

PM John 13:1-17

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[0 : 00] John, chapter 13, and it's on page 1085 in the Church Bible.!

The other three Gospels climaxes with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the whole Gospel moves towards that climax.

And John 13, verse 1, really begins a new section of the book, chapters 13 to 19, which deal with the last few hours of Jesus' life before his crucifixion.

So let's read John 13, 1 to 17. 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.

During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him. Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God, and was going back to God, rose from the supper.

[1 : 38] He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped round him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, Lord, do you wash my feet? Jesus answered him, what I am doing, you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.

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.

Simon Peter said to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands, and my head. 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. For he knew who was going to betray him. That was why he said, not all of you are clean.

[3 : 04] When he 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? You call me teacher, and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.

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.

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. If you know these things, blessed are you, if you do them.

May God bless to us that reading of his word. Let's sing again. I'd like us this evening to turn back to that passage that we read to John chapter 13.

Each of the gospel accounts, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, they're all about Jesus Christ. Their purpose is to tell us about him.

[4 : 26] And very often they have two aims in view, which appear to be in tension with each other. So on the one hand, the gospel presents Jesus Christ as utterly unique.

He is fully human, and yet he is different from all human beings, all other human beings. He is in a class of his own, and there is none like him.

He is the eternal word, who was eternally with God, and eternally was God. But who became flesh, became human, and made his dwelling among us.

And so he is unique, and the gospels want to evoke in us awe and wonder and worship. But another aim is that the gospels present Jesus Christ as the one we are to be like.

We are to follow him. We are to take him as our supreme example. We are to do as he did. So on the one hand, Jesus Christ is radically different from us.

[5 : 35] But on the other hand, we are to be like him. And nowhere is that tension more in evidence than in the narrative of Jesus washing his disciples' feet.

So to set the scene, I want you to imagine a country that is dry and hot. It might be quite difficult on a night like this in Dumfries.

But it's a dry and a hot country, and where all the roads are just dirt tracks, dust tracks. And where most people have to walk to get anywhere.

And that was the kind of country that Palestine was in the first century when Jesus Christ lived on earth. Now every culture has its own way of welcoming guests.

And in the culture of that time and place, a special way of welcoming a guest to your home was to provide them with some water to wash their feet.

[6 : 39] After they had arrived through the heat and the dry dust, their feet would be kind of dirty and grimy. So it would refresh them after the journey if they could wash their own feet.

And sometimes in wealthier homes, a slave or servant would perform that task. They would wash the feet of guests. And as you can imagine, that's not a very nice job to have to wash people's dirty, grimy feet.

So it would likely be the task of a low-down servant in the household. Well, the occasion that we have here in John 13 is the Jewish Passover feast.

When the Jews remembered God rescuing the children of Israel from the hand of Pharaoh in Egypt at the time of Moses, many centuries before the time of Jesus.

And Jesus' disciples had arrived at the room for the Passover feast to celebrate it.

[7 : 48] But it seems that no one had provided water. No one had volunteered to wash anyone else's feet. Maybe they thought, well, it's someone else's job to do that.

And then in the middle of the meal, Jesus does something that was astonishing and shocking to all his disciples.

We're told that he gets up from the meal, takes off his outer garment, wraps a towel round his waist, pours some water into a bowl, and then begins to wash his disciples' dirty feet one by one.

And it's very deliberate, the language, if you read in verse 4 and 5, it's very deliberate. It gives the details, every step on the way of what Jesus does to wash his disciples' feet.

And then he goes around one by one drying their feet with a towel. And the disciples are shocked and they're also embarrassed.

[8 : 51] This was the job of a slave or a low servant in a household. Now, there are some accounts on rare occasions in the ancient world at this time.

Very occasionally, someone would wash the feet of people that they're equals. Equals in status. And it was quite a status sort of focused society.

But no one had ever heard, there's absolutely no record of someone of a higher status, higher position, washing the feet of those under him.

That was completely unheard of. And yet Jesus, their Lord, their teacher, their master, the Messiah, he goes and does this.

He washes their feet. And to the disciples, there's just no way that this is, it's just all wrong. Jesus should not behave like this. What on earth is he thinking of?

[9 : 59] And so I want to look at the passage under three headings. First of all, what Jesus knew. Second, what Jesus demonstrates. And third, what we should do.

So first of all, what Jesus knew. And we're told, well, at least two things that Jesus knew. And first is when this happens, when this takes place.

And second, who he is, who Jesus himself is. First of all then, when does this take place? In verse one, we're told that Jesus knew that his time, or his hour had come, to depart this world and go to the Father.

Also in verse 11, connected to that, we read that he knew who was going to betray him. So this is, tells us this is the eve of Jesus' crucifixion.

And Jesus knows that in a few hours' time he will be betrayed and arrested. That he will be interrogated, he will be mocked, he will be spat at, he will be beaten, and tortured to death by being nailed to a cross where he will die a slow, agonizing death.

[11 : 23] And he also knows that not only will there be this intense physical pain and suffering, but also that there on that cross he will bear the sins of the world.

He will bear the punishment, the damnation for the sins of the world. That he will be forsaken by his Father in bearing that punishment. Jesus is facing, he's carrying the greatest burden that has ever been carried.

He is facing the greatest suffering ever to be suffered. This is the hour of his greatest need. He is carrying this immense burden.

I know that if I am carrying a burden, if I'm apprehensive about something, got something on my mind, maybe something's coming up in the week ahead, and it's worrying me, I'm anxious about it.

I find it really hard to think about other people's needs, other people's situations in that situation, because I'm preoccupied. And yet here we see the amazing thing is that Jesus Christ is carrying this horrific burden, this immense, unimaginable burden.

[12 : 37] And yet he's not preoccupied with his own needs. He's looking out for the needs of others. He sees his disciples with tired, dirty feet that need washing. And he washes their feet.

He shows, he demonstrates this love on a very practical level. And Jesus also knows what these disciples would do to him only a matter of hours later.

How do you respond if someone lets you down really, really badly? Maybe you respond angrily. Or maybe you say nothing, but you feel resentful towards that person, and you're cold towards that person, and you withhold affection and warmth that you might otherwise have shown.

Well, these disciples will all desert Jesus in the hour of his greatest need later that evening. Peter, one of his closest friends, would deny that he even knew Jesus.

He would disown Jesus. And Jesus, he knows all this. He's foretold it. He knows what's going to happen. Even worse, one of these disciples, Judas, who'd been his friend and companion for the past three years or so, would betray him to his enemies.

[14 : 04] He would sell him for money, for 30 pieces of silver. And Jesus knows that too, because he's foretold it. How would you respond?

How would I respond? If we knew that our friends were going to treat us in that way, to desert us, to betray us. And yet the amazing thing is here that Jesus, we're told, loved them to the end, in verse 1.

He loved them to the end. He shows no resentment, no coldness, no anger towards them. But he cares for their needs.

And he loves them with a lavish, affectionate, demonstrative love. And Jesus' love doesn't stop there. He goes on lovingly to teach them.

In the following chapters, from chapter 13 to 16, he teaches them, he instructs them. And part of the purpose of that is to set their minds at rest, to give them peace.

[15 : 07] Because they're worried, they're upset. And he wants to calm them, to give them peace in the midst of turmoil. And then in chapter 17, he intercedes for them.

He prays for them. Lovingly, he prays for them. And then, of course, he goes on from there to die for them. To die for their sins.

To die in their place. To lay down his life for ungrateful, cowardly, selfish, unworthy people. For sinners. And, of course, for us, too.

If we belong to Jesus Christ, his death is for us, too. Equally unworthy as those disciples. He is the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

Here we see that he loved them to the end. But the second thing that Jesus knows is who he himself is. In verse 3, we read that Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands.

[16 : 12] And that he had come from God and was going back to God. So Jesus knows that he has come from God.

John's Gospel opens by telling us that in the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God. And the Word was God. And then a bit later, that the Word...

And he also says that the Word, through all things, the Word was created. In him was life. That light was the light of men. And then a bit later, we're told that the Word became flesh.

And made his dwelling among us. That means he became a human. He became a man. The man, Jesus Christ. That is who Jesus Christ is. He is not like us who were conceived in our mother's womb.

And that was the beginning of us. Before that, we didn't exist. But Jesus Christ existed from eternity. In fact, he is God. He is the one. He is the creator of the world.

[17 : 21] Along with the Father and the Spirit. He is himself God. That is who Jesus is. He knows that he has come from God. And also that he is returning to God.

Through his death and resurrection and ascension into heaven. In chapter 17, Jesus, as part of his prayer, He prays to the Father.

God, the Father, glorify me, Father, With the glory I had with you Before the world was made. So Jesus is aware that Before the world was made, He shared the glory with the Father.

And that he's returning to that glory. That is where he has come from. That is where he is going. And also in verse 3, we read that He knew that the Father had given all things Into his hands.

It tells us that Jesus is Lord of all. All things are under his authority. Under his power. He has the whole universe in his hands.

[18 : 29] And yet here we see something Truly astounding. What does Jesus do with those hands? Those hands that have all authority. All power.

In the universe. He's using those hands to wash His disciples' feet. In this world, the big people, The important people, Have others running around after them.

Serving them. People doing their bidding. And yet here, We see the most powerful person in the universe. The most powerful hands in the universe.

Being used to wash His disciples' Dirty feet. The most powerful hands in the universe. Humbly. Lovingly. Serving. But there's a connection between verse 3 and 4.

There's a contrast in verse 3 with the exalted status of Jesus. And in verses 4 and 5, The humble service that he performs. And here's the connection that in spite of who he is, Jesus did this.

[19 : 45] Well, that's not really how it reads. Rather, it is more, It's because of who he is. Jesus does this.

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, That he had come from God, And was going back to God, Rose from the supper, Laid aside his outer garments, And so on.

It's knowing these things, And knowing those things, That's why he did this humble service. And Jesus is fully conscious as he's washing his disciples' feet, That in performing this menial task, He is revealing something of God to us.

He's revealing something of what God is like. Just in the next chapter, He will say to his disciples, This is just the most hours, Perhaps even minutes later, That anyone who has seen me, Has seen the Father.

If you want to know what God is like, Look at Jesus. Think God. Think Jesus. And Jesus, We're told that, Particularly that he's aware of that connection, At this time.

[20 : 58] And aware of that connection, He goes and washes his disciples' feet. He's aware that his actions, Conform to the fact that he has come from God, And is returning to God.

Donald MacLeod in his excellent book, The Person of Christ, Puts it like this, He says that the narrative, This is the narrative of washing the disciples' feet, The narrative suggests at the very least, That Jesus saw nothing un-God-like, In washing his disciples' feet.

But it probably also suggests something more, That at this moment, Jesus was driven by a desire, To do something matchless, God-like, And divine.

And saw the performance of this menial service, As the action which, Above all others, Conformed to the fact, That it was from God he had come, And to God, He was returning.

Foot washing was a servile act, Indeed, A task normally reserved, For the lowliest of menial servants. The conclusion to which this leads us, Is that the impulse to serve, Lies at the very heart, Of deity.

[22 : 11] God is not self-centered, And self-absorbed. As love, He is pure altruism, Looking not on or at his own things, But at the things of others.

It is his very form, To forego his rights. Well, second, We move on to what, Jesus demonstrates.

So he's going around the disciples, One by one, Washing their feet, And he comes to, Simon Peter. And Simon Peter just doesn't believe it. He says, Are you going to wash my feet? He can't believe what he's seeing.

It's all wrong to him. And Jesus says, You don't understand what I'm doing, But later you will understand. And Simon Peter says, No, you shall never wash my feet.

It's just all wrong to him. Jesus is their Lord, Their teacher. He's the last person, Who should be washing their feet. But Jesus goes on to say, Unless I wash you, You have no share, No part, With me.

[23 : 17] And he's using this as an illustration, As a parable, Of the washing away, Of sin. We must receive, This washing, This washing away of our sins, From Jesus.

Otherwise, Jesus will be of no benefit to us. We will have no share, No part, With him. And it presents sin, As our most fundamental, Problem.

And it's pictured here like, Like pollution, Like defilement. You're probably, You know, Familiar with, Well reports, You hear of, Of rivers that, You know, You have this beautiful river, And it's beautiful, It's full of life, And then, Raw sewage is emptied into it, And the river becomes, Polluted.

And it kills, Fish and other, Other life forms, And the river is, Is destroyed. And that's the picture of, Of our lives. Our lives polluted by, By sin, By our sins.

And God is, Holy, God is, Pure, And our sins cut us off, From God. And we cannot, Cleanse ourselves, We need Jesus Christ, The saviour, To cleanse us, To wash us, To purify us.

[24 : 39] And that is symbolised, By what he is doing here. Of course he's washing them, Outwardly, But it's a symbol of, The inward washing, That Jesus Christ gives. And he gives it through his, Death.

What will happen on the next day? His death on the cross, As John, Says in his first epistle, The blood of Jesus Christ, Cleanses us, From all sins, From all unrighteousness.

And it's by faith in him, That we are made clean, That we receive that washing, Away of sin. Well, Simon Peter says, He kind of, Completely changes, Says, Well, In that case, Not just my feet, But my hands, And my head as well.

And Jesus goes on to extend, The, The illustration, The parable, That a person who has had a bath, Doesn't, He's clean already, He only needs to have, His feet washed.

I remember, Living in, India, And particularly, In the summertime, When it's really hot, And dry, And dusty, And, You know, You might have a, A bath in the morning, A shower, And then, Very shortly, You know, You just, You'd go outside, You'd wander around a bit, Walk somewhere, And your feet would just get, Really, Really dusty, So, People would go to, Maybe a hand pump, And just rinse their feet, Wash their feet, Because, You're still, Your body's clean, But, Your feet, Just walking around, They get clarted with, Dirt and dust, And that's the image here, A person who has, Come to Jesus Christ, Then, It's like having a bath, You're made clean, Jesus Christ cleans you, When you believe in him, When you put your faith in him, You're made clean, But, As believers, As disciples, We walk around in this world, We live in this world, We, Our feet get dirty, We sin, And we need cleansing, From that every day, That's why, Every day,

[26 : 33] In the prayer that Jesus taught his, Disciples to pray, We pray, Forgive us, Our debts, Forgive us our sins, Cleanse us, That is what we pray for, And Jesus, Illustrates that, And, Gives a parable of that, In this passage, Well, Thirdly, We come to, What we, Should do, And, Particularly focusing on verse 15, Where Jesus says, I have given you, An example, That you also should do, Just as I have done, To you, So Jesus, He describes himself, As their, Their Lord, And as their teacher, A teacher is, One who has authority, To teach us, To instruct us, And the Lord is the one, Who rules over, The one we submit to, And Jesus, Leads and teaches, By, Example,

You've, All heard the saying, That actions speak louder than words, That maybe isn't always true, But it's often true, And Jesus here, Teaches by example, By this great demonstration, Of, Of service, Humble, Loving, Service, And we, As his disciples, Are to, Follow him, You also, He says, Should wash, One another's feet, Now, I don't think, We have to take that literally, In our society, In our culture, We don't have, The same climate, We don't have the same conditions, We don't really need, Our feet washing, At least not, Not as often as they did, In that particular, Place and time, It's not appropriate, For our country, Our culture, But the principle, Is what applies, And the principle is, Humble, Loving, Servanthood, And I don't think, It's that difficult, For us to, To translate it, Into,

Our own culture, And time, And place, It's, To serve others, Perhaps that might be, Doing menial tasks, The kind of things, That nobody else, Wants to do, Might be in the church, In a church setting, Cleaning the toilets, Hoovering up, Washing the dishes, You know, Moving the chairs around, Whatever it is, That's just a, It's just a, Kind of drudgery, Menial task, Sort of thing, That nobody really wants to do, And yet someone needs to do it, And, We can serve, By doing those things, Or, It may be just anything, It can be anything, That, Where we, We give, Our time, Our energy, Our resources, For the benefit, Of someone else, Whatever that is, To do what we do, Not, For ourselves, For our own, Self, Aggrandizement, Or self-fulfillment, But to do it, For the benefit, Of, Other people, Perhaps when you get,

No praise, Or thanks, For doing that, A servant, Is someone who, Who operates, Who lives, Not for, Himself, For herself, But for someone, Else, And that is what we are called, To do, And of course the challenge, Of this passage, Is to do that, Even when it's, Really difficult, When things are going against us, We see Jesus does that, For people who are, Just utterly, Undeserving of it, People who will, Let him down, Who will betray him, Who will, Desert him, And yet he is not, Unbittered, He keeps no record, Of wrongs, But, In love, He serves, Well we began, By saying that there are, Two things that we, Come across in the gospels, In their portrayal, Of Jesus Christ, On the one hand, That he is utterly, Unique, That he is in a class, Of his own, That he has come from God, And is returning to God, And that, God has placed, All things, In his hands,

The eternal word, Who shared the glory, With the father, From the beginning of creation, From before the world was made, And that, Should evoke in us, Worship, And praise, And adoration, But also, We are to be like him, We are to follow him, And Jesus says here, I have given you an example, That you also should do, Just as I, Have done, To you, May God bless his word to us, Let's pray, Lord we thank you for, Your words to us today, We thank you for, How that word, Speaks to us, In, In our situations, And, We pray that, You would help us to, To put your word into practice, In our lives, That we would, Seek to, To follow, Our Lord Jesus Christ, In that example of, Humble, Loving, Selfless, Service for others, Forgive us for our failure,

[31 : 38] To do that, And we pray too, That we would, Also, Be moved to, To wonder, And to worship, At, Just who Jesus Christ is, That he is, The eternal word, Who was, From eternity with God, Who from eternity was God, And yet, Who humbled himself, And became obedient, Even to death, Death on a cross, For our sakes, Lord, May we, Rejoice in these things, May we wonder at them, May we worship, Because of them, We pray, In his name, Amen.