

Membership's about....'

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[0:00] All right, it's good to be back with you tonight for the last in our three week mini-series. But let me start by talking about bucket lists. Have you heard of the idea of a bucket list?

No, no, it's kind of like what you want to do in life before you kick the proverbial bucket, before you die. I know it's a bit morbid, but it's apparently a thing. And so I want you to think about what are the top three things that you want to do or accomplish in life with the person next to you. You've got 35 seconds. Go.

In our passage today, Jesus, it's his last night on earth. And you know what he chose to do out of all the things?

Wash feet. Can you believe it? Is that on anyone's list? Anyone who washed feet? No? I mean, there was, of course, a meal that he had with his disciples. He also taught them and he prayed, but first he washed feet.

We're looking at church membership tonight. And as we'll see, it's all about serving like the Son who served us. Humbly, lovingly, sacrificially.

[1:42] And that's what this foot washing symbolized, that humble, sacrificial and loving service. And because it symbolized this, it pointed to an even greater act of humble, loving and sacrificial service.

It pointed to his death on the cross for us. And it's this type of service that he gives us and his example to follow. And so let me show you from the Bible. Please forgive my voice.

If my voice breaks, I'm not going through puberty again. I'm just losing it. So at point one, verse one, it was just before the Passover festival, Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and to go to the Father.

Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. Here John begins, actually, his account of foot washing, talking about Jesus's death.

And we know he's talking about Jesus's death because as I've highlighted for you, Jesus knows that the hour had come for him to leave this world. In other words, die. But John also tells us that his death was sacrificial because he links it to the Passover festival.

[2:55] In that year, the Passover festival was on the Thursday evening. The way it works in the Jewish culture, it starts Thursday evening and goes all the way through to Friday evening. Friday being Good Friday when Jesus was crucified.

As we heard in our first reading, the Passover festival was to remind Israel that they were once slaves in Egypt. And despite lots of warnings, Pharaoh refused to let God's people go.

And so God's judgment would fall on all of Egypt to force Pharaoh to let his people go. The only problem was Israel was also in Egypt and so would get the punishment too.

And so God said, no, sacrifice a lamb and put the blood of the lamb on the doorframe so that when the destroying angel sees the blood, it will pass over the house.

Hence, Passover. And all because of the Passover sacrifice or the Passover lamb. And in fact, earlier in John's gospel, John the Baptist, when he saw Jesus coming his way, he said, look, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[4:06] He was thinking of that Passover lamb. And by take away the sin of the world, he means take away the judgment the world deserves because of sin. The judgment we actually deserve because of our sin.

Jesus would take it away by sacrificing himself like that Passover lamb. And his blood would be spilled on the wooden cross, just like the lamb was put on the wooden doorframe.

You see, his death was sacrificial. And it was loving. At the end of verse 1, it talks about how he loved them to the end. That word end here could mean to the end of his life or the end of his love.

That is the full extent of his love. Either way, I think it's still talking about his death, right? Rather than the foot washing. I mean, the foot washing that took place on Thursday night was not quite the end of his life on Friday afternoon.

And it's hardly the full extent of his love. And imagine you've got a boyfriend and girlfriend and you want to show them the full extent of your love. Are you going to wash their feet?

[5:17] Are they going to be happy with that or will they break up with you? It's not really the kind of thing you do to show the full extent of your love, right? But Jesus' death on the cross, well, that is the end of his life.

At least for three days. And it does show the full extent of his love. And so it is again talking about his death. Verse 1 is all about Jesus' death.

And John starts with it to connect it to this foot washing event. That is, Jesus' foot washing on Thursday night pointed to his cross dying on Friday afternoon.

What's more, this foot washing also symbolized how he would serve them that Friday afternoon at the cross. For just as he was humble himself to lovingly and sacrificially serve them by washing their feet, so he would do so even more so by serving them through his death at the cross.

And so this foot washing not only pointed to his cross dying, it symbolized how he came to serve them, the type of service he came to give.

[6:30] Have a look at verse 2 to 3 where we see it through the foot washing. The evening meal was in progress and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of 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 a towel that was wrapped around him.

Notice in verse 3 the power that Jesus has. It says the Father had put all things under his power, which means Jesus has power over all things, right?

He is the King of kings. He is supreme in all of life, as we heard a couple of weeks ago. I wonder what you would do with all power. I mean, we'd like to think we do good, don't we?

You know, end world hunger, bring about world peace. But the problem is, with our sinful nature, often power corrupts. Or as the saying goes, absolute power corrupts, absolutely.

[7:43] I remember seeing this, learning this lesson even with my kids. The first time the kids were old enough to be left home, while my wife and I went out for a meal with some friends, we said we would put one in charge of the others.

And one kid put up there, oh, put me in charge! And so, because they did that, we said, no, we're going to choose a different person. But even though we chose a different person, before we'd even left the house, as we were walking out the door, we heard that other kid starting to boss their siblings around.

You know, go and do that. No, you can do this. Power corrupts, doesn't it? But not with Jesus.

Knowing he's no ordinary person, knowing that he's from God, knowing that he has all power given to him by God, what does he do in verse 4?

He gets up, takes off his outer clothing of power and privilege, and puts on a towel of service, and washes feet.

Dusty, dirty, stinky, sandal-wearing feet. It was such a dirty job that only the servants did it. In fact, it was such a dirty job that the Jews would try and get the Gentile, that is, the non-Jewish servants to do it, the most lowly servants to do it.

[9:01] But here, Jesus, the King, does it. He sacrificially gives up his rights as the King of Kings, and humbly becomes the most lowly of servants to lovingly wash their feet.

It's an extraordinary act when you remember who Jesus is, of humility, love, and sacrifice. Can you imagine a powerful world leader doing that?

You know, Trump, Putin, Albanese. Can you imagine King Charles washing Meghan Markle's feet after everything that's gone in the royal family?

But Jesus, the King, does it. He really is the servant King, isn't he? Of course, it symbolizes how he served them tomorrow at the cross, where this King of Kings gave up his throne in heaven to humbly, sacrificially, and lovingly die for us at the cross, and to cleanse us, not outwardly from dirty feet, but inwardly from sin for life with him.

Verse 6. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, Lord, are you going to wash my feet? Jesus replied, you do not understand now what I am doing, but later you will understand. No, said Peter, you shall never wash my feet.

[10:20] Jesus answered, unless I wash you, you have no part with me. Peter rightly calls Jesus Lord, because he knows Jesus is King, and usually people serve kings, don't they?

And so in verse 6, Peter is horrified when Jesus comes to serve him instead. Now in verse 7, Peter doesn't realize what's happening because Jesus hadn't died yet, and the Spirit at Pentecost hadn't come to give him understanding yet.

And so in verse 8, he's still horrified and declares that Jesus will never wash his feet. But then Jesus adds, unless I wash you, you have no part with me, no life with me.

And Jesus' comment at the end of verse 8 tells us again, just like verse 1, that something more is going on here than just washing feet. I mean, does unclean feet really stop us having life with Jesus?

Of course not. Rather, this service of foot washing pointed to Jesus' service of cross dying, to cleanse them for life with him, to be part of God's family with Jesus in this world now, along with a guarantee of life eternal with Jesus in the world to come later.

[11:41] You see, the real problem is not having unclean feet that stink, it's having unclean hearts that sin. And so washing Peter's feet to cleanse them outwardly was a really symbolic gesture about Jesus dying to cleanse Peter inwardly.

Unless Jesus dies for Peter, Peter can have no part with Jesus. As Jesus says, verse 8, unless I wash you, unless I serve you by dying to cleanse you, you can have no part in my family, no life eternal with me.

And so good old Peter says in verse 9, then Lord, Simon Peter replied, not just my feet, but my hands and my head as well. He still doesn't quite get it, but he does get one thing.

It's got to do with having life with Jesus. And this matters so much to Peter that he doesn't want to miss out on it, does he? And so he says, not just my feet, but my hands and my head too.

In other words, Jesus washed everything. And I wonder if we remember how important life with Jesus is. I was reflecting on this and what Peter was doing, how he didn't want to miss out on it, so he said, let's wash everything.

[12:57] And I was reflecting on this and wondering if life with Jesus mattered this much to me. You know, is it the one thing that I never want to miss out on, such that I'll cling to Christ no matter what?

Or have we begun to take it for granted instead? Or forgotten how good it is? Well, Jesus assures Peter that he won't miss out because he actually is already clean.

Verse 10. Jesus answered, those who've had a bath need only to wash their feet. Their whole body is clean and you are clean, but not every one of you.

For he knew who was going to betray him and that was why he said not everyone was clean. Jesus says to his disciples that apart from Judas who would betray him, they are already clean.

But hang on, how? After all, he hasn't died to cleanse them yet. That's tomorrow. Well, we need to remember that God can use the death of Jesus to cleanse people even before Jesus died for them.

[14:04] It's how all the people in the Old Testament, if you think about it, it's how they were cleansed even though Jesus hadn't even come yet. If they had faith.

And his disciples did have faith. They already believed Jesus was the Messiah, the King, the Christ. And so they were already cleansed even before Jesus died to pay for that cleansing.

It's a little bit like after pay. You know about after pay, right? You buy now and pay later. It's a really bad setup because interest rates are terrible and so on. But anyway, here it is.

They were cleansed now by faith and Jesus paid for it later at the cross. And so Peter was cleansed from sin by faith.

It's like verse 10, his whole body was already clean and so now he only needed to have his feet washed. That is, he only needed to accept Jesus serving him ultimately by dying for him.

[15:06] That is how Jesus would later pay for Peter's whole body cleansing that he'd already received. and we're cleansed the same way.

Jesus may have died almost 2,000 years ago but just as God used the death of Jesus to cleanse people for thousands of years before Jesus, so he uses Jesus' death to cleanse people for thousands of years after Jesus.

It works both ways. But again, only if we have faith in him. So do you? Do you believe in Jesus? That he did die on the cross to pay for your sins so that you can have life eternal with him? And for us who do, then Jesus leaves us an example to follow, point 2, verse 12.

When they had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. Do you understand what I've done for you? He asked them. You call me teacher and Lord and rightly so for that is what I am.

[16:12] Now that I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I've set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. You see, by washing their feet the Thursday night before he died, Jesus not only pointed to his death on Friday afternoon, but left them an example of service to follow.

But does that mean then we should literally wash each other's feet? with youth group camp coming up, perhaps instead of a car wash fundraiser, like one cartoon, I think you've switched green guys. Oh, there it is. Okay, it was not even that funny after that big build up. Anyway, here's the early church fundraiser, foot washing fundraiser. So instead of car wash, maybe a foot wash fundraiser. I told you it wasn't that funny after that build up. But anyway, or should we make a line after church tonight? You know, have chicken and chips and then have a queue down the hallway and get Mark chew up the end with a big bowl of water?

No, that's not what Jesus is talking about here. After all, do you really want someone else touching your feet? I don't, my feet are ticklish, I don't want people touching my feet.

[17:26] But more importantly, remember this foot washing pointed to his cross dying and symbolised how he'd serve them at the cross, humbly, sacrificially, lovingly.

And it's that type of service he wants us to copy. And so he's not saying he wants them to literally wash each other's feet any more than he wants them to literally die for each other's sins.

No, no, it's not the symbol, which is the foot washing, it's what it symbolised, which is the service. Point is, we are to serve like the sun.

Humbly, lovingly, and even sacrificially. And the great news is, I know many of you do. And so by the way you serve, you do effectively, not literally, but effectively wash one another's feet.

Whether it's up front, like reading the Bible, or leaning in prayers, or playing in the band, or down on the side welcoming people, or serving chicken and chips, or whatever it is, or up the back on the sound and slides, or during the week in a myriad of ways, even just simply encouraging one another.

[18:37] By putting off our preferences and putting on the towel of service, you are washing one another's feet, like Jesus. Of course, we do this not to cleanse people from sin, only Jesus' death does that, but we do it to help present everyone mature in Him.

Remember, in week one, we saw that life is all about the Son. We're to rotate our lives around Him at the centre. And so week two, we saw that our church goal is to present or proclaim the good news so that we can present everyone mature in the Son.

Or as it says on the front of our bulletins, with our mission statement down the bottom right-hand corner, to go, gather, and grow in Christ. That's the same thing as trying to present everyone mature in Him.

And so if life is about the Son, and church is to be on about presenting everyone mature in the Son, then membership involves serving like the Son to see that happen.

How? Well, I've already given you some examples, but we can break it down to two main ways, and I'll do it a little bit further. We can do it by proclaiming Christ, or helping the proclamation of Christ.

[20:00] You see, if verse 28 says on the screen, Jesus is the one we proclaim, so that we can present everyone fully mature in Him, then we serve in ways to help that message be proclaimed.

That's why on the front of the bulletins, underneath our mission statement, it adds, by prayerfully proclaiming and promoting God's word.

about Jesus in love. You know, welcoming people so that they might hear about it, or playing in the band so that we can sing about it, doing those things that promote the proclamation of it, as well as speaking it directly to.

But we can break those two things of proclaiming and promoting down even further with ways of serving that the Bible speaks about. Those three I mentioned last week, and so just very quickly, because we saw them last week, we saw where to speak to each other inside the church, which we can all do, and we saw that from Colossians chapter three, teaching and admonishing one another

with all wisdom, and not just through singing, but also after the service through speaking. In fact, Ephesians four talks about speaking the truth, God's truth, the gospel truth in love, so that we will grow to be, what? Mature in Him.

[21:20] Same idea. And so membership means we're all to serve by speaking, but also by praying for gospel proclamation, which we can all do as well.

And so we saw last week that Paul asked for prayer for him to proclaim the message. And so we're to pray not just for church pastors, but for mission partners, as we've done tonight, for kids church or youth leaders, for growth group leaders.

Last week I encouraged you to take the mission points on the back of the boards and home and pray for them. I wonder if anyone actually did that. We're to pray for those who proclaim the gospel. We're all to do that. The prayer night is coming up this Wednesday night where we can do that. In fact, one of our 1030 service leaders, I was really encouraged before they, before he prayed for the Bible, when the Bible was about to be read, he also prayed for all you guys who serve in kids church.

He prayed for us and he prayed for the leaders who had already gone out with the kids, that God would help them to teach the Bible well, which is a great example of doing this. Membership means serving by praying, which we can all do, and also by answering those outside, which we can all do.

[22:35] So remember from last week, to be wise in the way we act towards outsiders, making the most of every opportunity, doing good or saying something good that might provoke a comment or provoke a question, question, and then verse 6, we can answer it in a way that's full of grace and appropriately flavoured, that points them to Jesus.

As I said last week, one easy way, what do you do on the weekend? I went to church. Or what are you doing this coming weekend? Oh, I'm doing A, B, and C, and I'm going to church, and it'll be great. You can even add that great thing, I'm hoping it will be true, it'll be great, just to kind of provoke them and go, oh, I wonder why it is great.

Make sure you've got a reason for why it's great in case they ask you, but those sorts of things are easy to do, and we can all do that. But this week, we can also play a part to build the body as we're able.

As it goes on in Ephesians, from him, Christ, the whole body joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work. Each of us in this room have a part to play.

For some, it might be just those first three things that we talked about that we can all do, speak, pray, and answer because of our situation or life circumstance.

[23:54] But for others, it might mean playing a specific part on a roster or a ministry team that either directly proclaims the gospel or supports, promotes the proclamation of the gospel.

As I said before, many of you already serve like that, which is fantastic. But perhaps others are not yet and would like to, then please talk to Mark. He'd love to hear from you.

Membership means serving by playing a part as we're able. And it means meeting together as we're able. And so the Bible says that we're not to give up meeting together but encourage one another.

I know health and holidays and work sometimes mean we can't get to church every Sunday or get to an MGG group every week. But we're to make every effort when we can to get there.

To not give up meeting together. And notice the purpose for meeting together. It's not just to worship God together. It's also to encourage one another.

[25:01] But it's hard to encourage one another if we're not meeting with one another, isn't it? people, Christians these days, the stats tell us that most people think that normal church attendance is twice a month.

That's not what the Bible would call normal church attendance. I know every time we can get there, we should get there. Membership means serving by meeting together as often as we're able. And finally, membership means giving as we're able. I know the cost of living has increased. Everything's going up. And I know people don't have much to give, especially if you're still at school or at uni.

But the great news is God doesn't care about the amount. He only cares about the heart. As 2 Corinthians says, each of you should give, each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give.

Not reluctantly or under compulsion for God loves a cheerful giver. And God uses our money to help the proclamation of the gospel. And so we are all to give the as we're able bit is just the amount.

[26:15] And it doesn't matter what amount, whether it's 50 cents or \$50. The heart is what matters. Membership means serving by giving as we're able.

Now all these ways are directed to every Christian in the New Testament. And they all help either proclaim the gospel directly or promote the gospel to present everyone mature in Christ.

But they're not always easy to do, are they? Indeed, serving humbly, lovingly, and especially sacrificially, you know, when it costs us something, that's really hard to do.

And so Jesus finishes with a challenge and encouragement. Verse 16, he says, very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Here's the challenge. We're to remember that we are not above our master. And so if our king and master served us, then we must serve one another.

[27:22] It's not an optional extra. If we think it's optional for us, then we are effectively saying that we are above Jesus. Oh yeah, he served, but I'm above him, so I don't have to.

But as Jesus says, no one, no messenger is greater than the one who sent him. And so we must serve one another. Actually, this challenge is also an encouragement because it reminds us that Jesus does not ask us to do anything that he doesn't do for us first.

He leads by example, doesn't he? But there's even more encouragement in verse 17. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. Serving actually brings blessing, like the blessing of joy and satisfaction.

Yes, sometimes when God prompts our conscience to serve, we think, oh, do we really have to do that? Oh, I don't really want to do that. But then after we do it, we're actually glad we did. Have you ever had that experience where you actually served someone and actually brought you joy and encouragement?

We often feel a sense of joy or satisfaction from it. That's a blessing. Not to mention storing up treasure in heaven. Serving brings blessing. Well, I don't know if you're into bucket lists or not, but on the last day of his life, Jesus, Jesus, the king, washed feet to show how he would humbly, lovingly, and even sacrificially serve us at the cross.

[29:02] And so we are to serve like him. Membership means serving like the son. Let's pray. God would help us. Let's pray. our heavenly father, we thank you so much that Jesus came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for us.

Help us, we pray, to follow his example of humble, sacrificial, and loving service that you might be pleased to use us to present everyone we possibly can mature in him.

Help us to follow our servant king, we pray. In his name, amen. Amen.