

Do You Understand What I Have Done For You?

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[0 : 00] If you could turn back with me then to John's Gospel, chapter 13. And we're going to be looking at these verses 1 to 17.

Now, just like this morning, we're scratching the surface of those verses. You could be focusing microscopically on any verse, and that's one way of approaching it.

But when you look at this as a complete incident, and just as that was a section in the morning of Jesus addressing the Pharisees, the second part of his shepherd discussion with them, if you like, the first part being, I am the door of the sheep.

So, we're looking at the whole of this, but yes, we're not necessarily going to be plunging immensely deep into any part of it.

How far should our Christianity go in serving those who don't know Christ? How far should our Christianity go in ministering to one another?

[1 : 27] After all, Jesus has just said in this chapter, verse 16, Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master.

And of course, the master is before us tonight, washing the feet of his disciples, including the feet of Judas.

Now, of course, this is an enacted or dramatic parable. And so that it's not only about the external situation, it's got a deeper message than the actual outward elements of the action that is taking place.

But it still is the case, would we be willing to wash one another's feet? Now, as we look into this remarkable passage, I want you to be aware of its setting and place in John's gospel.

So, commentators would say that from John chapter 13 through to John 17 is a farewell discourse, which is quite a good phrase.

[3 : 01] In other words, it's Jesus' farewell speech and farewell teaching to his disciples who have followed him for three years and who've done everything with him.

They've been a community, a family. And this is his farewell speech. You remember Paul, I think it was, who gave a much shorter farewell speech to, was it, the Ephesian elders?

Well, this is the farewell speech of Jesus running through chapters 13 to 17. And I also want you to be aware, not only, if you like, of its literary setting in John's gospel, because you'll recognize that, in other words, here we're in the second half of John's gospel.

Everything that he wanted to say, and we're just over halfway in John's gospel, in these farewell discourses, and the other part of the setting that I want you to grasp is the historical time of the setting.

He's 24 hours from the cross. I want to bring three things out of this passage.

[4 : 36] Firstly, Jesus' knowledge and awareness 24 hours from the cross. Secondly, Jesus as our example.

And thirdly, how Jesus unpacks the heartbeat of this enacted or dramatic parable through his engagement with Peter.

Firstly, then, Jesus' knowledge and self-awareness. And for this first part, we're thinking of verses 1 to 3.

And there's a pregnant phrase brimming with the allusion and echo and recall.

John brings, John starts his account here of this night with this. It was just before the Passover festival.

[5 : 49] With all the allusions that such a statement would trigger in the disciples of Jesus, the Passover is one of the most momentous events in the history of Israel.

It is their birth, if you like. It is their redemption. It is judgment. It is associated with slaughtered lambs.

John knows exactly what he's doing when he says it was just before the Passover festival. And he says, Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world.

Of course, one word that describes the Passover is Exodus. Let me read that bit that I just read there again.

Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world. In other words, he knows that the time has come for his Exodus.

[7 : 09] Not from Egypt, but from his mission in this world to redeem sinners like you and I.

And go to the Father. I'm not going to stress that go to the Father just now because it's going to be in the next verse and I'll stress it at that point.

I just want you to remember the two things that I've said so far, the Exodus and the Passover and all those associations and allusions that are pulsating at this moment.

The first miracle that Jesus did was the wedding in Cana of Galilee. And you might remember that he said to his mother when she said, they've run out of wine.

Son, can you not help them? And he said, didn't he, something like, woman, my hour has not come. But here Jesus is almost at the omega point.

[8 : 20] I could almost say the nader point of the reason for his coming. And however great the miracles were, however lofty his teaching was, that is not the hour for which he came.

These were not the hour for which he came. Amen. Notice what it says there.

Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. That is absolutely glorious. Here he is 24 hours from the cross. And just if we race down a wee bit to verse 11, for he knew who was going to betray him.

He knows what's before him. He's been walking in its shadow for all those years.

[10 : 01] Up till this moment of the crucifixion, you could say, with that statement in the miracle of Cana in Galilee, his whole ministry was bracketed by this compulsion of this hour.

There is a warning in these opening verses, is there not?

The evening meal was in progress.

And the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. I don't think that you can account for the betrayal of Jesus just by looking at Judas.

He was with Jesus, eh? All that time. He experienced his love and his majesty and his glory.

[11 : 44] He walked with him and talked with him. But somehow or other, he became under the power of some other, the grip of some other power.

That's the warning. That is the warning. Let him who thinks he stand take heed lest he fall.

Don't dabble in anything that can take you over. verse 3.

You've seen there that one, Jesus knew about the hour. That Jesus knew about his exodus.

that Jesus knew who was going to betray him. And then in verse 3, 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 : 10] Let me speak just a little about the last part of that verse. Isn't it amazing? Jesus knew about his origin. I mean the man Jesus of Nazareth and he knew about his destiny.

He knew that he had come from God. From that ineffable, exquisite fellowship mentioned at the very beginning of John's gospel.

In the beginning was the word the logos and the logos was with God and the logos was God. And that little preposition with means towards God.

enraptured by each other's beauty and majesty. Jesus knew his origin and he knew his destiny.

I wonder do you know your origin and your destiny? You know that you've come from God not in the way that Jesus has but in the sense that you're made in the image of God.

[14 : 57] and because you're made in the image of God as a human being you matter. Jesus knew that he was going before I leave this first three verses they're a kind of introduction and touched as I'm sure you are with the word father in verse one and go to the father in verse three and knew that the father throughout this entire gospel is the picture of the father and the son utterly united in will in work in word.

You know in Aramaic the word means dad. Anyway let's go on to my second point Jesus as our example.

We've looked at Jesus' knowledge and self awareness before the crucifixion and I want to go on to speak about Jesus as our example.

Have you heard much about that? My guess is no. Because we're obsessed almost because he's our substitute.

I'll just rush to this verse 12 just now. No sorry verse 15 verse 15 the words of Jesus I have set you an example this whole enacted dramatic parable I have set you an example verse 15 that you should do as I have done for you that's open-ended that terminology that language always.

[17 : 47] Let me tell you something about the foot washing. In an orderly Jewish household no man would ever have washed the feet of the guests that came when they invited someone for a meal because as we all know the roads that they travelled along and treaded along were really dusty and hot and there would be all sorts of things in their feet that needed cleaned and the lowest slave in the house would clean the feet of the guests and that lowest slave for those households that could afford slaves wasn't

Jewish they were Gentile if a house didn't have a slave the wife or the children would wash the feet of the guests but certainly anyone of any kind of status like a rabbi or something like that it would be utterly unheard of and unthinkable and offensive you and I sitting here in 2022 we can't capture the jaw dropping response of the disciples when Jesus suddenly got up when the meal was in progress took off his outer garment put a towel round him and started going around the only glimpse that you get into it is Peter in

Luke's gospel according to Luke this same evening the disciples were arguing about who should be the greatest pride pride is the mother of all sins Jesus gives a dramatic lesson of the need the necessity for humility it's one of the reasons is it not that humankind don't want to come to God because they think they can get along happily enough with their own resources their own intellect their own moral compass their own religious compass ponder ponder for a moment will you who this was that washed the feet of the disciples including those of Judas ponder his breathtaking and jaw-dropping humility depicted vividly in his dramatic action at the Passover meal.

Will we, you and I, take off our outer garments of pride? Of prestige?

[22 : 14] Of position? Of rights? Of prerogatives?

Of popularity? The great apostle Paul puts this parable of Jesus in theological language in his letter to the Philippians.

Let this mind be in you. Which was in Christ Jesus who being in the form of God thought it, considered Godhead not something to be grasped at but made himself of no reputation and took upon himself the form of a slave and became obedient and became obedient unto death and as he puts it even the death of the cross with all its shame and with all its humiliation and with all its disgrace especially to the surrounding cultures including of course the culture of Israel.

when Jesus 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 said. 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 also should wash one another's feet I have set you an example.

[24 : 09] Anyway my point here really is one dimension of Jesus as our example that's massively important is humble service.

Metaphorically a willingness a willingness to wash one another's feet. Jesus is saying I have modelled for you how you should be willing to minister to one another's needs whatever those needs might be.

I have modelled for you how you should understand that true Christian love leads to humble service in the kingdom of God. I have modelled for you what Christ-like Christianity should look like.

Well that's amazing isn't it? But there's something quite important before we leave this second point you'll see that I've left the middle section of this passage to my third point.

But before we leave the second point 17 verse 17 is pretty pretty important. Now that you know these things you'll be blessed if you do them.

[25 : 58] Now we don't hear this stressed very much but I defy anybody in here to intelligently read through the four gospels and these are the source documents if you like that we have about the teaching of Jesus and the words of Jesus and not come away realising and I'm going to sum up what I'm saying by a phrase that Jesus used you'll be justified by your deeds.

Now of course I don't think that Jesus means justification in the sense that Paul means it but I do believe he's saying here is a mark of authentic Christianity that Christ is really in you.

Thirdly we've looked at Jesus' knowledge and awareness just before in the last 24 hours before the cross we've looked at Jesus as our example I finally want to look at Jesus' engagement with Peter because I mean on the face of it sort of plausible it looks initially that Peter is his motives are okay Lord you don't don't don't you wash my feet you who are who you are and me who I am come on and you know in verse 8a he's quite emphatic isn't he you'll never wash my feet that's why some people don't embrace the gospel it's too crude for them to repent of their sin and to ask Jesus Christ into their life it's as they think beneath them Jesus hits the nail in the head that's not the right expression is it then Jesus answered unless I wash you you have no part with me we used to sing redemption hymns Mary and I dare I say the whole congregation that we were in very lustily wash me in the blood of the lamb and I shall be whiter than the snow the blood of Jesus

Christ cleanses us from all sin we need to be morally and spiritually cleansed we need to be cleansed if we're to be redeemed if we're to not only know where we've come from but know where we're going have you allowed Jesus to cleanse you some of the lessons I suppose are that pride can masquerade as humility just as it was doing with

[30 : 49] Peter pride as I've already said can cause us to refuse the offer of Christ's cleansing the new testament talks about doesn't it the offense of the gospel Augustine once said there's this statement before pride comes a fall and Augustine said something like pride is the fall of all falls Nietzsche well before

I just say something about Nietzsche we're just about finished by away well I'll maybe just mention Nietzsche first well I won't the cultures that existed around the Mediterranean around the Middle East around where Jesus lived despised humility and the great philosopher German philosopher Nietzsche one of his one of the things that he had against Christianity as a movement of human beings that's just how he would put it it was groveling it was submissive it was groveling around in repentance and humility and because of that he believed he genuinely believed and wrote a case for it a critique for it that in actual fact its overall impact on human civilization was negative and he wanted to create

Übermensch was the German word which is translated Superman but that doesn't really point to what he wanted to create he wanted to create a new person a new species of human beings that was tall and strong and able to navigate this world by itself Jesus has just shown in this dramatic enacted parable that the way to greatness is down down down certainly in the kingdom of God the son of God said Luther became the greatest sinner of all time when he hung on the cross Paul said did he not that Jesus was made sin for us who knew no sin what this parable was doing even beyond a lesson in humble service was enacting salvation that Jesus Christ was about to accomplish I don't think this is an allegory and I don't believe in allegorical interpretation models or methods but it's difficult not to notice that in verse four he took off his outer clothing and that is certainly theologically what

Jesus did he took off in the sense of refusing to insist on his rights or his prerogatives in order that he might stoop lower than any other human being has ever stooped that he might snatch us from the jaws of death and hell I called this sermon do you understand what I have done I hope that you might just have understood a wee bit as we have together tried to walk through this passage this remarkable passage of Jesus taking his garments off and washing the feet of his disciples

[36 : 53] Amen one him his birth them and the people nie have to their neck their Ohhh yeah I can't take them