

Jesus washing his disciples feet

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[0 : 00] Let us now turn to the chapter part of which we read and our text is in verses 4 and 5. John 13 in verses 4 and 5.

He riseth from supper and laid aside his garments and took a towel and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

Verses 4 and 5 of John chapter 13. Words that refer to the foot washing of Jesus when he washed the feet of his disciples. Jesus and his disciples had arrived at Jerusalem from Bethany and they went to the upper room.

It was supper time, indeed it was the time of the last supper, the Passover time. And custom required that a traveller coming in from the dusty road would have had his feet washed in any hospitable home.

But there was no servant in the upper room. And none of the disciples, not one of them, showed any inclination of becoming a servant.

[1 : 27] So all sat down, took a supper and the meal went ahead as far as we can understand from the narrative. The meal went ahead without the foot washing.

At the door, at the door, there was the picture of water, the empty basin to receive the water and a linen towel. But none of the disciples took any notice.

Not one of them moved towards the picture or the basin or the towel. And each one in his heart hoped that the other would do it. So it was never done.

And all this while Jesus waited and waited. Perhaps he looked now and then towards the door but none of the disciples took the hint. And then at last he arose from the table. He laid aside his garments. He put the towel round about him and with his own two hands he washed the feet of his disciples.

Now the scene must have been deeply impressed on the mind of John who recorded this. who recorded this. For John records every movement of our laws. And he records it minutely.

[2 : 54] And may it be that what is brought before us here in this passage of scripture would also be deeply and indelibly impressed upon our own mind.

For this incident here of the washing of the disciples' feet by Jesus. This incident is both an example for us to follow and also an illustration for us to consider.

And I want us to think of this incident along these two lines. First of all we think of the example he gives us to follow.

The example he gives us to follow. Our Lord Jesus Christ is an example. He came into this world to be an example as well as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice.

Peter tells us quite clearly that the Lord Jesus left us an example that we should follow in his steps. And here in verse 15 Jesus said to the disciples round that table in the upper room.

- [4 : 09] I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you. This of course is not to be taken literally.
- Because it is not the custom for us to wash one another's feet. But, and this is not an example to do what Jesus did.
- But rather to do as Jesus did. To do as a servant would do. For this was what Jesus did.
- This is what Jesus showed himself to be. He was a servant. The servant of Jehovah. God said of his son. He is my servant whom I uphold.
- My elect in whom my soul delights. Now here in this incident before us. We have an example which Jesus has left us to follow.
- [5 : 11] And I want to say one or two things about this example. And the first is this. That in looking at this foot washing. We see here an example of personal service.
- An example of personal service. We see here in fact what the apostle Paul in part meant. When he said there in Philippians 2.
- About the Lord Jesus. That he took on him the form of a servant. The Lord Jesus became a servant.
- And he was sent from heaven as a servant to do his father's will. And his work of service which was a saving work. He did not commit to any other.
- For he knew there was no other person equipped to do the work that he was sent to do. As the servant of Jehovah. And there was no other good enough. To pay the price of sin.
- [6 : 11] So Jesus came. And gave to his disciples. An example of personal service. Now those strong. Twelve strong men in the upper room. Did not need Christ to wash their feet.
- They were quite able to wash their own feet. But they did need him to teach them a lesson. And one of the lessons that Jesus taught was a lesson on personal service. He taught them the need to serve one another in a personal way. And he taught them by becoming a servant to his servants.
- What a Lord we serve. A servant to his servants. And my dear friends the time will never come.
- When there is nothing for us to do for him. Or for anyone else. There is always the equivalent of foot washing to be done.
- And this is not done by delegation. That is altogether too easy. There is a place of course for delegation. But we cannot absolve ourselves from personal responsibility.
- [7 : 29] You see what Jesus says here in verse 14. If I your Lord and Master have washed your feet. We also ought to wash one another's feet. And do as I have done.
- Giving an example of service that is personal. Not delegated. But personal. For that is what Jesus did.
- When he washed the feet of his disciples. An example of personal service. The next thing is this. That in this incident we see also an example of humble service.
- And perhaps this is the chief lesson for us to learn. As far as our Lord Jesus Christ is concerned in this incident. The sheer condescension of the Lord Jesus.
- That is brought before us in this passage of scripture. And the condescension of Jesus is brought out I believe. By one of the guilty disciples.
- [8 : 26] Who ignored the picture and the basin and the towel. Namely Peter. For it was Peter who said to Jesus.
- Dost thou wash my feet? Let us put the emphasis on the other pronoun there. Dost thou wash my feet?

Who was the foot washer here? It was the Lord of glory. Whose name is wonderful counselor.

The mighty God. The everlasting father. The prince of peace. He washed the feet of his disciples. The one whose work was to create the world.

For whose honor and glory they were created. His work was to make all things new. And to turn wrecks like ourselves.

[9 : 29] Lost in sin. And born in sin. And shaped in iniquity. To make of us a new creation. That was his lofty work. To make the universe. And the entire universe is to the glory of God.

The glory of Christ. And every redeemed soul is to the glory of Christ. But look at him here. Look at him with a towel around his waist. On his bended knees before his disciples.

Washing the feet. Indeed as Paul says. He made himself of no reputation.

He laid aside his crown and his scepter. And his royal robe. And he humbled himself. It's well known that.

Pope. Used to wash the feet of twelve beggars. Each Easter. And they washed them with water. From a golden bowl.

[10 : 34] Now Jesus wants no such posturing from us. No such striving for effect. No such feeble symbolism.

But he does want. Down to earth. Faithful and humble service. Service that is free from ostentation and publication. And this means my dear friends.

That if we are asked to do. What will bring little thanks to us. Do it. If we are asked to do. What will hardly be noticed by others.

Do it. If we are asked. To do what few others would do. Do it. Do it. And if we are asked to do something.

And we know very well that we are the very last to be asked. The last on the list. Do it. You see Christ's call. Is not simply to admire his service.

[11 : 38] And his humility. But to follow it. It's easy to admire. It's there to be admired undoubtedly. But it's not so easy to follow. And yet.

Jesus has left us an example. Not only to admire. An example to follow. An example of personal service. And an example also.

Of humble service. The Lord of glory. On bended knee. Washing the feet of his disciples. There is humility. There is condescension.

On the part of our blessed Lord. Now I want to say something in the third place about this. That the Lord Jesus has also left us an example. Not only of personal and humble.

But of homely service. Homely service. All the homeliness of Jesus. A towel round his waist. He was at home with a towel.

[12 : 35] And he was anxious to observe the custom. The customary and homely task. Of washing the feet of guests.

Who entered the home. Let us never lose sight of. Of the real humanity of Jesus. Evidence in this little part of this humanity.

His homeliness. See him with the children. Thoroughly at home with them. When he took them up in his arms and blessed them. With the woman at the well. When he asked for a drink of water. With the bride and groom at the marriage in Cana of Galilee.

And here with his disciples in the upper room. There was nothing stiff. Nothing unbending. Here the reality of his humanity shone out. The very homeliness of Jesus.

In washing the feet of his disciples. And how we need. To have this. Play of character. To have this. To have this. Ability to identify ourselves. With those whom we seek to help. And to serve. That God would deliver us from being stiff. And professional.

[13 : 36] And unbending. And looking on other people as numbers. Rather than real persons in need of help.

But one other thought in this part of the text. And it is this. He has left us an example also. Of thorough service. Of thorough service.

He put off. All that would hinder him from doing the work properly. And he put on. What would help him to do the work thoroughly.

He put off his outer garments. For they would hinder him. And he wrapped around his waist a towel. For that would help him. To do the work thoroughly.

And the washing of his disciples feet. Was no token washing. Nor was it a half-hearted washing. It was done thoroughly. Notice this.

[14 : 58] Notice what the narrative says. He washed them. And then he wiped them. No doubt he wiped them dry. With the loose end of the towel. What he did. He did thoroughly. Our blessed Lord.

From the beginning to the end of his ministry. Was clothed with zeal as a cloak. And when he did his father's will. He did it perfectly. And completely. And zealously.

And thoroughly. That's the kind of Lord. That we have. And the kind of Lord. We need to follow. And my dear friends. Our nation at this very moment. Is suffering. Through lack of thoroughness. In administration.

In every department of its life. The church of Jesus Christ. Is suffering today. Through lack of thoroughness. In administration. In every department of its life. The church of Jesus Christ. Is suffering today. Through lack of thoroughness. Too much spiritual work. Is being done.

In a non-spiritual way. Half-heartedly. Belatedly. And with terrible slackness. And the church is suffering. Through the slackness. Through the slackness. Of its members. Very often. And because it's the church.

[15 : 53] We serve. And because it's the Lord of glory. We serve. This calls for more thoroughness. And dedication. Than we will give to our own affairs. Not less. and because it's the church we serve, and because it's the Lord of glory we serve, this calls for more thoroughness and dedication than we will give to our own affairs, not less. And what a blessing it is that there are those, no doubt in all our congregations, who follow the Lord in this way and who devote themselves and dedicate themselves in a thorough way to the work of the church, to the work of the Lord and to the spreading of the gospel. And there's no doubt at all that we suffer as individuals and if we are individual believers we suffer as individuals through lack of thoroughness in our devotions. Is there not a slackness about our prayer life? Is it not the case that far too often we pray only when we feel like it and that our prayer life is governed by feeling rather than the desire to be like the Lord himself, thorough and zealous in what we do? May our worship be undertaken privately and publicly conscientiously and may we live faithfully to Christian standards and show forth the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. Well that's the first thing I want to bring out. Yet here we have an example for us to follow. An example of service that is personal and humble and homely and thorough.

But now we come to the second thing, the illustration he gives us to consider. The illustration he gives us to consider for this is more than an example, it's an illustration and here we go down a little deeper and we look at aspects of Christ's person and work which as yet we have not considered because the foot washing of the Lord Jesus illustrates some aspects of his person and work and the first is this, it illustrates the love he bears. It illustrates the love he bears. What he did there for his disciples was evidence of the love that he had for them. The very first verse says here, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end, to the end of their day and to the uttermost of the day.

He loved them. And we read there in this 13th chapter the new commandment. The new commandment I give unto you that you should love one another as I have loved you.

And the foot washing was no token foot washing. It illustrated and was an evidence of the love that he had for his disciples and the love he has for all his disciples down to the end of time. And remember this that among the disciples there in the upper room there was Judas and Jesus knew very well that Judas had his eye on the bride and Jesus knew very well that when Judas went out and it was night it was an order to betray him he went out. And yet he washed the feet of Judas.

Judas. Well there's nothing here to indicate anything to the contrary. And there in the upper room there was Peter. And he knew that Peter would forsake him at his trial. But he washed his feet too. And then he knew also that the rest of the disciples would forsake him at the cross.

[19 : 58] And still he washed their feet. And still he washed their feet as an evidence of his love for them. And true it was that they all forsook him and fled.

And my dear friends the Lord Jesus still loves his fleeing people. And he still has fleeing people. Those who are not following him closely. Those who perhaps like the disciples forsake him in certain circumstances in a time of crisis perhaps they forsake him.

And they fail in their witness. And still he loves his fleeing disciples. And he loves his backsliding disciples. He says I will heal your backsliding and I will love you freely.

Yes and he loves his secret disciples. Yes and he loves his secret disciples. Those who decline to nail their colors to the mast. I wonder if there's someone here tonight and that's precisely your position. You've been a disciple for a while but you're full of fear. You're timid. There's something wrong. You're a secret disciple and perhaps at this very moment you intend going on being a secret disciple.

At this very first on and you are coarse. You're a disciple of the flesh. You are a disciple. helps your heart. Now starting and your days have taught you my days and three people... I'm not at this■!

[21 : 29] an illustration was the foot washing of the love he bears. But then again this foot washing is also an illustration of the work he accomplished, of the work he accomplished. We have mentioned the love of Jesus. Well the love of Jesus is redeeming love, redeeming love. In other words the product of his love is redemption. The love the eternal love of God the Father is the highest source we can go to for the origin of redemption and the love is redeeming love and the work of Jesus Christ is a work of redemption. Now I believe that in some way we see in this foot washing an illustration of the work of redemption.

In this way Jesus rose from the table, he laid aside his garments, he girded himself with a towel and then he poured water into a basin.

Now in that fourfold action, there can be seen as an illustration of his redeeming work. A kind of symbolism of his redeeming work.

You see what did our redemption in the eternal decree of God require? Well that's a big answer, a big question and a big question to answer. But may I say this, it required that Jesus would rise from his throne in glory.

And that he did. It required that he would lay aside his crown and scepter and royal robe. And that he did. In his incarnation. It required that he would take the towel of our humanity and wrap it around himself. And that he did. When in the mystery, the great mystery of godliness, he assumed into his divine nature our human nature.

[23 : 51] And it required that he would pour out his own blood on the cross for our redemption, for our justification and for our sanctification. All this he did. Illustrated, symbolized by the fact that he rose up, laid aside his garments, took a towel and girded himself and poured water in a basin and washed his disciples' feet.

And the hands with which he washed the feet of his disciples were the hands that were nailed to the cross. And the body around which the towel was wrapped was the body that was broken for us, which we shall remember tomorrow, in the breaking of bread, in the pouring out of the wine.

And when that body was broken for us, and when that body was pierced, there flowed out blood and water. But ere such love and sorrow meet, our storms compose so rich a crown.

Where the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small, love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

Now, I want to say a third thing about this foot washing as an illustration. Illustrating the love he bears, the redemption he accomplished, and also the refreshing, the refreshing he gives.

[25 : 24] It illustrates the refreshing he gives. He gives. For the foot washing gave relief and refreshing to the tired feet of the disciples. Now, Jesus cares for our feet.

In the sense that he cares very, he cares very much for what is earthly about us. For our body.

This body that has got to go down to the ground, into the grave. He cares for what is earthly about us. But he cares even more for what is immortal about us. Our immortal spirits.

Our spiritual nature. Our never dying souls. Our souls. And in his care, it is his to restore our souls, as the psalmist says in Psalm 23.

It is his to revive us when we are weary. To refresh us when we are jaded. To lift us up when we are cast down. And don't we all have such an experience as we journey on.

[26 : 27] Jaded, cast down, depressed, in need of reviving and refreshing and quickening. Lifting up our heads. And he is the lifter up of our heads. Well now, how does he do it?

Well, he does it by his word. By which we are refreshed and comforted. He does it by his Holy Spirit. He does it through the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a means of refreshing. Of reviving. We come away from the dust of our journey through life. And we come and we sit at the table. And there we are refreshed and revived.

When we partake worthily and take into our hands the emblems of the broken body and shed blood. It's a means of refreshing and has been down through the generations. May it be a means of refreshing for us tomorrow.

That not only does the Lord revive and refresh by his word and by his spirit and by the Lord's Supper. But he also refreshes us through his own people.

[27 : 36] In other words, God uses his people to refresh his people. Now that was the Apostle Paul's testimony. The Apostle testified to the fact that he was refreshed by some Corinthian Christians.

He was refreshed by Onesiphorus. Refreshed by the coming of Philemon. And these men, when they went to Paul and ministered to Paul, they were like the hands of Jesus that washed the feet of the disciples.

May he make us, in some way or other, a means of refreshing to others who are in greater need than ourselves. And if we are to be refreshed, if we are to be a means of refreshing others and encouraging others in the Lord, then we need to be refreshed.

And our prayer is that by coming to the Lord's table and by partaking there in a worthy manner, our souls will be lifted up and our spirits revived through the sacrament.

But there is one thing more I want to say and it is this. That the foot washing of Jesus is an illustration of the love he bears, of the redemption he accomplished, of the refreshing he gives.

[28 : 51] And it illustrates too the purity he requires. The purity he requires. For water is used not only for refreshing, but also for purifying and for cleansing.

And Jesus said to Peter, If I wash thee not, if I wash thee not, thou hast no path with me.

What Jesus meant there, I believe, was this. He said to Peter, Unless I cleanse you thoroughly from sin, you will have no place in my kingdom. That, I believe, is the full meaning of which Peter only saw the part.

Now to be sure, the Lord Jesus requires purity from us. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.

He requires purity from us. But the purity he requires is the purity that he and he alone can give.

[29 : 55] If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. We need washing that he can give. Now the apostle Paul tells us in writing to Titus, rather, chapter 3.

Paul tells us that our regeneration is in fact a washing. He talks about the kindness and love of God our Savior toward us appeared.

Through the washing of regeneration. The washing that the regenerating work of Christ's Spirit produces within our souls. And that washing of regeneration is washing from sin's guilt.

And we need that if we are to be in his kingdom. And then the apostle John says in his epistle, he talks about the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son cleansing us.

And the word there is going on cleansing us. It's a continual cleansing, not just an initial, but that going on cleansing us from all sin. And there the blood cleanses us, not only from sin's guilt, but from sin's pollution.

[31 : 09] And then again John in the book of Revelation speaks about the Lord Jesus, the Lord of glory and says unto him who loved us and washed us.

And the word there is, loosed us from our sins with his own blood. Loosed us so that there through the blood of Jesus we are freed, not only from sin's guilt and sin's pollution, but from sin's power.

If I was thee not thou hast no part with me. And if we have not been to Jesus for cleansing, we have no part with him, no part or lot with him.

There is a cleansing that Jesus requires, a washing that Jesus requires. And that is the washing that Jesus himself gives through regeneration, through the outpouring and the shedding of his own precious blood, which shedding we will commemorate God willing tomorrow in the poured out wine.

Well then, may he who washed the disciples' feet, cleanse and wash us thoroughly within.

[32 : 33] And create within us a clean heart and renew a right spirit within us. Only then can we worship him. Only then can we derive benefit from the ordinance that he has given us and has put at our disposal when we approach the ordinance with a heart cleansed by Jesus' blood, washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, given a clean heart through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

For Jesus himself said, Blessed are the pure in heart. They shall see God. And they shall see him with rejoicing.

That implies that others also will see God who are not pure in heart, but they will not see him with rejoicing or with gladness. For Jesus, may we go to the fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins, and may we find cleansing there for ourselves.

May we be renewed in the inner man after the image of God and die more and more unto sin and live more and more unto righteousness and then come to the table and seek the benefits that his redemption has purchased for us and lay hold upon them by faith for ourselves.

The benefits of assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace and perseverance therein to the end.

[34 : 10] O we give thanks to God that Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, thereby setting us an example to follow and giving us an illustration to consider and to lay deeply to heart.

Let us pray. Our gracious God, Lord, we come before thee realising how unworthy and how unfit we are.

There is so much disablement about us, so much weakness, there is so much sin. And Lord, we come as those who need that inward purifying and to have that pure heart.

For then, we are in the place of blessedness. And grant to us, too, the refreshing we need in our spirits.

O may we be revived and refreshed and quickened. For there is so much to cast us down, to perplex, so much that turns us aside from thee.

[35 : 28] And we pray thee, Lord, to come to us and in thy strengthening grace and in thy great might to revive us again that we may rejoice in thee.

We ask that thou will bless each one of us and prepare us for the Lord's day. May we look forward to it eagerly. May we come into the house of the Lord prepared inwardly.

That we would see no man save Jesus only. May this be our great desire, to see him in all the beauty and comeliness of his nature and character.

To see him in all the sufficiency of his work. In all the glory of his reign. Sitting at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens. And we ask, O Lord, that thou wilt part each one of us tonight with thy blessing.

Giving to us the grace of humility which we see so clearly in our blessed Lord. That we might truly humble ourselves under thy mighty hand.

[36 : 38] That we may be exalted in due season. Hear us and receive us graciously. For Christ's sake. Amen.