

The-Servant-King

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[0 : 00] John chapter 13, verses 1 to 20. 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 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.

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.

[1 : 28] 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 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. 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.

[2 : 40] 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. This is the word of God.

Well, good morning everyone. My name is Gareth. If you don't know me, you'll detect I have a different accent to everyone else.

Or everyone else has a different accent to me. All right, let's pray. Let's pray. Lord, we just ask this morning that you would speak to us through your word.

[3 : 53] Help us to hear, to understand. And not just to hear, but to do your bidding for your namesake.

Amen. John chapter 12 brings an end to Jesus' public ministry. He now turns his attention to his disciples in order to prepare them for what was to come.

They had followed him throughout this public ministry and had been amazed, awe-inspired, at times confused, and even fearful of the words and events they had witnessed.

After he had calmed the storm in Lake Galilee, they said, Who is this that even the wind and the waves obey him? They knew he was very special and they believed in him.

Though as we will see, not all. But for those who believed, their belief was real and they stuck with him.

[5 : 11] Most recently, they had witnessed the resurrection of Lazarus and the triumphal entry into Jerusalem with the people declaring, Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.

Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Glory. At this point, they didn't know or understand the implications of this and how their lives were about to be turned completely upside down, being radically changed even more.

But Jesus was there to prepare them. He loved them dearly and would do to the end, or to perfection, as John MacArthur puts it.

Everything was now set. The hour had arrived. Jesus was going to return to his father, following unimaginable anguish, pain, and the sealing of a new covenant that would bring a cleansing salvation and peace with God to those who believe.

[6 : 48] Have you ever been in a situation you felt really uncomfortable in? It's made you feel really awkward? Anne and I have been to many weddings in our time, but one of them stands out for a wrong reason.

Or maybe so that I can give you an illustration now. I don't know. But along with all the couples whose weddings we've been to, we really liked this couple.

They were lovely people. We knew they were very popular. And they had many friends. So for us to be invited was a tremendous privilege.

But at the reception, we felt so awkward and uncomfortable. Not because it was a bad reception. But because we felt, quite frankly, unworthy to be there.

Inside, I was squirming, though it was a fabulous wedding. Have you ever had that feeling? Now think of that feeling of awkwardness, magnified many times.

[8 : 02] And we may begin to understand how the disciples must have felt. Supper had already begun when Jesus got up and removed his outer garment and tying a towel to his waist.

He began to wash the disciples' feet and then wipe them with a towel. Can you imagine the room previously filled with a hubbub of relaxed conversation, maybe even laughter?

It would now have turned silent with the realization of what Jesus was doing. The relaxation turned to tension. All eyes fixed on Jesus in bewilderment and embarrassment.

This was socially awkward. Not just socially awkward, it was outrageous, shocking. The washing of dusty feet would not usually take place in the middle of a meal.

It would take place before. It would normally be carried out by a bond servant. That's a slave. Only a slave in this circumstance would be seen having removed their outer garment.

[9 : 17] The New Bible commentary says the removal of the outer garment and the wrapping of a towel around the waist was the dress of menial service and would have been despised by both Jew and Greek alike.

Jesus, who had just been lorded as Messiah, the King of Israel, is now washing the feet of those who serve him.

Awkward. They considered they were not worthy. This was no way for a king to behave. It was all too much for Peter.

And he was the only one to vocalize what everyone else was thinking. Lord, do you wash my feet? Jesus ever patient. Peter, you don't understand right now, but later on you will.

Meaning after the resurrection. Now if Peter had have thought through what Jesus had just said, he might have come to the conclusion, well, Jesus had never been wrong before.

[10 : 21] In fact, he's done and said some amazing things. Yeah, okay.

I'll trust him. I'll let him wash my feet. I'll understand later on. But we know from other scripture that that's not Peter's personality, is it? He acts or speaks first and thinks after.

Noble as he may have thought he was being, he said, you shall never wash my feet. The inference here is, Lord, this is below you. I can't allow you to do this.

Do you realize what you're doing? I don't think you do. But of course, Jesus does. He loves them so much. He's willing to humble himself by this demonstration.

Preceding the ultimate act of humiliation and love, the cross. He also has something very important to teach them. So he presses on.

[11 : 30] If I do not wash you, you have no share with me. This is a game changer that changes Peter's mind immediately. If you wash in my feet means I have a share with you, then I'm all in.

In fact, Lord, wash my hands and my head also. Perhaps, understandably, Peter has got the wrong end of the stick. He wanted to be well and truly clean.

But this is only a part of what Jesus is teaching them. Just your feet, Peter. You don't need a wash. You are clean. But not every one of you is clean.

At first glance, it might be a bit difficult to understand what's quite going on here. If Peter doesn't have his feet cleaned, he has no part of Jesus.

Yet not of all of those who are having their feet washed are clean. You have Judas in the room. It's obvious that the feet washing is not the way to be clean. that it was symbolic of something else.

[12:39] But they did need to be clean to belong to Jesus. What was it that made them clean? If we jump a couple of chapters to John 15 and verse 3, Jesus tells them explicitly, Already you are clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

Now it's clear that simply hearing the word did not make them clean. Because Jesus had spoken not only to his disciples, but publicly to many people, including the Pharisees, who we know refused to believe so could not be clean.

The disciples believed and they were clean, though not all. Soon Jesus was to die on the cross.

Ultimately, they would be cleansed by his blood as we are cleansed if we believe in Jesus.

Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow is the promise in Isaiah 1 and verse 18. As the song says, what can wash away my sin?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Judas saw the signs and miracles at close hand. He was one of the disciples.

[14:08] The other disciples saw Judas as one of them. When Jesus told them that one would betray him, they had no idea who that was going to be. Judas was not clean.

He did not believe. He loved money more than Jesus. He worshipped money, not the Lord, and was soon to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.

Once Jesus had washed the disciples' feet, he put on his outer garment and then went on to explain the significance of the foot washing. He reaffirms that he is their teacher and Lord and tells them that as he has done to them, so they should do to one another.

That is, serve one another in humility. I think we probably don't quite grasp how alien an idea it was to the disciples given the times they lived in.

Humility was despised in the ancient world as weakness. We know that the disciples had previously not understood this because in Mark's gospel in chapter 10 verses 35 to 45, James and John had got it oh so wrong, requesting that one sit on Jesus' right hand side and the other on his left in glory.

[15:32] They didn't realize what they were asking. It says in verses 42 to 45, And Jesus called them to him and said to them, You know that those who are considered rulers of Gentiles lord it over them and their great ones exercise authority over them, but it shall not be so among you, but whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.

For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. They had not absorbed the words, but Jesus, washing their feet, powerfully brought home the message of humility and servanthood.

He then went on to cement this point even further. Verse 16, 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.

Don Carson writes of this verse, No emissary has the right to think he is exempt from tasks cheerfully undertaken by the one who sent him, and no slave has the right to judge any menial task beneath him after his master has already performed it.

Jesus was turning their understanding of his kingdom upside down. They were to lead, but not lording it over the church. They were to emulate their master, the servant king, and serve one another in humility, driven by love.

[17:16] In doing these things, they would be blessed. All through this passage and the passages that follow, Jesus is preparing his disciples for his departure, his death, and resurrection.

resurrection. As we know, this was to be a horrifically difficult time of confusion for them. Jesus wanted them to remember that when Judas betrays them, betrays him, when things appear to go pear-shaped, this is all part of the plan.

It is important that they stick together and still believe that Jesus is the Messiah. of course, it is not until Pentecost that they receive the Holy Spirit and they will fully understand.

We finish our passage on another sit-up-and-take-note verse, which is verse 20. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.

Not only does Jesus want his disciples to remember that he is the Messiah and that all that is to happen is part of God's plan, he also wants them to know that when he returns to the Father, they are to continue his mission that others might believe in him and be saved.

[18 : 53] Are you clean? Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? Or do we worship something or someone else like Judas?

As I've heard somewhere else, if you were tried in court for being a Christian, would you be found guilty? Is there evidence?

And if you believe, does that belief bring about a gratitude of heart and love for a Savior who has gone way beyond washing our feet to death on the cross in ultimate humiliation?

And following the example of love and humility of our Savior, do we serve one another? and allow others to serve us? No task too menial.

I came across part of a hymn by Brian A. Wren while I was studying for this. I love some of these words. Great God, in Christ you call our name and then receive us as your own.

[20 : 12] Though through, not through some merit, right, or claim, but by your gracious love alone. We strain to glimpse your mercy seat and find you kneeling at our feet.

then take the towel and take the bread and break the bread and humble us and call us friends.

Suffer and serve till all are fed and show how grandly love intends to work till all creation sings, to fill all worlds, to crown all things.

us. We strain to glimpse your mercy seat and find you kneeling at our feet. I love those words.

They show a picture of Jesus, our King, the King of Kings, a King who in great love humbled himself on our behalf, our servant King.

let us worship him. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you that you came to earth, that you loved us so much that you died on that cross for us.

[21 : 42] we thank you for your love and humility so great. How can we respond in any other way than to love you and serve you?

Amen.