

The Humble King John 13:1-17

A New Section in John.... It's like the beginning of a new series...

John chps. 13-17 has been called the **holy of holies of Scripture**. [Pray]

Of all the places I would like to go back in time to, this would be at the top of the list.

The focus in John shifts in chapters 13-17.

- He is with his **disciples**.
- **He's preparing the leaders of this new Messianic community.** (Minus Judas)
 - Notice verses **19-20**– “I am telling you this before it takes place” then a statement about them being sent as his representative...
- All of this instruction is within hours of his death, under the shadow of the cross.
 - It's **Thursday**. He will be crucified on **Friday**.
- This material is not found in the Synoptics, but **only John**.

The foot-washing **sets the whole tone of the farewell discourse** – the humility of Jesus, the upcoming cross-work of Jesus, His cleansing of sinners, and the call to follow the way of the Master.

- Foot washing was a needed activity: No paved roads ... animals and people traveling ... covered with the mud, dirt, dung ... open toed sandals.
- **Think about these dirty feet!**
- **Most guys in our culture even with a daily shower, and *fast actin tinactin* still know that feet stink!**
- **Feet are proof “that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God”**
- **The last thing we want to do is wash feet.**
- **But here is the King, the exalted one, stooping to wash feet of His servants.**
- **All of this foreshadows of an even greater display of humility – the cross.**

Let's look at it in three parts:

(1) Consider His Love

(2) Receive His Cleansing

(3) Follow His Example

The first point is just a reflection on verse 1.

The third point is most obvious.

The second point is plain to see as well, but not always emphasized.

- **But it is essential to emphasize because otherwise this passage is simply about moralism: “Jesus washed feet, you wash feet.”**
- **That's true, but by itself, this kind will crush us or puff us up.**
- **We need something more than the command: we need to be cleansed. We need power.**
- **The second point gives hope for the third point. Not serving for but from.**

#1: Consider His Love (13:1)

This verse is one of the most encouraging verses in the gospel.
It's like a **banner** over all that Jesus has done and is about to do.

13 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

“Before the Passover Feast” - I take this to be the Passover meal.

It may seem odd that John does not include the details of actual Lord's Supper, as we read of them in the Synoptics.

- But allusions to the meal's **meaning** appear everywhere throughout **John 13-16**.
- John gives **less of the ceremonial, and more of the theology**.
- This may be because of **the time** of his writing.
- He may have in mind Christians who have already read Mark and are familiar with the meal, and may even have a concern that the meaning is at risk of being lost.

In the Synoptics, 2 major themes appear:

- (1) Judas betrayal (that led to his arrest/crucifixion) is foretold along w/ Peter's denial;**
- (2) Luke tells us that there was a dispute that night about who was the greatest, triggering Jesus' teaching on servant hood (Lk 22:24-27).**

- **John weaves these themes together in this chapter:**
- **His death/cleansing is symbolized; and call to humble servant-hood is stated.**

“His hour had come” – cross, resurrection and ascension (**“to depart to the Father”**).

- **His great love will be demonstrated at the cross, in this climactic “hour” (Rom 5:8).**
- **Christ our Passover Lamb will be slain.**

“having loved his own who were in the world” – he *has* loved them; **everything up to this point.**

- **“his own”** -- he has a particular love **for his own**.
- He loves his **sheep**.
- I am called as a Christian to love everyone, every man/woman; I have a particular love for one **Kimberly Merida**. I have loved her out of all the women in the world in a unique way
- Jesus loves his own in a special way.
- My friend, if you are a Christian, feel this love.

“loved them to the end” (or he showed them full extents of his love”)

Loved them unto the end...

- **of his earthly life**
- **to end of their lives.**
- **To end of ends, forever.**

Romans 8:35-39

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*Oh love that will not let me go,
I rest my weary soul on thee.
I give thee back the life I owe
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.*

We will revisit the theme of love in the farewell discourse.

- John 1-12 – The themes of **light** and **life** dominate.
- John 13-21 – now “**love**” appears **45 times** in these chapters.
- **Jesus loves the Father, the Father loves him; he loves his disciples, and the disciples are to love one another.**
- John was overwhelmed with love; even calling himself the “**disciple whom Jesus loved.**”
 - He was amazed that Jesus would love him as he does.
- Further, in the next verse, the first disciple **mentioned is Judas.**
- **Jesus showed love to his enemy. He will wash his feet. Have dinner with him.**
 - Would you have Judas over to dinner? If you knew he was going to betray you?
 - **Maybe to put a laxative in his falafel!**
 - Would you want to **knock him in the head with the basin?**

Jesus is completely aware of the cost of his love – he will endure betrayal and a then die a brutal death. Love is always costly, sacrificial...

- He will endure the darkness on behalf of us, that we may be sons of light.

“**He loved his own ... he loved them to the end.**”

- **Keep this in mind as we continue to read – see Jesus loving you here.**
- **Not just loving “us” but “you” (Gal 2:20)**

#2: Receive His Cleansing (13:2-11)

Now we enter the scene of the foot washing.

We read that it was “**during supper.**”

- Not sure if they were already eating or just prior to, but probably the foot washing came first. **I can't imagine eating bread while washing these feet.**
- It'd be like **changing your oil while eating corn on the cob.**
- It was customary **to wash feet when the guests arrived, but it was a menial task reserved for the lowest rung of society.**
- The foot washer was on the bottom of the social chain, but **the exalted one goes low.**

The statement of cleansing comes in verses 8-11. Backing up then to v 2, we notice: who provides the cleansing, how one is cleansed, and our need for cleansing.

A. Who Cleanses: Jesus (2-3, 8)

- i. Jesus, **who will be betrayed by Judas** (2).
 - Satan will use Judas.
 - He has refused the light. His heart is hardened and now under the sway of the evil one.

The **Exalted** One, Jesus (3ff)

- ii. Jesus, who has **all authority**, “The Father had given all things into his hands” (3)
 - iii. Jesus, who has **divine origin**, “come from God” (3)
 - iv. Jesus, who will enjoy **future glory**, “going back to God” (3)
 - v. “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.” (8). Only Jesus can do this cleansing!
- **Every religion has some method of cleansing, some ritual, bathing, special water Holy underwater, holy steps, karma, pilgrimage, self mutilation, pagan sacrifices, or something...**
 - **But you cannot get guilt and shame off of you by your own work; it comes only in Christ.**

B. How He Would Cleanse Us (4-5, 12)

I think we are to assume he systematically moved around the table, and washed their feet one by one.

This foot-washing event demonstrated what Jesus came to the earth to do: he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Jesus acts out his redemptive mission, **like a parable.**

The Language is strikingly similar to **Philippians 2:6-8.**

- i. **He rose from Supper** (4a). He already did this by rising from his throne in glory in order to condescend to earth.
- ii. **He laid aside his outer garments** (4b). Paul says “though he was in the very God, he emptied himself.”
- iii. **He girded himself with a towel** (4c). He took the garb of a servant (“by taking the form of a servant” Phil 2:7)
- iv. **He poured water into a basin... washed their feet** (5). In a few hours he would his blood would be poured out for the washing away of sin, what foot-washing symbolizes. (“obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” Phil 2:8)
- v. **He resumed his place** (12) – skipping ahead we see this idea of his ascension acted out, he put on his outer garments and resumed his place
 - “After he made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty of Heaven (Heb 1:3).

This is astonishing grace....

Jesus’ gift of the forgiveness of sins should regularly put us on our face in awe, or leave us beside ourselves with joy. Both are appropriate responses to grace.

Grace should produce awe and joy.

The Savior still serves us; he still cleanses; he still loves.

- **Right now, he is interceding for us!**

- **Maybe you feel like the help you need from Jesus today is embarrassing, and more disgusting than the disciples' feet.**
- The Savior still cleanses; renews; loves.
- He will cleanse you if you admit your need for it.
- But if you hide and fake it like Judas, there's no hope.

C. Our Need for Cleansing (6-11)

We need a primary cleansing; and a daily cleansing....

6: It is quiet until he comes to Peter!

- Peter is skilled in recognizing the obvious – “you going to wash my feet?” – yes Colombo!
- **He has no inner voice; just an outer voice!**

7: But Peter does not understand that this experience is not merely a physical foot-washing.

- Jesus says later you will understand – after the events of the hour take place.
- **We don't always know what God is doing, but we must trust him.**
- You will look back and see the master painter completing his portrait.
- Peter will understand this event more in the future.

8: Peter protests again, **even more strongly**. “Not in a million years!”

- **When Jesus says, “You don't understand” that'd be a good time to be quiet!**

8b: But Jesus tells him why he must be cleansed.

If you are not cleansed than he has no share/part/union with Jesus.

- The word for “share” used here in the OT is used for Israel inheriting tribal lands (Num 18:20; Det 12:12; 14:27)
- But we are inheriting life with Christ.
- Through the cleansing that Jesus brings, we receive eternal life.

9: **Peter -- then I'll have the deluxe package!**

If a simple foot-washing brings this blessing, **what would a whole bath bring!? He was a Baptist!** But there's more misunderstanding here.

10: bath/feet; “You are all clean, though not all of you” ... “he knew who was going to betray him”

- Again, he's not talking about physical foot washing, but spiritual cleansing.

Judas was not clean.

- **Judas needs more than a footwashing – He needs a bath!**

The disciples were clean. They have bathed and they are clean.

- To use John's language: **They have believed. They have eternal life. They've passed from death to life. They are sons of light; children of God. They are his sheep; no one can snatch hem out of his hand.**

- This includes Peter.
- To use Paul's language, he is **"justified"**

What about this phrase, **"except for his feet"**?

- There are a lot of questions regarding this phrase, but I agree with Piper:
 "When a person believes in Jesus, he is completely cleansed. He is clean before God.... The repeated washing of the feet represents our daily confession of sin.... [E]ven though he was "completely clean" (verse 10) — that is, even though he was justified and new in Christ — there were sins that needed daily confession and forgiveness — daily spiritual foot-washings. The once-for-all purchase of his forgiveness needs daily application."

Carson: "Individuals who have been cleansed by Christ's atoning work will doubtless need to have subsequent sins washed away, but the fundamental cleansing can never be repeated."

Boice: "Those who are Christ's are totally justified men and women, but they do need constant cleansing from their repeated defilement by sin in order that the fellowship they have with the Father and with the Son might not be broken"

**Judas never was clean in the first place.
 He only looked cleaned outwardly.**

Notice verses **18-20ff** – a whole section about this betrayal follows (some translations include these verses with verses 1-17, others put it with the verses to follow since it focuses on Judas' betrayal).

Judas' story reminds us:

- 1. You can invest much time and energy in a person but they can still make shipwreck of their faith and life.**
 - Maybe you have spent time and had many gospel conversations with loved ones, but they continue persist in rebellion and unbelief.
 - You can't believe for someone. Jesus spent three years with Judas.
- 2. You can hear the best Bible teaching in the world and still not believe.**
 - Judas heard the Sermon on the Mount; the Olivet discourses, the parables, etc.
- 3. There are wheat and tares.**
 - Judas faked it well.
 - HE was the **treasurer**. He was trusted.
 - When Jesus says "one will betray me," **they don't say, "It's Judas!"**
- 4. An inordinate love and things always leads to destruction. (1 Tim 6:9-10)**

So, Judas did not have the fundamental cleansing; **the bath.**

The others believed and were followers, but would still need daily renewal.

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 Jn 1:8-9)

Luther, we receive God's grace "once and for all, again and again, and more and more."

- We need cleansing from sin's penalty, and we then need ongoing cleansing for fellowship.

Have you received this once for all cleansing? You can take a bath. Free. Paris.

- Do you have a practice of daily confession and cleansing?
- May you come to him for this fundamental cleansing.
- And may you practice daily confession and repentance.

Don't remain in the dark, like Judas but come out into the light.

#3: Follow His Example (13:12-17)

12: Jesus resumes his place and has them consider the significance of this event.

- Remember the conversations about whose the greatest had been taking place (Lk 22) Luke records right after the institution of the supper and prediction of betrayal...

²⁴ A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest.

²⁵ And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. ²⁶ But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. ²⁷ For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

13-14: Jesus reminds them of the way he is to be addressed (Teacher and Lord), but then goes a step further in verse 14.

- He reminds them of the implications of his position: *Wash one another's feet*.
- Not in a literal sense but in humble acts of service to one another.
- He is saying, "No act of service is beneath you!"
- The King of Glory just washed your feet! Don't forget it!

15: "I have given you an example that you also should do as I have done to you."

- Is this a new ordinance? The apostles didn't think so. It is not taught or done elsewhere.
- What is laid on our shoulders is the obligation to care for one another (13:34-35).

This is not just for the good of the community, but also for our witness to the outside world.

- Verses 34-35: Francis Shaffer called the "final apologetic."
- They will know not by well-crafted statements but by looking @ our love for one another.
- Ravi Zaccharias "The single greatest obstacle to the impact of the Gospel has not been its inability to provide answers, but the failure on our part to live it out."

16: He reminds them of their status: "servant" and a "sent one"

- If their Master and their Sender performs humble acts of service, so should we.
- If you think you are hot stuff, hear this: "You are not greater than your Master!"
- If you have some kind of standing, you are still called to go low, to wash feet.
- "Don't think too highly of yourself... consider the interest of others" (Phil 2)

17: Here's motivation for service: "you will be blessed [happy]"

- **My happiest moments include driving back after Sundays... a happy tired.**
- **You know that if you serve Christ (at the bedside, in counseling, etc)**
-

Four Reflections Following Jesus' Example

#1: Remember that it's a privilege to serve Jesus and his people.

- **I got to hang with my long time friend David Platt this past week. As we were leaving my driveway, I said, "Man, thanks for reaching out. This was great." He said, "Same here..." Then he said, "We should be in hell, bro."**
- **That escalated quick!**
- **He said it so sincerely and it really struck me with a profound sense of awe.**
- **It's a perspective changing truth. That is what I deserve.**
- **I said, "I know." "Can you believe this? How did this happen?"**
- **He quoted an old sermon title, "From a mess to a message."**
- **I determined to start every day like this. "I should be in hell."**
- **But I've been cleansed. I am loved. I am at the King's table.**
- **So, what does Jesus want from me? Time, talent, treasure? Okay, gladly.**
- **It's sheer privilege to humbly serving others to the glory of God – in any role.**

Anything we get to do for Jesus is a privilege.

We should be in hell, not being cleansed, and commissioned to serve!

#2: Seize the opportunities you have to serve Jesus and His people, even if your service may seem small and insignificant.

Everything done in his name matters.

Are there feet that need to be washed by you?

For many people Christianity is a philosophical study.

- **But our faith is intensely practical.**
- **It's about how we serve people.**
- **It's about how we treat others.**

Many like to argue theology but spend no time serving anyone.

- **Don't just have a theology of Christ humility; show humility by serving others.**

With all our faults and weakness, IDC is filled with people who wash feet.

Let this text encourage you today.

Paul underscores this kind of service saying:

¹⁰ and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work. (1 Tim 5:10)

That's a good life! That's a meaningful life! Don't forget it.

- **You are walking in the way of your Master!**
- It's very easy to be a church basher. All you have to do is look for the failures of others.
- For some Christians, no church is good enough for them.
- They function as a church critic, a **Siskel and Ebert Christian**, rather than a servant.
- That's a sad way to live life.
- It's also a failure to see all the good that many do in the church.
 - Teaching Classes
 - Playing in the band
 - Arranging chairs
 - Making coffee
 - Practicing hospitality
 - Holding babies in the nursery
 - Giving regularly offerings to the church
 - Serving others in the GG
 - Having college students in their home
 - Welcoming a new family to the community
 - Praying for one another

Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, ¹⁰ for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do **this more and more**, (1 Thess 4:9-10)

#3: Be a servant leader.

- If you are a leader, this text is especially important.
- This is Christian leadership 101.
- **Leadership is not lordship.**
- Leadership is setting an example and inviting others to follow you.
² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. (1 Peter 5:2-3)
- Lordship is being a boss and making demands and threats.
- Jesus revolutionized the world of leadership with his model of servant leadership.
- If you have any kind of leadership – in the home, as a coach, as a teacher, etc; this is the example.

#4: Remember that we are empowered to serve the Jesus and one another.

We don't serve in our own strength!

Verses 34-35 summarize this new focus and the Christian's ethic and witness, and is helpful to have in our minds before we read the next verses about the foot washing:

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

How is it new?

It's new in that **Jesus has demonstrated it (in the incarnation)**; and it's new in that through his redemptive work, **he now empowers it (through his death, resurrection, ascension and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit)**.

What a Savior! This passage makes you love Jesus more, doesn't it?

Consider his love.

- Marvel at it. Rejoice in it. Feel it.

Receive His cleansing.

- **“Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing flood?...”**
- The primary one and the daily ones.
- “If you should mark iniquities, Oh Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness that you may be feared.” (Ps 130:3-4)
- Let him wash you completely, and let him wash your feet Daily.

Follow His example.

- We will have many opportunities this week.
- It's a privilege to serve him and others, and we have power to do it.