

John 13:1–17

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[0 : 0 0] all right 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 the evening meal was in progress and the devil had already prompted Judas the son of Simon Iscariot to betray Jesus 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 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 he said 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 had he said not every one of you 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 then he asked them you call me teacher and Lord and rightly so for that is what I am now that I your Lord and teacher have washed your feet you should also wash one another's feet I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you fairly truly I say to 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 this is the word of the Lord thanks be to God thanks Andrea and good morning let me add my welcome to everyone good morning let me add my welcome to everyone I am standing in the balcony of the new church auditorium which we will prayerfully make our commitments toward today in regard to renovation and it is a joy to be with you we we we come today to one of the most well-known bible stories given to us in all the scriptures it's the story of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples and the centerpiece of the story is not easy to miss John the narrator does a masterful job of slowing down his words at a point of emphasis so that the reader will take in almost every movement that he wants to convey the centerpiece of the story is in verses four and five and I encourage you to keep your bible open and look at that with me and listen to how slow his words begin to flow Jesus rose from supper he laid aside his outer garments and taking a towel tied it around his waist then he poured water into a basin and began washing the disciples feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him I mean you see eight still frames like portraits in an art gallery laid out in black and white so that the one who is going through

won't miss a single thing you see him rise you see him disrobe his outer garment you see him take a towel you see him tie it you see him uh pouring water into a basin and washing the feet and then wiping with a towel what are we to make of this story what does John want us to take away clearly this event signifies something what meaning does he want us to make from it let me make it as personal as I can how might this text today be used by God to strengthen your life to change your life to shape the future life of our church two ways really and I want to look at them today two ways this text I believe is given to the church and to you this morning so that we would remember that we are to point people to Christ crucified and that we have a pattern of our lives together after Christ as he is here exemplified the washing of the disciples feet for us pointing us to Christ crucified and providing for us a pattern of life together after Christ as he is here exemplified well how do these uh things emerge in the text let me take the headers first one at a time this sort this story we must point people to Christ crucified how do we get to the cross from this context how do we get from the atonement to the atonement which comes later in John from this text I just want you to see briefly there are three roads laid down in the text that drive you forward in John's narrative to the cross the

first one the most obvious road is there in verse seven let me read that again for you Jesus answered him what I am doing you do not understand now but afterward you will understand it's clear from these words that Jesus wants to take this event and place it into some larger contextual interpretation something that they won't understand fully now but later will you could just call this the road of time that will travel from 13:1 all the way until the cross there's a second uh road in the text that would require you to move beyond the event of the foot washing to actually the cleansing of Christ on the cross for our sin washing and that's really a road in the text that relates this physical social activity to something spiritual something internal now look at verses 8 through 10 there's this notion here of an external washing but Jesus makes this external washing something equivalent to whether or not we have a share with him verse 8 and then verse 10 Jesus again says that the one who has bathed that is who is externally clean need not wash except for his feet but is completely clean and you are clean but not every one of you

in other words the bodily cleanliness of being at the table having washed your feet the way you and I would today wash our hands is signify in the text that there's something spiritual going on in Jesus's mind that he's doing something with water on their feet but it relates to an internal cleanliness of heart and life that he will later accomplish on the cross the road of time the road of something spiritual not merely social being done here and the third road in the text was actually hinted at hiding almost in the text way back in verse 1 let me read it for you now before the feast of the Passover when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world of the father having loved his own who were in the world listen here it is he loved them to the end to the end to the end but the foot washing is not the end there are another eight chapters of material to go certainly this act is not the supreme act of Christ's love in fact um the word here he loved them to the end is a word called telos and that word the end of his love will not reappear in John's narrative until you get all the way to chapter 19 in verse 30 where Jesus is on the cross and he cries out with a loud voice not telos love them to the end but tetelestai it is finished i mean this is extraordinary in other words then when you and i come to john 13:1 we are entering into the climactic scene of the cinematic display of the love of god in christ but that climactic scene which is irreversibly tumbling forward after this meal which will culminate in his crucifixion and his resurrection is here laid down only as an opening salvo so the foot washing is prefiguring the soul washing and a full and complete love of christ to the end to its fullness and all its completeness and that of course requires that moment when he says it is finished let me see if i can put it to you this way this road of time this road of something spiritual not merely social this road of substitution that is embedded in this word of loving them to the end these are all proofs laid down in the text to convince you and me that we are in the foot washing supremely to recognize the death of christ the disrobing of his life amongst the hostile people the bowing of his head not merely his knee the giving of his blood not merely a cleansing of your feet i guess i could put it this way as simply as possible this great act of jesus washing the disciples feet is a soul saving sign it points you to christ crucified it gives us then something that he does that we cannot do what are the implications what are the implications for you and for me let me just lay a few out this morning that are on my heart that i think derived naturally from the force of that

argument you and i were created to point people to christ crucified christ church was recently constituted to point people to christ church the building that i'm presently standing in and many of you will be in today is under construction for the purpose of pointing people to christ crucified this is what we are and this is what we will be his death is the only means by which you and i can ever be cleansed from our sin we need to hear this today and all of our friends need to hear it all of our family members need to hear it the neighborhood in which i'm standing needs to hear it the city in which i dwell needs to hear it the world in which we traffic needs to know that the supreme act of god's love in the world is nothing less than christ crucified secondly just remember that if you don't hold that jesus says in verse 8 if you will not let me wash you then you will have no part in me let me say another implication of the text this this first movement of the text that really pushes from verse 1 through verse 11 some of us need to be reminded this morning to see jesus as he truly is in his most elevated glorious divine state the one sent from god for some of us he's become too familiar he's become too much like one who walks alongside us or one who is just like us but he is nothing like us in this sense that he dwelt from eternity on high he plunged across the threshold of heaven and bore his body into the womb of a virgin he gave his life of our existence with perfect obedience to god and here the eternal one the son of god the son of man on his knees exemplifying his love for us by laying down his life he's more than your best friend he's more than your buddy he's more

than your brother he is the savior of your soul and the only one who can bring you into relationship with the father some of us have forgotten that some of us have gone on with our life as though he is all too much like us let me say what we really need we really need to see jesus the way peter sees jesus here you know peter often is uh brought up in christian circles circles as the one who is constantly putting his foot in his mouth and you might think he's done it again here but in actual fact peter is the one at the table who seems to recognize that he is standing before someone who is elevated far above him and should not be doing this foot washing to him you can see it there in verse 6 lord do you wash my feet or you can see it there in verse 8 lord you shall never wash my feet why because peter understood himself and who he was and his own heart and his own frailty and his own fallenness and to think that his beautiful savior his lord the one that he had been following for three years would now denigrate himself to the role of the lowest servant in the household and put his hands on his feet was beyond him

many of us need to remember and emulate the awareness of peter that when we're talking about christ crucified and us pointing people to christ crucified we are talking about nothing less than the eternal one humbling himself to the point of death death on a cross a death which was warranted for us to take many of you will be too young to remember the days when jimmy carter was president and he was and is a wonderful man who gives his life to causes which help the entire social order he will be remembered for that undoubtedly but when he first came into office he was also remembered at that time for not taking limousines and not throwing parties and not entertaining in the white house and his reasoning was he wanted everyone to know that he was just like one of us it was a beautiful picture in some sense but that's not the picture here jesus is not on his knees he's not on his knees before you or on the cross for you to indicate that he is like you no later in the text he will say no i am your lord and i am your teacher you have that right he's elevated third before we move to the second movement of the text third before we move to the second movement of the text in pointing people to christ crucified we are to lay him forth as a salvation for sin we are to humble ourselves and elevate his standing as peter understood and really when you think of these verses it ought to have the sole effect of increasing your adoration for christ your love of christ it would be difficult to think about reading these 11 verses without a heart swelling devotion rising when we see what he has fully done for us at calvary the foot washing why is it here what meaning are we to make from it first we are to point people to christ crucified second look at verses 12 through 17 it isn't just the proclamation of christ crucified here we also have a pattern of life for those following christ that is exemplified here let me just point your attention again to those wonderful verses in 14 and 15 if i then 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 to you i just want to pause for a few minutes on this idea of this example because evidently in this text while verses 1 through 11 move you forward in the narrative to proclaim christ crucified verses 12 to 17 are yet wedded to it and meaningfully so jesus has something to be communicated in this foot washing event that goes beyond his cross work to the work of you and i picking up our cross in other words he saves us with his activity that only he can do but he now calls us to follow and emulate him that he might sanctify us as we pick up the very pattern of his life the point to make is this

[20 : 08] 12 through 17 begin to unfold for you an entire world of christian ethics christian ethics follow emerge up and out of the cross event and they do so naturally they do so seamlessly in the text they do so necessarily in the text this truth is not new in the bible that christian ethics are required of us just in regard to the cross event needed by us let me give you a couple of examples it was the prophet ezekiel in chapter 36 verses 25 to 27 that brought forth a prophetic word that sounds almost like the event we are seeing unfolded here in narrative form in verses 25 to 27 of ezekiel 36 we read these words i'll start at verse 25 i will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses wow isn't that amazing it's not just your uncleanness it's all your uncleannesses it's not just the nature of your being it's the total accumulation of all the things god has promised here that he will put clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses and from all your idols i will cleanse you and i will give you a new heart and a new spirit i will put within you and i will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh and i will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules do you see what he's prophesying that there is going to be a day where god cleanses a people for himself who changes their heart from the inside who who inhabits them through his own spirit who in a sense breaks open the heart of stone that we have so callously created of our own making and disobedience against him and it says notice he will cause you to walk in my statutes

and and and and uh to obey my rules there it is again god's salvation god's christian message christ cross work is is wedded seamlessly with the ethics that move from it that by his spirit we now begin to obey we begin to walk in his ways so as the word of christ embraced by faith gives us life so too the pattern of christ is put before us that we might emulate it in his full human example it's not just jeremiah 31 that links christian ethics with the cross event i could have taken you to uh uh uh ezekeiel 36 i'm sorry i could have taken you to jeremiah 31 where jesus talks about or the prophecy talks about a new covenant and the new covenant says that the implication of that has something to do with the great and the least and jesus will pick up on jeremiah 31 at the lord's supper in the gospel of luke and say i am now instituting a new covenant to you my body which many of you will come and receive today in faith to be strengthened and he associates that body which is the new covenant of his blood with language at the table in luke about who is the greatest and who is the least and who will be the greatest and who is the least and the answer in luke 20 is the servant is the one who is to do all things all of these things are seamlessly wedded in jeremiah's covenant so as jeremiah's prophecy points you to christ

embedded in that pointing is the pattern of life for those following christ we could have gone all the way back to the passover this will be something you wouldn't even have to look at exodus 12 where you see that the blood is over the door lintel of the home and it's the blood and the passover lamb that saves you but that day that saved them is commemorated for the rest of the chapter in an annual event which they are to repeat that with uh unleavened bread which paul will pick up on to say is a requirement of your holiness of throwing the leaven out so even in the passover event this great signifying act where christ will point it will point to christ it is already embedded with a pattern of life that those who are following christ paul will actually use it in the case of church discipline to call a man back who has left his first love and that the church might work toward restoration what what am i saying what am i saying about this aspect of the pattern of life that this ethic of foot washing this christian ethic that emerges in the church naturally necessarily always is attached to the cross event your holiness matters your table service matters your walk matters we as christ church must conform our lives to the pattern that we see exemplified in christ here do you see how the whole passage now of 1 through 17 is just laid open with holy spirit teaching for you verses 1 to 11 pointing us to the death of christ verses 12 to 17 providing a pattern of life for those who are following christ verses 1 to 11 the cross work verses 12 to 17 the work of picking up your cross in the first 11 verses we get forgiveness of sins we get to be clean but in the next five verses we're told how to follow and we're in bold and we're in bold and to serve and what does it look like what would it look like for you for your life to be irreversibly shaped this morning just as the disciples were from this meal what would it look like for our church new out of the womb only two weeks ago what would it look like for us to point a world to christ crucified and to pattern our lives on christ here exemplified you can't get it any clearer than verses 14 and 15 if i then the lord your lord and teacher have washed your feet you also ought to wash one another's feet for i've given you an example that you should do just as i've done to you this is what we're to do that's the call to action we're to wash one another's feet let me tell you uh just a little story uh 1876 when william booth's salvation army had just gotten underway people were arriving in london to enlist from all over the world and one man boarded a boat from the united states sailed across the atlantic to enlist in the salvation army by the name of samuel logan brenzel at first booth accepted his service reluctantly and grudgingly booth said to brenzel you have been your own boss too long wow isn't that so true for so many of us even under the hearing of my own voice

you have been your own boss too long and in order to install humility into brenzel he set him to work cleaning the boots of the other trainees imagine this man this great man coming from the states as a humble act of service but being met with uh booth's strong words that he is now to clean the boots of all the new trainees the writing i'm reading from says brenzel said to himself have i followed my own fancy across the atlantic in order to black boots and then as in a vision he saw jesus bending over the feet of rough unlettered fishermen lord he whispered you have washed their feet i will black black their boots you know it is said in our own country that you can tell a man by the quality of his shoes but according to our text jesus would say you can tell a man the quality of a man by the bruises on his knees and by the shoes that he's cleaned by the servants of christ in the church by his neighbors who would exemplify that both on the inside and on the outside is a man or a woman who gives of themselves for the welfare of others just as christ did let me ask you and myself a question whose boots are we blackening who are we serving or are we all too often

thinking that we're to be the one in the chair and that we are there in ways that others are to clean up after us this call to action in verse 14 and 15 ought to completely drive the future ministry of christ church and notice it's grounded this action is grounded in an analogy take a look at verse 16 and then we'll begin to flow this to an easy conclusion verse 16 truly truly i say to you here's the analogy that stands beneath the action a servant is not greater than his master nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent me two analogies to simply indicate that what is good for the christian must be so if it was emulated in the life of the christ and this is true for a master and a servant is true for a messenger and the one who delivers the message you know there was a famous conductor or at least a story of one who was once asked as he led the whole symphony which is the most difficult instrument to play and without missing a beat no pun intended the conductor evidently said second chair violin he said i have plenty of people who will more than willingly and energetically arise in the morning to play with joy first chair violin but to find someone who will play second fiddle and to do so joyfully and with energy that is the most difficult place to put someone in the orchestra and so let me ask you who who are you resisting serving look who jesus served here he serves judas who would later betray him his enemy he serves peter who in all his frailty will deny him which we'll see next week he serves nathaniel who once said can anything good come out of nazareth he serves levi who once sat at a table collecting the money from others in a the pilgrim way who should you serve serve those closest to you sometimes those are the very hardest but you and i are to give our lives to christian ethics and service let me finish just by saying this from this text may it be said of you and me may it be said of christ church through their words they pointed us to christ crucified and through their lives we saw the pattern of christ's life exemplified and because of their presence we are a changed people for good indeed we have embraced their gospel may we be a people of the word and a people of the way and may we begin to learn that we are all to get in line behind christ and to live lives patterned under his beautiful act of service our heavenly father what a text so much here for us to meditate on but i pray for each man each woman each child who hears my voice even now as i speak to you may they never see this text without it propelling them to their need of the cross and may we never read this text as though our ethics weren't a matter of great concern help us oh lord lord have mercy may we follow you well in jesus name amen thank you