

# Jesus' Parting Words

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Hi, everyone. It's good that the temperature has fallen about 10 degrees. I had my shorts ready in the bag just in case I need to. But thankfully, for you and for me, we don't have to go there. Now, not many of us get to choose the time of our going, nor the manner of it.

Well, my grandfather, a sprightly 80-something, left church one day and was knocked over by a driver who failed to stop. Two days later, he was dead from internal brain hemorrhage.

On the other hand, when our friends knew their daughter, a four-year-old, only had six months to live, it really focused their minds on what they wanted to do with her. Sure, they were heartbroken. They were sad. But they just weren't going to just sit around and cry and worry.

For them, every minute from now on was precious time. And so it is, as we start this series, with Jesus in these chapters, chapters 13 to 17, Jesus knows that the time had come for him to go. And so time was now precious for him. And his mind was absolutely focused.

Every word, every incident from here on in is of great importance. Now, John sets the scene for us in verse 1, and you've got an outline there to follow along.

[ 1 : 3 1 ]     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 left his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. Now, the fact that Jesus was going to the Father was a good thing. It was a great thing, in fact, because that's where Jesus belongs, by his Father's side, reigning in glory.

As verse 3 puts it, he had come from the Father, and now he was returning to him. But that meant two things, two things that weighed heavily on Jesus. The first is that the way back to the Father is via the cross. It was the Passover festival, and even as all around thousands of lambs were being prepared for the Passover, Jesus knew that he was to become the Passover lamb, the one that was going to be sacrificed to take away the sins of the world.

That's what John means by, the hour had come. Now, this is actually Jesus' own phrase. Back in John chapter 12 and 23, just a page before, if you look with me, Jesus had said, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seed. And so it's important to remember, as we look at these chapters, that the shadow of the cross looms large over them.

But secondly, dying on the cross also meant that Jesus had to leave his disciples. So for three years, Jesus had lived with them, ate with them, taught and traveled with them. Jesus was not ashamed to call them his own, people he had loved. And now Jesus prepares to leave them. And as he does, Jesus will love them to the end. That is, he will love them to the uttermost, to the max.

That's what the to the end means. But ironically, that meant having to leave them so that he could go and die on the cross. But again, we remember that love is what motivates Jesus as he heads to the cross. Love for those who were his own. Now, the other thing that John makes clear in these opening verses is that nothing is taking place by surprise for Jesus. Jesus knows what lies ahead. Everything is working out according to God's plan. So if we look down the chapter, there are four instances where John tells us, or Jesus himself says, that Jesus knew. So already in verse one, we've read that Jesus knew that the hour had come. And then in verse three, Jesus knew that the father had put all things under his power. So that is, Jesus not only knew, but also has the power over the events that were coming up as well. Power even over the actions of Judas and Satan. So we read in verse two that the devil is responsible for prompting Judas to betray Jesus. But straight after that, in verse three, we are left in no doubt that all this, that all power had been given to Jesus over what is going on.

[ 4 : 48 ] We may not be able to fully reconcile this in our mind, but both of these truths sit side by side. Now, as for the other two instances, verse 11 tells us that Jesus knew who was going to betray him.

That was Judas. Well, in verse 18, it's the converse. He says, for I know, Jesus says, whom I have chosen, meaning that he knew Judas would betray him because he had not chosen him. So yes, Judas and Satan are responsible for their actions, but their evil deeds operate or come under God's sovereignty.

All things are under Jesus's power, even the schemes of evil men. Now, this may be confusing to you, and if it is, we can talk more about it later on after the service. Now, many of us, if we see something bad about to happen to us, we'll, I think, do whatever it takes to try and stop it or avoid it.

We wouldn't step headlong into suffering if we could avoid it. And if we knew a close friend was about to betray us, I'm pretty sure that we wouldn't let him do that to us. We would take evasive action, wouldn't we? But that is not what Jesus does. He does exactly the opposite. He doesn't try to stop it.

He walks into it, as it were. Now, why does he do that? Well, because he's motivated, not by his own needs, or his own comfort, or his own well-being, but rather he was doing it for the sake of others. He was doing it because that was the way he was going to serve them. And so this is now what we see clearly in what Jesus does next. So resuming in verse 3, Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, we just read that, and then he had come from the God and was returning to God. And then here's what he then does. So he got up from the mill, 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. Now, feet washing was, and probably still is, a lowly task. In those days, roads weren't sealed. You didn't have the council having a road sweeper come through once a week to gather up the garbage. Besides, you had dogs and donkeys and all sorts of other animals along your street doing whatever they do with their business and leaving it there. So imagine your feet after a day's walking. Cleaning them would usually be left to the slave of the house. And only the host didn't have one would he or she have to do it himself.

[ 7 : 33 ] It was a lowly task. Perhaps by way of comparison, it's a bit like taking out the garbage after supper. I'm not sure how many of you have actually done that. But even then, that's probably not as bad as feet washing in those days. And so perhaps that's why nobody did it before the meal.

Nobody wanted to. So imagine having dinner that night. The aroma of the table was competing with the aroma from under the table. And well, not literally, of course. Their feet was actually dangling outside because they were reclining. But you get what I mean.

And then what they see is Jesus get up, strip down to his loincloth, that's actually an undergarment, and proceed to wash their stinky feet.

Now, if you were a disciple, what would you have thought? And I'm sure that they would have wanted to stop him, right? But on the other hand, they would have thought, how can we actually tell Jesus, our Lord and teacher, what to do?

Well, thankfully, they have Peter, who you could always count on to say something, to speak his mind, and to ask the questions that no one else did. And so when Jesus came to Simon Peter in verse 6, Peter said, Lord, are you going to wash my feet? To which Jesus replies, you do not realize now what I'm doing, but later you will understand.

[ 9 : 00 ] Now, that was not good enough for Peter. I think he felt for Jesus' honor. So he said, no, you will never wash my feet. And here's where the conversation gets interesting, because Jesus begins to talk at a deeper level, deeper, sorry, not higher, deeper, but Peter at first fails to get it.

Jesus starts by telling them that something more important was happening than just feet washing, that his actions were pointing to a greater truth. And so Jesus answers in verse 8, unless I wash you, you have no part in me.

Now, notice that Jesus doesn't say anymore, wash your feet, but wash you. I think he's indicating that he's now talking about a different type of washing, the washing that comes from his death on the cross.

That unless Jesus' death washes Peter of his sins, then as Jesus says, he will have no part in him. He wouldn't be safe. He wouldn't be able to belong to Jesus. And that's what the Christian faith is all about, the gospel of grace.

It's about allowing Jesus to do what you cannot do for yourself. And so, in one sense, no amount of Bible knowledge or trying to do good works will make us clean.

[ 10 : 19 ] Only being washed by Jesus can. Not literally, of course. Jesus is talking about us trusting in his death. And that's how we are washed.

But it's something that Jesus has to do for us. Jesus is the one that has to serve us. As the Gospel of Mark puts it, for the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

If you don't get this, if you don't believe in this, then as Jesus says, you can have no part in him. Now, Peter didn't get it, of course.

But I think he was spooked by Jesus' rebuke. So, he is afraid that perhaps Jesus now is going to cut him off. He's given the wrong answer. And so now he, in one sense, overreaches.

He goes from one extreme to the other. He says, all right then, Jesus. Don't just stop at my feet then. Wash my hands. Wash my head too. Go the whole hog. To which Jesus has to gently explain to him again, those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet.

[ 11 : 24 ] Their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you. And so the first reference to clean is a physical clean. The whole body is clean. But the second is spiritual.

Now, the clean here doesn't mean sinless. The disciples were all sinful, just like Judas. But they were clean because of Jesus' washing. They had trusted in Jesus. And so they belonged to him and had a right standing before God.

But not Judas. Now, the other thing that tells us that the feet washing is not just merely physical, but it's pointing to Jesus' death, is in the way John describes Jesus' actions.

So both the phrase in verse 12, to put on, that's the robe, and then back in verse 4, to take off, are the same ones that Jesus uses when he talked about his own life.

So back in John chapter 10 and verse 18, he talks about laying down or putting off his life and taking up. Sorry, that's the other one.

[ 12 : 26 ] Laying down or putting on or taking up or putting on his life. So John verse 18 and John chapter 10. Now, no one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.

That is to take off. I have authority to take it off or lay it down and authority to take it up or put it on again. This command I received from my Father. And so the feet washing, we need to know, it's not just modeling humble service.

It's actually a picture of Jesus' greatest act of service for us. That of giving his life on the cross and loving his own to the end. And when Jesus returned to his place, what he now does is then proceeds to apply what he's just done to the disciples.

It's application time, as it were, for the disciples. And so for us, it's application time as well. So this is the question that Jesus asked us in verse 12. Do you understand what I have done for you?

If the disciples said yes, if we say yes, then the first application is this. We are to follow his example. So verse 13.

[ 13 : 39 ] 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 that you should do as I have done for you.

Now, there's sort of two ways to show, to be an example, isn't there? So sometimes we see politicians turn up at the school, like so. Perhaps during reading week.

And then they sit in front of the class and they read a book to the kids. Now, we know why they're doing that. They're trying to set an example so that hopefully when it comes on the evening news, parents would look at it over dinner and go, yep, I should do the same after dinner as well.

But sometimes we look at that and, you know, we're a bit smarter than that. We suspect that it's all, you know, maybe a bit of a show. We're not sure whether Julia Gillard, you know, actually goes home and does it herself.

I mean, she doesn't have any children, so a bit hard. But the point is that when Jesus set an example, it's not for show. I mean, those feet of the disciples really needed washing.

[ 14 : 43 ] And he really did love his disciples. He doesn't just do it just so that other people will follow him. No, Jesus does it because that's the way he always is.

That's what he always does. He always has the heart of a servant, whatever he does. He always has others' good in mind whenever he acts.

He's always selfless. He's always sacrificial. And we see that most clearly in the cross. And so Jesus' point is that we are to do the same. We are to follow him because no servant is greater than his master and no messenger than the one who sends him.

You can't call him Lord and Savior and not follow his example. Now, of course, we can't die for each other literally.

We can only do it once and then that's it. But what we are asked to do is to have the same selfless and sacrificial attitude that Jesus has. And so I think this works out in a number of ways.

[ 15 : 47 ] The first is that it means from time to time serving others and doing things that we don't like to do, we hate doing. Lowly tasks even that no one wants to do.

So we mustn't use the whole, you know, God has just called me to be a Bible teacher but not to throw out the rubbish. Because seriously, do you think Jesus was called to wash feet?

But second, and I think this is just as important, we are to also serve and have a servant heart whatever we do. That is, even when we teach the Bible or we're up front here praying or playing the music, we are to do it with a servant heart.

We are to have the same attitude that Jesus did when he washed his disciples' feet. Be sacrificial, living for others and not ourselves. Often I'm so quick to notice when others are not serving me with a servant heart.

But I think Jesus' point here is that we should be quick to apply it to ourselves rather than insist it of others. So you may play the guitar, and I'm not picking up on Ash this evening.

[ 16 : 54 ] You may play the guitar a certain way. But if you know that that distracts people and stops them from singing properly, then, you know, even though that's not your preference, you should try and play it so that they can sing better.

Or if you are a leader and, you know, you like doing things last minute, and I know that none of you like that here, but you know that it actually stresses other people off because it doesn't leave them time to prepare, then a true servant will actually make an effort to prepare early, even though that may not be your style.

You see, true serving, serving one another is costly. It will take you places where you would rather not go. It will require of you when you don't feel like it, what you should do.

But Jesus gives us this assurance, this promise, and it's there in verse 17. Jesus promises us that we will be blessed if we serve like him. Now that you know these things, Jesus says, you will be blessed if you do them.

So every time things do get hard when you serve, don't resent it, but just remember Jesus' promise. You will be blessed if you do them.

[ 18 : 08 ] And that sort of leads us to the second point, application, and that is we can have full confidence in Jesus' promises. Because when we hear Jesus asking us to follow him, to give our lives to others as a servant, this is no ordinary human being talking here, but this is God himself.

This is the Son of God, the one that has come from the Father. Now Jesus has taken this trouble to tell the disciple all these things because he says in verse 19, I'm telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen, you will believe that I am who I am.

And when he says that I am, what we are to immediately recall is that the great I am in the Old Testament is God. So all through John, every I am statement that we have in John by Jesus is his claim to be God.

And just like the God of the Old Testament, Jesus makes it a point to tell us before something happens so that when it happens, we can believe in him. It's his way of giving us proof that he is God.

Now I don't know whether you know this, but up to this point, it's only us to the readers that knows that Jesus knew. So all the three verses, 1, 3, and 11, are actually John's narration to us.

[ 19 : 24 ] But here in verse 18, it's when Jesus finally reveals to the disciples that he knows by saying, I know those that I have chosen. But this is to fulfill this passage of scripture.

He who shed my bread has turned against me. So Jesus quotes Psalm 41 here and claims that the scripture is now being fulfilled. So he's saying that he's doing this because he knows that something is going to happen before it happens.

And we don't have time to look at it in detail, but I think the rest of verses 21 to 30 is all about Jesus doing just that. That is when he dips bread for Judas, he's actually telling John that he knows who the betrayer is.

Not only that, he's also telling John that he has the power over the events that are about to happen. For it is Jesus that, in one sense, presses the start button by saying to Judas, what you are about to do, go and do quickly.

He's actually starting the chain of events that leads to his death. But the crucial point is, and I want to make this, is that he tells his disciples beforehand so that they can believe after it has happened that he is the great I am.

[ 20 : 37 ] So I think that's why, for example, John uses the phrase Jesus testified in verse 21. He doesn't say, Jesus said. Jesus sees this as a solemn declaration by Jesus, a testimony that we can hold Jesus to, and which gives the disciples confidence to believe in Jesus.

And now that brings us to our third point, and that is that we too can have the same confidence because Jesus then entrusted everything he has said to his disciples.

He sends his disciples out as his messengers to pass on his message to us. So for us to believe in Jesus, we need to believe in the message of his disciples.

See there in verse 20, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me, and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me. It has to be the one that Jesus sends through whom we believe and accept.

And we know that the disciples are those people because Jesus in verse 16 calls them his messengers. But what Jesus has done here is establish a very clear chain, and we're going to look at that over the next few weeks because Jesus keeps coming back to it.

[ 21 : 54 ] God the Father sent Jesus, and Jesus sends his disciples. The message that Jesus has from the Father is the same message that the disciples are to teach by the Holy Spirit.

And this message is recorded for us in the Bible, in the New Testament. So accept this message, and you accept Jesus. Accept Jesus, and you accept God the Father also.

And so our job is to point people to this message, the one that has been faithfully passed down by the disciples. It's not for us to make up our own.

And the same goes that when we judge others and measure others, we need to see whether they are telling us, giving us messages that are consistent with what God has in the Bible.

As I said, we'll unpack all of this in coming weeks. But today, let us finish with this message that the Lord Jesus has passed down to us through his disciples. And it's there in verse 12.

[ 22 : 53 ] Do we understand what Jesus has done for us? Do we understand that the one who died on the cross died to serve us? He is a God who serves us, a God who lays down his life for those he loves, whatever the cost, whatever the sacrifice.

If we do, and we call him teacher and Lord, then we need to follow his example. We need to serve one another the way Jesus serves us. And as Jesus promised, we will be blessed if we do.

Let's pray. Father, we have to admit sometimes that you have set a really high bar for us.

For us to serve one another like you served us is a high calling. One even almost impossible to emulate. And yet, Lord, help us to see the depth of your love in what you've done for us, how you've served us.

And even as we are caught up in that love, that will prompt us to serve one another like you. And help us too, Lord, to remember that even though it may be hard at times, that ultimately we will be blessed.

[ 24 : 08 ] We will be blessed because you promised if we do these things. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, when Christians gather together, it's good for us to affirm the faith that we should have in the world from us, feeling, even with the confidence who, to have this key.

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