

A Picture of Christ's Love

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[0 : 00] Turn in your Bibles this morning to John 13. We are stepping into a new phase of the gospel of John 13.

! Chapter 1-12 in some sense would give you a kind of an opening picture and then would expand it more. Giving you a little statement or a little event that took place in Christ's ministry and then kind of opening it up to help you understand more about the heart and character of Christ.

What's going to happen from 13 to 19 is that that order of starting small and getting bigger is going to be reversed in that from 13 to 19 the focus of the gospel is going to keep on coming back towards Christ and the cross.

I think sometimes we miss how central the cross is. How important it is for us to get our head around the reality of Christ dying for us and in our place.

John doesn't want us to miss that. And so if you would begin with me in John chapter 13, let me begin reading at least to kind of frame your thinking there in verse 1.

[1 : 40] 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 the 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 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.

Let me point out to you this morning that one of the key pieces of information that we need to hold on to in our lives on a regular basis is the love of Christ.

I think about the passage just for a moment back in Ephesians chapter 3 and if you were to ask me what would be one of the more important passages that I can hold on to and rely on to be a comfort, an encouragement, an instruction, a guide to me, I would say it's this passage in Ephesians chapter 3 where the apostle says, listen, here's my prayer.

[3 : 15] Here's the thing that I'm interested in that you might be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and height and width and depth of the love of Christ so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Well, I have to tell you that understanding the love of Christ is not something that you can do without information. Does that make sense? You can't love Him if you don't know Him and you can't love Him if you don't understand the heart that He has.

And so as you look at this passage, I want you to realize that it drives home the point that we find there in verse 1.

Now, do you like the fact that John kind of tells us up ahead what's going to happen?

How many of you remember going to class and the first thing that happened in the class after the professor or the teacher introduced himself and wrote his name on the chalkboard?

[4 : 30] Well, those are the good old days, right? They don't do it that way anymore. But the teacher said, I am Bubba and I am here to see that you get smarter and I'm going to tell you up front how this class is going to go.

Here are the homework assignments. Here are the days that the test is going to happen. And when it's all done, you've got this information packed in, right? Here's the apostle that says, here's what I want you to understand.

Here's what I want you to understand. Jesus, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. And so as we open up this passage and begin to appreciate it in our own hearts and lives, here's the thing I want you to comprehend and plead with the Holy Spirit that you will not be distracted from the discipline of thinking carefully and deeply about the love of Christ for you.

Well, let's get into the text and understand, first of all, what we see is that this is a love that is faithful and tender. John sets the stage in our lesson by explaining that here we are dealing with the setting of the Last Supper.

Without overplaying the details of this, I want you to understand that we are actually talking about the Last Supper prior to His crucifixion. It's not a Last Supper. It is the Last Supper.

[6 : 01] And it is the Last Supper that He is going to partake with His disciples. And in that context, we're going to find not only that it was a supper that really celebrated the fact of His coming sacrifice for us, but it was also a supper that was profoundly instructive.

I want you to imagine that here is Jesus that is caught up in teaching His disciples critically important things.

And in this context of talking about His death and reminding them of the fact that He was going to be sacrificed for them, that there was a new covenant that was in the frame, He also does something that is very, very surprising in that He washes the feet of His disciples.

I think these facts come together and are well understood under the frame of the fact that He loved His own and He loved them to the end.

It's against this backdrop of the cross that we really see this picture of love that we may be tempted to kind of skip over and get caught on the big details and not really see the overarching truth.

[7 : 20] As we take up the theme of the love of Christ, one of the things that I want you to understand here is that Christ's love lasts forever. Look at what it says there again in verse 1.

It says, Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. You know, truth of the matter is, we're okay at loving people who love us.

Isn't that right? Really? I remember talking with one young man that was quite interested in finding a future wife.

And there's nothing better than coming to a pastor, you know, a marriage broker that I am. Ha! He wanted my advice on this process.

And I actually, I had the lack of wisdom to suggest an individual to him. It was one of my only mistakes that I've made in the last ha.

[8 : 19] But I remember suggesting that he contact such and such an individual. And I thought this person was an entirely credible candidate. I knew the person's character and I was without hesitation ready to recommend this individual.

Went out with the individual one time and after that I said, So how'd it go? And he said this, on to the next interview. And I thought, What? We're not bad at kind of loving those who love us and loving those who kind of meet our criteria and our frame.

I want you to understand that the depth of Christ's love is seen not only in this matter of a lasting love, but also a love that really cared about the details and the depth of the needs of his disciples.

Here we are at the Lord's Supper. And I want you to understand that in that frame, he takes the time to explain several very, very important truths for us to hold on to.

You see, here is Jesus making it clear that his love never changes. It never changes. It never changes.

[9 : 37] Knowing what he did about Judas and what was coming, I want you to recognize the fact that it was not the kind of environment or circumstance in which you would follow through and really, truly love that kind of person.

You may be a little vindictive towards him, or at the very least, you just kind of cut him off and say, On to the next interview, right? We've got another one. It's all done. Judas is gone.

And here is Jesus tenderly loving the chief of sinners. I want you to think with me just for a moment of what all Jesus knew about Judas' heart.

If you were to work your way back into John, you'll remember one of the things that says about Jesus is that he knew what was in men's hearts. On occasion, he knew what people were arguing among themselves about even when he was removed from their presence.

He knew what the Pharisees were thinking. And so it is safe to assume, accurately, I believe, that he knew exactly what Judas was involved in and what his heart was like.

[10 : 47] And so here is that dishonest, wicked heart of Judas that could claim no ignorance in his determination to deny and to betray Christ.

And here in the middle of the flow of the last hours that Jesus has, we find him doing something that strikes us as unusual.

You see, here is Jesus who is faithful in his love for Judas and he can be trusted to love you as well.

Does that make sense? If Jesus would love Judas as vile and as wicked as what he was going to be engaged in and knowing all about Judas' heart, if Jesus was willing to love him, he's going to love me and he's going to love you.

Tender. Faithful. There's something else that I want you to mark here in John chapter 13, verse 3 and 4. We find that Jesus' ministry was one that was saving and sanctifying.

[11 : 52] Look, let me read it. Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hand and that he'd come from God and was going to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments and taking a towel, he tied it around his waist.

Now, the meals in ancient Palestine were, particularly when you're talking about a formal meal, they were arranged around a low-lying table and they had couches that people laid on and were rather reclined and comfortable.

By the way, how many of you know that the average meal today in America takes about 18 minutes on the high side? Now, you know, how many of you have been anxious about what's going to happen after the supper and you find out that it's done bang?

Now, dishes is a different story. In the ancient world, meals were social events and they talked and they went about it slowly and there was one course after another and just a very slow pedestrian approach and here is the meal going on and Jesus gets up.

By the way, when Jesus got up, guess what every eye did? What's up? And then he takes a towel and ties it around his waist.

[13 : 15] Now, that was curious. I mean, I bet you some of the disciples were beginning to feel just a little nervous because towels and saviors, I mean, you know, hard to fit together.

But then look what happens. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and wiped them with the towel that was wrapped around him. By washing feet, Jesus taught several lessons.

In order to understand these lessons, there are several things I want you to pick up on. For one, washing feet was an expected part of a dinner like this. Guests didn't arrive in a limo or get red carpet treatment.

The vast majority of people in the ancient world traveled by foot. And they didn't wear high boots coming up their calf.

They kind of stomped, in many cases, barefooted through the streets or maybe they had some leather sandals that, and by the way, how many of you know that sandals are really not good for keeping all the crud of life out?

[14 : 27] And so when people would come to a dinner or people would come to be a guest in your home, the standard thing was for you to assign someone to wash the feet.

By the way, the streets in the ancient world were shared by all. And not only shared with all, but also shared with all the animals that were part of the ancient world.

You had donkeys, you had cows, you had horses, you had sheep, and you had goats. And they contributed to the biomass in the path. I'll never forget a Christmas program that Judith and I attended a number of years ago in a church that large church put on just a slam bang Christmas program.

And on top of the normal music, they actually had sheep that were, you know, shepherds herded the sheep in. Somehow or another, the sheep got nervous.

And they came down, I don't know, I would imagine there should have been better planning, but the sheep came down the center aisle and they were spitting all these little pellets out the back end of every one of the sheep.

[15 : 52] Okay? And the shepherds were walking, they're barefooted, I mean, the shepherds are barefooted. And I, I mean, this was a sober moment, I mean, you know, it's a Christmas program and I am up there just, I'll go to my grave remembering that program.

I don't know what the gospel was like that night, but I'll never forget the sheep who left behind these little tiny little landmines and everybody was really nervous about what it felt like. How many of you ever, no, I won't go there.

Okay. No garbage trucks in the ancient world. And so, the pathway was a cruddy place to walk.

And washing sheep, washing feet, was expected.

I want you to understand that whoever had organized that dinner had a bowl and pitcher on site. Jesus didn't leave the room, it was there.

[17 : 06] And so, I want you to understand that as the disciples came in, every one of them saw the pitcher and the bowl there and they knew what normally happened at a meal.

Jesus had already repeatedly made the point to them that the one who would be first would be servant. The one who would be servant was the one that was important.

And so, here were the disciples. I can only imagine, I don't have any textual basis to premise my argument, but you can kind of imagine knowing the disciples were always about who was first, they were probably thinking, well, somebody ought to wash feet.

I mean, and it's not me because the truth of the matter is I'm going to be number one. Hey, Peter, what do you think?

No. I'm hoping somebody else will do that. And so, here's the bowl and here's the pitcher. Peter ought to be doing this, really. Do you know how many times he's put his foot in his mouth?

[18 : 22] He at least ought to do something for other people's feet. And the bowl and the pitcher just sat there and nobody moved. It's interesting, actually, to recognize that in the synoptic gospels, they had been arguing over and over again about this issue of who was number one.

In fact, keep your finger there in John. We're going to come back, but I just want you to turn just for a second to Luke chapter 22, verse 24 through 27. Hey, have you ever found yourself just a little discouraged with your spiritual progress and development over the years?

Raise your hand and wave at me just so I know you're with me here, okay? Don't despair because if Jesus loved and kept on working on the disciples, he's all over you too.

And here they are. They're at the Last Supper and they end up having a dispute, verse 24, among them as to which of them was going to be regarded the greatest.

Bowl and pitcher right there in front of them. They're arguing about it. Beyond that, going back now to John, we find here is Jesus who didn't give up on the 12 and he will not give up on us as he makes the point to us You look there in the passage going back to John 12, verse 13.

[19 : 57] He starts to wash the disciples' feet and as he is washing them, he comes now to Peter. And by the way, if there's anything you know about Peter, it's that he was one who didn't have any hesitation to say what he was thinking.

Sometimes that really got him in trouble. Isn't that right? Classic illustration today. Jesus had already washed several of the disciples' feet and here we come to Peter in verse 6.

He came to Simon Peter who said to him, Lord, do you wash my feet? Now, I don't want you to understand. It was like, hey, are you really going to do mine too?

It was like, you doing mine? No. The underlying implication is Peter was not interested in having Christ wash his feet. Why? Peter understood that the responsibility of washing feet belonged to the lowest of the low.

I have a wonderful bride and I remember at one point I had worked pretty hard and my feet were really hurting.

[21 : 12] How many of you have ever had feet that hurt bad? And I asked her if she would rub my feet. Okay, she's in the nursery so she's free of this conversation. Don't need to share it with her.

She said, there are a lot of things I'll do for you, honey, but rubbing feet is not one of them. That was earlier in our marriage.

Now, I rub her feet and she rubs my feet but you know what? I see it on your faces. You know, rubbing feet is kind of like over the edge, isn't it? Try washing them. When the guy's been stepping in donkey poop and, you know, sheep stuff, you know, it's like, you're kidding.

me. And here is Jesus washing feet. Well, Peter, when he pushes back, has Jesus respond this way in verse 7.

What I'm doing you do not understand now but afterward you will understand. For most of us that should have been like, okay, I get it. I may not. How many times did the disciples not understand?

[22 : 16] Do you follow that? I think about Jesus telling one parable after another and they'd all sit there and nod, you know, as he was talking, oh yeah. But when they got private, what would they do? You know, there's a point that John didn't get.

Would you go ahead and help him with this? And Jesus would explain. So here is Jesus saying, Peter, relax. You'll understand later.

Oh, not good enough for Peter. Right? 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.

To put it another way, the washing work of Jesus is part of relationship with Jesus. I've got to tell you something. There are some of you sitting here today that I have reason to believe you've never come to faith.

You don't know Christ as your personal Savior. You know some of the vocabulary. You've enjoyed being under the umbrella in a sense. But you've never come to the place where by faith you have come with broken humility and said, my life is a mess and I'm a wreck and I need Christ to be my Savior.

[23 : 37] And here was Peter pushing back and Jesus made the point. Let me tell you something. Apart from being washed in the blood of Christ, you have no hope.

Well, there's another distinction that Jesus makes here and they're actually two different washings. Look at verse 10.

It says, the one who has bathed and that's an accurate translation of the two different Greek words that John uses to describe what's taking place. The one who has bathed does not need to wash except his feet, but is completely clean and you are clean but not every one of you.

Now, the point Jesus is making here because remember what happened when Jesus said, hey, listen, if I don't give you a, if I don't wash you, you're not part of me. Peter says, well, do me all.

Jesus said, no. The one who's been bathed, the one who's been covered by the blood of Christ has been saved and has a relationship, but here's what happens in the daily flow of life.

[24 : 47] Mess follows. So let me kind of push these two different washings together so you can see salvation is the once for all bathing in the blood of Christ.

And there are some of you here today that can remember what was it like before you came to the Lord Jesus, your heart was dark and your condition was absolutely miserable and you were under the curse of the law and you knew the judgment of God and yet there came the day when by faith you came to Christ and he washed away your sins.

What can wash away my sins? Nothing. What? But the blood of Jesus. At the same time, there is a time, there is a regular time where we need the daily washing of his grace to deal with our sin from day to day.

And so if you are here and have been bathed in the grace of Christ and he has drawn you to faith, there's no need to be plunged in again. I got to tell you, salvation is a once for all event.

It's something that happens by the grace of God and you are turned from darkness to light. You who are not a son are now a son. But you still need to be bathed on a regular basis to have the daily issues of sin in your life cared for.

[26 : 15] And so here we understand that Jesus is teaching us both the matter of salvation that we need to be saved by being immersed in the blood of Christ and we need daily cleansing from the ongoing battle of our sin.

Let me come to one other piece this morning. Look there at verse 15. Actually back up if you will just for a moment. Verse 12, he says, 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?

Nobody said a word. You call me teacher and Lord and you're right for so I am. If then I, 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 should do just as I have done to you. I find in this passage not only a love that is tender, not only a love that is saving and sanctifying but also a love that is instructing and blessing.

When Jesus washed his disciples' feet he was giving us an example to follow and I got to make this point make it gently.

[27 : 37] I don't believe that what it is teaching here is foot washing and that every month or every three months that we ought to have a foot washing service. I think what is being given to us is the overarching illustration of the fact that the common characteristic of believers is to be humility and servanthood.

And here Jesus is saying if I'm willing to be this kind of servant you have to be willing to do the same thing. What Jesus did in washing dirty feet calls us to follow him and to serve in lowliness and humility.

The common characteristic of believers that are walking with Christ is to be a regular willingness to be used for the glory of the kingdom.

Serving one another. I appreciate actually being in a fellowship that we enjoy here where when we ask for help we end up with an abundance of individuals engaged in doing it and we're continuing to grow at that.

All last week and for the remaining four weeks we will be serving Franklin County Board of Elections Training Ministry. Every person who has interacted with their staff from our fellowship will tell you the same thing.

[29 : 05] They like being here. Do you know why? Because when they are here they are served without hesitation and with kindness and joy.

by the way servanthood opens the door for gospel ministry do you understand that? And God is giving us one opportunity after another to do that.

Here is Jesus washing dirty feet and calling you to be a servant like He is. Let me look at another part here just for a moment.

Look down there at verse 17. By the way this is a little verse that is worth remembering memorizing and etching on to your life.

Let me read it slowly. If you know these things blessed are you if you do them. Now important to understand this there are two different kinds of blessings.

[30 : 16] blessings. Okay? Bless you my child. I gave you \$100,000. That's a blessing. Bless you.

I'm going to give you something. I'm going to do something for you. I'm going to load you up with something that's good. Blessing. There's a different kind of blessing.

This word here that's used is the word makarios. else. In the English language it's actually the word happy.

Hey who here would like to be unhappy in a permanent funk? Just try it so you can get a feel for it. Here's what I want you to do.

Frown. Just frown for a second. You're doing it. Some of you are pretty practiced. I got it. Here's what Jesus says.

[31 : 15] You want to be happy? Yeah. I had a chance last week to talk to a guy about the Lord. So what do you want out of life?

Here's what he said. I want to be happy. Well who doesn't? You want to be happy? Here's what Jesus said. Look at it. Verse 17.

If you know these things. By the way, what things is he talking about in this case? He's talking about serving people, washing feet, wiping doo-doo out from between the toes.

I mean, he's talking about really getting into it. Do you follow that? Come on. I'm not trying to be crude. Just to help you understand. It was pretty low life work.

Happiness comes from knowing Jesus and obeying him. There's some of you here today that actually spend a fair amount of your time being pretty unhappy.

[32 : 24] That is normal for a person who doesn't know Christ. Do you follow that? How many of you remember just how unhappy it was being an unrepentant, unregenerate, hell-bound sinner?

Does anybody remember what it was like? Yeah, it's miserable. And if you are here today and you do not know Christ, happiness is a fantasy and it will never have a permanent impression or place in your life.

Why? Because one of the things it says repeatedly in the book of Isaiah is there is no rest for the wicked. There are some of you here who have known the happiness and the freedom that comes with forgiveness and having had your sins washed away by the blood of Christ, but you have fallen prey to the enemy of your soul who has misled you to think that service and being like Christ are not important.

unhappiness flows down the channel of being a self-focused person.

Can I say that slowly so you don't miss it? Unhappiness flows down the channel of being a self-focused person. Again, just so you don't miss it.

[33 : 54] Unhappiness flows down the channel of being a self-focused person. Let me read the verse again. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

in summary, with the cross right in front of him, in the flow of the last supper, Jesus uses washing feet to show incredible love for the greatest and vilest of sinner to confirm to anyone who is here, if Jesus could love Judas, he can love you.

And he used washing feet to teach us that happiness comes from being humble and being willing to serve.

Why? because I get to be a little bit like Jesus. Let's pray.

Father, you who abide in heaven, who know the frailty of our hearts, and know the need of our soul, have blessed us beyond measure in sending the Lord Jesus to be our Savior, to be our teacher, to be our Lord.

[35 : 54] And there's some here today that need Jesus as their Savior, and I would plead with you that you would convict their heart and challenge them to lay aside their pride and confess their sins and believe in Jesus.

There's some here today that know Christ as their Savior, but have allowed sin to creep in and need the washing ministry of your word and spirit to be revived, to be restored, to find pleasure in being a servant of the living God.

And our plea is that you would be honored among your people this morning. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's stand.