The bridge between John's "Book of Signs" (John 1-11) and "The Book of Glory" (John 13-21), reveals how heavily Jesus leaned on the ministry of the Holy Spirit as He began to recede from public miracles and teaching. He proclaims to the crowds in Jerusalem one last time to "trust in the light while they have it," and then He hides from them (John 12:36).

But how full are these hidden moments that Jesus had before the Cross, both in John's account and in the midst of our hidden lives today. Let us give full credit in this week's notes to the Holy Spirit for filling every nook and cranny of Christ's humiliation with the glory of God. Let us also give the Spirit credit for being determined that every moment of our lives will, in the end, bring glory to the Son and the Father! How does the poet put it, describing how the glory of Christ can fill even the most mundane tasks?

Teach me, my God and King,
In all things thee to see,
And what I do in anything,
To do it as for thee:

A man that looks on glass,
On it may stay his eye;
Or if he pleaseth, through it passe,
And then the heav'n espy.

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgerie divine:
Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,
Makes that and th' action fine.

Not rudely, as a beast,
To run into an action;
But still to make thee prepossessed,
And give it his perfection.

All may of thee partake:
Nothing can be so mean,
Which with his tincture (for thy sake)
Will not grow bright and clean.

This is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold:
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for less be told.

George Herbert, *The Elixir*

Mon/Tues/Weds: Read John 10:39-42 & John 11:45-54 **The In-Between Spaces**

As I pursued a degree in geology, the hardest part of optical mineralogy for me was being able to correctly identify the "interstitial" matrix that surrounded the crystal structure of the mineral itself. In other words, what was filling up the seemingly empty places in the laboratory slide of the mineral I was looking at through a microscope? Learning to interpret the interstitial places took me a whole year in that class. Just so – it takes a whole life-time to appreciate how Christ can weave His Father's glorious purpose, even into the darkest, seemingly "empty spaces" of our lives!

Do you appreciate that every moment of Christ's life redeems every moment of our lost lives? Sin ravages and years of sin and regret seem to leave our lives wasted, and we may end up in the back of beyond because of our sins, forced, like Psalm 61:2 says, to cry out to the Lord from "the ends of the earth," because that is how far our sin has carried us away. See the Holy Spirit filling those times, enabling us to cry out, "Abba Father." Why? Because the Spirit helps us when we don't know how to pray (Romans 8:15 & 8:26) and when we are weak and outcasts.

In the same way, we see Jesus driven out of Jerusalem and the populated parts of Judea (John 11:54) because the Jewish Leaders officially decided to arrest Him and put Him to death (John 11:53 & 12:10). Where did He go? He would have followed a familiar pattern of retreating into the wilderness, as He had done before. The heat of the angry Jews who sought to stone Him caused Jesus on an earlier occasion (John 10:31) to go across the Jordan. Here in John 11:54, Jesus goes probably to the north and east, towards the wilderness that surrounded the Jordan river. What was the immediate result? Well, John 11:54 doesn't tell us. But I believe that the same thing would have happened as did in John 10:41-42. Many believed and saw that Jesus fulfilled all that John the Baptist had said about Him. He was the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world," and no doubt many believed in Him (compare John 10:42 with John 11:45 & John 12:11).

Meditate and Pray: Just as the Gospels record that Christ, the spiritual vagabond, was forced to wander "with no-where to lay His head" (Luke 9:57-58), so John's Gospel pictures Him repeatedly seeking out wilderness places because He, the king of the world, was unwelcome in His own creation! But how glorious were these times of "travelling into the sticks." These withdrawals were crucial times of growth and rest, in terms of maintaining communion with His Father and personal instruction with His Apostles.

The western author, Ivan Doig, expresses God's ability, through Christ and by His Spirit, to work in the "in-between times" this way:

> "The spaces between stars are where the work of the universe is done."

Thurs/Fri: Read John 11:49-12:3 & Matthew 26:1-16 **Divine Control over Evil**

Christ withdraws from Jerusalem to ensure that He would not be prematurely arrested before His appointed time. He goes to an unknown town named "Ephraim" (John 11:54). Scholars are not certain where this is, but tradition says it is a village about 15 miles northeast of Jerusalem, bordering the uncultivated wilderness of the Jordan river valley. In such a secret place, Christ would be safe but also close enough to Jerusalem to make it back for Passover, when the time came to die on the Cross.

This time of retreat was also part of the Divine plan. God is actually very active in such hidden and quiet times. As William Cowper says (# 128, *Trinity Hymnal*), God is not to be judged by feeble sense. He may "plant His (hidden) footsteps in the sea," but He is making progress towards His ultimate goal.

Nowhere is such progress more clearly seen than in the Divine timetable for the sacrifice in Jerusalem of the Son of God. Christ's enemies are forced to arrest and crucify Him during Passover, thereby ensuring the fulfillment of the Old Testament shadow which the original Passover lamb-sacrifice was meant to be. Their original time-table is not adhered to:

> Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. But they said, **"Not during the feast,** lest there be an uproar among the people" (Matthew 26:3-5).

These hypocrites could ensure their outward, ritual purity in "keeping the Passover," when their hearts were actually full of murderous hatred of the Son of God.

But God ordains that Judas would be prompted by his anger at Jesus' rebuke concerning the generous offering of nard which Mary, the sister of Lazarus, offered to anoint Christ. He went immediately to the high priests (Matthew 26:14-16) to make plans to betray Christ. Elated at this unexpected defection, the religious leaders make plans to arrest Christ on the eve of Passover (Thursday evening of Passion week). Thereby the Lamb of God actually dies on the Passover, as God's Word ordained!

Meditate and Pray: In the middle of the most malevolent heavenly storm that ever has raged, God was in complete control of those who hated His Son and desired His death. The Father was even able to provide for His Son when he needed rest in the Valley of the Shadow of Death (I speak of His weary humanity here). God ensured that His foes would be intimidated from arresting Christ before or during Passover: too many crowds, too many eyewitnesses to such an arrest, and too great a risk of riots since Christ was so popular with the masses (Matthew 26:5). Thus Jesus was able to be refreshed and to enjoy loving communion with God's people, as represented by Lazarus and his sisters (John 12:1-3), even to be anointed for his burial.

Father, we praise you for caring for your Son even as he approached the ultimate Day of being stricken for us. We praise you that, even on our worst day, you are able to control all of our enemies, all malevolent forces, even destroying diseases. You can provide rest today and passage to eternal life on the day You have set. No one will remove us from your hand.

Sat/Sun: Read Exodus 12:1-6 & Matthew 26:1-2 Exact Timing, Exact Control

Amazing! Christ "our Passover Lamb," was slain just as Exodus 12:6 mandated, "at twilight" -- that is before evening, in the afternoon. That is precisely when Jesus was crucified, as scholars will tell you – at 3 pm, the exact time Passover lambs were being slaughtered. When the time came for Satan to enter Judas, and for our Lord's command to be given, "What you do, do quickly," (John 13:27) the religious leaders had already agreed with Christ's betrayer that His arrest should take place on the evening of the Passover Sabbath.

Thus, all Christ endured and suffered to be our Savior was according to God's exact decree, timing, and purpose. Reflect on Christ's dying for us "at just the right time" (Galatians 4:4) with the words of John Calvin, from his commentary on Matthew's Gospel:

> And it is of great importance for us to hold, that Christ was not unexpectedly dragged to death by the violence of His enemies, but was led to it by the providence of God; for our confidence in the propitiation is founded on the conviction that He was offered to God as that sacrifice which God had appointed from the beginning. And therefore He determined that His Son should be sacrificed on the very day of the Passover, that the ancient figure might give place to the only sacrifice of eternal redemption.

Meditate and Pray: Sing about God's glorious plan of salvation using this hymn from a New Testament text (1 Corinthians 5:7) on "Christ our Passover" (by John Neale):

1 The Lamb's high banquet we await
In snow-white robes of royal state,
And now, the Red Sea's channel past,
To Christ our Prince we sing at last.

2 Upon the altar of the Cross
His Body has redeemed our loss,
And tasting of his precious Blood,
Our life is hid with Christ in God.

3 That Paschal eve God's arm was bared,
The devastating angel spared;
By strength of hand our hosts went free
From Pharaoh's ruthless tyranny.

4 Now Christ our Passover is slain,
The Lamb of God that knows no stain,
And he, the true unleavened Bread,
Is truly our oblation made.

5 O all sufficient sacrifice,
Beneath Thee hell defeated lies;
Thy captive people are set free,
And crowns of life restored by Thee.

6 We hymn Thee rising from the grave,
From death returning, strong to save;
Thine own right hand the tyrant chains,
And paradise for man regains.