

The Word Became Flesh
Week 39
John 13:1-17 (CSB)
“Humility + Holiness = Happiness”

Introduction

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. **Philippians 2:3 (KJV)**

After retreating from the crowds, Jesus put one final effort into preparing His disciples for the road that lay ahead. On Thursday of the Passion Week, He gathered them all into an upper room to celebrate the Passover with them. Jesus told His followers that He had been looking forward to sharing this meal with them.

Then He said to them, “I have fervently desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”
Luke 22:15

As they were about to begin the Seder meal commemorating the Jews great exodus from Egypt, Christ was well aware that the time for His own “exodus” was at hand. The disciples did not really know what to expect in the coming days, but The LORD knew every minute and every second of the agony that was soon to become His burden to bear. For on Friday, the very next day, at the exact same moment in time as hundreds and thousands of passover lambs were being slaughtered throughout the land to celebrate Israel’s deliverance from ages past, The Lamb of God would lay down His life to deliver this world from the bondage of sin. For it was this reason alone, that He came. *This* was His hour.

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. **John 13:1**

The phrase in this verse that says, **“He loved them to the end”**, actually means that He loved them to the fullest extent. For this is why He was willing to die, because He loves us completely. Jesus held nothing back in His love for those who would come to Him by faith for salvation. He died for you, because He considered you to be worth dying for! That is what it means to love to the fullest extent.

“No one has greater love than this: to lay down His life for His friends.” **John 15:13**

As we read John’s reciting of the events that occurred that evening in the upper room, the power of Christ’s love for His chosen is overwhelming to us. He wanted them to learn how to love as He loves. In fact, He wants all of us to follow His example. As The LORD of glory gets up from the table to serve His disciples, we are shown a living example of how we are to love Him and to love one another as His Body, The Church. It is a practical display of the wonder working power of agape love. This love of God **Corrects** us, **Cleanses** us, and **Commands** us to die to self in order to follow Christ.

Corrected (vs.2-5)

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. 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. So He got up from supper, laid aside His outer clothing, took a towel, and tied it around Himself. Next, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples’ feet and to dry them with the towel tied around Him. **John 13:2-5**

For those who are familiar with the Passover Seder, it is customary to begin the memorial with a washing of the hands as a symbolic “ceremonial cleansing” before the meal. It is at this time that I believe Jesus, got up from the table and took off His outer garments, wrapped Himself in a towel and began to wash the feet of His disciples one by one. It must have been a shock for them to see their Master humble Himself in such fashion, for the washing of feet was a menial task that would have been reserved only for a slave to perform. Yet here was The LORD of glory, taking on the form of a lowly servant!

A careful reading of the Scriptures will reveal to us how those twelve men should have been extremely convicted by Jesus’ act of selfless devotion. For they had just recently been arguing amongst themselves as to which of them was the highest ranking within the group!

Then a dispute also arose among them about who should be considered the greatest. But He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who have authority over them have themselves called ‘Benefactors’. It is not to be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever is greatest among you should become like the youngest, and whoever leads, like the one serving. For who is greater, the one at the table or the one serving? Isn’t it the one at the table? But I am among you as the One Who serves.” **Luke 22:24-27**

What better way to demonstrate this spiritual reality of God’s kingdom, than to perform the task of a lowly servant. It has been said that true humility doesn’t mean to consider oneself as less than, but rather, it is not to consider oneself **at all!** This world lives to climb social and political ladders, to gain all the status that one can achieve, but Christ has called us to divest ourselves of all selfish ambition and live to serve others. Can you imagine how much better this world would be, if those who lead us and refer to themselves as “public servants” would actually live to serve others, rather than have others serve them.

I cannot help but wonder if the disciples began arguing about who was the greatest when they were deciding who would take the respective places around the supper table that evening. I can imagine that everyone there wanted to get as close to Jesus as they could, so they were fighting over the “pecking order” to see who would get the preferred spots at the table. How convicting it must have been for them, as The LORD began to wash their dirty feet! Not only had He rebuked their childish behavior with His words, but He rebuked them further by stooping down to wash their feet! It is often by His love that God corrects us.

Can you imagine knowing that within a few hours you would be nailed to the cross in order to save these men, and yet here they were arguing about which of them was greater?! I am fairly certain, that this was discouraging to The Savior. And I am also pretty sure that He is disappointed in us today as well! My friends, we need to stop making this all about ourselves. It is time for the Church of Jesus Christ to return to humility. It is time that we look around and see who might need to have their feet washed. Neither the Greeks, nor Romans, in Jesus’ day placed any value on humility. In fact, they considered it to be weakness. But it is only through humility that men shall repent of their sins and turn to Christ for salvation. For humility is the only way to receive the grace of God!

...God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

James 4:6b

Cleansed (vs. 6-11)

He came to Simon Peter, who asked him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” Jesus answered him, “What I’m doing you don’t realize now, but afterward you will understand.”

“You will never wash my feet,” Peter said. Jesus replied, “If I don’t wash you, you have no part with me.” Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.”

“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.” For he knew who would betray him. This is why he said, “Not all of you are clean.”

John 13:6-11

You can be certain that Peter was in on the “who’s the greatest” discussion. For The Scriptures make it plain that he, James, and John were often in competition with one another. Not to mention the fact that Pete never met a conversation that he didn’t feel the need to enjoin. When The Savior reached down to lift Peter’s feet, he tried to resist. Perhaps he was starting to feel a touch of guilt that it never crossed his own mind to perform such a menial act of service. He certainly knew that Jesus was overqualified to perform this task. So he attempted to stop The LORD from touching his dirty feet. **“LORD, you will never wash my feet!”** he exclaimed. The actual Greek is even more emphatic. A better rendering would read, *“You shall never, not ever, wash my feet!”*

Jesus tells Peter that once again, he has no idea what he is talking about. Peter did not understand the spiritual significance of what Christ was doing. And since he was thus unaware, he would have been much better served by keeping his mouth shut. Jesus told him that unless He were allowed to cleanse the hesitant disciple’s feet, then he would have “no part in Him.”

Now, Peter had a LOT of flaws, but devotion to Jesus was not one of them. He loved his LORD. He had a funny way of showing it at times, but the love was genuine nonetheless. So, upon hearing Christ’s admonition to him, he once again overreacts with an uninformed response. He asked Jesus to give him a bath! While it was an “over the top” response, it did open the door for The Savior to teach a very important spiritual truth.

“One who has bathed,” Jesus told him, “doesn’t need to wash anything except his feet, but he is completely clean. You are clean...” **John 13:10a (partial rendering)**

What was Jesus saying? He was talking about the eternal security of our salvation. Once a person has come to Christ in genuine belief, they are completely made clean. They will ***never*** have a need to be re-cleansed! Jesus saves, and when He saves, He saves completely, my friends. You can never lose your salvation. So relax Pete. You do not need an all over bath.

And now the rest of the story. Even Christians sin. A person’s feet, in Scripture, are symbolic of the places where they walk. And even when we try our best to follow Christ, sometimes we stray off course. We wander off the path of righteousness, as it were. And when we find ourselves walking into places where we ought not go, our feet get dirty, and we lose the close fellowship that we have with God. It is then that we need to allow Jesus to lift up our feet and wash them clean. We confess our sins and allow Him to forgive and cleanse us, so that we can once again walk in holiness alongside of Him. John, the writer of this gospel, understood this reality full well in his later years. This is why he wrote:

If we say, “We have no sin,” we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **1 John 1:8-9**

So what is the Christian who has been forever bathed (washed clean) by the blood of Jesus, to do when he strays into sin? Go to Christ in repentance and have your feet washed and your fellowship restored! This is why Jesus told Peter, **“If I don’t wash you, you have no part with Me.”** So do not let sin rob you of your close walk with The LORD. When you mess things up, allow Him to pick up your feet and wash them clean. For without these frequent cleanings, we will be ineffective in the kingdom. To walk with God is to walk in holiness. So how long has it been since you have had your feet washed by Jesus?

Now don’t miss the order of this. First Christ corrected (rebuked) them with His words, and then He cleansed them! That is exactly how we as His followers are corrected and cleansed. The Word of God rebukes us and causes us to repent. And when we do so, Jesus cleans us up again. What a great

spiritual reality we are shown from a disciple who didn't know when to keep his mouth shut! I'm so glad that Peter made such a fool of himself, so that we could all learn from his mistake! **Correction** by the Word leads to **Cleansing** from The LORD!

Commanded (vs.12-17)

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? You call Me Teacher and Lord — and you are speaking rightly, since that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done for you.

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

After demonstrating just how much He loved them by washing their dirty feet, in order to ceremonially cleanse them to partake of the Seder meal, Jesus then gave them a command to do likewise, to love one another, just as He has loved them. Many have interpreted this as literal directive to observe foot-washings as a rite of the church, much like baptism and communion. But I believe that the meaning goes much deeper than this. While there is nothing inherently wrong with washing one another's feet at a church service, the truth that is actually being conveyed here is that we, as Believers, have been commanded to humble ourselves, in order to serve our brothers and sisters in the love of Christ.

In order to truly follow Jesus, we must first put ourselves in last place, in order to serve the needs of others. Christ Himself has set the example for us to follow. Our Savior gave up the glory and majesty of Heaven, in order to come as a lowly servant to lay down His very life for us. We too are commanded to have this same mindset.

Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, Who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when He had come as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death — even to death on a cross. Philippians 2:5-8

Now seeing as this is such a clear command in The Scriptures, the question that remains for us today is simple. Is this how we live? Do we humble ourselves before God and our brothers and sisters in order to become a servant of all?

The washing of the disciples feet is not just some idle story intended to move us emotionally. But rather, it is offered as an example of how we must live, if we are to be like Christ. Jesus ended this object lesson by telling His disciples that if they walked in this manner, then they would find lasting happiness (The word "blessed" in the Greek means "happy"). But He was also fully aware that not everyone who claim to be His followers are the genuine article. Judas also had his feet washed that day as well, but to no effect, for his soul had very much remained unclean! The story of Judas shows us just how miserable the unbeliever will be in this world. For to choose a life without the light of Christ is to be lost in darkness forever.

So let it be said of us that we have been Corrected by The Word of God, Cleansed by the Savior, and are obedient to His Command to love, as He loves. For the secret to a life filled with everlasting joy is simple: Humility + Holiness = Happiness!

And let the *Corrected*, *Cleansed*, and *Commanded* say... TRUTH!!!