

John Ch13v1-17 - Washed Clean To Serve

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[0 : 00] Good morning everyone, nice to see you today.

And please turn in your Bibles to John's Gospel, chapter 13. John's Gospel, chapter 13. So if you've been with us over the last little while, you'll know that we were looking at the resurrection of Jesus Christ and those who had encountered the risen Jesus and the difference Jesus had made.

And now we're going to jump back into the middle of John's Gospel. Chapters 13 to chapter 17 are really about 24 hours in the life of Jesus.

Chapters 1 to 12 is about three years, but chapters 13 to 17 is really about 24 hours just before Jesus is arrested and crucified.

[1 : 20] Jesus spends time with his disciples, teaching them and preparing them for his departure. So over the next few weeks, we're going to be looking at that section, chapters 13 to 17, as Jesus prepares the disciples and teaches us through his word what it means to follow him.

So we're going to read from verse 1 of chapter 13 to verse 17.

Let us hear God's word. It was just before the Passover festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father.

Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God.

So he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

[3 : 02] He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, Lord, are you going to wash my feet? Jesus replied, You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.

No, said Peter, you shall never wash my feet. Jesus answered, Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.

Then, Lord, Simon Peter replied, Not just my feet, but my hands and my head as well. Jesus answered, Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet.

Their whole body is clean, and you are clean, though not every one of you. For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said, Not everyone was clean.

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. Do you understand what I have done for you? He asked them. You call me teacher and Lord, and rightly so, for that is what I am.

[4 : 25] Now that I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Well, let's pray as we ask for God's help. Again, Father, we say thank you for this word that we have read.

A word written years ago, preserved and kept for us today, that we might learn what it is to be followers of the Lord Jesus, the King of Kings.

I pray that as we hear your word, you would change us and mold us to be servant-hearted, loving others as you loved us.

[5 : 47] May you do that work in us for our good. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Have you washed your hands?

I can still hear my mother say it. It was a very simple rule that we had in our house. Before sitting down for dinner, you had to wash your hands.

The problem was, my mother's standard of cleanliness was a lot different to mine. Sticking your hands under a running tap for less than a second was not enough.

I would be sent back to the bathroom, use soap and water, and dry your hands. Now having dirty hands not only meant no dinner, it also meant I couldn't sit at the table with my family.

My hands needed to be cleaned first. Well in our text, Jesus is washing, not his hands, but he's cleaning his disciples' feet.

[6 : 59] But this isn't just a physical washing that is taking place. It's a much deeper and greater washing that we all need.

You might have picked it up as we read. Look at the end of verse 8. Jesus said, unless I wash you, you have no part with me.

You see, when we are washed by Jesus, we can enter into the full fellowship of God as Jesus cleans us so we can enjoy that relationship with the Father and the Son.

So how can we be made clean today and what difference will that washing make to our life? well first notice that this washing is an act of love.

Do you see it there at the end of verse 1? Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

[8 : 13] Jesus loved his disciples. He had spent the last three years with them. He cared for them deeply, but now he would show them just how much he loved them.

He would love them to the end. A young man might declare his love for a woman, but to show the extent of his love, he goes and buys an engagement ring.

We could say he loves her to the end. A husband may love his wife, but to show the depth of his love, he cares for her all the way through her illness.

We could say he loved her to the end. Well Jesus is saying to us and to his disciples, I love you.

And to demonstrate the extent of that love, to reveal the depth of that love. End of verse 1, he loved them to the end.

[9 : 19] As we will see in just a moment, Jesus showed his love for us by becoming a servant to wash us clean and to give us an example to follow.

He showed us his love by becoming a servant servant, to wash us clean so that we might become servants to one another.

He loved us to the very end. So let's together unpack this act of love.

First, Jesus loves us by becoming a servant. He loves us by becoming a servant. Look at verse 4 with me.

So this is during the meal. Jesus got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

[10 : 38] Now the scene here is both shocking and embarrassing. In our culture, as I'm sure it is when you go home, we'll sit round a table to eat.

Well in ancient cultures, people would eat by lying on the floor. So if you could imagine in your house where you have your dining table or where you eat, instead there is a great big carpet in the middle of it with food and dishes.

And then each person would lie with their head towards the rug, in towards where the food was, with their feet pointing away from the rug.

It was a perfect way to eat, relax and chat with your head on your arm, leaning in, eating away and how are you doing, how was the day and so on and so forth.

But let's remember, people didn't wear socks or shoes either. they wore sandals. That meant your feet got sweaty and dirty in a very hot climate.

[11 : 44] Bits of sheep and goats' poo got stuck between your toes. They were smelly and dirty feet. So when you took up your place for dinner around the rug and to eat the food, the servant of the house would come around and wash everybody's feet.

We don't want bad smells at the dinner table or dinner rug. Well, just as Jesus was about to wash his feet, wash the disciples' feet, you could imagine what the disciples must have thought.

This is a servant's job. This is reserved for the lowest of the low. it must have been that there was no servant in attendance that day because, well, the disciples couldn't be bothered to wash each other's feet.

But here Jesus does. Jesus gets himself ready, pours the bowl of water, and began to wash their feet.

But the real shock comes when we realise who Jesus is. Look back in verse three. Jesus knew that the father had put all things under his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God.

[13:16] John is telling us that this is not just a mere human being. This is God in the flesh with absolute power over all things.

The power that created the universe and sustains and provides all things. That power was with Jesus. He's telling us God is present with Jesus.

Now with that in mind, how would you finish verse three? Let's read verse three again. Jesus knew that the father had put all things under his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God.

So he demanded that he be treated with honour and respect. So he ensured that he was served first.

No. Verse four. He got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist and began to wash feet.

[14:36] Do you see what's going on here? God in the person of Jesus began to wash dirty, poeey, smelly feet.

feet. Imagine our president, Catherine Connolly, hosting a banquet for distinguished guests. Just before the food is served, the president runs into the kitchen, puts on an apron and a nice pair of yellow marigold gloves, and begins to serve food and wash up and come out with other food, sweating in her forehead and placing food before them.

It'd be shocking. Imagine the headlines around the world. Presidents are served. They don't do the serving.

Well, as we peer into this room, as we see this meal taking place, as we see Jesus, we see God, the creator of the universe, from all time, from beginning to end, Lord of all, washing dirty, smelly feet.

Is that your God? We see Jesus saying, I have come to serve you, not to demand of you.

[16:07] I have come to give to you, and not to crush you. In fact, Jesus came to wash us, and clean us.

so Jesus loves us by becoming a servant, and second, Jesus loves us by washing us clean.

Let's pick up the conversation in verse six. he came to Simon Peter, who said to him, Lord, are you going to wash my feet?

Servants do that. You can't do that. Verse seven, Jesus replied, you do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.

No, said Peter, you shall never wash my feet. Jesus answered, unless I wash you, you have no part with me.

[17:18] You see, clearly there is something else going on. It's not just about the physical washing of feet. This is a sign of a deeper and greater cleaning that must take place.

So what does this foot washing signify? What does it all mean? Well, the prophets spoke about it. To help us, let's go back to Ezekiel chapter 36.

Ezekiel chapter 36. So keep your finger in John 13 and go back to Ezekiel chapter 36. If somebody has a page number, that would help.

8, 6, 7. No? Okay.

Ezekiel chapter 36 and we'll be looking at verse 24. Now, just some context here. God's people had been warned that if they continued to turn away from God, they would be taken into exile.

[18:40] And this physical separation, this exile from the land, mirrored their spiritual separation from God. and into this context, the prophet Ezekiel comes to speak of God's promise of renewal.

Now, look carefully and listen carefully to the language that Ezekiel uses. Pick it up in verse 24.

God says, For I will take you out of the nations and I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land.

So the physical separation is now being reconciled as they come back to God. Verse 25, I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean and I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.

Verse 28, clean then you will live in the land I gave to your ancestors and you will be my people and I will be your God.

I will save you from all your uncleanness. You see, this idolatry that needs cleaned is all about us replacing God with something else or someone else.

[20 : 17] You see, we live as if we're God. We act as if we're the one with absolute power. My life, my choice, no one is going to tell me what to do.

But all that does is separate us from God. We've become unclean, we've become dirty, and the only way that we can be brought back into fellowship with God is if we are cleansed.

which is exactly what God promises us to do. Look at Ezekiel 36 verse 33. This is what the sovereign Lord says, on the day I cleanse you from all your sins.

So here is a promised washing that's going to restore and renew, a cleansing that's going to bring about a new life, a new beginning and a fresh start.

But how will this promised cleansing actually take place? Well, let's go back to John chapter 13.

[21 : 25] You see, as Jesus is there with the bowl of water washing the disciples' feet, Jesus in a sense was saying, I am the one who was promised!

And I am the one who's come to sprinkle clean water on you. I have come to cleanse you internally, to rid you of your impurity, of your idolatry.

But how would Jesus actually clean us? Does he get out a bowl of soap and water and say, that's it, you're cleaned? No, Jesus will clean us by his death.

Look at chapter 13, verse 1. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father.

Jesus here is talking about his death. In just a few hours' time, he would be hung on a cross. The hour, the time of his death and the cross is about to happen.

[22 : 33] Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. He loved them to the fullest. He loved them by going to the cross and dying for them.

As Jesus would say, greater love has no one than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

You see, we're to make a connection here. The external washing of the disciples' feet by Jesus is a sign of the internal washing Jesus achieved through his death.

In other words, we are made clean by the self-sacrificing death of Jesus on the cross. As a servant, Jesus enters into the world to take our place, to die for you and for me, taking my sin on himself, my impurity, my uncleanness, and making it all his own, and in its place giving us his purity, his cleanliness.

By his death, he washes us clean. You see, this is a wonderful picture, because all of us have done things that have made us unclean.

[24 : 02] We have lived lives that have left us dirty, and no matter how much we try, we cannot remove that stain of that night that went too far, that conversation that ended in a triad of abuse, that episode in my life that spun out of control.

Sometimes, we actually take a physical shower or a bath in an attempt to somehow scrub away guilt and shame.

Have you ever done that? Or maybe you have that buried so deep within your life that you're afraid to admit it or to say anything because God will despise you and reject you.

Well, look again into this room. See this meal that is taking place. See Jesus, the God man with absolute power, becoming a servant to wash us clean.

You see, by turning to Jesus, we're not crushed, we're made clean. we're not rejected, we're washed. He gave his life for you and for me, that we would be welcomed into that pure love of the Father and the Son to enjoy him forever.

[25 : 35] So, are you clean? look at verse 10 with me. Jesus answered, those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet.

Their whole body is clean, and you are clean though not every one of you, for he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not everyone was clean.

You see, Jesus sees and knows our hearts. He can peer right into my soul now, and he knows what's on your heart right now. But if we have come in trust to Jesus, we have been made clean, no blemish remains, every sin, past, present, and future, has been washed away.

But maybe you are here and you're weighed down by your sin, bogged down with guilt and shame of the past. Well, don't fear Jesus.

Come to him, sit as it were at the table, and let him serve you. Let him wash you, let him clean you, confess your sins to him, and he will make you pure, so that you too can enjoy the pure love of the Father and the Son.

[27 : 19] Let him wash you, for that is why he came. God so Jesus loves us by becoming a servant. He loves us by washing us clean.

And third, Jesus loves us by leaving an example. Can you turn up the volume just a little? I'm raising my voice too much, competing with the rain.

Thank you. And there it's dying. Isn't that wonderful? verse 12. When he had finished washing their feet, he had put on his clothes and returned to his place.

Do you understand what I have done for you? Jesus asked them. You call me teacher? You want to learn from me? You call me Lord?

You say you want to obey me? And rightly so, for that is what I am. And now that I am your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, so you should also wash one another's feet.

[28 : 27] I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Can we hear what Jesus is saying? I have loved you by serving you, so you must serve one another.

So next Sunday, who's on welcome? Hands up? Oh Mary, Mary and maybe somebody else. You must wash people's feet as they come in the door, right? Well, not necessarily, thankfully. We don't wear sandals and we don't eat and we eat sitting at a table, so it wouldn't make sense for us to be washing each other's feet.

However, the principle is we are meant to serve one another with humble love. So two things to consider what it means to follow the example of Jesus as we serve one another.

Firstly, no one is above being a servant. None of us here can say, I'm not a servant.

[29 : 45] If we have been cleaned by Jesus, he has cleaned you to bring you into the sphere of serving. Look at verse 16.

Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

if Jesus who has been given all power over all things, if Jesus the God man takes the lowest position possible to serve us, then I am not above the position of servant.

In fact, we are all to assume the position of servant. We live our lives as servants.

Do you remember how the apostle Paul put it? We had it read to us at the beginning of our time together. Philippians chapter 2.

[30 : 47] Let me remind you of the words. Philippians chapter 2 verse 5. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.

Do you get that? In our relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. Well, what was that? Well, who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage, rather he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant and being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

That is the mindset we are to have. So when we arrive on a Sunday morning, come as a servant, come ready to give, come ready humbly to love one another.

During the week, plan, how am I going to serve the church family? As Jesus said, I have set an example that you should do as I have done for you.

You see, if I think I am above the place of servanthood, servanthood, it is saying I am actually above the Lord Jesus Christ. I am better than him.

[32 : 37] Oh no, we are not. He loved us and washed us and cleaned us so that we can serve one another in love.

So no one is above being a servant. And second, no one is below being served.

No one is below being served. Look at who Jesus served in this meal. Go back to verse one. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father.

Verse three, Jesus knew that the Father had put things all under his power. Verse 11, Jesus knew who was going to betray him and that is why he said not everyone was clean.

Jesus knew all that was going to take place. This isn't a surprise to Jesus. He knows what's around the corner and Jesus knew what Judas was going to do.

[33 : 48] But that didn't stop Jesus washing Judas' feet. He made no distinction as he went round that group of disciples.

He served them all and he came to Judas and he washed his smelly dirty feet too. You see sometimes we can have the mindset that says oh no I can't serve them. They are so ungrateful. Why should I ever serve them after what they did to me? Well imagine if that was the mindset of Jesus.

What if he bypassed us and says no I'm not washing you clean. You see not one of us deserves the humble servant love of Jesus but knowing and seeing my uncleanness knowing exactly how I would behave and how I would treat him Jesus died for me and washed me clean.

That means I can never look at anyone and say they are below being served. not one person is below being served.

[35 : 18] And if ever I find it a difficulty or if you find it a difficulty to serve another person well look again at the cross and look at Jesus who died for you and served you.

I have set an example that you should do as I have done for you. So what does this text teach us? Well very simply Jesus showed his love to us by becoming a servant to wash us clean and to give us a way that we might serve one another in humble love.

Let's just take a moment in the quietness to reflect on what we've just heard. Let us give thanks to the Lord Jesus the God man who came to serve us and give his life for us.

Ask that the Lord would give us the right mindset every day as we see how Jesus cleaned us that we too may serve one another.

[36 : 59] Lord Jesus thank you thank you for serving us thank you for assuming and taking on the role of a servant for dying our death for being mocked and beaten becoming nothing that we would be washed clean.

we thank you for that and would you please help us to keep our eyes fixed on the Lord Jesus so that we too in turn may humbly serve one another in love recognizing that not one of us is above the role of servant and not one of us is below ever being served.

Please help us this week to serve each other in love. Amen. Well we're going to sing together and I think we sang it last week but we're going to sing it again because it captures exactly what the Lord has done