

The last scene in Christ's life we are going to study this weekend is when Jesus washed His disciple's feet. This may be called seeing 'Love on Its Knees'. Jesus who came to serve, serves by kneeling before His troubled, proud, dirty disciples.

Often our homes have the same problem that Jesus saw among His disciples. Jesus knew that there was a competitive spirit in the hearts of His disciples. In fact, approaching the Last Supper, the disciples were disputing over which of them was the greatest ([Luke 22:24-30](#)). So at that Last Supper, Jesus gave them an unforgettable lesson in humility, and by His actions rebuked their selfishness and pride. The more you think about this scene, the more profound it becomes. It is certainly an illustration of what Paul wrote years later in [Philippians 2:1-16](#). Peter must have recalled the event when he wrote his first epistle and urged his readers to "be clothed with humility" ([1 Peter 5:5](#)).

The best way to reach out to our family and lead them into humility and harmony is by serving them. This retreat is a time that we learn how to lead in humility.

It is remarkable how often the Gospel of John reminds us of Christ's humility even while magnifying His deity: "The Son can do nothing of Himself" ([John 5:19](#), 30). "For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will" ([John 6:38](#)). "My doctrine is not Mine" ([John 7:16](#)). "And I seek not Mine own glory" ([John 8:50](#)). "The word which ye hear is not Mine" ([John 14:24](#)). And of course, John ends with the account of Christ's ultimate expression of humility through His death on the cross.

Even within sight of the Cross, the disciples were still arguing about who was greater than another. It was this very argument that produced the situation which made Jesus act as their servant.

The roads of Palestine were unsurfaced and uncleaned. In dry weather they were inches deep in dust and in wet they were liquid mud. The shoes ordinary people wore were sandals, which were simply soles held on to the foot by a few straps. They gave little protection against the dust or the mud of the roads. For that reason there were always great waterpots at the door of a house; and a servant was there with a ewer and a towel to wash the soiled feet of the guests as they came in.

Jesus' little company of friends had no servants. The duties which servants would carry out in wealthier circles they must have shared among each other. It may well be that on the night of this last meal together they had got themselves into such a state of competitive pride that not one of them would accept the duty of seeing that the water and the towels were there to wash the feet of the company as they came in; and Jesus mended their omission in the most vivid and dramatic way.

This ought to make us think. So often, even in our churches and families, trouble arises because someone does not get his place.

In every sphere of life desire for prominence and unwillingness to take a subordinate place wreck the scheme of things. A player is one day omitted from the team and refuses to play any more. A member of a choir is not given a solo and will not sing any more. In any society it may happen that someone is given a quite unintentional slight and either explodes in anger or broods in sulkiness for days afterwards. When we are tempted to think of our rights, let us see again the picture of the Son of God, girt with a towel, kneeling at his disciples' feet. [1]

John 13 starts with a contrast. Judas who was prompted by Satan is shown side-by-side with Jesus who was prompted by the Spirit. Judas was driven by selfishness and Jesus was motivated by love. Judas was proud and insensitive; Jesus was humble and gentle. Judas

was treacherous and ended up betraying Jesus; while Jesus was faithful and ended up sacrificing all, giving Himself in love for sinners.

On the last night Jesus was together with the disciples, He washed their feet with His own hands, to teach them humility and service. As He began He said, "You are clean, but not all of you," referring to Judas ([John 13:10-11](#)). After the object lesson He gave another warning that Judas could have heeded: "I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me'" ([John 13:18](#)).

Jesus grieved over Judas, being unwilling that even this vile man should perish (cf. [2 Pet. 3:9](#)). As the time for the betrayal came closer, Jesus "became troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me'" (v. 21).

He did not grieve over the loss of His own life, which He willingly laid down. He grieved over the spiritual death of Judas and, it seems, made one last appeal before it became forever too late. He knew Judas's unbelief, greed, ingratitude, treachery, duplicity, hypocrisy, and hatred. Still He loved him.

The death He was about to die was as much for Judas's sin as for the sins of any person ever born, and it was for Judas that the Lord grieved as only He can grieve. He lamented over Judas in the same way He had lamented over Jerusalem: "How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling" ([Matt. 23:37](#)).[2]

Jesus loved Judas so much and was a living portrait of how completely opposite Christ's way is to Satan's. Satan had one simple plan from his fall onward—personal advancement at the expense of others. Beware of having the motivation in life to get ahead at others expense. That was Judas' motivation, as it was his father the devil's also.

Satan from the moment of his fall into sin began to say in his heart, "I will think of myself first." That is what Judas did that night. Jesus however came to serve, came to give His life, surrendering Himself to die for others.

So Jesus knelt before His disciples in complete contrast to self-seeking and serving Judas; and in rebuke to that same attitude of the Devil that was bubbling over in the stinky-feet and soiled-proud-hearts of Christ's disciples.

The words used by the Spirit of God in [John 13:5-14](#) have a deep spiritual application to our lives. The first word is *nipto* (used in v. 5-6, 8, 12, and 14) and it means to cleanse or "wash a specific part of the body". The second word is *louo* (used in v. 10) and it means "to bathe all over". The distinction between these words points to the importance of this foot-washing parable or illustration that Jesus was acting out before their eyes. He was demonstrating the elements of a holy walk.

At the instant of salvation we are "bathed all over", our sins are removed, we receive a new heart, and we are completely forgiven ([Revelation 1:5](#); [Titus 3:3-7](#), and [I Corinthians 6:9-11](#)). Jesus promises us that through His death he will "remember our sins and iniquities no more" ([Hebrews 10:17](#)). But, going through life in such a sin filled world leads to regular defilements. But as one united to Christ we do not need to get "saved again", we just need to have that specific stain, sin, or defilement cleansed away. That is the essence of [I John 1:9](#) where we see that if we are constantly confessing our sins "washing a specific part" (that is the tense of the first verb) God is faithful and just to already once-and-for-all to have cleansed us "bathed all over" (that is the tense of the second verb). What a comfort for us

who slog through this muddy world that we don't get unsaved when we sin; but we can't enjoy the delights of our salvation as long as we carry the mud of the world upon our redeemed hearts. Repent and confess and be washed.

That is why it is so important that we "keep our feet clean". When we are defiled, we lose fellowship with our Lord. That is what Jesus was saying to Peter when He said, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me" ([John 13:8](#)).

Christ's word translated "part" was *meros*, which means "participation, having a share in someone or something." Salvation was God "bathing us all over". Then God united us to Jesus in a settled relationship that cannot change. We see this permanence in the verb *wash* in [John 13:10](#); because it is in the perfect tense it means that the washing was settled once and for all.) Fellowship with Christ is tied to whether we keep ourselves "unspotted from the world" ([James 1:27](#)). If we permit un-forsaken and un-confessed sin in our hearts and minds, our walk with the Lord gets obstructed; that is why we need to have our feet washed.

Foot washing was a parable, or a living illustration by Jesus of the character of His entire ministry. Jesus was a humble servant to those He loved, and to those He led. Jesus was showing them how He can enter the world not to be served but to serve; and that was exactly the ministry He had called His disciples to follow.

John 13 beautifully parallels Philippians 2. As Jesus rose from the supper in John 13, Jesus rose from the right hand of His Father to come to us. Then at the Last Supper, Jesus laid aside His garments (John 13:) just as Paul says that Christ laid aside the blinding, glorious power of Deity to become incarnate.

Next, in John 13: Jesus "gird Himself" with the servants towel just as Paul says about Christ's humbling Himself to take the 'form' of a servant. As Jesus poured water in a basin and began to wash the disciples feet, so in a few hours He would pour out His blood on the Cross as an atoning offering for sin.

Then Jesus concludes His parabolic illustration of washing their feet with these words:

[John 13:12-15](#) So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? 13 "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, 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 should do as I have done to you.

How can we apply these truths to our lives tonight? Do we add a third "ordinance" to baptism and communion as some dear Christians have done? I don't think so, otherwise Paul would have expanded upon that ordinance as he did on the other two. No, I believe that it is deeper. Christ's illustration is a call for every believer to be involved in servant hearted, humble ministry. We are to get up from the "table" for Christ and take the servant's role in whatever place we find ourselves serving.

Jesus challenges us when He said, if He as our Master did that—so should we do so for each other! And there are so many ways we can do so. We can help those who are helpless—as in children, orphans, widows, the handicapped, aged, and sick.

We can come to the suffering, the hurting, the down cast and share Christ's tender love—even by opening our homes to those who are alone and have no warmth of Christ's love.

Even more we can minister to those we love who are defiled and help them back to proper fellowship with Him. It was the defilement of their pride, their unwillingness to serve that had to be confronted. That is exactly what Paul reminds us of, as our ministry to those in His body.

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. How should we “wash” those who need to be restored back into fellowship with Christ? Paul uses one very clear word: gentleness. One way to capture the metaphor of foot washing is to use water that doesn’t add to the problem. We don’t plunge a brother or sister’s feet into scalding water nor ice water. Harshness or cold formality both will never do—we must kneel with the gentle warm water of humble love as we serve them—by serving Christ’s way.

One other note—use water. Some believers try to dry-clean the feet of others scraping them free of dirt in a way unlike Christ’s way, and often take the skin away with the dirt.

May we see by Christ’s example how to come in love, in meekness, and in humility as we serve Him by serving each other!

If you want to deepen your fellowship with the Lord, the vital element is to keep your feet clean.

A Day of Reckoning

... *We must all **appear before the judgment seat** of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, ... whether good or bad.*

—**2 Corinthians 5:10**, emphasis added

As we will learn in this coming week in Living Hope week 16, the assembly at Pergamos faced the judgment of God for sin that was never dealt with in their lives; so will we if we don’t repent. Because God *hates* sin, we need to flee from it and fear the holiness of God. As a warning to everyone called to lifelong consecration to the Lord, which is the picture we see in Christ’s washing the feet of His disciples.

Now listen to the words of the Apostle of holy living—as we turn to Ephesians 5.1-14.

Ephesians 5:1-14 Follow God’s example in everything you do just as a much loved child imitates his father. 2 Be full of love for others, following the example of Christ who loved you and gave himself to God as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, for Christ’s love for you was like sweet perfume to him. 3 Let there be no sex sin, impurity or greed among you. Let no one be able to accuse you of any such things. 4 Dirty stories, foul talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, remind each other of God’s goodness, and be thankful. 5 You can be sure of this: The Kingdom of Christ and of God will never belong to anyone who is impure or greedy, for a greedy person is really an idol worshiper—he loves and worships the good things of this life more than God. 6 Don’t be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the terrible wrath of God is upon all those who do them. 7 Don’t even associate with such people. 8 For though once your heart was full of darkness, now it is full of light from the Lord, and your behavior should show it! 9 Because of this light within you, you should do only what is good and right and true. 10 Learn as you go along what pleases the Lord. 11 Take no part in the worthless pleasures of evil and darkness, but instead, rebuke and expose them. 12 It would be shameful even to mention here those pleasures of darkness that the ungodly do. 13 But when you expose

them, the light shines in upon their sin and shows it up, and when they see how wrong they really are, some of them may even become children of light! 14 That is why God says in the Scriptures, “Awake, O sleeper, and rise up from the dead; and Christ shall give you light.”

TLB

The NIV captures verse three so clearly, look at those words again—“But among you **there must not be even a hint** of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.

Now where have we gotten to in our American Culture? Are we listening to Paul or is our life slowly being squeezed into the shape our lusts of the flesh driven world around us pressures us to be every day?

Remember Romans 12.1-2—

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. NKJV

This evening as each family takes the water and the towel, we are going to have a time of personal consecration. While Jesus washed their feet, they were convicted of their sinful attitudes and actions. I would like to ask each head of family here (that means 42 husbands here and two single moms) to take the foot washing bottle and towel, get on your knees in front of your family and wash their feet one by one.

Start your foot washing time by reading aloud the verses in John 13. Then take as long as you need to do this illustration Jesus left us of our need to wash the defilement of the world off from our lives.

While you have your feet washed, it is a very humbling time. It is harder to have your feet washed than to do the washing of another’s feet. So while you are being washed, ask the Lord to convict you of any sins that are hindering your fellowship with the Lord. Right there where you sit, confess them, forsake them, and ask for His cleansing anew and afresh.

And then either the oldest child for the single moms homes, wash your mother’s feet or the beloved wife in each couple’s home wash your husband’s feet). Then, close your sacred time of personal consecration and foot washing in prayer.

You can spread out, move outside or anywhere in this room.

[1]Barclay, William, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of John - Volume 2 Chapters 8-21 (Revised Edition)*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press) 2000, c1975.

[2]MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.