are marginalized Jesus followers
- Jesus’ commandment to love one another is meant to be embodied, to be embedded in our very beings as a way of life