

Life in His Name – Part 32
Our Servant Lord - John 13:1-18
Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Oct.22nd, 2023

Intro:

- Knowing how much time you have left to live is a merciful gift. It helps us to focus on what is most important and gives us urgency to do and to say what we need to. Many of us, if not most of us in this room, have been with loved ones during the final months, weeks, days, and moments of their life on earth. Jesus was now in the last hours of His life. What would He communicate to His closest friends? Chapters 13-17 contain what Jesus communicated and prayed. Let's draw close, slow down, and pay special attention to what is said and done. There are essential things for Christians to know and believe in these chapters. Between the crowds and the cross, this is what the committed need to know.
- In our passage this morning, we see our servant Lord, Jesus the Son of God, who has power of all things and the highest position in all creation, love us to the end, lead us as a servant, cleanse us with forgiveness, and teach us by example. He tells us to do the same. Let's gather around to listen and learn.

Jesus loves us to the end.

John 13:1 NIV

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

- The Passover had been celebrated for centuries. Year after year, generation after generation, the Israelites remembered the spotless lamb who gave up its life to save theirs. Little did the people know that in an upper room, there was the true spotless lamb who was going to give His life once and for all to save the lives of all who trusted in Him.
- Jesus dearly and deeply loved those who were His in the world. He did not love them partially or halfheartedly. He did not pull away at the end, but He loved them fully and completely by laying down His life on their behalf.
- If you have put your faith in Jesus, He loves you fully and deeply as well, as you, too, are still in the world. He also loves you to the end. Remember how deeply loved you are. Let that reality give you security, comfort, and strength. Let it empower you to love others because you are already fully loved and not look for others to love you. Jesus loves you now, and His love will be with you and meet you and surround you for all eternity.

Jesus leads us as a servant.

John 13:2-5 NIV

The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

- In that day, the primary way to get around was to walk. The roads and pathways were almost entirely dirt, and their footwear was thin sandals. As you can imagine, people’s feet became sweaty, dirty, and grimy while they walked along. It was a common courtesy in their day that when you entered a house, a servant would wash your feet.
- “Some rabbis taught that this task was so lowly and demeaning that it was unacceptable to have a Jew do it—even if he was a slave. Even today in the Middle East, feet are considered filthy and undignified. You may have seen scenes from political protests where angry mobs pound statues or billboards with shoes, or you might recall the Iraqi journalist who threw his shoes at a visiting president. It’s considered a profound insult. There’s a deep sense, culturally speaking, of disgust about feet.” (Mike Cosper, crossway.org).
- And here they all were, sitting together while the meal was in progress, all with dirty, grimy feet, because no one washed them or was willing to wash them. It was not for the lack of water, basin, or towel. All of those things were provided. It was for a lack of willingness to humble oneself and serve the others by washing their feet.
- John also points out a couple more details about this group. Judas Iscariot was with them, and the devil himself had prompted Judas that this was the time to betray Jesus. The lowest of the low was sitting with them. A “friend” who was in league with the devil himself was going to betray Jesus to death. And in contrast, John points out that “Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under His power,” that Jesus was and is the most powerful person on the planet, and He could do anything He wanted.
- Now, here is where the shocker takes place: the most sought-after person in the nation, the most powerful person on the planet, takes off his good clothes, puts on the clothes of a servant, and starts to wash their feet.
- Jesus could have done anything. He could have asked John to find someone to wash their feet. He could have said a word and their feet would be clean. He could have cursed Judas and destroyed him on the spot to at least eliminate that scum bag. He did not do any of that. He chose to take the lowest of low positions and wash their feet himself, even Judas’s.
- This is how Jesus leads us, as a servant, using His mighty power in service to others. He did not have others serve Him; He even served His betrayer. This is God’s heart, and this is how God leads. He uses His ultimate power to serve His people. He never abuses His power, but takes the lowest position as a servant. Let this image shape your understanding of the heart of Jesus, what He does, and what He has done for you. This is a leader worth following, and this is a leader you can give your life for. This is a leader you can trust completely and who should be truly honored and esteemed.
- Now, I imagine that as Jesus started doing this and the disciples saw what was happening, the room became quiet as Jesus moved to wash their feet one by one. Without using words, Jesus spoke volumes and taught them deep theological truth through what He was doing. He also taught what we are to do.

Jesus washes us with forgiveness.

John 13:6-11 NIV

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” 7 Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” 8 “No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” 9 “Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!”

10 Jesus answered, “Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.” 11 For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

- It is not surprising that Peter, of all the disciples, responded this way. Peter, a man of strong feelings, is the one who, time after time, steps out first, saying what is on his mind. “Jesus, you will never wash my feet” was a statement of honor and recognition of who Jesus was.
- However, this lesson was not only about using power to serve one another in humility. It was much deeper than that. It was an object lesson on how we are washed and cleansed by the forgiveness of God, even though we continue to walk in a sinful world.
- When we put our faith in Christ, this encompasses acknowledgment of our inherent sinfulness, repenting, and asking for forgiveness. God then gives us a “new heart,” forgives us our sins, and makes us children of light. This is our new identity. The theological term is called “justification.” However, people who are a new creation still sin; we are in the continual “sanctification” process, becoming more and more like Christ. The Holy Spirit within us convicts us of sin and our participation with it, which we then confess. This is the sin that is “on” us versus the sin that is “in” us, or being a child of darkness.
- We must confess and repent of sins that we commit still as saved people, but we do not lose our salvation because we sin. One will not be saved if they don’t confess Christ as their Savior. However, if Christ is your Savior, you will “work out your salvation,” that is, live in a way continually moving to be more and more like Christ (see I John 1:5-10, Rom. 8:28-30, Phil. 2:12-13).
- Understand that if you are in Christ, you are clean of your sin (you had a “bath”) and are being cleansed from your sins (dirty feet). Understanding this gives us assurance of our salvation and evidence of our salvation (see also Eph. 2:10-12). We are justified when we put our faith in Christ at the time of our decision. We are being sanctified, which is an ongoing present process, and someday we will be glorified, the new state of the redeemed at the resurrection.
- Again, knowing these things gives us confidence that we are in Christ and the conviction to live like Christ. These are important theological concepts for you to understand as one who is a Christian.
- Now, after teaching this theological insight, Jesus then explains how we are to live in relationship to each other by following His example.

Jesus teaches us by example.

John 13:12-17 NIV

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. 13 “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am.

14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 16 Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

- Jesus not only has all power, but He holds the highest position. He is both “teacher” and also “Lord” for this is who He is (this is yet another admission of His identity). After confirming His identity with them, He told them and us that we should use our position to serve each other. This teaching flies directly in the face of “word faith” theologies that over elevate the Christian’s value and worth by saying we are to be served by others verses using our standing in Christ to serve others. Are you in Christ to serve other people or to be served? If you think you should be served, then you are saying that you are greater than Jesus.
- Let me remind you that we are to have **“the same mindset as Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Phil 2:5-8 NIV).**
- We are to possess humility and helpfulness toward brothers and sisters in Christ. We are to be humble and helpful. We are to love each other, help each other, and honor each other. Now that you know how you should interact with and for others, go and do it. For the blessing is in the doing. “You will find that the deepest joys in life are not when people are hailing you in your status, but when they are helped by you in your service.” (John Piper, desiringGod.org)

Conclusion

- The teachings contained in this passage are critical for those who are Christians. Treasure the fact that Jesus loves you completely and fully, now and forever. Let this give you a sense of worth and significance. Let this fact expand your love and honor of Christ.
- Know that Jesus, having all power and the highest position, uses these things to serve others. You can trust His leadership and commit yourself to obeying and following Him. Trust Him and His plan.
- Know that Jesus set you an example, that you are to live and lead the same. If you want more and more blessings in your life, serve others. Look to do this practically, intentionally, and consistently. This is the way to blessing, and true living.