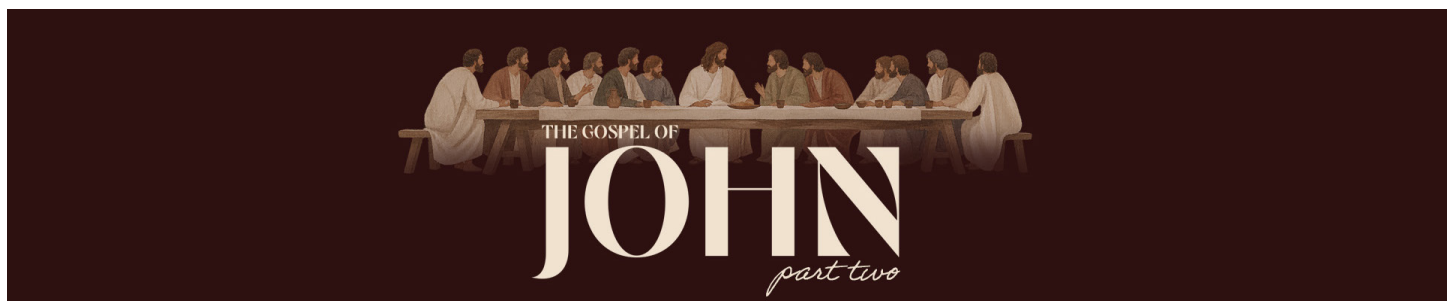




Sunday, September 27, 2026

John 13:1-20

Message

As we come to our text this morning, I want you to see that this moment - right now - sets the stage for everything else that's about to take place over the next 8 chapters. 8 chapters to cover the course of roughly one week in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And today we start with one of the most iconic scenes that scripture can paint for us.

The Last Supper.

You know this picture. It's an icon of artistic expression that was painted by Leonardo DaVinci in 1498 and still remains one of the most recognizable paintings of all time.

And it is this supper that sets the ball in motion for everything that we're about to see over the next eight chapters.

So if you have your Bibles with you this morning, I'd like to invite you to turn with me to John 13 where we will be reading the first 20 verses. If you are able to, I'd also like to invite you to stand for the reading of the Word of the Lord.

John 13:1-20

'Before the Passover Festival, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

2 Now when it was time for supper, the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, to betray him. 3 Jesus knew that the Father had given everything into his hands, that he had come from God, and that he was going back to God. 4 So he got up from supper, laid aside

his outer clothing, took a towel, and tied it around himself. 5 Next, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet and to dry them with the towel tied around him.

6 He came to Simon Peter, who asked him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

7 Jesus answered him, "What I'm doing you don't realize now, but afterward you will understand."

8 "You will never wash my feet," Peter said.

Jesus replied, "If I don't wash you, you have no part with me."

9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head."

10 "One who has bathed," Jesus told him, "doesn't need to wash anything except his feet, but he is completely clean. You are clean, but not all of you." 11 For he knew who would betray him. This is why he said, "Not all of you are clean."

12 When Jesus had washed their feet and put on his outer clothing, he reclined again and said to them, "Do you know what I have done for you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are speaking rightly, since that is what I am. 14 So if I, 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 for you.

16 "Truly I tell you, a servant is not greater than his master, and a messenger is not greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

18 "I'm not speaking about all of you; I know those I have chosen. But the Scripture must be fulfilled: The one who eats my bread has raised his heel against me. 19 I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am he. 20 Truly I tell you, whoever receives anyone I send receives me, and the one who receives me receives him who sent me."

The Last Supper appears in all four Gospels but John's account is quite unique. Whereas Matthew, Mark and Luke all talk about the instruction of the Lord's Supper by placing the emphasis on His body that would be broken and His blood that would be shed, John seems to mention the meal in passing.

It's almost as if John assumes that his audience already knows about the bread and the cup. And so rather than repeating what has already been said, he draws our attention to something else that happened around that table that night - something the other Gospel writers didn't record, but something John clearly wants us to see.

In the middle of their meal, Jesus suddenly gets up from the table, grabs a basin of water and a towel and starts to wash the disciples' feet.

And I actually think that this is very intentional for John. You see, John's not wired like Matthew, Mark or Luke. As we've seen already through the first 12 chapters of his Gospel, John's style of writing is very different than the others. John tends to slow down and spend more time exploring the meaning behind what Jesus said and did, rather than simply recording the events themselves.

For example, throughout the first half of the book, you may remember us working through what are commonly referred to as the seven signs. John intentionally chose specific miracles of Jesus and used them as signs - each one revealing something about who Jesus is and ultimately pointing us toward the truth that He is the Messiah, the Son of God. In other words, John isn't just telling us what Jesus did. He's constantly trying to help us understand what those things reveal about who Jesus is.

And so, by placing the emphasis on the foot washing when the others placed the emphasis on the bread and the cup, John isn't diminishing the importance of communion. No, he's actually giving us another perspective of the very same thing.

Both communion and foot-washing are symbols of sacrifice. By using the bread and the cup, Jesus was showing them the kind of sacrifice He was about to make for them - a sacrifice that only He could make. But by then washing their feet, He was modelling the kind of sacrificial love they were now called to show one another.

Which is why He then says in verse 15:

John 13:15

'For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done for you.'

Many of you may be aware just how humbling a task washing feet really was back then. In the Middle Eastern climate, the roads were dusty and people generally wore sandals. So you can imagine what their feet would have been like by the end of the day - covered in a mixture of dust, dirt and

sweat - or even other stuff - especially if they've been at the markets with the animals....near the latrines....you get it.

When people entered a home, small basins of water would commonly be provided so that their feet could be washed. Sometimes you would wash your own feet, but in wealthier households that dirty task would be given to a servant. And if there were multiple servants, it would typically fall to someone of very low status. As far as household tasks were concerned, this was about as humbling as it got.

So for Jesus to now disrupt the meal, and humble Himself to the status of the lowest servant was His way of showing the kind of sacrificial love and humility that He was expecting from His followers. That no task is too low. In the kingdom of God, we're all called to wash dirty, stinky feet.

And in some ways, I think what he was doing was creating an equal level playing field for every single disciple sitting around that table. Do you remember how later on Paul would say that in the Kingdom of God we're not viewed as male nor female, Greek nor Jew, slave nor free, but all are one? I think this is in part, where Paul got this message from. And it makes sense, because even for the disciples following Jesus, we know that there was temptation to establish a pecking order - to figure out who was the greatest, who was the most important, who deserved the position of honour.

James and John had even asked Jesus if they could sit at His right and His left when they came into His Kingdom.

And while travelling about a year earlier, Jesus, overhears the disciples secretly talking about who is the greatest among them. Jesus then reminds them that:

Mark 9:35b

'...If anyone wants to be first, he must be last and servant of all.'

And, when you think about it, this was the kind of humility that marked Jesus' entire life! From being born to simple people - Mary and Joseph - not kings and queens. Born not in Jerusalem, but in Bethlehem. Not in a castle, but laid in a feeding trough.

It was this humble King who would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey instead of a stallion, declaring peace instead of war...who would later be betrayed by one of His own for a little bit of silver, and then subjected to the humiliation of the beatings...the whippings...the crown of thorns...and then the

final humiliation of being stripped naked, hung on a cross and left to die.

This was the message that He lived! And yet while sitting around that table, the disciples are completely oblivious to any of this. Because, if you take a glance over at Luke's version of the last supper, he actually let's us know that the disciples clearly had not learned their lesson - they were still arguing about who would be the greatest in the kingdom of God. And this time, not secretly at all.

So, when Jesus gets up in the middle of the meal and starts to wash each of their feet, He's reminding them that this kind of humble servant leadership is the kind of leadership He expects from each of them. This is what the Kingdom of Heaven is really all about.

Think about it. Why does Jesus choose the washing of feet in this lesson? Because they hadn't yet been washed. This was something customary to do, and if there were no servants to do it, then it would likely be taken on by one in the group. And while they're sitting around the table with their stinky feet, arguing about who would be greatest, Jesus now stoops down before each of them and assumes the lowest form of servanthood, to clearly make His point.

The kingdom of God doesn't operate the way the kingdoms of the world do.

Mark 9:35b

'...If anyone wants to be first, he must be last and servant of all.'

And then again in our text today - just after Jesus tells them to do as He does, He goes on to say:

John 13:16-17

'Truly I tell you, a servant is not greater than his master, and a messenger is not greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.'

Now, as Jesus prepares Himself for this task, I imagine a great hush falling over that room. Because think about what they're watching. Here is Jesus - their Rabbi, their Teacher, their Lord - taking off His outer garment, wrapping a towel around His waist, pouring water into a basin and then stooping down in front of them one by one to wash their dirty feet.

And I have to imagine that as He moves around that table, there is some serious reflection taking place. Because while they had been concerned about who was the greatest among them, the greatest among them was now on His knees doing the job that none of them had been willing to do.

And I think moments like this have a way of exposing the condition of your heart without anyone even having to say a word.

Eventually though, Jesus comes to Peter. And Peter always has something to say.

And Peter is not having it. He simply won't let Jesus touch his feet and he makes a big scene about it. To which Jesus replies by saying that...

John 13:9

...'If I don't wash you, you have no part with me.'

Before we get too deep into the weeds on this one, I want you to notice the words that Jesus uses here. Because it seems a little unnatural to me. I naturally want to read this as,

'If I don't do this, then I won't have anything to do with you.' But that's not what Jesus says here. He specifically says:

'If I don't do this, then you have no part with Me.'

And that distinction is important because Jesus isn't threatening to reject Peter here if he doesn't comply. He's simply helping Peter understand that what Jesus is doing is necessary for Peter to continue to partner with what Jesus has come to accomplish.

Peter actually thinks he's honouring Jesus by refusing to let Him wash his feet. But Jesus is showing Peter that following Him means allowing Jesus to do for Peter what Peter could never do for himself.

It's a picture of salvation.

You see this act for Jesus, is so much more than hygiene.

On the surface, Jesus is washing dirty feet. But underneath it, He is using this moment to point Peter toward a much deeper kind of cleansing - the cleansing that only Jesus can provide.

And, of course, Peter doesn't understand any of this yet. He just hears Jesus say, 'Unless I wash

you, you have no part with Me.’ So Peter does what Peter does and immediately swings to the other extreme:

John 13:9

‘Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.’

Now, we’re going to take a bit of a pause here, and before we go into Jesus’ next comment about being truly cleansed, and how there is one among them who is going to betray him, referencing Judas, I want to go back to the beginning of the text where we are first introduced to Judas as the one who is about to betray Jesus for some silver. Jesus already knows this and so when it came time to wash his feet, we are not told that Jesus refused. Look at that humility. He knows what Judas is about to do - He knows that he has given himself over to the devil - and yet He kneels down, lovingly grabs his feet and washes them one after another.

And Judas would have been sitting there as Jesus had this interaction with Peter. He would have heard Jesus talking about being washed. About being clean. About having a part with Him.

We don’t know what was going through Judas’ mind in that moment. John doesn’t tell us. But we do know what Jesus was doing. Jesus was washing the feet of His betrayer. The hands that Judas was about to help put into chains were, in that moment, lovingly washing his feet.

So when Jesus teaches us to...

Matthew 5:44

‘... love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be children of your Father in heaven.’

...as difficult as those words are for us to hear, Jesus didn’t just speak those words, in this instant, in this very moment, he was living them - on His knees, lovingly washing the feet of His enemy.

And there’s one final picture here that I can’t help but think about. Hundreds of years earlier, the prophet Isaiah had written:

Isaiah 52:7

‘How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation...’

Now, John doesn't tell us whether Jesus was intentionally referencing that passage here or not, but I can't help but see this picture here.

Because these dirty feet that Jesus is now washing are about to become the clean, beautiful feet that carry the Gospel into the world.

These are the feet that will leave this upper room and eventually travel from city to city, village to village and nation to nation proclaiming peace, bringing good news and telling people that salvation has come through Jesus Christ.

And before Jesus sends those feet out into the world, He gets down on His knees and washes them.

And I think that this may be in fact, the greater message for all of us here today. Don't worry, I'm not gonna call you up here and wash your feet. To me it is an irrelevant illustration in our context today. And I'm not going to ask you to wash your wife's feet or your husband's feet, that's just gross. You see it's not about washing feet. It's the concept of humility and servant hood that it involves. Washing feet may not be part of our culture today, but loving the way that Jesus loved is everything.

As husbands how we love our wives should look exactly like how Christ loves the church and gave up His life for her. And wives, how you love your husbands should embrace that same kind of sacrifice and selflessness as well.

And it doesn't stop with our marriages. How we love our families, our friends, our communities, our coworkers - even that angry boss or neighbour who drives us crazy - says something about the love that we ourselves have already received from our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

But there's one more thing that stands out to me here that I think we need to work though. In verse 10, Jesus says that:

John 13:10

'One who has bathed,' Jesus told him, "doesn't need to wash anything except his feet, but he is completely clean.'

Which seems to me that Jesus is talking about something far deeper than simply dirty feet.

Remember, Peter has just been told that unless Jesus washes him, he can have no part with Him. And now Jesus tells Peter that he has already been bathed - he is clean - and only his feet need washing. That sounds a whole lot like salvation language to me.

And we need to understand that there is a difference between needing to be made clean and being clean but getting your feet dirty.

For example, in the Old Testament, priests would wash themselves ceremonially but throughout the day would re-wash their hands and feet before ministering at the altar.

Which is a beautiful picture of what Jesus is doing here isn't it? When we put our faith in Christ, we are made clean. We belong to Him. We don't need to get saved all over again every time we stumble or fall. But even as people who have been made clean, we still get our feet dirty.

We still sin. We still say things we shouldn't say. We still allow attitudes into our hearts that shouldn't be there. We still come into contact with things in this world that affect us. And when that happens, we need to let Jesus clean what has gotten dirty.

This is why John would later write:

1 John 1:9

'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'

Sin is destructive. And when we allow sin to remain unconfessed in our lives, it affects our fellowship with Christ.

So yes, if you belong to Jesus, you have been made clean. But that doesn't mean your feet don't get dirty. And part of walking closely with Jesus is regularly allowing Him to wash away the dirt we've picked up along the way.

And so at the end of the day, there is an intimacy of relationship that the Lord is calling us to - one that is close not far. And in just a few short chapters, Jesus will remind His disciples to abide in Him. He'll tell them that a branch cannot bear fruit by itself; it has to remain connected to the vine. And I think that's where all of this ultimately leads us.

Stay close. In the good times. In the hard times. In the meh times. When you get it right, stay close. When you stumble and get your feet dirty, confess and stay close. Don't run from Him. Don't hide from Him. Let Him wash what needs to be washed.

As we close the service this morning we're going to open up the altar and invite you to come and be prayed for. It doesn't matter what you need, this is place where God will meet you. You can share your heart or you can simply mention that your need is private. God knows.

BLESSING

May the Lord Bless you and Keep you
May He cause His face to Shine upon you
May He be gracious towards you
Lifting up His countenance upon you
And may He give you peace
In Jesus name, Amen.

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