John 13 (Part 1) :1–20 • Jesus Washes the Disciples Feet

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We're in John chapter 13, John 13. And we're going to be calling this part 1, as we take the first 20 verses of the chapter. John 13, beginning at verse 1. Read along, or follow along with me as I read,

1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2 During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father, had given him all things, or rather *had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, 4 rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. 5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, do you wash my feet?' 7 Jesus answered him, 'What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.' 8 Peter said to him, 'You shall never wash my feet.' Jesus answered him, 'If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.' 9 Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' 10 Jesus said to him, 'The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you.' 11 For he knew who was to betray him; that is why he said, 'Not all of you are clean.'*

12 When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, 'Do you understand what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, 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 (also) should do just as I have done to you. 16 Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. 18 I'm *(I am) not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.' 19* I'm *(I am) telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. 20 Truly, truly,*

I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me." (ESV)

Stop there if you would please, and let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we come to You this morning humbly to ask that You would open our eyes and ears to see and hear what You have for us in these verses. Lord, You've not only given these verses to begin with as through the writing of the apostle John, but You have supernaturally preserved them all these years that we might grow from them and gain a heart of wisdom and be nourished in our spirit and soul. So we ask You, Lord God, to do that today. But we confess to You as we begin to dig into these verses, that apart from Your spirit, we are hopeless. And we need the illuminating work that You are doing in each of us to bring understanding and application. So we ask You to do that in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord, and all God's people said, amen.

It is now Thursday evening in the context of the narrative that we're looking at here. The disciples, along with Jesus, have gathered for the evening meal. This would be the meal where Jesus eventually after supper, broke bread and also gave the cup to His disciples. Both as symbols of His impending sacrifice on the cross.

Interestingly enough, John didn't record those things. Isn't that something? John actually gives us more detail, on what happened this night, than any of the other gospel writers, and yet he doesn't get into the details of the Last Supper. I find that very interesting. Probably it was because, by this time the other synoptic gospels had been written, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. And John knew that had been covered well. And that he went on to deal with other aspects of this detail.

Interestingly enough, scholars generally agree, that chapters 13 through 17 of John's Gospel, all occurred in the Upper Room. All of the speeches, all of the talking, we have that many chapters that deal with just what is happening here in the Upper Room. However, in the passage that we're looking at here this morning, the focus is very clearly on this foot washing thing that Jesus did. By the way, how many of you have ever been through a foot washing service? Put your hand up, let me see. Okay, well, just a few. I'd say maybe 5 to 7%, perhaps.

Anyway, so this is where we kind of focus. And it begins in verse 1 with John giving kind of an introduction, if you will, to chapters 13 through 17. And he says here, that *"1...before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come,"* and of course that doesn't refer to a single hour of time,

meaning 60 minutes, it's referring to the time. The time had come for Him to sacrifice Himself. And John says, *"to depart out of this world to the Father."* He ends this section by saying, *"having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end."* And that's a very interesting sort of a phrase.

The word "end" there in the Greek means "to the limit." He loved them to the limit. In other words, Jesus gave them the uttermost proof of His love. And of course, He's talking there not about washing their feet, He's talking about dying on the cross. This is a, this is an introductory phrase that is now speaking of the, surely, the current events, but also into the future of what Jesus is going to do in the next 24 hours. And in fact, in a couple of chapters here when we get into it in the 15th chapter, Jesus is going to define that as the uttermost. If you look on the screen with me,

John 15:13 (ESV)
Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

John chapter 15:13; *"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends,"* right? By the way that's the verse on our T-shirt, isn't it?Yeah, those T-shirts that we made this summer John 15:13.

So now we get into the details of the Last Supper, obviously minus the, you know, the bread and the cup. But John writes to us here in verse 2, saying that *"2 During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,..."* and then he goes on. I wanted to talk about this just for a minute.

When John says that Satan had already put this into Judas's heart to betray the Lord, what he's essentially saying is that Satan found fertile soil for the deceptive temptation that he was now communicating to Judas. But, make no mistake about it, Judas was not a puppet in these circumstances. Don't think of Judas as like, well he didn't have any choice in the matter. He was the one chosen to betray the Lord. And so, he was probably going to be a good guy, had God not kind of randomly decided to make him the betrayer. Who knows? He might've been another apostle Paul. I guess we'll never know because God decided ahead of time that Judas was going to be, you know, the villain of the story.

Do you know there's some people that actually think that way? I don't. Judas's heart was not right with God. And therefore, he was vulnerable already to this whole temptation. We read earlier that Judas was in charge of the money bag. He was kind of like the treasurer of all of the disciples. And John even told us

that he regularly dipped into it for his own purposes. And we know that Judas was the kind of guy who just couldn't understand things. Like when Mary, the sister of Lazarus, was so overwhelmed with such incredible love for her Savior. And she took that really valuable perfumed ointment, and broke it over His feet and His head, and so forth and anointed Him. Judas couldn't get it. He didn't understand that kind of love. And he criticized her, you'll remember. So we've already had these snapshots that have given us some understanding of the heart of Judas. And that's why, because he was not right with God, he was then susceptible, vulnerable, if you will, to these temptations.

And then it goes on in verse 3 to say, then *"3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and,* (I want you to pay attention to what that means) *that he had come from God was now going back to God,"* He then rose from the supper, took off His outer garments, took a towel, wrapped it or tied it around His waist, and then began to wash their feet. If we just get right into the foot washing and we ignore what John tells us here in the top of verse 3, we're going to miss a great deal of emphasis that is important for us to lay hold of.

He begins by telling us in this whole foot washing narrative with this interesting preface, that Jesus now knew and understood, that God the Father had placed all things into His hands. Not as if that had just come as a revelation, by any means. But Jesus knowing that all authority had been given to Him, He knelt down and washed the disciples' feet.

And I bring that out to you because I don't know what you would do if you figured out that you suddenly had all authority in heaven and on earth. But typically when someone recognizes that they have some kind of authority, regardless of how big it may be or whatever, they begin to act like it. Have you ever noticed that? Once we realize I've got the authority here and that everybody's just kind of following my lead, suddenly I'm going to play on that. I'm going to kind of use that. And I'm going to start expecting people to do what I want them to do. And I'm going to start barking orders. I'm in charge here in case you were wondering. So you go do that, you over there. And you, and that sort of thing.

And that's typical human nature. And this is why it's so important for us to see this. Jesus knowing that "all authority" had been given to Him, He got up from supper and started washing people's feet. And that's what I want you to see. And here's what Jesus did. Verse 5, *"5...poured the water into a base and began to wash the disciples feet, wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him."* And you can just...wouldn't you have loved to have been a fly on the wall, and just see the expression of the disciples, as I'm sure they're dumbfounded.

You guys do know that the other gospel writers tell us, that even at the Last Supper they were debating which of them was the greatest. Yeah. And I don't doubt that probably, there was some kind of conversation like that going on probably, just before this happened, you know. That's the perfect timing.

None of the disciples were prepared for this. Because you see, this was not uncommon, this whole foot washing thing. It's weird for us to wash feet. But it wasn't in that culture. In fact, it was traditional that when you had a guest over for a meal at your home, your household servant, whichever one happened to be the lowliest position, they would get down on their knees, and when your guests arrived, they would take a bowl of water and they would wash your guests' feet. And that was just what they did.

And so, this again, this wasn't something that would have shocked the disciples from the standpoint of the foot washing part of it. What would have dumbfounded them is that Jesus got up to do it. He's the master. They all know by this time that even though they're having conversations among themselves about who's the greatest, they know He's the greatest. I mean if it's going to come right down to it.

And so for Him to get up and do this, and I don't know, maybe it was even somewhat confusing for the men who sat there while Jesus washed their feet. But we're going to look at these verses again. And as we do, you're going to see that there are essentially four things that Jesus is communicating or conveying to them through this whole foot washing experience. And for those of you who like to take notes, we'll put them up on the screen for you so you can see them. They are essentially these:

What Jesus sought to convey:

- A lesson in humility and grace

- A picture of cleansing

- An example of servitude

- An exhortation for the days ahead

One, He wanted to give them a lesson in humility and grace. And that seems fairly obvious. He next wanted to give a picture of cleansing and He wanted to talk about cleansing. And this is a very important discussion about cleansing. And then thirdly, he wanted to give an example to them of servanthood. And

then fourthly, He wanted to give them an exhortation that they could take with them in the days ahead.

Lets start with the first one, a lesson in humility and grace.

What Jesus sought to convey:

- **A lesson in humility and grace**
- A picture of cleansing
- An example of servitude
- An exhortation for the days ahead

You know, as Jesus was going around washing these guys feet, I have no doubt that if anybody was going to buck this, He probably figured Peter would do it. And sure enough, that's what happened. Verse 6 tells us that He came to Peter, probably got down on His knees, or slid over to where Peter was, and Peter immediately asked, *"Lord, do you wash my feet?"* And that's simply a way of saying, do You mean to wash my feet? Is that what...is that Your intention? Well, of course it was, and he knew that.

And you'll notice that, Jesus answered him and He said, 'what I am doing, you don't understand right now, but afterward, you will understand. Now, that should be enough to get Peter to just relax. I mean, you'd think, right? If your Savior says to you, listen I know you don't get it, but just chill because you will later, okay?

But of course, Pete, that's just not his way, you know. It's not his way to get it. So he, Peter objects, he says, no, he says, You will never wash my feet. And he just kind of lays it out there. And with this statement that Peter makes, he kind of, he proves that he doesn't understand what Jesus is doing.

But if you've ever, for those of you who've been to a foot washing service, and some of you have, you probably know that the toughest part about being at a, participating in a foot washing service, is not washing people's feet, it's having your feet washed. That's the tough part. That's the part that people object to. There's a lot of, I'd say even the majority of people, would get down on their knees and wash people's feet, as grody as that even is. But, you know, the whole idea of taking off your shoes and letting someone wash your feet is kind of like, ugh (groan) I just don't want to do that.

And it's essentially a response of pride, letting someone serve you. And that's really what it kind of comes down to. It's letting someone serve you, you know. That's hard to do. It's hard to take. And do you know what, do you know what it takes to let something like that happen? It takes humility, and it takes an understanding essentially of the pridefulness that would otherwise keep us from allowing that to happen. We need to understand grace. And that's what Jesus was trying to convey here to Peter. And Peter was having a difficult time accepting this, because he hadn't really laid hold of grace yet. And he still had a great deal of personal pride. And so he says, *"You shall never wash my feet."*

I don't know, you guys probably remember the story of me telling you when I was a young man I was in my twenties. And I was leading a home Bible study. We were living in Montana at the time, and I had to drive about an hour to go to this Bible study. And after the Bible study, the people that were there kind of took up this little offering. I didn't see them do it, but I think it was before the study they took up a little offering just to kind of help me with my gas costs.

And so, I had gone to this Bible study with an older Pastor. In fact, he was probably about my age now. And he was older and wiser. And the guy whose home that we were meeting in, after the study just kind of came over to me and and had some rolled up bills in his hand, and he started handing me this money. And I was like, no, no, no that's okay. I don't need your money. I was just being all prideful and stupid. And the older pastor who was sitting next to me just kind of leaned over and he said, just take it, okay.

The reason I had a hard time accepting it is the same reason Peter had a hard time accepting Jesus watching, washing his feet. Because it takes humility to let somebody serve you, especially when you know you don't deserve it, right? Peter knew. He knew he didn't deserve it. Anything, really, frankly. And yet to understand grace, is to understand that it's not because I deserve it. It's because He loves me, right?

Do you know how many Christians stumble over that very simple concept? They have a real, they, you. Some of you, have a hard time accepting what God wants to do in your life. Because you know, beyond a shadow, you don't deserve it. And I hear this from people all the time. And you know we talk about this a lot. People come to me and they'll say, Pastor Paul, I just don't feel like I deserve God's love. And I tell them, you're right. You don't! You don't deserve anything He gives you. Why are you going to let that stand in your way? If you're going to wait around until you deserve things, you'll never accept anything from the Lord.

Do you understand grace is getting what you don't deserve? His love, His forgiveness, His goodness, that's grace. Oh, if we need to know grace, we need to understand grace. And we will begin then to accept what He has for us, rather than waiting around saying, well, I'm just going to wait till I'm deserving. Yeah, you got a long wait ahead of you.

You guys remember when Jesus started the Beatitudes in the "Sermon on the Mount," He started giving us an understanding of the steps to salvation. And that's what the Beatitude gives us. Steps to salvation. And what do you need to understand before you can even come to a place of receiving salvation. Let me show you this on the screen from John chapter five, verse three: *(Pastor Paul misspoke; he meant to say Matthew five, verse three)*

Matthew 5:3 (ESV)
"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

You guys know what it means to be poor in spirit, right? To be poor, that word actually means destitute. It means you have nothing. It doesn't mean you have a little, it means you have nothing. So blessed are those who have nothing in their spirit. And that word literally means speaking of themselves, in and of themselves. Blessed are those who have nothing in and of themselves for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. In other words, blessed are those who realize that they have nothing to offer, because they now have everything to receive by grace, right? Now that's the first step. If you haven't come to that place of understanding that you have nothing, you probably haven't gone any further.

Anyway, we're going to move on here. The second thing that Jesus sought to convey as we put these back up on the screen:

What Jesus sought to convey:

- A lesson in humility and grace
- **A picture of cleansing**
- An example of servitude
- An exhortation for the days ahead

Highlighted there, the second one is just this picture of cleansing. You notice that Jesus said to Peter in verse 8, He said, listen, if I don't wash you, you have no share in me. And so Simon says, well then don't just wash my feet, wash my

hands and my head as well. Listen carefully to what Jesus says in verse 10. "10 *Jesus said to him, 'The one who has bathed* (very important) *does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean.* (You might consider underlining those two words in your Bible, completely clean. And he said to him, to Peter,) *"And you are clean."*

Okay, what is Jesus saying here? Well, you guys know that in that day first of all, we'll talk about the physical thing He was saying, and then what's the spiritual meaning. The physical, in the physical sense, you know that in those days they wore open sandals. And so, the roads were made of dirt. And, and so even though someone may have bathed in the morning and completely washed their body before leaving home, if they had to go anywhere, if they had to walk anywhere, their feet were going to be dirty by the time they got there. But when they got to their destination, it doesn't mean they need another bath they're already clean, it just means they need to wash their feet.

All right, now, what's the spiritual meaning behind this? This is the message Jesus is giving them about cleansing. And this is something that, again, a lot of Christians miss. For those who have received Christ as their Savior, okay, by faith, you believe what Jesus did for you on the cross, that's your bath. And you're clean. But you know what? You're not walking in a perfect, clean world, are you? Just like the Jews who had to walk on dirt roads, you're walking in a filthy world. And so what happens, your feet get dirty. And so there's the need for cleansing. You don't have to get saved again. You just need to wash your feet. You get it?

Here's the deal. There's a lot of Christians who will, will read that Jesus taught us to pray to be forgiven in the Lord's Prayer. In fact, let me put it on the screen. You guys know this. We all know the Lord's Prayer.

Matthew 6:12 (ESV)
"...forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

People read that and they say, why did Jesus teach us to pray that prayer, to ask to be forgiven? Aren't we already forgiven? And what they're asking is, aren't I already clean by faith through Jesus Christ? And the answer is, yes, you are. You're already clean.

So then why do I, why was I told to pray to ask God to forgive my debts? Because you've been walking in a dirty world. And your feet need to be cleaned because you're coming into the presence of the Holy of Holies. And you don't want to walk in there with dirty feet because you're bringing, you're traipsing

the world...remember your mother used to say that? Don't traipse that mud in here. Right? And my mother said that all the time. I just waxed this floor. Don't go walking through here with your muddy shoes.

Well, you know, hey, if mom didn't like that, what do you think God thinks about it? You know, as it relates to walking into the Holy of Holies. Listen, it's for relationship. We walk through a filthy world, and we get dirtied by the world. It doesn't mean we have to get resaved, but it does mean we need to kind of just ask Him to forgive us before we come into His presence. So there's nothing standing in the way of our communion with Him, our fellowship with Him. Because we take on the world when we walk in the world, and we need that forgiveness.

And so Jesus is giving this beautiful picture of cleansing for the believer. Remember, the believer's already clean because he has put his faith in what Jesus did on the cross. He's clean. She's clean. But your feet get dirty. So just wash your feet. "Lord, forgive me. Forgive me, wash me, cleanse me. Thank you, Lord." You're not getting saved again. You're just making sure nothing's standing between you and Him as it relates to your fellowship.

Third thing on the screen highlighted there for you:

What Jesus sought to convey:

- A lesson in humility and grace

- A picture of cleansing

- **An example of servitude**

- An exhortation for the days ahead

He was giving them an example of servanthood. Verse 12: *"12 When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, 'Do you understand what I've (have) done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you're right,...* (That's what I am.) *14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash* another's, *one another's feet."*

Is Jesus telling us here to have foot washing services? Actually no, that would be an Old Testament interpretation to a New Testament truth. What I mean by that is there are a lot of people who read things in the New Testament and they

apply an Old Testament mindset, which is legalism. Oh, Jesus wants us to have foot washing services. No, what He's saying is, I want you to apply what I've shown you. The attitude, the willingness to serve in the lowliest position. Whatever that may be. Be willing to do, giving up whatever place you think you may deserve, to serve others in everyday life.

And that's how He taught us to serve one another. Ready and willing. Ready and willing to render the most humble service, whatever it may be. Whatever dirty, rotten (ugh groan) kind of service we're called upon to do.

You've heard me say before that my elders used to, in fact, it was one of my elders who since retired and moved away. But he used to talk about becoming an elder. That was when the Lord gave him his "holy demotion." That's what he called it. He called it a holy demotion. He said, he said now that I'm an elder, I have to clean toilets. And, and, and that was his way of just kind of saying, I need to be willing to do whatever the Lord calls me to do, to render whatever service, you know.

Interestingly enough, Luke, records something Jesus said during the Last Supper that I've always loved. I'll put it on the screen for you. It's from Luke 22.

Luke 22:25-27 (ESV)
And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves."

It says, this is Jesus speaking. *"...he said to them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them,* meaning their subjects, *and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater; one who reclines at* the *table or* the *one who serves...*the person at the table? *Is it not the one who reclines...* and is being served? Right? Right. But look at this statement. I love this statement. *But I am among you as the one who serves."*

Do you know what? Jesus still speaks that to His children today. He's still speaking that to His kids, *"I am among you," "But I am among you as one who serves."* I am among you as one who is humble of heart, and willing to do

whatever, you know. And that is what we are called to, Christians. That's our calling.

People once in a while will say to me, Pastor Paul, I don't know what my calling is. Well, we'll start right here. This is a good place to start. Be willing to render any service, anytime, no matter how lowly. Let's start there and then we'll talk about whatever other spiritual gifts calling maybe you were interested in talking about.

We have a tendency to want to kind of leapfrog over the the, these sort of humble beginnings to serving, and get right on to, I want to know exactly how big of crowds I'm going to be drawing, you know. I want to know exactly how important I'm going to be in the eyes of other people. So Lord, show me my calling.Yeah I, I need you to humble yourself and be willing to serve."

Lastly, fourth thing, an exhortation for the days ahead.

What Jesus sought to convey:

- A lesson in humility and grace

- A picture of cleansing

- An example of servitude

- **An exhortation for the days ahead**

Verse 15, look with me there in your Bible, *"15 For I have given you an example, that you...should do just as I have done to you. 16 Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor...a messenger greater than the one who sent him.* (And) 17 *If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."*

And, you know, Jesus was about to send these men out as sheep among wolves. He was, he's just 24 hours or so from, you know, His sacrifice on the cross. And He's making some important points to them about where they go and what they do. And He wants this example to go with them. I've given you an example that you should do as I have done.

And as you go, it's going to be hard, but I want you to go in all humility, willingness to serve, and I promise a blessing. Did you see that in verse 17? Did you see that? *"If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."* Right?

It's not enough just to know. "*If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."* There's a blessing He pronounces.

And then the last verses of the section that we read here this morning, Jesus goes on to speak of the betrayal by Judas. He says in verse 18, "I'm not speaking of all of you..." In other words, He knew that there were some there that simply couldn't receive the things that He was saying because their hearts were closed. And He's specifically talking of Judas. He says, *"I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'"* a quote there from Psalm 41.

And then He says in verse 19, I'm telling you this now so that when it all unfolds, you're going to believe. You're going to *"believe that I am he."* That's interesting statement, isn't it? I'm telling you now so that when you see this thing happening, you're going to know that I knew and I am the one I claimed to be.

And then Jesus gives us a final promise to kind of ponder in verse 20. He says again, *"20 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."* speaking of the Father. So, what's He saying here? To accept and embrace the one that Jesus sends is to accept and embrace Jesus Himself. In like manner, to receive Jesus is to receive the Father.

He's simply saying that the connection between the messenger and the sender of the message is so close that accepting one means accepting the other. Isn't that an awesome place for you to be and for me to be in this world? I mean, think about that, you guys. You go out and you start sharing Christ with somebody, and they accept you and they receive your message, they've received Christ, you know. Isn't that crazy? That connection is so close and so intimate.