

GOSPEL OF JOHN

Encounter Jesus – The Son of the Living God

Being Like Jesus!

Today's lesson is an event near the end of the earthly life of Jesus where He made an illustration from a custom of the day. Foot washing was a 'service' offered to people who gathered for a meal. Even if you did not live far away from your destination your feet would get dirty from walking the dusty roads. Having their feet washed was a good way to 'freshen up' before a meal.

In a sermon on Jesus washing the disciples' feet, R.C. Sproul said, "Often when we have a hard day, we think that we should be treated special. That people should cater to us and be sympathetic to us. Well, whatever kind of hard day we have had, we have never had a day where we knew that in a matter of hours that the God of heaven and earth was going to pour out His full wrath on us. Jesus, the One who is about to face the difficulty, the hardship, the challenge that has never been faced before by any human, is thinking about His love for the disciples." And He illustrates His love for them by performing a menial task.

As Jesus' public ministry ended and the hour of the cross was near, Jesus' desire was to prepare the hearts of His closest disciples for what was about to come – the events that would change their lives and the world forever. As John carries us through the gospel story he moves to the time when Jesus met with The Twelve for their last Passover meal together. John in his gospel focused on Jesus' act of humble service when He washed the disciples' feet on that night. Jesus performs the menial task for the purpose of showing His love for His disciples and to give a picture of the spiritual cleansing that would be made possible through His humiliating death on the cross.

As we read the story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet, let's visualize how His performing this menial task before His crucifixion pictures what He was about to do for all of us at Calvary.

- (1) He rose from His place of comfort and rest at the table just as He rose from His throne in heaven, a place of comfort and rest, to come to this earth to be our Savior.
- (2) He laid aside His garments in preparation to wash His disciples' feet just as He laid aside His glory to become our sin offering.
- (3) He took a towel and girded Himself becoming the form of a servant during the Passover meal picturing how He took on the likeness of man and became one of us.
- (4) He poured water into a basin for the purpose of cleansing just as He poured out His blood to cleanse us from guilt and the penalty of sin.
- (5) After Jesus finished the task, He sat down again reminding us that He now sits at the right hand of the Heavenly Father, after cleansing us from sin and having risen from the grave.

Read John 13:1-5 (ESV) ¹ 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. ² During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, ⁴ rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. ⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

John mentioned that Jesus' hour had come. The followers of Jesus had been waiting for the hour of Jesus to come for over three years. They didn't realize what they were waiting for. It turned out to be nothing like they thought. Life has a way of being like that. *Isaiah 55:8 (ESV)* ⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. The best way to keep from being 'blindsided' by life's events is to stay focused on Jesus.

To depart out of this world is a reference to the world system stained by sin. This present world is a civilization that is anti-God and anti-Christ and right there among The Twelve was a representative of that sin-stained world – Judas.

As we see the love of Jesus, His love will stand in contrast with Judas' treachery. It was not a surprise to Jesus that Judas would betray Him. When close friends and relatives betray us, we are often shocked and we shouldn't be. It happened to Jesus. However, Judas' betrayal did not come as a surprise to Jesus since He knew even before He selected Judas that Judas would be His betrayer. (*John 6:70-7*) Don't be fooled. Judas did not 'switch sides in mid stream.' Judas was never a true follower of Christ. By his own freewill, he made his own personal choice to reject the love of Jesus.

Judas Iscariot, the betrayer, was still in the room when John said of Jesus: *he loved them to the end*. This act of Jesus' love was not performed after Judas Iscariot left to betray Him. He was still in the room and Jesus washed Judas' feet just like all the other disciples. Jesus did not leave anyone out of His love – He loved them all – even the one who would betray Him. Sometimes people worry over having done something so unlovely that they feel as though they cannot be loved by God. But, that is the Devil's lie. We see the picture of Christ's love when He washed the feet of all – not just those the world might have considered to be His 'favorite' few. He died and shed His blood for all of us. It is now our choice to accept or reject Him.

John writes: *Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God*. I love the way Wiersbe explains this verse. Wiersbe writes, "Because Jesus knew who He was, where He came from, what He had, and where He was going, He was complete master of the situation. You and I as believers know that we have been born of God, that we are one day going to God, and that in Christ we have all things; therefore, we ought to be able to follow our Lord's example and serve others."

Although the disciples most likely would have been happy to wash Jesus' feet, they could not conceive of washing each other's feet. We have previously studied that washing someone's feet was the task for the lowest servants. The culture did not call for friends to wash friends' feet. Luke's version of the Last Supper reveals in

Luke 22:24 (ESV) ²⁴ A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. Even if their feet were dusty, washing feet was not on their mind. Their personal aspirations were on their minds.

Let's listen in on Peter's conversation with Jesus concerning the foot washing.

Read John 13:6-11 (ESV) ⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." ⁸ Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." ¹¹ For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."

Almost every group has a Peter – the one who is bold enough to voice what everybody else is thinking! And Peter objected loudly to Jesus' act of humble service. Jesus explained to Peter that without washing there is no fellowship with the Savior. The dirtiness of sin breaks our fellowship with the Lord even though we are still a part of the family of God. We humble ourselves but it is Christ who cleanses us. Peter objected to having His feet washed by Jesus because at this point he did not 'get the picture'. Jesus told him that later he would understand. It would take an empty tomb and the coming of the Holy Spirit!

When Jesus told Peter that unless He washed His feet that he would have no share with Christ, Peter in his usual gung ho style wanted his whole body washed. *Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean."* Peter knew that guests arriving at someone's home did not take a complete bath upon arrival. They just had their feet washed.

When we trust Christ as Savior, being *bathed* is a picture of our sins being forgiven and washed away. **1 John 1:9 (ESV)** ⁹ *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* However, as we walk in the world, our feet are bound to get dirty! We don't need to 'get saved' all over again. We just need to get back into fellowship and renew our communion with our Savior!

As he told them they were clean – their sins were forgiven, He spoke of one exception – Judas – although Jesus does not mention him by name – his name would be evident to all soon enough.

Make sure that you follow Jesus because of who He is, not because of what you think He might provide for you. – Stephen J. Cole

Read John 13:12-17 (ESV) ¹² When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you?" ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

Jesus was often called Rabbi meaning teacher in the gospels. Peter had addressed Jesus as *Lord* during their foot washing conversation. Jesus tells the disciples they were right to regard Him as their teacher and Lord, and His adopting a servant role did not change who He was. However, He also knew that His coming was very different than what they had expected. They had been expecting an earthly Messiah – a king who would come in and remove them from Roman rule – a descendant of David who would literally reign over their nation and they perceived their role in the kingdom of God to be anything but what it turned out to be.

The point of the lesson was: if He could wash their feet – they could wash one another's feet! The foot washing example is only that – an example. As Jesus' disciples today we have ample opportunity for humble service in many ways.

Jesus gives another *Truly, truly* statement proclaiming that what follows is the truth! *Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.*

Wiersbe interprets Jesus' words this way, "The servant (slave) is not greater than his master; so, if the master becomes a slave, where does that put the slave? *On the same level as the master!* By becoming a servant, our Lord did not push us down: He lifted us up! He dignified sacrifice and service."

Read John 13:18-19 (ESV) ¹⁸ *I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'* ¹⁹ *I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.*

Again Jesus references Judas. Jesus was referencing **Psalm 41:9 (ESV)** ⁹ *Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.* As Jesus faced imminent death, He felt like the psalmist, because a close friend, one of the Twelve, would turn against Him and betray Him. Jesus knew the disciples would feel the sharp slap of betrayal when Judas stepped up and kissed Him. Jesus wanted His true followers to realize that Judas' betrayal did not catch Him by surprise.

Read John 13:20 (ESV) ²⁰ *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."*

Here we have another *Truly, truly statement*. Jesus adds this because Judas had preached and he had healed and walked among them. They thought Judas was 'one of them'. This is something that continues to play out even today. McGee speaks of a religious leader who turned from the faith and the hurt it caused. McGee writes, "A man who drove me to the train said to me, 'Dr. McGee, I am puzzled. I was saved under the ministry of that man. I know I am saved and I know I am a child of God but I am puzzled. How can you explain it?' I showed this man this very text and told him that even Judas had gone out preaching and had won converts, not because he was Judas, but because he had given the message. God will bless His Word. We are saved by hearing the Word." This is not really a lesson about foot washing in the ancient world. This is a lesson about being like Jesus! Paul wrote of Jesus in **Philippians 2:6-8 (ESV)** ⁶ *who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,* ⁷ *but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.* ⁸ *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* That is what Jesus did for us! The question remains: what will we do for Him?