

## **The Humility of Love (John 13:1-17)**

**By Pastor Jeff Alexander (2/1/2015)**

### **Introduction**

1. John gives an extended introduction to the events of Jesus' last Passover celebration and the washing of the disciples' feet—(a) The knowledge that the hour of His sacrifice and His return to the Father had come; (b) The hour revealing the extent of His love for His own; (c) The foreknowledge of Judas's tragic and imminent betrayal; (d) The certainty of the divine origin and destiny of work He was doing—all this said to establish a stark contrast.
2. The God-man, Jesus Christ, was humbling Himself in love to serve the undeserving in an act of self-sacrifice on the cross that none could possibly understand.
  - a. To help them, Jesus humbled Himself by washing the feet of His disciples, a task assigned to the lowest ranking slave of the household.
  - b. That the disciples did not at first comprehend the purpose of Jesus' action is evident by their horror and refusal, Simon being the first to vocalize their objection.
3. Jesus' response to Peter provided the teaching opportunity He needed to explain and to charge the disciples to follow His example.
  - a. Washing feet, a custom of Jesus' day, was not the lesson; the humiliating self-abasement of the Savior in washing feet was the lesson.
  - b. Because Jesus, the master rabbi, was willing to humble Himself in such a way, the disciples had no excuse for failing to do as well.
  - c. In fact, Jesus referred to them, not as disciples, but as slaves of whom He was master (v. 16).
4. The lesson for us is that following Jesus, which is necessary if we claim His salvation, is not an option, nor is the sacrificial self-denial and loving service to others an option.

Every problem in the church today can be traced to our failure to love in the sacrificial way that Jesus describes in this lesson.

### **I. The Self-Emptying of Jesus**

1. The apostle Paul understood Jesus' teaching very well (Philippians 2:1-11).
  - a. Addressing relational problems in the Philippian church, Paul pointed to the Savior's humiliation as the correction for the church's own problems.
  - b. Like John, Paul demonstrates the divine and exalted position of Jesus before His incarnation.
  - c. Paul then contrasts that exalted position with the depth of His humiliation in the incarnation.
2. John, in his prologue, describes the inscrutable fact that the Creator of the universe was rejected by His own people, Israel, in the incarnation (John 1:11; 3:11, 32; 5:43).
  - a. The responses to Christ's ministry of truth and mercy are astonishing.
    - 1) His own family considered him "out of his mind" (Mark 3:21).
    - 2) At first His own brothers did not believe Him and actually taunted Him to manifest His claim to be the Messiah (John 7:3-5).
  - b. His own disciples were not much better.
    - 1) They demonstrated constant lack of understanding and bewilderment over Jesus' ministry and teaching.
    - 2) Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss, superficially embracing him but skeptically denying him, for a bag of loose change (Mark 14:33-35).
    - 3) Peter denied the Lord three times (Luke 22:54-62).

- c. The greatest betrayal was His rejection by His own people, Israel, who were waiting expectantly for their Messiah.
  - 1) Their God came to them in the flesh, but they did not receive Him (John 1:11).
  - 2) He spoke God's words to them, and they turned deaf ears to the truth (John 6:69).
  - 3) He demonstrated His power over demons, and they attributed this to the devil (Matthew 12:24).
  - 4) He performed abundant miracles that no one else could do, and they demanded signs to prove His authority (John 2:18; Matthew 12:38).
  - 5) His glorious birth was a miracle they attributed to immorality (John 8:41).
  - 6) When He told them the truth, they accused Him of having a demon (John 7:20; 8:48).
  - 7) When He showed them that He and His Father were one, they accused Him of blasphemy and sought to stone Him (John 10:33).
  - 8) Their hatred and blindness were so severe that they preferred to have a murderer loosed upon their community (Mark 15:7) and the Prince of Peace put to death (Luke 23:18-23).
- 3. We read these accounts and somehow miss the fact that no other human being was ever the object of such scorn nor subjected to such brutal humiliation than was the Lord of Glory.

## II. What About His Followers?

- 1. Jesus asked the ambitious sons of Zebedee, "*Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?*" (Matthew 20:22).
  - a. Is there, then, any humiliation for us that is too great?
  - b. Yet, we live as if there were nothing to suffer and that everyone owes us kindness and respect.
  - c. If we are offended, we get angry, vindictive, and unforgiving.
- 2. Our life is a simple proposition.
  - a. We can live unto ourselves as usual—selfish, sinful and idolatrous, proving that we have no eternal life abiding in us. Or—
  - b. We can seek to live unto others to one degree or another in our own power and discretion, seeking the glory that comes from man, only to suffer eternal loss. Or—
  - c. We can follow Jesus, loving Him and those around us, dying to self, suffering His humiliation and abuse with the hope of resurrection glory and victory assured us in the life to come.
- 3. Jesus' words must stand as true and necessary (John 13:12-18; 34, 35).
  - a. If we are truly His, we cannot but obey them.
  - b. We can only obey them as we have enablement from His Holy Spirit (Philippians 2:12, 13).
  - c. The Spirit-enabled drive of one who has been apprehended of Christ is seen in the example of Paul (Philippians 3:7-11).
 

*"The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself"* (2 Timothy 2:11-13).

## Conclusion

- 1. The church is Christ's body living out Christ's life in a broken and sinful world.
- 2. We, as salt and light, are to know Jesus and to make Him known by our loving relationships in the world.
- 3. Does your heart burn with intense desire to see Christ made known and made glorious?
- 4. Or are you comfortable being comfortable, isolated from reproach, content with being loved, and insulated from the danger that comes from risking all for His sake?