

# PM John 13:1-20 The servant King

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 01 February 2026

Preacher: Rev Gareth Burke

[ 0 : 00 ] As it is recorded in the Gospel of John and the chapter 13, John's Gospel, chapter 13. And we'll read here from the beginning to the end of verse 20.

John chapter 13, from the beginning. 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 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 to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around 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.

[ 1 : 38 ] 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 is 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 to betray him. That was why he said, Not all of you are clean.

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? 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.

[ 2 : 43 ] 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.

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.

I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place, you may believe, that I am he. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send, receives me.

And whoever receives me, receives the one who sent me. Amen. May the Lord bless his work.

I will please, if we could turn to John chapter 13, the portion we read together. John 13, this lovely passage here, at the beginning of this chapter.

[ 3 : 45 ] Some time ago, I was speaking to a lady, who was telling me about a conversation, she had had with a Christian friend.

Her friend went to a church, where the gospel sadly, was not often preached. And the lady who attended this church, told my friend, she said, well I think things are beginning to change.

Because, the minister has announced, that he's beginning a series, on Proverbs. Now this was quite a surprise, because he didn't really preach series, through biblical books.

And the Christian lady, well, she was quite excited about this. But about a fortnight later, she met my friend again, and my friend asked her, well, how about the series on Proverbs?

How did it go? Oh, she said, didn't go well. He stood up, and said, our proverb this morning, is a stitch in time, saves nine.

[ 4 : 53 ] Well, you know, these proverbs have their place, they're interesting, aren't they? But of course, they're not inspired scripture. They may be useful, at some times, but, they're not, the word,

of God.

Nevertheless, I want to, share a proverb with you, this evening. And it's this, there's more to this, than meets the eye. There's more to this, than meets the eye.

Now, some of you might say, oh, that isn't really a proverb. That's an idiom. But I consulted, with our good friend, Mr. Google, and I asked him, I said, is it a proverb, or an idiom?

And he said, you can take it either way. What does it mean? Someone has given it, this definition.

This means, that a situation, has hidden depths, complexities, or qualities, that are not, immediately obvious, or apparent, from a superficial glance.

It suggests, that beneath the surface, there is a more, interesting, intricate, or significant, reality.

There's more to this, than meets, the eye.

[ 6 : 13 ] And I think, we can apply, this proverb, to this portion, that we're looking at tonight, in John, chapter 13. There are things here, that are obvious.

There are things, that are clear. When I was reading, through the passage, there would have been, things that, left out at you, that were, absolutely, 100% clear. But as we, delve into this passage, there are other things, in here, that are not, immediately apparent.

But yet, there is deep truth, hidden, in these verses. And it is, greatly beneficial, to us, to find, these truths, and to consider them, as well.

So what I want to do, this evening, as we come to this passage, is approach it, from three angles.

Consider the seen, consider the obvious, and then consider, the hidden.

Consider the seen, consider the obvious, and consider, the hidden. Now I'm sure, that you're familiar, with the scene, that's presented, to us, here. It's Thursday evening, before the cross.

[ 7 : 20 ] Jesus, and his disciples, have gathered, in the upper room. Judas is still here. It's important, to note that. John is of course, present, and he gives to us, a very vivid account, of what happens.

Because he was there, up close, saw it all, directly. So, Jesus and his disciples, have gathered, in the upper room. And as they went, into that room, there would have been, a basin, and a jug, filled with water, and a towel.

Many's host, would have, provided a servant, to wash your feet. And that's why, the water, and towel, and so on, were there.

This was a custom. Now you've got to, recognize of course, that in the days, of our saviour, in Israel, men, often wore, open toed, sandals.

We wouldn't be, wearing them, in Dumfries, in February. But that's, that's what they went, around in. Some of you, will have a pair, of sandals, I'm sure.

[ 8 : 30 ] And they would have, worn them without socks. My family have advised me, that it is, very bad, from a fashion point of view, to wear, sandals, and socks together. So, you wear, open toed sandals, your feet get dirty, and smelly.

And so it was a custom, when they would have, gone into a room like this, for a servant, to come along, and wash your feet. Not a very pleasant task. I mean, who wants to get down, and wash somebody else's, dirty feet?

But nevertheless, that's what was done. I'm not sure, if there's an equivalent, in our society today.

Maybe, if I go to your house, and I'm wearing an overcoat, you might say to me, can I take your coat?

That would be, an hospitable thing to say, wouldn't it? It means, come on in. You're welcome. Well, there is no servant. So what happens?

Well, the scriptures don't directly tell us, but I'm sure the disciples, would have been looking, at each other. You know, when situations arise, sometimes we stare, at each other. Peter's a little bit, of a leader, isn't he?

[ 9 : 36 ] He would have been staring, perhaps, at Thomas. You know, Thomas, you make a move. You get over there, to the water. And Thomas might have been, taking the attitude, no way am I going to do that, and start staring at Matthew.

But Matthew worked for the revenue, and he felt he was above, that kind of thing, that kind of menial task. He wasn't going to, going to do that. And how humbled, the disciples must have felt, when Jesus himself, got up, and poured the water, into the basin, took off his outer garment, got down, with the towel, and moved from, one disciple, to the next, on his knees, washing, their filthy, feet.

This, was the work, of a servant, that obviously, none of them, were prepared to do, but Jesus himself, is willing to do it. Don't you love Simon Peter?

Don't you see so much, of Simon Peter, in yourself? He comes to Simon Peter, verse 6, and the, the Greek here, is hard to translate actually. Yes, it's, it's, Peter, confused, and muddled, and embarrassed, and, and feeling awkward, and he basically says to Jesus, you, my feet, washing, you know, he, he isn't quite sure, what to say, but what he's conveying, is this, I can't have you, washing my feet.

You shall never wash my feet, he says in verse 8, and Jesus says to him, the one who is bathed, does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean, and you are clean, but not every one, of you.

[11:28] Oh, that's a difficult statement, isn't it? I'm sure Peter, initially wasn't sure, what all that was about, and we'll come to that, in due course, but here is the scene, Jesus on his knees, washing their feet, doing the servant's task, the others refusing to do it, and Peter, protesting, but Jesus prevails upon him, and explains to him, that there is some, hidden significance, in what he is doing, this then, is the scene, but consider with me secondly, the obvious, the things that are clear, in this passage, notice here, the love, of Jesus, the love, of Jesus, now before the feast, of the Passover, verse 1, 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, what does that mean, well it could be translated, he loved them fully, or it could mean this, that Jesus was aware, that the end was at hand, that he was soon, to go to the cross, that in a short time, he would go, and die there, in their place, bearing their sin, but whatever way, in which we interpret, that expression, it is evident, that what Jesus is doing here, is an expression, of his love, for his disciples, remember Mary of Bethany, she does a similar thing, to Jesus, doesn't she, she gets that alabaster jar, of very expensive perfume, and she pours that perfume, over Jesus, as an expression of her love, for the Savior, and here is Jesus, engaging in this practical talks, and moving from disciple, to disciple, washing their feet, to express, to them, his love, for them,

I think that we need to, reflect upon this, brothers and sisters, in our reformed tradition, we hold very much, to the truth, of God's word, we hold to the great doctrines, of the faith, and that it's right, and proper, that we do that, and that we defend, the great doctrines, of the faith, but let us be careful, that we do not become, sharp edged, Christians, let us be careful, that in our own lives, we reflect, something of the love, of Jesus, and let us be careful, that we appreciate, and value, and bathe, in the love, of Jesus, for us, for God, so, loved the world, that he gave, his only begotten son, here he is, the savior, the only, son of God, and he comes, from the glory of heaven, into this world, to save his people, from their sins, and it's not, that he has been, forced, into this, mission, by the father, but he comes, willingly, out of love, for his people, he loves you, this evening, if you are a Christian, if you have faith, in him, if he is your savior, he loves you, maybe tonight, you're passing through, trying times,

I don't know, maybe this evening, you're struggling, in different ways, maybe tonight, you're perplexed, and concerned, about many, matters, what can I say to you, if you're a child, of God, if Jesus Christ, the son of God, is your savior, he loves you, and he's with you, I don't know, what you think, about hot tubs, I find that people, come in two categories, some people, love them, and other people, oh, they just think, they're the most terrible thing, I wouldn't even, talk about them, I happen to be, in the first category, and you know, what it is, you lie there, in that bubbling water, and it's, it's just a beautiful, experience, you're bathing, in it, and sometimes, even in our darkest moments, it is good for us, to withdraw, and to come aside, and simply, to bathe, in the love of Christ, for us, his people, he delights in you, he loves you, you're his, and here he is, expressing that love, in a very practical, and down to earth way, demonstrating to these men, who've gone around with him, for these three years, that he loves them, and as he loved them, so he loves us, his people, the love, of Jesus, notice secondly, the example, of Jesus, verse 14, if then your Lord and teacher, has washed your feet, you also ought to wash, one another's feet,

I've given you an example, that you should do, just as I have done, to you, truly, truly I say, to you, a servant is not greater, than a master, nor is a messenger, greater, than the one, who sent him, now what's this about, several years ago, I was visiting a lady, her son was, a minister, in Australia, and she hadn't been able, to get to his, induction service, he had moved, to a new congregation, but she had the order of service, and she showed me, the order of service, and I was reading through it, and at one point, in the order of service, it said, the washing of feet, the washing of feet, and I said

to her, what was this, now she wasn't there, bear that in mind, oh she said, that was a lovely thing, she hadn't seen it, that was a lovely thing, the men from the presbytery, got down, and they took their, socks and shoes off, in the front row, and my Billy, that was her son, he washed her feet, now I love the men, in our presbytery, but I'm not agitating, for this practice, to be introduced, into services of induction, is that what Jesus means, for to get down, and wash one another's feet, well there may be context, and there may be situations, where that is appropriate, there may be, but it's much bigger, it's much broader, it's much wider, than that, what Jesus is saying to us here, in the example, that he is giving to us, is simply this, don't get above yourself, be prepared, to do the work, of a servant, be prepared, to get down there, and do the nitty gritty thing, yes he's demonstrating, his love, and he's showing his love here, for his disciples, and we rejoice tonight, in his love for us, but he's also, challenging us this evening, as to whether or not, we're prepared to, and willing to do, practical deeds, of kindness, to help our brothers, and sisters, in Christ, Christ, now you may say to me tonight, well that's not really, my kind of thing, you see I'm into the theology bit, and other people, are into the practice, I read the institutes, you can run the messages, for others, but it doesn't work like that, it doesn't work like that, the word, is to be studied, and imbibed, but it's to be lived out, in our lives, listen to Jesus, this isn't me, this is what Jesus is saying, in Matthew 25, he gives us this, this parable, of the sheep and the goats, from verse 31 onwards, and he says, on the great day, when I come, the men and women, through all the generations, of time, are going to be gathered, before me, I'm going to put my people, the sheep, on my right hand, I'm going to put the unbelievers, the goats, on my left hand, and, this is what I will say, to the sheep, when I was hungry, you fed me, when I was naked, you clothed me, when I was thirsty, you gave me something, to drink, when I was in prison, you visited me, striking, isn't it, because these works, in which they have engaged, have not saved them, of course not, but these works, in which they have engaged, are evidence, of their faith, in Christ, the fact, that they belong, to Jesus, has been seen, in the lives, that they have lived, and notice here, that these works, that they have done, have been works, performed, in relation, to other, believers, when I was thirsty, you gave me, drink, when I was naked, you clothed me, when I was sick, you visited me, when I was in prison, you came to me, as much as they have, ministered on, to the people of God, on to those, who have faith, in Christ, they have ministered, on to Christ, himself, these good works, performed, in relation, to their brothers, and sisters, in Christ, are evidence, of their faith, in the Lord, and Jesus, is saying to us, this evening here, in John 13, he's saying, follow my example, as I am serving, these my disciples, in this practical way, so you are to serve, my people, in practical ways, well, what does that mean, what does it look like, maybe it involves, taking someone, to a hospital appointment, maybe it involves, making a pot, of whatever, potato and leek soup, and taking it, to someone, who's unwell, or who's just, had a new baby, maybe it involves, suggesting, to a younger couple, who rarely get out, that you're going to, babysit for them, for an evening, so that they can, take a little time, and go to Nando's, or McDonald's, or wherever they go, and have, a little time together there,

[ 22 : 04 ] I say, it's not very spiritual, that's not a Bible study, no it's not, but isn't this, what the Savior, is saying to us, and isn't it, what James is saying to us, that faith, without works, is dead, how do I know, that you have faith, I see that in action, in your life, so there are things, that are obvious, the love of Jesus, so vast, so full, for us, the example, of Jesus, but see here also, the humiliation, of Jesus, who is Jesus, well you know, who he is of course, he's the eternal, son of God, essentially, and truly, divine, in the beginning, was the word, John 1, and the word, was with God, and the word, was God, he was in the beginning, with God, all things were made, through him, and without him, was not anything made, that was made, he is none other, than the son of God, essentially, and truly, divine, there was a man, in my last congregation, and every time,

I preached on the doctrine, of the person of Christ, this is what he said, to me at the door, he said, Gareth, you got that wrong, this morning, well at least, he was consistent, you got that wrong, this morning, he said, when Jesus left, the glory of heaven, and came into this world, he left his divinity, he left his Godhood behind, and he became man, no, that's not correct, when Jesus came, into this world, it is not that he ceased, to be God, or left his divinity, parked in heaven, no, he became man, for sure, but he's the God man, truly, and essentially, God's, listen to the apostle Paul, in those wonderful words, that he penned, in Philippians chapter 2, have this mind, among yourselves, which is yours, in Christ Jesus, who though he was, in the form of God, did not count equality, with God, a thing to be grasped, he was in the form of God, did not count equality, with God, a thing to

be grasped, who is Jesus, he is none other, than the eternal son of God, essentially, and truly divine, listen to Paul again, in Colossians 1, at verse 15,

Jesus, he is the image, of the invisible God, the firstborn, of all creation, for by him, all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or rulers, or authorities, all things were created, through him, and for him, who is Jesus, he is the son of God, he is essentially divine, he is the creator, of the universe, and yet he humbled himself, became man, born of the virgin, the word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and here he is, the son of God, the creator, of the universe, on his knees, washing, smelly feet, will you forgive, the personal nature, of this illustration, I have a cousin, who is a dentist,

I am not in any way, boasting about him, but this is just the facts, he was a professor, of dentistry, in England, unknown to me, until a few years ago, he was a leading figure, in the British dental world, the editor, of the British dental journal, for many years, he lectured, all over the world, in dental matters, I was talking to a lady, one day, she was a dentist, and she happened to say to me, you're not related at all, to Trevor Burke, are you, and I said, well, he's my cousin, honestly, she nearly passed out, she said, he's your cousin, she was really taken, by this, well, he was married, to a dentist, and one Friday, lunchtime, his wife was very agitated, because her dental nurse, had taken sick, and she had a whole lot of patients, lined up for the Friday afternoon, and no dental nurse, now my cousin, he's an obliging fellow, and he said, don't worry,

I'll do it, so there he was, sitting there, beside the dental chair, his wife was doing, all the chiseling, and drilling, and hammering, and everything else, that has to be done, and Trevor was sitting there, doing the work, of the dental nurse, and people were coming, into the practice, and saying, oh, you've got some new staff, and who's this you've got today, and all of that, did he cease to be, a professor of dentistry, no, did he cease to be, a significant figure, in the dental world, when he was doing that, that task, no, but for a season, he was prepared, to set those things aside, and do the humble work, here is our savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, the king of glory, he did not cease, to be God, he did not cease, to be the son of God, he did not cease, to be essentially divine, but for a time, he humbles himself, he becomes man, he becomes, a servant, and all of this, for you, and for me, coming into this world, becoming flesh, humbling himself, so that we, through his life, and through his death, may enter, into the blessings, of salvation, see the obvious, the love of Jesus, the example of Jesus, the humiliation, of Jesus, but then consider, the hidden, please, things that are perhaps, less obvious, in this passage, and there are two, the tragedy, that is apostasy, whose feet did he wash,

[ 28 : 38 ] John, yes, Peter, yes, Matthew, yes, Judas, yes, Judas is there, there's references to him, take verse two, when the devil, already put it, into the heart, of Judas Iscariot, or take verse, 11, Jesus knew, who was to betray him, or verse, 18, I'm not speaking, of all of you, I know whom I have chosen, Judas is there, and Jesus washes his feet, he's there, like the rest, of the disciples, if you had seen, the disciples, walking along the street, when they were going out, two by two, there's maybe, Matthew and John, together, and that's Thomas and Peter, and you would say, now who's that other fellow there, the one carrying the bag, who's that, oh he's Judas, alright, just looked like the rest of them, acted like the rest of them, talked like the rest of them, but he wasn't the real thing, a true work of grace, had not been wrought, in his heart and life, he was, acting as if, he belonged to the Lord, but his heart, was not changed, by the grace, of God, it's a solemn warning, to us, to make sure, that our standing in Christ, is real, and genuine, and genuine, now there's something else here, the necessity, of ongoing, forgiveness, for the child of God, let's read again, verses 6 to 10, if we may,

Jesus came to Simon Peter, and said Lord, and Peter says to him, Lord do you wash my feet, and Jesus answered him, what I am doing, you don't understand, but afterward you will, Peter said, you'll never wash my feet, Jesus said, if I don't wash you, you've no share with me, Simon Peter said, Lord not my feet only, but also my hands, and my head, Jesus said to him, the one who is bathed, does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean, and you are clean, but not every one of you, now what's this about, what's this about, Jesus is making, a distinction here, between someone, who has had a bath, and someone, who needs to have, their feet washed, can I bring it into, maybe more modern vocabulary, and say it's the difference, between someone having a shower, and someone washing their hands, you know if I went to your house, for lunch, and then you come and say, now the lunch is ready, if I said to you,

I'd like to wash my hands, well you would think, that was alright, but if I said to you, well you'd excuse me, till I have a shower, you would think, that was mighty weird, wouldn't you, and that's the distinction, that Jesus is drawing out here, between someone, who's had a bath, and someone, who needs their feet washed, someone who's had a shower, and someone, who needs to wash, their hands, and the Saviour, is suggesting to us, in this imagery, the difference, between justification, and sanctification, he's suggesting to us, in this imagery, that we who are in Christ, are saved, by the grace of God, there is now, no condemnation for us, for we are in Christ Jesus, our sin, has been dealt with, but that does not mean, that we're perfect, there's a need, for ongoing, cleansing, we've been bathed, but we need to wash, our feet, we've been showered, but we need to wash, our hands, let me try, and illustrate it, here's your son, he's 17 years of age, he's just passed, his driving test, scary time, isn't it, and he comes to you, and he says, dad,

I'd like to borrow the car, oh you've been dreading, that moment, but you're, you're trying to be cool about it, you say, oh I, oh fine, no problem, no problem, and you make sure, you're back by 11 o'clock, and give him all the instructions, and don't be driving, with the window down, and one arm out the window, and don't be trying to drink coffee, while you're driving, you tell him all those things, and off he goes, he comes back, just after 11 o'clock, and you're glad to hear, the click on the door, the door shutting, he's home, and he comes into, the living room, where you are, and he says, dad, I don't want to alarm you, well, when a young person says that, you're always alarmed, I don't want to alarm you, but there's been a slight mishap, and he takes you out, to see the car, and when he was turning, into the driveway, he managed to clip, the pillar, on the way in, he scraped the front door, the back door, and put in a few dents, as well, well, you say, it's only a car, you know, it doesn't really matter, don't worry about it, but inside, you're seething, you're seething, he's your son, you're his father, nothing can change that, nothing, but there's a, there's a tension, that's come, between you, he hasn't conducted himself, as you had hoped, and next morning, at breakfast, it's kind of strange, there isn't a full blown row, but there's, there's a strain there, a tension, you know, sugar, sugar, yeah, how are you, fine, thanks, you, okay, that kind of conversation, stilted, a bit distant, relationship is not as close, as it ought to be, and here we are, men and women of faith, trusting in Jesus Christ, for salvation, we've, we've had the bath, but we need our feet, washed, we've had the shower, but we need our hands, washed, there's, a tension has come, between us, and the Savior, a distance has developed, because of sin, in our lives, and we need to bring, that sin, onto the Lord, and confess, that sin, before God, that we may walk, in closer communion, and fellowship, with the Savior, this sin, in the life, of the believer, it does not alter, our standing, before God, but it does affect, our communion, with God, it does not alter us, in terms of our justification, for nothing can change that, but it does affect things, in terms of our, fellowship, and communion, with Christ, unconfessed sin, in the life of the believer, needs to be brought, before God, that we may walk, closely, with the Savior, here, here are hidden things, in this passage, Judas is here, the sin of apostasy, professing faith, but not genuinely, believing, claiming to be a follower, but no true work, of grace, done in the heart, here is the, the need, for ongoing, cleansing, in the life, of the believer, set before us, in this analogy, of being bathed, and getting your feet, washed, here is Jesus, doing something beautiful, that is striking, for his disciples, but here is Jesus, also teaching them, significant, and deep truths, to which they need, to pay heed, well it is my prayer, this evening, that as we go, from this place, we might take this word, with us, and apply it, to our lives, that we might, bathe, in the love of Jesus, for us, and that we might, show that love, to others, and that we might, walk closely with him, who is our savior, confessing our sin, and seeking to, show forth,

[ 36 : 38 ] Christ, because we're those, who are in deep fellowship, with him, let us pray, we bless you, oh God our father, for our savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you, that he is, a wonderful savior, who left the glory, of heaven, and came to this earth, who never ceased, to be God, but for a time, humbled himself, and did the lowly, thing, and all of this, for our salvation, help us, oh God, to rejoice, in his love, to show his love, to others, and help us, to walk, in close communion, and fellowship, with Jesus, for this we cry, in his name,

Amen.